

The

CAPTIVE VOICE



An Glór Gafa

Vol. 9 No. 1

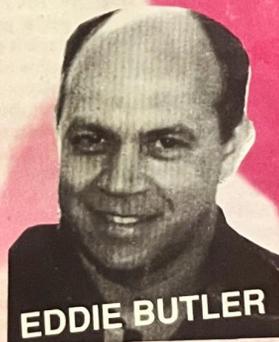
January/February 1998

£1/\$5

The Voice of Irish Republican Prisoners of War

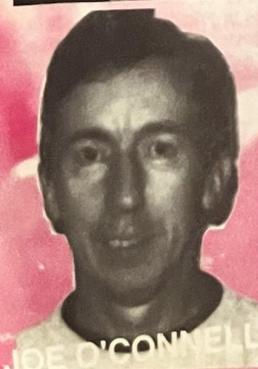
WE HAVE OUR NELSON MANDELA'S

22 Years In English Prisons

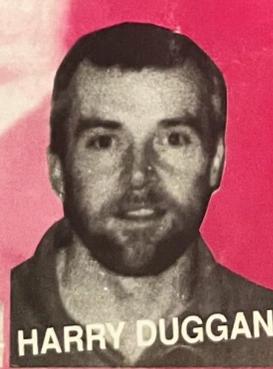


EDDIE BUTLER

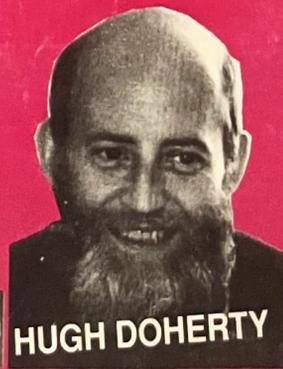
**RELEASE
THEM NOW!**



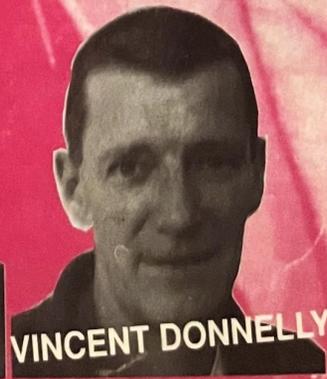
JOE O'CONNELL



HARRY DUGGAN



HUGH DOHERTY



VINCENT DONNELLY

The CAPTIVE VOICE

An Glór Gafa

The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa is a quarterly magazine written in its entirety by Irish Republican POWs currently being held in Ireland, England, Europe and the US. It is published by Sinn Féin's POW Department.

Irish republicans have always recognised that resistance to British misrule does not end upon their arrest. The battles to be fought and the tactics to be employed may change but the enemy remains the same. In the words of our comrade Bobby Sands:

"The jails are engineered to crush the political identity of the captured republican prisoner, to crush his/her resistance and transform him/her into a systemised answering-machine with a large criminal tag stamped by oppression upon his/her back, to be duly released on to the street, politically cured — politically barren — and permanently broken in spirit."

The establishment of this jail journal is a tribute not only to our families, friends and comrades, whose strength and support have been inspirational to us all, but also is a

clear recognition that we are what we are — political prisoners, unbroken in our deep-rooted desire for freedom.

The Captive Voice affords us a platform and an opportunity to present in print our views on those topics and issues which affect daily life both inside and outside of the jails. The magazine contains political analyses of current national and international affairs, culture, short stories, poetry and the latest updates on prison-related campaigns and issues. Satire and humour can also be found within the special features, cartoons and artwork illustrations.

We have been pleased and greatly encouraged by the response to the magazine. It is hoped that the sharing of our feelings and experiences through the pages of *An Glór Gafa* will be both beneficial and enjoyable for all our readers.

We are determined that our message and our captive voice shall be heard by many.

— The Irish Republican Prisoners of War. ■

Make sure that you 'hear' *The Captive Voice* each quarter by taking out a subscription.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR FOUR ISSUES ARE:

Six Counties, Wales, Scotland and England:.....	£5.30
26 Counties:.....	£6.10
Europe (airmail):.....	£6.70
Australia:.....	£9.50
Elsewhere:.....	£8.00

BULK ORDER RATES ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

Name:

Address:

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES/MONEY ORDERS
PAYABLE TO AN GLOR GAFA

Send details to:

The POW Department
51-55 Falls Road,
Belfast.

Tel: 249975. Fax: 231723

or 44 Parnell Square
Dublin.

Tel: 8727096

USA & CANADA

Readers in the USA & Canada can now obtain *The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa* direct from the Irish Northern Aid Committee in New York. Price \$5 each; four-issue subscription \$20. Send details to: *An Glór Gafa*, c/o INAC National Office, 4951 Broadway, New York 10034. Tel: (212) 567-0707.

CONTENTS

'Authoritarianism, Intolerance and
Paternalism' 2
A Family Together, A System Apart 4



Bravest of the Brave	6
Incarcerated still	7
Sinn Fein Youth - A Youth Movement	8
First Sunday	10
Reviewing 'The Wrong Man'	12
A Christmas Tale - The Snowman and the Dummy	14
TnaG Bliain Amhain d'Aos	16
Proud of the Past - Confident of the Future	17
United and Strong	19
Quotes	20
Guilty By (Press) Association	21



Raiteas Don Slógadh ó na Cimí sa Cheis Fhada	24
Drugs - A Community Fightback	25
Red Spider	27
Crossword	28

We welcome correspondence with ideas, suggestions or comments on the contents of *The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa* or on any subject of concern to prisoners.

WRITE TO: Micheál Mac Giolla Ghunna or Paddy O'Dowd, H-Blocs, Long Kesh, County Antrim.

The

CAPTIVE VOICE



An Glór Gafa

At time of writing the Talks at Castle Buildings, Stormont, have been in session for over a month. Most participants and observers have made reference to the historic days and new opportunities which real negotiations have, and can, herald. It is worth bearing in mind that had all parties to the Talks applied themselves in a positive manner from the start of this process then the opportunities created by historic days over the previous three years would not have been squandered. Since the current process began in August 1994, Sinn Féin has sought to engage in it in a serious and responsible manner - it is clear that the majority of people on this island want their representatives to do likewise.

Unfortunately unionism is having difficulty in rising to the challenge. But whatever difficulties they might have, or perceive themselves to have, they are of the unionists' own making. Despite their insistence that it would never happen without prior decommissioning the UUP find themselves joining a process with Sinn Féin. However, it is a process they would prefer to see dead in the water. They are floundering, searching for excuses to stall progress, they are 'playacting' in attempting to find other preconditions by which to keep Sinn Féin outside the Talks. But we all know that the time for prevaricating is at an end, the Talks have begun, it's time to get down to business, it's time to negotiate.

Whilst they attempted to downplay its significance, unionists know that themselves, and the British government sitting down at the negotiating table with Sinn Féin is historic. It is historic not just because of what came before but because of what is to come in its wake. And there is the crux of the unionist difficulty - it is not about decommissioning, it is not about Mitchell Principles, it is not even about ceasefires - their difficulty is the fear of negotiations because to negotiate means accepting change and unionism cannot countenance any loss of their undemocratic privilege, but lose it they must. There can be no going back, no internal settlement. The Six-County state has failed, it's time to build for the future.

Nationalists know that the future is not the Union with Britain. The Union has failed generations of Irish people, it is the root cause of conflict in our country. Sinn Féin are clear on their position going into negotiations. They want to see an end to British interference in Irish affairs, they want to see an end to the Union, the Union must be smashed. Not only is that a legitimate negotiating position, it is, from a republican perspective, an honourable one.

When Martin McGuinness outlined this position in a forthright way his comments provoked unionist outrage while others chided Martin for not being 'sensitive' to David Trimble's position within unionism. Perhaps they think that Sinn Féin should involve itself in delusion for the sake of David's sensitivities. But he is not even deluded by his own words - if Mr Trimble believed his claim that Sinn Féin are ready to accept partition, he would have skipped to the negotiating table faster than he could do a jig on the Garvaghy Road. No, for too long unionists had deluded themselves into believing that they would never have to negotiate with republicans.

It is indicative that there was more of an outcry from some quarters to the words of Martin McGuinness in Coalisland on October 5th than there ever had been when Sinn Féin representatives and members of their families were being murdered by pro-British death squads. Throughout the '80s the DUP led the unionist campaign, 'Smash Sinn Féin', such sloganising was easy, it brought with it no responsibility nor accountability and of course it appealed to any and every anti-democrat at a time when to even show republican sympathies meant you were demonised and marginalised.

Yet, for all the attempts to smash Sinn Féin, republicans remained focussed on the objective. They have never been over-awed by their enemies, sidetracked by begrudgers, or undermined by detractors. As a political party Sinn Féin goes from strength to strength, its support base continues to expand as more and more people come to accept their analysis about what is needed to build peace, real peace, in Ireland.

If there are unionists who are willing to move beyond the slogans and the anti-democratic politics of exclusion they should engage seriously in negotiations with those who they see as their enemies. The days when they allowed Paisley's ilk to set the agenda should be left behind. It is clear that the Reverend Ian is no more willing to make accommodation with nationalists today than he was thirty years ago when he was throwing snowballs at Jack Lynch at Stormont. On many an occasion since, Paisley has frozen his hands rolling larger snowballs; alas! it has been the arms of others which have been pained throwing them.

Negotiations raise doubts, misgivings and fears in everyone, no-one claims it will be easy. As for the republican POWs, we have confidence in a confident leadership, we don't doubt their abilities in talks, we have no misgivings about their motives, we do realise that what lies ahead will bring its own difficulties but we believe that Sinn Féin ought to be in there. After the negative campaigning, and attacks they've had to endure from so many over the years, we want them to have a smashing time. They deserve it.

'Authoritarianism, intolerance and paternalism...'

The Irish Presidential election has seen one of its candidates, Mary McAleese, come under sustained attack from sections of the 26-County establishment and media. For a candidate to be subject to so much attention may not be so unusual in itself, but what has been revealing is the motivation behind the campaign of smears, innuendos and open hostility. Her detractors are quite openly pursuing a pro-partitionist, anti-northern-nationalist

In this the last week of the election campaign we look at some of the debate which has arisen through the media.

"Her (Mary McAleese) precise shade of green is irrelevant: choosing any northern nationalist as a presidential candidate was bound to be divisive and provocative."

"The holder of the highest office should be realistically described as President of the Republic of Ireland, not as President of Ireland."

"My attitude here will be seen as reflecting a "partitionist mindset," but so what?"

John A. Murphy, Professor of Irish History, University College Cork - [Sunday Independent, October 26th 1997]

"What's the difference between a southern nationalist and a northern nationalist?"

Mary McAleese in response to a question asking would the election of a northern nationalist not send out the 'wrong signal'.

- [Question and Answers (RTE1)]

"In any case, Mary McAleese is the only dangerous candidate

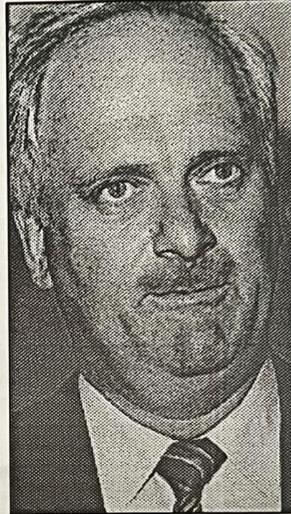


● CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN

out of the field of five. She is dangerous because she is an extremely strong nationalist."

Conor Cruise O'Brien - [Irish Independent, October 10th 1997]

"Our bending over backwards to recognise the unionist position itself resulted in a form of sectarianism just as corrosive as any other: a sectarianism directed at our fellow Irishmen and Irishwomen in the nationalist community across the border. Through our elected



● JOHN BRUTON

from that of unionists or the British government."

John Waters - [Irish Times, October 22nd 1997]

"The republic resents interference in the North just like Northern Ireland resents interference from the Republic. Normally this is a good thing but pretending that Northerners and Southerners see something the same way is a piece of political correctness."

Eoghan Harris - [The Sunday Times, October 26th 1997]

"Mr Adams' partisan involvement in backing one party rather than the other in the South is not in the interests of nationalists, North or South. The SDLP has wisely avoided partisanship of that kind and Mr Adams should have followed that example."

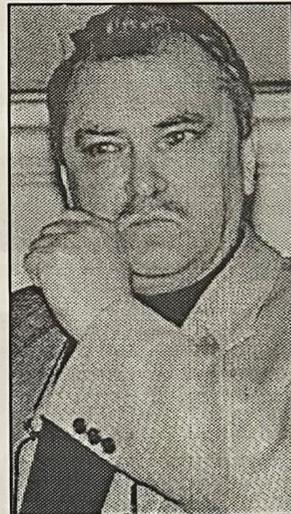
John Bruton, Fine Gael leader - [Irish Times, October 24th 1997]

"In his final paragraph he (John Bruton) says that Sinn Féin should have stayed out of the Southern election in the way that the SDLP has. For reasons best known to itself, the SDLP does not organise in the Republic. It does not have much of a right to involve itself in the electoral process.

"Not only does Sinn Féin organise on an all-Ireland basis, a member has been returned to the Dail by the electorate. That surely gives it some right to voice an opinion on the next President of Ireland."

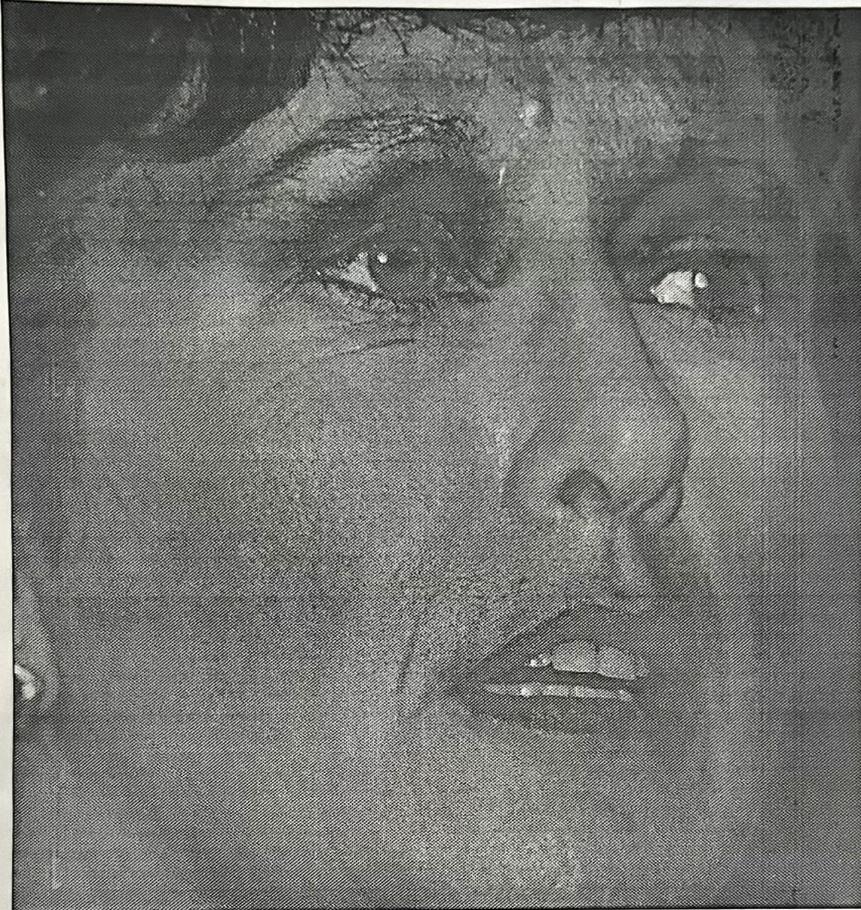
- Irish News editorial in response to John Bruton

"McAleese then self-combusted"



● EOGHAN HARRIS

representatives and media mouthpieces, we adopted an attitude to their nationalist aspirations indistinguishable



● MARY McALEESE

by going on Marion Finucane's programme and arguing about the Ardoyne. Nothing like a Northern accent arguing about the Ardoyne to lose you points in the Southern polls."

Eoghan Harris - [The Sunday Times, October 19th 1997]

"The fact is there is a prejudice here against Northern nationalists. We don't like their accents, we don't like their "attitude" and we don't like their politics, even though we pretend to share this last. But worse than not liking their politics, we don't tolerate their politics. We don't allow them to have a different view even of their own condition and welfare. What else explains the rows of raised eyebrows and arrays of curled lips over the "revelations" of commonplace nationalist views?"

Vincent Browne - [The Irish

Times, October 22nd 1997]

"I have watched the unedifying spectacle of the intellectual left baying and behaving with the kind of authoritarianism, intolerance and paternalism it so detested in the reactionary right, have watched a smear of McCarthyite proportions hatched, fanned and daubed all over the McAleese campaign - the classic smear of guilt by association used with a gusto reminiscent of J. Edgar Hoover at his most malign."

Professor Anthony Clare - [Sunday Independent, October 26th 1997]

"Moreover, even her strongest supporters could not deny that McAleese, by being so sensitive to possible affronts to her identity, risks making herself appear like a caricature Northern whinger, finding evidence of discrimination and

sectarianism in every word, decision and glance."

Eilish O'Hanlon - [Sunday Independent, October 26th 1997]

"This is not the first time McAleese has been brought to book for crimes of race and religion. In 1969, the B-Specials burned her family's house down. A few years later, the UDA machine-gunned her new home. The next year her father's pub was blown up and business destroyed by the UDA. Finally, one day her profoundly deaf brother had his throat cut by a street corner gang of loyalists... (Luckily Mary McAleese and her mother were able to get him to hospital in time).

"This woman deserves to be rescued from the short-arsed moral pygmies trying to destroy her. The political petrol bombers are outside

McAleese's again and we must go to her rescue."

Tom McGurk - [The Sunday Business Post, October 19th 1997]

"McAleese sends out a certain sort of signal. She may be a moral person in herself but she blurs the boundary between democratic parties and Sinn Fein by the satisfied way she accepts it striding the political landscape. In some sense she is seen as a surrogate Sinn Fein candidate."

Eoghan Harris - [The Sunday Times, October 19th 1997]

"It is almost as if people like Eoghan Harris would have more sympathy with Alan Clarke who advocated that a solution could be reached by shooting six hundred people in their beds, than he has with Mary McAleese.

"Yet, when history comes to be written, all the desperately negative sniping by the Harrises of this world will be seen not to have averted one single killing."

Breda O'Brien - [The Sunday Business Post, October 19th 1997]

"Banotti should put a placard over her bed with this on it: People in the Republic are profoundly partitionist and are not happy about presidential candidates who are burdened with Northern baggage."

Eoghan Harris - [The Sunday Times, October 19th 1997]

"It has been said that she is too good - that she will quickly tire of the tedious constraints of the Presidential Office and then there will be trouble. This is surely the ultimate criticism - being overqualified for the Presidency of Ireland!"

Professor Anthony Clare - [Sunday Independent, October 26th 1997]

"Maybe I am mad. A person who perceives things which most of his colleagues think to be normal is bound to seem mad."

Eoghan Harris - [The Irish Times, October 24th 1997]

A family together A system apart

Unfortunately many Irish families know the experience of having a loved one imprisoned. The initial emotional turmoil is often only numbed by the need to cope with new day-to-day hardships. When that loved one is arrested and charged in England those difficulties are ever more pronounced for the family back home in Ireland. In this article, Rita and Frances, sisters of remand prisoner Brian McHugh, outline some of what they - as well as Brian and his friends - have had to endure since his arrest in London just over a year ago.

On September 23rd 1996, armed police made several raids in London. Brian was arrested as were several others. At the same time Metropolitan Police killed Diarmuid O'Neill - unarmed, he was blatantly gunned down, he was never given the chance to answer his accusers.

Brian was taken to Paddington Green and held for seven days. We had no contact with him during that time. We didn't know what was going on or what was happening in Paddington Green. We had a phone call from him - it was a great relief to hear his voice but the call was short, as was our joy for we learnt that he was being charged - himself and three others, James Murphy, Patrick Kelly and Micheal Phillips. We felt terrible knowing that he was so far away from us.

However, as difficult as it was, we had to immediately begin to deal with the practicalities of the situation. Firstly, we needed to know in which prison he was being held so that we could write to him and also find out what clothing and other articles he would be allowed to receive,

how much money he would need and, of course, establish visit arrangements. The answer to some of these questions were sent to us in a terse letter from the prison governor in Belmarsh. But the coldness of bureaucracy was forgotten when we learnt of the warm generosity of a man, who we have never met, who bought Brian a radio and gave him some money for batteries.

As a family we quickly got ourselves organised to ensure that Brian's needs are covered. Every three weeks we send him money so that he can get the essentials - including phone cards, batteries, stamps and fruit. The fruit is vital as it provides the vitamins so lacking in their daily diet and living conditions.

We also had to reconsider our own spending habits as

we needed money for flights, car parking, petrol, train/bus fares and accommodation, whilst in England to visit Brian.

At the end of October, a month after his arrest, the two of us, along with our sister-in-law, Maura, travelled to Belmarsh for our first visit. We had received notification that we had been given 'discretionary clearance' to visit. But we had natural distrust of the word of British authorities, and, having heard of other peoples' experiences, whereby any excuse is used to refuse visitors admittance to the prisons, we brought with us extra photos and identification. Our distrust was justified when upon arrival to book in for the visit we were informed that our paperwork had been misplaced and we would have to apply to go through the lengthy procedure again. You can imagine their surprise when we produced six forms of I.D. and two photographs each - the criteria we were obliged to meet.

When we got to see Brian it was clear why they had attempted to keep us out of the jail. He was covered in injuries inflicted upon him the previous week, when he and the others were badly beaten for refusing a degrading and unnecessary squat search.

As for the actual visit itself, the conditions and the manner in which it was conducted, made it a waste of time. It only served to cause more distress. A wall of glass separated Brian from us and communication was only possible via an inadequate intercom system. If two of us happened to speak simultaneously he was practically deafened, whilst

for us the mechanical-sounding voice answering our questions was barely audible. Needless to say, after our visit in that awful place, we shared a few tears that night.

Those 'closed visits' were so intolerable that Brian and the others in the Special Secure Unit (SSU) decided that they would no longer allow themselves and their families to be subjected to such dehumanising and discriminatory treatment. At that time out of the English prison population of 56,000, only 21 were singled out for the closed visit regime and 75% of that number were Irish.

So, on New Year's Eve 1996, we had our last visit with Brian before he joined the others in protest over visiting rights by refusing to accept closed visits. We didn't know how long it would be until we saw him again but we supported his position fully.

As it happened, it was to be over eight months before the protest could be ended. On August 18th 1997, the British Home Office announced 'security reclassification' for some prisoners, including those in the SSU. Their security classification was changed from 'Exceptionally High Risk' to 'High Risk Category A', which meant therefore that they were entitled to open visits.

Words cannot express the relief and joy we felt when we heard the news. It was extra special when we learnt that we would have a visit with Brian on August 23rd - his birthday. So along with Maura and this time her two daughters, we took the plane bound for London, very much looking forward to giving our

brother his birthday greetings face to face.

Immediately on seeing Brian we noticed how pale and so much thinner he had become, but he was in good spirits, obviously enjoying the chance to be with us as we were with him. We had been looking forward so much to the open visit but the visiting conditions, while an improvement, were still pretty awful. A table approximately four feet wide and six feet long, separates the prisoner and the visitors - the prisoner and the visitors must remain seated, he can stand up twice, once to greet us and once to say goodbye. You cannot sit on the table for 'hygiene' reasons, you can buy him a mineral but cannot share it for 'security' reasons, a prison warder sits beside Brian with a notebook and pen for 'obvious' reasons and video cameras record the events for 'one could only guess' reasons. It doesn't exactly make for a relaxed get-together and is totally unnecessary considering the security measures each of us came through prior to the visit.

Before the visit Brian had been strip-searched and put into 'sterile clothing', put through x-rays and metal detectors and had body rub-downs. He'll go through the procedure, reversed, after the visit. We also have been through x-rays, metal detectors and rub-downs - as have the two girls Olivia, aged four, and Jessica, aged two and a half. They are subdued after this and remain so on the visit, feeling intimidated by the presence of strangers and the surroundings. They get bored in the small cubicle, there are no toys allowed for 'security' reasons. There is nothing to amuse them. In desperation Brian rolls up a piece of tissue into a ball so they could roll it across the table to one another. (On our third visit, colouring books were allowed in). Brian hasn't seen his children since his arrest one year previously - the children don't recognise him. Olivia remains by the door, afraid of



● Metropolitan Police killed Diarmuid O'Neill - unarmed, he was blatantly gunned down, he was never given the chance to answer his accusers

the strangers in uniforms. But after two hours, just as the visit is coming to an end, his patience is rewarded when Jessica climbs up onto the table, walks across it, puts her arms out to 'her Brian' and kisses him. It's the first tender contact he's had since his arrest. He closes his eyes to savour the precious moment - the scene is heart-rending and even the female warder is forced to fight back tears.

That moment made us even more determined to do all in our power to right the injustice of, not only petty regimes, but the real injustice, whereby Irish men and women remain in prison for

political reasons.

Saoirse had been established in the Fermanagh area the previous week and we resolved to put time and effort into helping achieve its objectives, ie the release of all political prisoners.

Many people have made reference lately as to how well the British government is dealing with prison issues. However, a lot of what is being reported through the media is contrary to the truth. For example, even though their security has been 'downgraded' Brian and his four friends are still in the SSU in Belmarsh, and it is a worrying development that

harassment by the warders inside the SSU has increased since their reclassification. The warders are not happy that reclassification allows these prisoners to have open visits and are doing all in their power to provoke a situation whereby they can charge them and thus have them lose 'privileges' - which effectively means their visits. Such harassment ranges from the cowardly, when a screw goes around in the early hours of the morning banging the doors on the Irishmen's cells and switching on lights, so as to deprive them of sleep - to the totally absurd when, for instance, Brian was told he couldn't get his dinner unless he put in a written request. Needless to say, he went hungry that day. Even the English prisoners who were in the SSU commented upon the obvious discrimination against the Irish lads.

As their trial approaches, the screws also seem intent in disrupting any opportunity the men have of coming together in order to prepare their defence. Apparently this has been a common feature in the past for Irish prisoners in the SSUs in their pre-trial period.

But Brian knows that, no matter what, we as a family will be standing firmly by him - just as we continue to do with Noel in Long Kesh, we are very proud to say that they are our brothers. We do not intend to remain idle whilst they remain in prison. At every opportunity we will make our voices heard, both at home and in England, until they and all their comrades are released. We would urge everyone to do likewise - don't allow the situation to persist whereby families remain separated through imprisonment. Organise in your area, attend demonstrations, write letters to those with influence, do anything you can, what's important is that you do something, don't leave it up to everyone else, we all need to push, build and work if we want our loved ones released, if we want to achieve peace.

■ BY FRANCES AND RITA

THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE

A silence lay across the jail. Prisoners breakfasted in their cells while prison guards doing their rounds placed their steel-tipped boots upon the tiled floor with unusual care.

The confines of the jail were so quiet that the sounds from outside its walls were clearly audible. Audible also was the contrast of sounds, a contrast reflective of the mood of the island. The sombre recitation of prayers by the large crowd, mostly kneeling, all with bowed heads, outside the prison gate. Further away but cheering loudly, the loyalists ensured their taunting jeers would be heard. The voice of the disconsolate and the glee of the triumphal carried over the high walls and slated roofs to the cells - to the condemned cell.

The September morning was shaded by a dark sullen sky. Little natural light penetrated the barred window, set high in the wall. The walls were roughly painted, their dull yellow adding to the drabness of this sparsely furnished cell.

On the concrete floor by the side of a small iron bed knelt a young man of slight build, more a boy than a man really. He was dressed in dark grey trousers, a grey shirt open at the neck and shoes and socks. The prison uniform was plain and roughly cut, but he managed to look tidy. Around him knelt three priests, joining him in prayer. They had begun mass at 7am and now at one minute to eight the young man continued to pray, having received holy communion.

On a nearby table sat a tray on which lay an uneaten breakfast. It had been refused earlier by the young man, saying that he wanted "the body and blood of our Lord Jesus", to be the last thing he had taken before he died.

He was calm, his manner contrasted with those around him. The two prison guards standing nearby had spent the night with him and in their presence he had sung 'Lay Him Away On The Hillside' and 'God Save Ireland'. He wanted to lay no blame, to carry no malice with him on his journey. As the time for this journey drew nearer the agitation of the two guards became more apparent, leaning on one foot and then another, not sure how they should stand or where to settle their gaze.

Exactly at the stroke of eight the cell door opened and two men quickly stepped inside. One was in his fifties, tall, pale and balding. The other was younger and stockier. They were both English. The senior of the two in both age and rank sucked quietly on a boiled sweet.

The young man was now seated in a chair with his back to the door and although unable to see the men, he knew their task.

With two determined strides they were immediately behind him. The tall one tapped his shoulder indicating for him to stand. Even before he had properly got to his feet the man had taken a long leather strap from his jacket pocket and was binding the young man's arms behind his back.

Now that this part of the young man's journey had begun the two prison guards performed their duties with routine adeptness. As the buckle of the leather strap was being fastened, they went to the large wooden locker which stood

against one of the walls. There was a loud click, a bolt shot back and the locker lifted clear to reveal a door. The door to the gallows. The condemned cell and the gallows were side by side, separated only by the door which remained hidden until the last moment.

The young man spent his final days only feet from the beam on which he was to die. Perhaps he knew all along what lay behind that outsized locker in the cramped cell, he never asked, he never dwelt upon his impending death, not even now as he began that short final walk.

The senior executioner stepped towards the door and opened it, just a few short paces lay the gallows drop. He led the young man through the door, the other executioner walked behind him, should he need assistance to the rope. He didn't. Without a falter to his step the young man walked the last couple of paces of his short life.

The two prison guards, the prison governor, the City's High Sheriff and the medical officer followed, positioning themselves nervously around the gallows and by the cell door.

The young man's walk was halted when he reached a white 'T' painted in the centre of the wooden floor. For a few seconds he faced the noose dangling inches from his face. He remained calm. As the executioner pulled a white linen hood from his breast pocket a priest stepped forward, his hand trembling, pressed a small crucifix to the young man's lips. Fingers and crucifix caressed him for a brief moment. As the white hood was being pulled down over his face, he spoke aloud, "Sacred heart of Jesus be my salvation." The noose was placed tightly around his neck while the assistant executioner completed strapping his legs together and stepped clear.

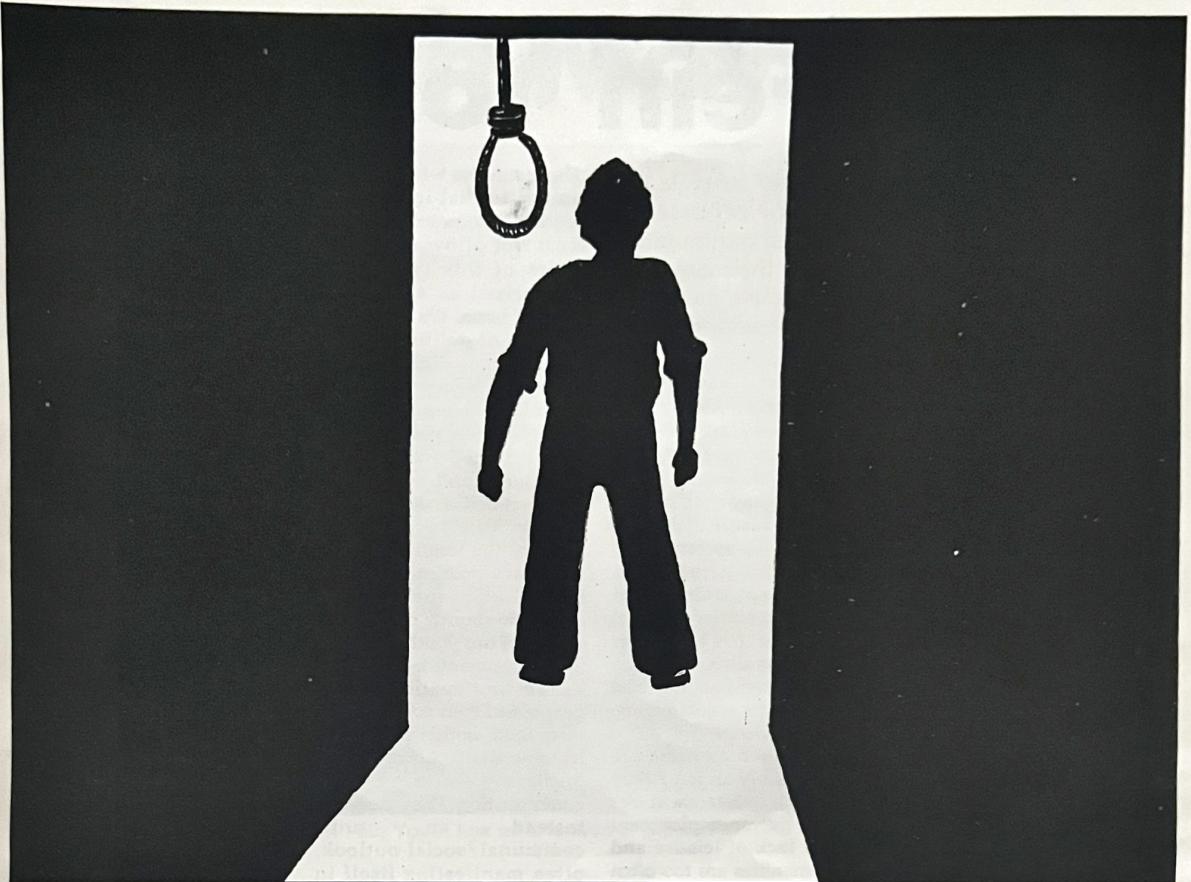
For a momentary pause the young man stood there alone under the gaze of the assembled. Then the trap-doors collapsed and his small body dropped from sight. The trap-doors slamming against the walls of the chamber below echoed loudly across the jail, the din saving those onlookers the sound of his neck breaking as the rope snapped fast.

A half hour later, five other young men were led from their cells to the prison chapel. All five were close friends and comrades of the young man whose lifeless body remained hanging only yards from where they knelt down to pray. As was standard practice at executions, the body would hang on the end of the rope for a full hour before being taken down.

The jail was silent still. The chapel too, except for the sobs of the small congregation. One of the priests began to officiate but broke down weeping and was unable to carry on. Another priest stood up and continued with the Mass.

When the solemn Mass was finished, all present gathered in the sacristy. There was silence between them, each unsure what to ask or what to say. Finally, the silence was broken by Fr Alexis, he began haltingly, "I met the bravest of the brave this morning. Tom Williams walked to that scaffold without a tremor in his body." The priest's voice grew strong as he recounted with pride, "The only people who were shaking were us and the hangman."

Everyone was gripped with emotions again and the tears flowed freely.



■ Illustration by Paul McCullough

"I've one other thing to say to you," he eventually continued, looking at each of Tom's friends individually, "Don't pray for Tom Williams, pray to him, for at this moment Tom is a saint in heaven."

They left the chapel and the five were returned to their cells. A couple of hours later, just before midday, one of them, Joe, heard a prisoner in the cell above his own call out to him, he told Joe to look out the window. In the distance Joe managed to catch sight of a small procession carry a plain wooden coffin just before they passed from view. Joe felt the grief more so now as he climbed down from the window, having witnessed the final part of his comrade's journey.

The procession now out of sight of the main prison lowered the coffin into a shallow grave, covered it with quick-lime and promptly buried it. A number of prison guards stood stiffly during the proceedings which ended after a brief service. Everyone dispersed to continue with daily life within the prison.

A number of hours later someone returned, knelt by the wall and scraped into the rock. When he had finished the initials 'TW' were scored deep into the wall at the foot of which lay Tom's lonely grave.

■ BY JIM McVEIGH
H-8C
H-BLOCKS

N.B. Jim is currently working on a project about the life and death of Tom Williams. He would welcome any information or correspondence on the subject.

Incarcerated still

In 1994 Crumlin Road Prison was finally closed to republican remand and sentenced prisoners. Only occasionally does a republican prisoner now pass through the jail on his or her way to court or on the final part of a pre-release scheme. Over the years thousands of republicans have passed through that draconian place. But one young republican remains incarcerated within its walls, Tom Williams.

Tom, an IRA Volunteer from the Clonard area in Belfast, was sentenced to death for his part in a gun battle in which an RUC constable was killed. Tom himself was wounded in the exchange of fire. At 8am, September 2nd 1942, Tom

Williams, only 19 years of age, walked calmly and bravely to the gallows to face his death. Hours later in a secluded corner of the jail he was buried in an unmarked grave.

Forty-five years on, he lies in Crumlin Road Prison still. During those years strenuous efforts have been made by many dedicated individuals and groups, in particular the National Graves Association, to have Tom's remains re-interred in the Republican Plot in Milltown Cemetery. We share their fervent hope that Tom will at last be allowed to rest in peace beside his comrades, those brave men and women who also gave their lives in the cause of Ireland's freedom.

Sinn Féin Youth —

Throughout this present phase of struggle the republican leadership have repeatedly affirmed the need for nationalist communities to listen to the youth, take heed of their concerns and ensure that they have a constructive means by which to partake in all aspects of the community.

The Republican Movement, over the last 27 years, has understood the importance of youth participation. There have been attempts to establish a youth organisation within the confines of existing republican structures. But each of these initiatives such as 'Republican Youth' and 'Glór na nOg' failed to capture and maintain the interest of those for whom they were established. So, whilst the Republican Movement clearly recognises the importance of youth involvement, past ventures have failed to provide that vital dynamic which is necessary in capturing such energy and channelling it in a positive direction.

Why is it that a movement so resourceful as our own has been unable to maintain a

youth programme through which young nationalists could direct ideas and address issues of relevance? It would be inconceivable to accept that an element of our people who have suffered so much as a result of British occupation via sectarianism, daily harassment, imprisonment, injury and death should not for the most part, feel that they had access to a mechanism through which to determine how best to confront the unjust regime in the Six Counties.

Issues such as these are unquestionably an ingredient of British interference in our country, but unemployment and the lack of leisure and social amenities are too often seen as separate issues likened to many other areas in Britain and Europe. However, whilst these problems arise in

other countries where conflict similar to that in our own country is non-existent, we must not allow for social topics of this type to be categorised as any less a political issue. We know that decades of political, social and economic discrimination has left its legacy within the nationalist community. We know what the young people have inherited and continue to endure - and we know it has been deliberate since the day the British created this state for the unionists. So of course it's political when we look at the effect unemployment has on a section of our youth. It breeds disillusionment, lack of self-esteem and apathy. Young people feel their communities offer them nothing and they have no desire to contribute positively to their communities. They develop instead an anti-communal/social outlook, often manifesting itself in crime, joyriding and solvent and drug abuse. Too often community-based responses to such activity in itself drives

a deeper wedge between the rest of the community and its young people. All of this places further strain on an already undervalued community.

Too many young men and women from our social class are unemployed with spare time on their hands and too few facilities in which to spend it constructively. We must challenge the views which would criminalise young people and instead place problems such as unemployment, and all that derives from it, in its rightful political context.

Of course, down through the years young activists within the Republican Movement have been central in developing the Movement into the effective force it has become today. Many have also been central to keeping the heart in our communities when they have come under the most violent assaults and pogroms and the blackest of propaganda attacks. Despite this we have not seen the creation of a vibrant and enduring youth movement.

But perhaps we are about to. Perhaps we are not witnessing the emergence of a Republican youth movement, with the ability to articulate young opinion and grasp the issues which are of concern to young people, in the form of 'Sinn Féin Youth'. On the other hand it could be said that we are treading an old path, the path on which past initiatives got bogged down and simply fell apart, ie they became an avenue to ensure that the most unappreciable tasks in the day to day functioning of a movement such as ours were carried out. If Sinn Féin Youth's vigorous participation in dealing with social and political issues recently is anything to go by, then the former would seem to be the truth.

Unlike the youth initiatives of old they have taken ownership of their very



● The Republican Movement, over the last 27 years, has understood the importance of youth participation

A Youth Movement



● For its part, it is clear the Sinn Féin Youth has no intention of playing second fiddle to the wider republican base

existence along with the responsibility for mobilising young people throughout Ireland. The extent of their

confidence can be appreciated when they speak of their desire to not simply become an extension of already

existing Sinn Féin structures. Instead they wish to create space in the Movement in order to develop their own politics in their own way. They guarantee to bring with them new ideas, new experiences and innovative forms of protest. Such confidence and determination is reflective of the communities from which they come. Their vigour and energetic sense of purpose is like a breath of fresh air and should be appreciated by us all.

Already they are showing an enthusiasm to highlight and debate issues affecting our whole community, issues such as anti-social behaviour and responses to it and the banning of plastic bullets. They have demonstrated a flair for imaginative tactics designed to ensure that no British military installation is beyond the reach of demilitarisation.

This creativity must be

allowed to develop within its own dynamic. Traditional methods alone are no longer effective in drawing young people as a force into the Movement. We should avail of those measures which are positive, popular and attractive to young opinion and adopt them as a source for politicisation. The acceptance of the broad republican analysis has been largely supported by young voters in successive election campaigns, particularly since 1996. Perhaps this has helped provoke the broad republican base into more seriously addressing the need to tap into youth awareness and solidify their support.

We republican POWs should also be aware that we possess personal experiences of being young nationalists during the various periods of this struggle since the 1960s. We can recognise some of the mistakes of the past and help others who have taken up the challenge into not repeating them.

For its part, it is clear the Sinn Féin Youth has no intention of playing second fiddle to the wider republican base. They are not about to accept a passive role in an agenda which demands equality and the end to British rule in Ireland. Sinn Féin Youth is giving voice to the idea that young people have much more to offer if only they have the forum in which to do so. It seems that Sinn Féin Youth is itself that very body. They are taking up the challenge themselves. To quote one of their representatives, "The bottom line is that the opportunity to build a strong, vibrant youth movement is here. All we need to do is grasp the opportunity. A move which will benefit both young republicans and the Movement generally. Let's stop talking and just do it!"

■ BY JOHN O'HAGAN
H-BLOCKS

Cyclical

When the feather falls from flight
Drifting, swirling in rhythmic movement
As if painting a Picasso with line.

There is no sense of substance
While coming to rest.
The feather, translucent, seems still levitated,
Easily swept away by elements lacking
Subtlety or grace.

Yet the cycle will complete
As the feather will reappear
On ground, hedge or tree
To await and witness
The flight of life.

■ BY HARRY MAGUIRE
H-BLOCKS

The First Sunday

To many the first Sunday in September is just another Sunday, the day after the night before. A day of blinding headaches, trying hard to remember some of the previous night and trying desperately to forget the rest of it. A day of recovery. For many a GAA fan it might be all those things but it's a special day also. It's the beginning to the climax of many months eager anticipation and vocal spectating as they've followed the fortunes of the best hurling and football teams in Ireland. This first Sunday is to decide the All-Ireland Hurling champions - then two weeks later the gaelic footballers will battle it out for the Sam Maguire.

For most people going down to the match (the All-Ireland Final for those readers who are not familiar with our national pastime) the day begins in the wee small hours. Whole families travel together, which means a none too easy task for parents to get their excited offspring ready for the day ahead. Sandwiches are prepared and packed into a bag with the biscuits and flasks of hot tea ready to play their own traditional and truly necessary role in the days proceedings.

Throughout the country oil-checks are made, petrol tanks are filled before people pile into cars and coaches to begin their journey. But for the Belfast fans the favourite mode of transport is the train. From early morning they begin gathering in Central Station. The place is a hive of activity, friends greeting friends, friends looking out for friends still to arrive, everyone checking their tickets before boarding the train. There is a buzz within the carriages. The older patrons discuss tactics, past defeats, past victories, as they vie among themselves to prove who has the oldest living memory. The younger supporters argue, they laugh, they joke about anything but the game - the game, for them, begins when they reach Croke Park, but for now it's an opportunity to catch up on all the craic.

Finally, the whistle blows as the train sets out for Dublin. As it builds up speed the fans settle down for the journey, there's a collective contentment that they are on their way. Leaving Belfast behind, going through the countryside, passing through towns, adds to that feeling of a day out - getting away from it all to watch the best teams in Ireland battle it out in the most exciting sport in the world.

Half-way through the journey the all-important sandwiches and cups of tea are distributed. Trying to consume this

sustenance on a crowded, rocking train is a skill in itself which deserves a medal. As the hunger-pangs are reduced the noise level rises and continues to do so the closer the train gets to Dublin. For some this is their first time going to Dublin for a Final, their excitement is evident as the train winds its way through central Dublin towards its destination. At every window there are curious faces peering out to catch a glimpse of the conglomeration of which they are soon to become a part. At last the train comes to a halt in Connolly Station and the crowd alights to begin the final stage of its journey on foot through the broad Dublin streets.

All-Ireland Final day and Dublin inner-city is a special place. It has been transformed with colour and sound as people from every county in Ireland converge into the heart of it. Not everyone there is a faithful supporter of one or other of the teams in the Final. There are people who make this annual pilgrimage regardless of which county, or province, is represented. But when the 30 men take to the field to do bale the 15 who are on the 'underdog team' can be assured of an extra-loud cheer from these so-called 'neutrals'.

The streets and roads become thronged with people oblivious of traffic, or traffic rights. Those trying to complete their journeys in cars soon realise their error of judgement as the by-ways become a 'pedestrian only' zone.

The locals - ever willing to offer a service - ply their trade selling everything from home-made hats and scarves, in the



■ Illustrations by Noel McHugh

colours of both counties, to fast-food, ice-cream and sweets for the children.

More old friends from different parts of the country meet up and there are shouts and waves to familiar faces across the packed street. Then as the crowd nears the stadium the once brisk walk gradually grinds to a slow synchronised shuffle. Into sight come the huge grey buttresses of the stand. The smaller members of the crowd are on tip-toes trying to get a better view of what lies ahead. Some more fortunate ones are



on the shoulders of grown-ups. One final check in the pocket to make sure that the sacred ticket is still there. Finally, the turnstiles and the journey comes to an end. Croke Park awaits.

Croke Park, the Mecca for all GAA fans. Since the early part of the century followers of hurling, camogie and football have been flocking here and you only need to visit once to know why they endeavour to return. The atmosphere is electric. Every vantage point in the ground is taken up. The flags and banners waving, the place a sea of colour.

As more fans merge with and add to the colourful waves, the Artane Boys Band provides the entertainment on the field. Earlier the minor teams have battled it out for glory. Now the jubilant and disappointed from that final join the 60,000 awaiting the senior teams to do battle also.

The more 'senior' men and women, all champions from bygone days, make an appearance to the warm appreciation of the crowd. But the greatest greeting of all is reserved for those who take to the field today to give their best so that the honour of All-Ireland Champions will be bestowed on their county.

The roar is deafening, it alerts the hairs on the back of the neck and gets the heart pounding. The players each acknowledge their own faithful following.

To finish the formalities, the playing of an t-Amhran na bhFiann. As it comes to an end there arises the biggest cheer of the day so far as rival supporters try to give the loudest voice as if the outcome of the game depended on who could make the loudest roar.

The players are in position and the referee gets the game underway with the throw-in. The hurleys clash and for seventy minutes the crowd follow every score with a cheer and every miss with a gasp. The first few minutes are important - who can gain the upperhand, assert their authority on the match? The game is an art being played here at its highest level. Players rising high, snatching the sliotar (hurley ball) out of the air, using the hurley stick to deadly effectiveness, scoring the points,

dropping the sliotar to the forwards who try hard for those vital goals. Nobody wants a dirty game, hard but clean. Half-time score hasn't shown any team to be dominant. The last thirty-five minutes will prove who has the greater staying power, who can get the points when most needed. After the close of seventy minutes of thrilling action, of thirty men giving their all, fifteen claim glory and fifteen are left sorely disappointed. The contrast of fortunes is reflected in the stands. The supporters of the victors rush onto the pitch to acclaim their conquering heroes. The players, their faces red from the action and beaming with pride, are ferried shoulder high towards the podium to receive their winners' medals and trophy.

The losers are comforted by their fans, supportive arms on shoulders, handshakes - 'you were unlucky' they are told, 'you'll win it next year for sure'. But it's still too soon after defeat, they're still inconsolable, so close to victory but now runners-up - second best. Around them the celebrations have begun;

The crowds come out of Croke Park - going their separate ways. For some the day is coming to an end, for others it's only the beginning of a day which won't end 'till tomorrow.

The train returning to Belfast is full of post-match analysis, all the 'ifs' and 'maybes'. But people are a lot more subdued than when on the journey down, the children tired, the youth in quiet banter and the older fans in reflective mood. Regardless of where allegiance lay, it was a good day out, a good match.

The train arrives in Belfast, the crowd return to their homes now through their own familiar streets. The excitement of Dublin a hundred miles and a day of memories behind them. But already thoughts are turning to the next big day, another Sunday down for the Final, back to Croke Park in a fortnight to cheer on the team which will lift the Sam Maguire.

■ BY RORY MORGAN
H-BLOCKS

REVIEWING THE WRONG MAN

'The Wrong Man' by Danny Morrison, published by Dublin Mercier.

The release in February of Danny Morrison's third novel, *The Wrong Man*, initially excited as much news reportage as it did the attentions of the review pages and supplements.

Liz MacPherson, writing in the *Irish News* (25-2-97), and Mary Holland in the *Observer* (2-3-97), in their respective interviews with Danny Morrison, treated the publication of his latest novel as a topical story rather than a literary event. The perception then current was that of the likelihood of a full-scale return to violence and each wondered whether such a development might affect the author's reported determination to write full-time.

Comments on the novel were quite favourable, and justly so. Danny Morrison's past as a leading republican strategist and spokesperson more usually guarantees a carping press.

Danny might well prefer his work to be judged solely on its artistic merits and accordingly regard as a mixed blessing, at best, any extraliterary attention or publicity. I imagine it a severe burden on a writer to have to shoulder the continual anticipation of critical, even hostile, scrutiny and nevertheless keep to his or her creative vision and purpose. Given Danny's career to date he is conceivably a likely target for barbed criticism. However, from another standpoint, all those years of politically-active service might be deemed a waste if he hadn't managed to make an enemy or two or ruffle a few establishment feathers.

As for *The Wrong Man*, it is an unsettling and thought-provoking read for a republican, marking a return to the territory of the author's first novel, *'West Belfast'* (1989). Belfast has changed. The conflict has ground on. Danny has changed. He exhibits less overt compassion in this third novel; the writing is more controlled; the tone stark. A palpable sense is conveyed of the dark urgency of life under Brit occupation: the roadblocks, the P-checks, the dawn raids, and overhead, the drone all day of surveillance helicopters. Republicans know the cost of resistance to British rule: the graves, the prison cells, lives and relationships damaged or destroyed. Consequently, for those familiar with that emotionally-attribitional terrain, the novel may rouse the pain of loss. There is also the pain of survival as Danny faithfully depicts the micro-culture of secrecy and siege of Active Service Unit volunteers and their taut circles of familial and communal support which is so vital to the furtherance of the struggle. But ever at a cost.

How, though will readers unfamiliar with our particular collective trauma heed this novel? The republican experience and voice is rarely provided in fictional expression free of distortion. Here, it has seldom better been expressed and is deserving of a wider readership. Whatever stylistic lapses or structured flaws some critics may attribute to *'The Wrong Man'* the author has rendered an honest, believable account.

What of the critics? As a backhanded compliment to Danny's republican CV, great things apparently are expected of him, at least in

terms of intent if not their attainment. Kate Fearon in *Fortnight* (September '97), implies that Danny is a literary under-achiever because of his failure to produce the *'Northern Irish'*. - Why does she imagine that he would aspire to a partitionist fiction? To the equivalent of Jung Chang's *'Wild Swans'* (1991), or Vikram Seth's *'A Suitable Boy'* (1993), Danny stands accused in the review for not sufficiently exploring the pros and cons for the use of force against injustice. True, perhaps, but that would have made it a different novel, not necessarily a better novel, though the task is one for which Danny is pre-eminently suited.

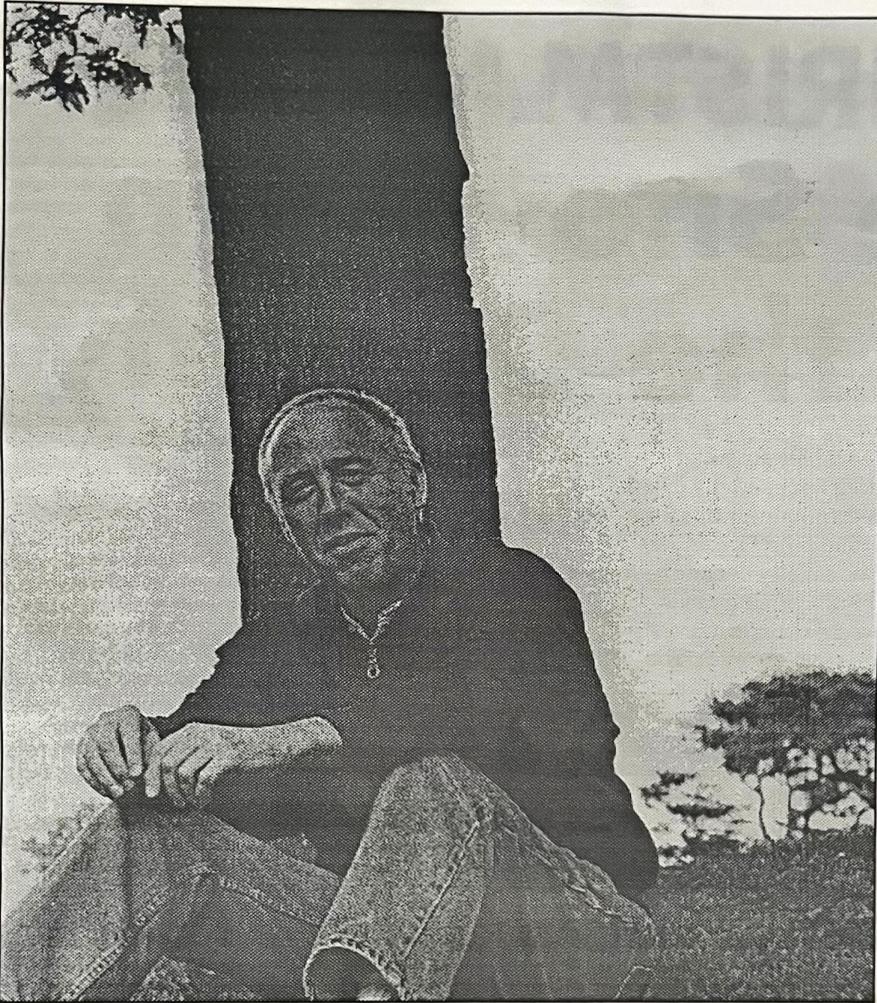
The most swingingly caustic verdict on *'The Wrong Man'* was delivered by the author and journalist Eugene McEldowney, who condemned it as 'another turkey' (*Irish Times* 28-3-97). This time Danny's crime, it seems, was his failure to produce a novel comparable in stature to Alan Paton's *'Cry the Beloved Country'* (1948), often cited as an exemplar of politically-committed fiction.

I was left wondering had McEldowney actually read Danny's novel. Either that or he has evaluated it within an overly strict interpretation of where the parameters ought to be set for the conventions of a political novel. His main contention is that Danny hasn't transcended the recourse to stereotypes, which more than any other narrative ingredient, of course, defines the bulk of novels with a *'Troubles'* theme. The point is scathingly laid on and is undeserved. I was struck by Danny's deft handling of the characters - a level of terse delineation of the plot. Roisin is especially well-drawn.

Alannah Hopkin, reviewing the novel for the *Tribune* (2-3-97), praises his 'characterisation of women'. Tina, the ASU member who ends up imprisoned, though sketchily rendered, remains a powerful presence (and as a survivor, redeems the novel's rather grim finale).

At the heart of McEldowney's annoyance - I don't think 'annoyance' is too strong a word - is the sparer definition afforded to the RUC and Brit characters compared to Roisin, Raymond, Tod, etc. He perceives the lack of a credible counter to the republican characters. If so, this misses the point of Danny's novel. Let me explain.

In his first novel, *'A Kind of Homecoming'*, (1994), Eugene McEldowney introduces a sympathetically-drawn RUC Superintendent, Cecil Megarry, a crusty spud - why should Ken Maginnis come to mind? - whom most republicans reading the novel would, I believe, readily enough empathise with - in itself quite a trick to pull off. Further to his credit, McEldowney steers clear of contrived balance, the imperative to equally present all shades and sides. The notion that narrative conflict requires a sort of 'level playing field' for heroes and villains is as old as the novel. But as Arthur Koestler argued, invoking a more ancient aesthetic, 'a nonhuman agent or principle' may also serve as a protagonist - 'chance, fate, God'; to which we may add 'state repression'. McEldowney intrinsically understands this, as his novel demonstrates. Megarry works so successfully as a character because the author manages



● DANNY MORRISON

to project a plausible surround of nationalist alienation and state skulduggery, furnishing tension and depth to the RUC man's individualistic outlook. Megarry is all the more sharply realised as a result.

Danny Morrison similarly enfolds his characters within 'the nationalist nightmare'. The milieu is a tangible reality as well as a projection of their fears. The RUC, for example, are shadows, deliberately under-defined; an only partially-known, therefore more menacing enemy. Republicans rarely get close to an RUC man except in the involuntary circumstances of a Castlereagh 'interview'. The intense, scary focus at box room and street level, of

republicans ever alert to betrayal, escape routes, of clandestine enemy movement, is an authentic and, I believe, brilliantly-realised descriptive aspect of what it was like to be an activist in Belfast during the relevant narrative period.

McEldowney's review, sadly, was a nasty bit of hatchet-jobbing.

Other reviews, even when quite laudatory, are agenda-driven, or at least tendentious; or reveal a sloppy handling of detail. As an example of the latter, consider Chris Petit's Guardian review (17-4-97), in which he mistakenly asserts that Danny is the incumbent Sinn Féin director of publicity, a post Danny had to vacate, we remember, upon his arrest and imprisonment in 1990.

The slip is surprising, given that Petit's 1996 'Troubles' thriller, 'The Psalm Killers' comes replete with a bibliography detailing the author's research for the novel.

Malachi O'Doherty, meanwhile, in a thoughtful if slightly prudish 'Opinion' for the Belfast Telegraph, in which he pars Danny's supposed 'obsession with sex' (what Kate Fearon alludes to as 'faintly voyeuristic'), refers to Raymond, the novel's main IRA protagonist, in these terms: 'He might be freeing Ireland, but he is enslaving his whole community' (7-4-97). [My emphasis]. Little recognition here of root causes.

Alannah Hopkin in her

otherwise positive review for the Tribune, talks of 'the effects of the sectarian struggle', and of 'the damage that sectarian violence brings to the lives of both men and women'. The term 'sectarian' is insidious and needs to be challenged. There is nothing in the novel to justify its use. Joe Powderly is shot dead by Raymond, not for his religious affiliation but because he revealed his membership of the Ulster Defence Regiment. Just prior to the slip that sealed his fate, the IRA team were on the point of leaving, quite aware that Joe was a Protestant.

Back now to the matter of representational balance. I would suggest that there is no simple template from which to construct an omniscient depiction offering equal validity to all, however much writers may pursue that goal. Perhaps in time someone will produce a novel of epic proportions, embracing the diversity of traditions, perspectives and interests in Ireland, and offering what Eugene McEldowney calls 'a glimpse of Tone's noble vision'. We should prepare for a long wait. After all, it has been said that Tolstoy took fifty years to make sense of Napoleon's invasion of Russia before producing War and Peace.

In the meantime, isn't it the task of the politically-conscious writer to portray with honesty what he or she knows, and attempt to give voice to what previously remained unheard, unsaid, suppressed or marginalised? As individuals and as communities we might then regard fiction as an invaluable resource for increasing our understanding of how others see us, and we them. Danny Morrison's 'The Wrong Man' is, in my estimation, a valuable contribution to that end and is worthy, I believe, of a more positive consideration than Eugene McEldowney, for one, allowed.

■ BY PAT MAGEE
H-BLOCKS

A CHRISTMAS TALE: The Snowman and the Dummy

I awoke to what I thought to be the sound of children at play. Even before I opened my eyes I could tell that my cell was brighter for this time of morning in the midst of winter - on December 25th - Christmas morning! I was really beginning to waken up now, even in the H-Blocks Christmas morning is a special time, special breakfast, I thought, as I rubbed the sleep from my eyes. The cell was definitely brighter and... and then the question struck me; how could the sound of children interrupt my sleep here in Long Kesh? I was confused. Then I heard a yelp followed by a few choice words and associated with Mary and the baby Jesus. It was children at play alright, our resident 'big children', I concluded, as I drew back the curtain to see what had them causing such a commotion so early in the morning. I was dazzled by the brightness of my first ever white Christmas. A snowball down the back of someone's neck was obviously the cause of the earlier colourful outburst.

The brightness of the morning gave me an unexpected lease of life for that time of the day. I swung my legs out of the bed, the concrete floor greeting my feet sent a chill from my heels to my shoulder blades. I sought out my flip-flops from beneath the bed with my toes and slipped my feet into them. Wrapping a towel around my waist and grabbing my wash-bag I headed for the wash-house. Stepping from my cell onto the wing, I felt the excitement of Christmas, the decorations adorned the landing from end to end and hung from side to side, bringing welcome colour to the drab decor within the block.

I met a few comrades, all dressed for the occasion, loyally wearing the pullovers, the shirts, the socks, which their mothers, their aunties and their grannies had so dutifully bought or knitted for Christmas. Each wished me a Merry Christmas and advised me to go outside to see the depth of the fresh snow. I returned their greetings and as I passed the yard door decided to take their eager advice.

I walked through the doorway, pushed through the turnstile and stepped into my first ever white Christmas. The cold air rushed around my body sending a shiver up my spine. 'Man, it's cold', I thought, but never did I imagine just how cold things might become on that Christmas morning 1995. But then I was simply savouring the moment whilst I took in the sight of my surroundings in their white blanket. The snow was about 4 inches deep, the tall grey fence surrounding the yard

was sprinkled in an icing-sugar effect but nature's best attempts couldn't do much to brighten the corrugated iron and razor wire.

My attention was drawn to the middle of the yard where those sounds which had awoken me earlier were continuing, and there they were, a group of my comrades, 5 or 6 in all, prancing around and adding finishing touches to a huge snowman. It was equipped with all the usual bits and pieces - and more, which I don't think I'll mention. I shook my head in despair at this scene as these revolutionaries played in the snow. 'So, this is Ireland's finest', I thought to myself, and hoped to God our enemies weren't watching, and was grateful that their families couldn't see that they had finally flipped under the strain of too many Christmases in jail. But I decided that I was being too harsh, for it's true that there is a bit of a child in us all, a bit more in some than others, and obviously too much in the remainder, my poor noisy, jovial comrades just had to be the remainder.

Upon finishing this philosophical reflection I noticed one of these comrades looking in my direction with a wide grin on his face. When the others followed his gaze with similar grins, I became a little concerned. Suddenly the yard felt cold, "Time to be indoors", I said to myself. Just as I began to retreat in that direction I heard what sounded like a war-cry and watched dazed for a split second as the group made a charge in my direction. I took to my heels and headed for the door - my flip-flops kicking up snow like a snow-blower. Relieved, I reached the door only to find that Bun, my friend and trustworthy (until then, of course) comrade, had secured the door on the inside leaving me on the outside in a state of panic, begging to get in. All my pleas got a point-blank refusal and just before I could get down on my knees to try a little harder, the snowmen arrived. Taking hold of my legs and arms and still whooping loudly - too loud for them to hear my screams for mercy it would seem - they took me off to the centre of the yard. Such was my hysteria that I believe I tried to convince them at one point (remember this was a pathetic attempt for freedom), that I was allergic to snow. But they clearly knew nothing about the danger of allergies, as, without ceremony, they dumped me to the ground.

Their faces I can recall yet, and believe me they were stuff of nightmares, their glee in capturing their 'prize' was hideous. I was rolled in the snow as though they were kneading bread and as I felt the cold mass stick to my skin, I was struck by the horrible thought that I was the second victim to go through this ordeal - the first being the present snowman - what poor comrade has made up that body, I was thinking, just as the rolling stopped. I had just time to begin collecting my thoughts, firstly grateful that I wasn't to have black stones poked into my eyes, a carrot stuck on my nose and a pipe shoved into my mouth after all - not to mention other

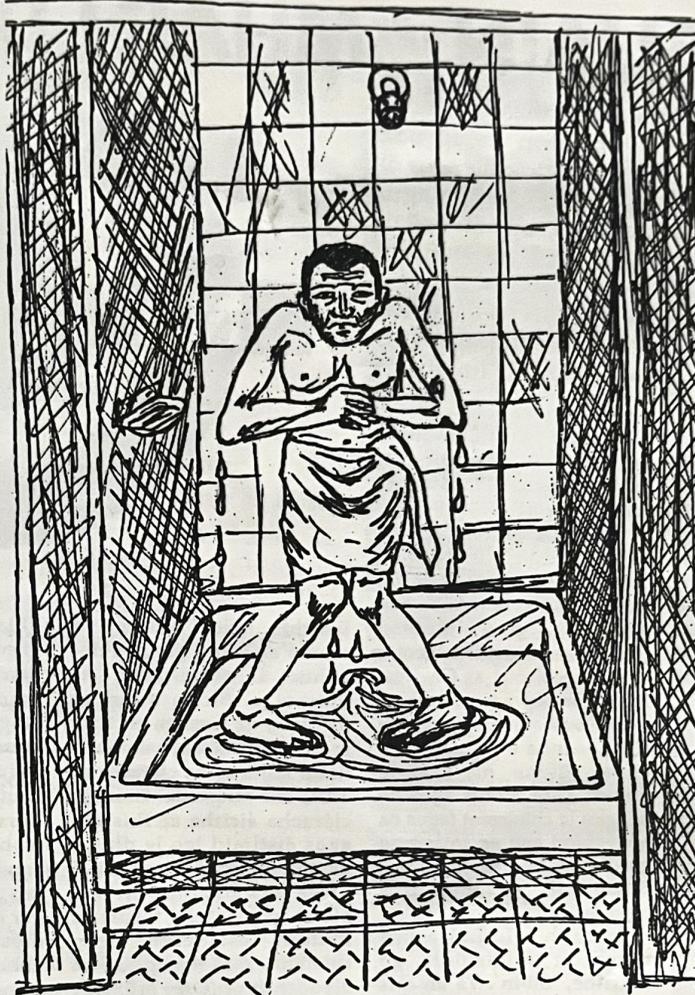
accessories - and secondly, it was a relief to find my towel still around me. Then the snowball bombardment began. I don't know how long this episode lasted but as it continued they became even bigger, by the end I swore I was being hit by basketballs.

Once released I took off, a shaking, bruised wreck, for the wing. Within 30 seconds I was beneath the hot spray of the shower in the belief that I had probably just escaped frostbite by minutes.

Unfortunately as the feeling came back to my extremities, it also returned to my ego, it felt bruised and nothing would do but I massage it. I came out of the shower, quickly dried myself, put a dry towel around my waist and headed for the yard again feeling, after my shower, that I was invincible.

I stepped through the doorway and saw the boys still working on their piece of art in the yard. I called to them and they looked up surprised but genuinely glad to see me. I grinned back and gave them a defiant two-fingered salute. The war-cry struck up again and they charged towards me, I turned with an air of cockiness and headed to my escape route. I knew Bun wouldn't be there this time, I had sussed and scouted everything before I went to the yard - only, he was there! I later found out that someone from an adjoining wing saw me scout the area and within five seconds had got word to Bun. I actually screamed when I saw the door bolted and Bun peering at me through the flap on the inside. I like to believe, if only for the sake of our friendship, that he almost relented and would have let me in, I can't accept that my whimpering pleas did not scald his heart, that his maniacal laugh was but a cover to stop him from bursting into sympathetic tears. But before he could show his compassion I found myself going through that same journey to the centre of the yard. This time, to add insult to injury, I lost my towel, so much for my ego looking for a massage. This time without that piece of cloth around my waist for protection, the snow ended up everywhere and, man, it was cold! This time, upon release, I positively sprinted, a blue streak, straight for the shower. I believed my ego was lying out there among the snowflakes but again it quickly joined me as soon as the heat returned to my body. "One more show of bravado", it told me, "just to show them".

I decided I'd be more careful this time, no risks. I climbed on top of the radiator in the shower-room and shouted out the



■ Illustration by Noel McHugh

window. I couldn't see them but I knew I had their attention. They couldn't see me either except for the two fingers I waved in their direction. It was strange, a deathly silence immediately descended upon the place. That's dampened their party', I thought, allowing my ego a satisfied smirk as I climbed down to the floor. My toe just reached the tiles and they were upon me. I practically collapsed off the radiator as they struck up their war-cry again.

"I've got pneumonia", I spluttered between exaggerated sobs. Suddenly there was silence. They looked at me with concern - it worked, I would be left alone now.

"What did he say?" asked Pdraig. "Something about he forgot to phone ya," Collie answered, quite sure of himself. "Poor wee bastard, he must have ice on the brain, come on, we'll take him to his cell."

Despite protestations I was carried down the wing, their sympathy worse

than their attacks, as I was tucked up in bed to allow my "brain to defrost". "Poor Stevie", I could hear them up and down the wing, "he's hallucinating about phone calls". How much can an ego take?!

Later that day we all sat down together to feast on the Christmas dinner, all except a lone mysterious figure who crept out to the yard and demolished the snowman which had been the pride and job of so many. And guess who got the blame?

The absurd theory was put forward that I had made a dummy (Cold-itz style) in order to fool them into believing that I was there with them getting stuck into the turkey and stuffing when, in reality, I was outside kicking the stuffing out of their snowman. There were unfounded claims that a brush-shaft, a coat and a football, with a face uncannily like mine drawn upon it, were found in my cell. Needless to say, I ended up in the snow a third time. But little did I care, I was fully-clothed on this occasion and in the midst of my screams protesting my innocence, I managed a smile to myself as I reflected that I was looking very much forward to eating my Christmas dinner.

■ BY STEPHEN CANNING
H-BLOCKS

TnaG BLIAIN AMHÁIN D'AOIS

Oíche Shamhna, bliain ó shin, thosaigh Teilifís na Gaeilge ag craoladh don chéad uair riamh. I ndiaidh blianta de strácáil agus de fheachtas ag gaeilgeoirí is grúpaí Gaeilge agus blianta de gheallta briste ag rialtas i ndiaidh rialtais tháinig rath ar an obair. Ar fud na tíre bhí gaeilgeoirí ina suí os comhair na teilifíse (nó ar a laghad na gaeilgeoirí a bhí abálta TnaG a thógáil ar a dteilifíseáin!) ag fanacht go míshoighneach agus go han-tógtha leis an chéad phictiúir ón chéad chraoladh den stáisiún úr.

Anseo i nGaeltacht na Fuiseoige bhí muid breá sásta nuair a fuair muid an cárta tastála ar an scaileán i H-5, tá bliain ó shin. Bhí díoma orainn áfach nach raibh an glacadh sách soiléir. San am chéanna bhí muid abálta cláracha a fheiceáil d'ainneoin an "tsneachta".

Oíche Shamhna i féin bhí cóisír againn le dinnéar Iodaileach a ullmhaíodh againn féin ar an sciathán. Ina dhiaidh sin reachtáladh Tnáth na gCeist - ceann iontach bíogáil mhór eile cruinnithe sa seomra teilifíse.

Cúpla nóiméad roimh 8.00 in, shocraigh muid síos chun an oscailt spleodrach a fheiceáil beo. Ní riabh aon amhras ach gur oíche stairiúil a bhí ann, oíche ar leith i fosta i bhforbairt na Gaeilge. Bhí an díogras, an múinín agus an chuma dhiongbhailte i measc fhíreann TnaG le mothú go soiléir agus iad i mbun taibhsíocht na Samhna! Bhí go leor tinnte ealaíone agus cnamh, lán eile an oíche ud.

Ba sin bliain ó shin, agus anois ta muid ag ceiliúradh Samhain eile. San idirlinn tá sult agus tairbhe bainte againn as TnaG de réir a chéile i gcaitheamh na seachtainí agus na míonna i ndiaidh na hoscailte oifigiúla, shocraigh nósanna agus blasanna pearsanta i measc na nGaeilgeoirí sa Chaeltacht s'againnse maidir le rogha na gcláracha ar TnaG. Roimh i bhfad bhí dream beag ag leanstan an phríomh sobal-drama 'Rós na Rún'. Rug sí greim ormsa i ndiaidh cúpla mí agus anois taitníonn sé go

mór liom. Leanann lucht tacafochta na peile 'Olé Olé' (agus lucht tacafochta Rangers anois!)

Tá dúil mhór ag na seanfhondúirí in Albain TnaG. Bíonn an clár seo rud beag cosúil le MTV ach amháin go mbíonn trachtairacht ann fan cheol is faoi na ceoltóirí as Gaeilge. Seinntear pop agus roc cheol ó shean-albain agus craoltar físteipeanna a dhul leis an cheol. Bíonn na Rolling Stones, Dire Straits agus na hEagles le chluinsint (agus na sean-chimí ann ag smaointíú gur Jimmy Hendrix nó Mark Bolan iad, ag seinm ar a ngiotair!)

Is maith le lucht leanúna an cheoil traidisiúnta, go háirithe, 'Sibín'. Tá an clár suite i dteach tabhairne agus bogann an griangrafadán timpeall ag taispeáint an cheoil is na cainte. Is craic amhaith é.

'S é 'Hollywood Aocht' an clár is fearr ar TnaG de réir na sobaldain (no bubbleheads!), an lucht a chaitheann ceathair uaire is fiche gach lá ag amharc ar an teilifís. Cuidíonn an clár seo leo a mbarúlacha a dhéanamh suas fan chéad scannán eile ba mhaith leo a fheiceáil!

Ach is é mo bharúil gurb é 'Nuacht TnaG' an clár is fearr. Cludaíonn sé réimse fairsing d'abhair is de scéalta eagsúla a bhaineann le gach páirt den tír agus le tíorthaí eile. Cludaítear scéalta fosta nach bhfuil cláracha nuachta eile sásta a chraoladh. Mar a deirtear - radharc eile ar shaol na hÉireann agus na dtíorthaí



iasachta. Ach tá níos mó na siamsa amháin i gceist duine abhus i nGaeltacht na Fuiseoige. Bíonn muid ag foghlaim na Gaeilge an t-am ar fad agus mar sin bainimuid úsáid rialta as na cláracha ar TnaG sna ranganna. Cuirtear cláracha áirithe ar fhísteip agus éistimid leo le dhul i dtaithe ar canúintí eagsúla. I dtaca leis an chúspóir seo bíonn na cláracha faisnéise iontach úsáideach agus suimíúil - mar shampla, 'Éirí Neodrach', 'Ón mBreith Gaeltachta'.

Má tá laigí ar bith i gceist dear linn, leis na cláracha ar TnaG is dócha gurb é an laige is mó ná nach mbíonn mórán cláracha air atá déanta ó thuaidh ná fán tuaisceart. Tá a fhios againn fosta go mbíonn roinnt daoine ag gearan fá chánúint Thír Chonaill ar TnaG agus cuireann sin isteach go mór orainn. Bíonn fadhanna againn le canúint na Mumhan ar TnaG ach tá a fhios againn go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go n-éiríonn muid cleachta léi mar chuid dár n-oidhreacht.

Maidir le cláracha na bpáistí tá jab den scoth déanta ag TnaG. Rinneadh suirbhé i measc na ndaltaí scoile faoin chineál cláir a mbeadh dúil acu ann. Mar thoradh air sin tá polasaf ag TnaG achán deis a thabhairt do na páistí páirt a

ghlacadh sna cláracha. Mar gheall ar seo bíonn líon mór den aos óg ar fud na tíre ag baint suilt mhóir astu. Tá caighdeán na gcláracha iontach ard fosta, go háirithe 'Hiúdaí', 'Bosiní', 'Bouli', 'Culabula' agus 'Ó Bhun go Barr'. Is iad na cláracha is tábhachtacha do chaomhnú agus fhorbairt na Gaeilge mar taispeánann sé do na daltaí gur cuid d'fíis den saol mór ár dteanga dúchais agus chan abhar scoile no teanga na seandaoine amháin í.

Ag ceiliúradh breithlá bliana TnaG dúinn, is soiléir bhí fuil dul chun cinn suntasach déanta ag foireann an stáisiúin agus rachaidh sé i neart amach anseo. Bíonn líon an lucht feachana ag ardú go rialta mar gheall ar ard chaighdeán na gcláracha, éifeacht na foirne óige agus an teagmháil láidir le pobal na Gaeilge.

Bun iontach é do phobal na Gaeilge ar fud na tíre gur cuireadh i bhfeidhm Teilifís na Gaeilge. Ghlac sé dian iarracht ar fad chun an fiontar a choinneáil ar obair in ainneoin an doichill a cuireadh roimhe ag drong beag iriseoirí. Níl amhras ar bith ach go n-éireoidh le TnaG sna blianta atá le teacht.

■ LE GÉAROID
MAC AOIDH
H-BLOCKS

Proud of the Past Confident of the Future

On September 18th, a Sinn Fein delegation made up of Martin McGuinness, Pat Doherty, Dodie McGuinness, Pat McNamee, Brid Curran and Martin (Archie) Livingstone, visited the republican prisoners in Long Kesh.

This was the first time such a delegation was allowed access within the camp to meet with a large number of republican POWs. It was an historical day given that republican prisoners fought long and hard and endured many sacrifices over the years in order to expose the lie that Britain held no political prisoners in Ireland.

Padraig Wilson, O/C of the republican POWs in the H-Blocks, gives his view on the visit.

When the preparations were being made for the delegation visit to the H-Blocks by six members of Sinn Féin I could not help but smile at the irony of it all. For years elected members of Sinn Féin were denied visiting rights to any of the prisons where republican POWs were being held. It was part of an intense campaign to isolate and marginalise republicans. It was designed to reinforce the view that we were not political prisoners. (Now, whatever happened to that old line?)

Shortly after our comrades in Oglagh na hEireann declared the ceasefire of August 1994 the NIO refused Pat McGeown, the spokesperson on prisons and an elected Sinn Féin councillor, permission to visit our women comrades in Maghaberry. Even though that ridiculous decision was later rescinded, we did not miss the point that elements of the old regime still held clout.

The visit scheduled for Thursday, September 18th, was not only to be important and significant as part of the

ongoing process of dialogue with the wider republican family, it was also, for us, public acknowledgment by the British administration of our status as political prisoners. We have always been political prisoners and our captors have always accepted us as such, in private. The public acknowledgement has been a long time in coming.

There have been smaller delegation visits to the camp, but those have taken place in the visiting area and were restricted to a small number of POWs. This time 40 POWs



● PAT DOHERTY

would attend. Each of the three H-Blocks where republicans are held would be represented. The camp leadership and cumann na mBloc H would be represented. The leadership at Block and wing levels would be represented also. The geographical make-up of the camp, in terms of our home towns and counties, would be reflected in the group of 40 POWs.

The visit took place in the prison gym. It is a building well enough equipped for sporting purposes but not the most inviting of locations for a political gathering. However, the natural chill of the place was very much neutralised by the warmth and comradeship which was so evident in the greetings and friendship between our visitors and ourselves. For many of us it was a time to catch up with old friends and exchange some light banter before the serious business commenced. The acoustics of the building, given its layout and very high roof, are not great, but we are sure that the prison Security Department had no trouble listening to what was said (isn't that right, Steve?)

I felt honoured to welcome Martin, Pat, Dodie, Archie,



● PAT McNAMEE

Brid and Pat, on behalf of all the republican POWs in the camp. I felt proud that despite all the difficulties that long-term imprisonment and close confinement throw up that the republican prisoners remain strong and solid. Our unity of purpose and spirit of resistance was not as much evident as tangible.

We had, in the days prior to the visit, conducted meetings in every wing in H-Blocks 4, 5, and 8 to give everyone the opportunity to contribute to the agenda. The clarity of thought and keen interest in political developments among POWs were reflected in that agenda.

What stood out in the contributions from the leadership, as represented by the delegation, was the confidence in the republican position. The frankness with which potential difficulties were being discussed was refreshing. There was clear determination not to allow that confidence to wane nor allow any difficulties to deter or frustrate us.

Looking around me I could not help but recall another visit years ago by Sinn Féin representatives to the H-Blocks. During the hunger-strike of 1981 the Brits allowed a delegation to visit



PADRAIG WILSON — speaking to the media in Long Kesh

the hunger-strikers in the prison hospital. They hoped that the hunger-strikers could be convinced to give up. Comrades from those days, Sid, Marty and Bernard, were sitting in the gym with me now. On the delegation was Archie, now head of the Sinn Féin POW Department, with whom I shared a wing during the blanket years.

We have come a long way since then. The events in the H-Blocks and Armagh during those dark days laid the ground for the path that we were all to follow in the intervening years. Here we were sitting with our comrades, discussing the process of dialogue and negotiation in which republicans have become such an essential element. All of the other parties to this

process have at various times, and with varying degrees of ferocity, condemned, demonised, marginalised, vilified and otherwise attacked us.

It is easy at times to get caught up in the frustrations and uncertainties of the present and lose sight of just what we have come through to get to where we are today. Listening to what was being said and discussed helped guard against that. There was not really anything new or startling being revealed. In fact, I think many lads were a bit surprised by how tuned into events they themselves actually were. What was important and what was present throughout was the confidence with which the republican analysis and objectives were being

explained and pursued.

For us as POWs it was an opportunity to reiterate the point that our plight as political prisoners was part of the overall conflict and its resolution should be seen in the overall context. Any attempt to bargain with us should be guarded against. We have concerns and at times doubts, but we trust those on whom the responsibility of leadership has been placed. The organising of such visits ensures that we are viewed not as a separate entity but as part of the wider republican family, either as volunteers or activists. This is important to us. But it is also a signal to those who would try to use prisoners as a tool against the republican agenda.

It was not possible to give

all POWs access to the type of forum we had that day. We want to try and bring about visits onto the actual blocks and wings themselves. In the past this facility has been extended to elected representatives - but not republicans. In the meantime we hope to repeat this type of visit and bring down a fresh set of faces with fresh questions.

It is impossible to recreate, for those not present, the air of confidence which dominated the visit. We look forward to the next time. Until then the real debates and analysis will continue in the cells, canteens and in the yards of the H-Blocks and all other prisons which hold Irish republican prisoners.

**BY PADRAIG WILSON
H-BLOCKS**

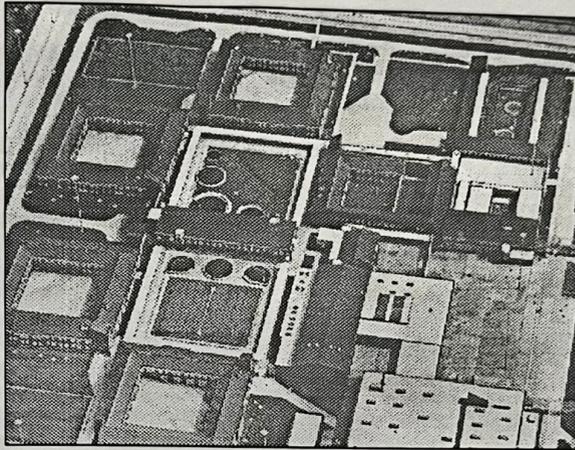
After the renewal of the IRA ceasefire the first of the Sinn Fein delegation visits was with the women republican prisoners in Maghaberry Prison.

UNITED AND STRONG

July of this year brought about the renewal of the IRA's 1994 ceasefire and as expected the media went into a frenzy about the whys, the why nots and the consequences of it all for the then faltering peace process. But the media has its own agenda and puts particular spins on such things so we weren't paying much attention to it in terms of trying to analyse what exactly was going on.

The IRA announcement caught us all by surprise and we were delighted when Sinn Fein informed us that representatives of the leadership wished to meet with all the women republican prisoners in Maghaberry. However, we were very sceptical that the administration would allow us, as a collective group, to meet with such a delegation. In the past any visit with Sinn Fein representatives was treated as just an ordinary visit. But the issue was raised with the administration on this occasion and to our surprise it was agreed that the delegation could meet us all together. We as a collective would meet with a Sinn Fein delegation.

This was the first time that the establishment had conceded publicly that we are political prisoners. The issue of the delegation visit and the manner in which it was to be conducted may not seem of major consequence to many but what it underlined made it historic to us. It underlined how just was the determined and selfless sacrifices made by our comrades in Armagh Jail during those long years of protest and hunger-strike, and how right we were in our continued resistance at any attempt to treat us as anything but political prisoners. Our identity is all the more



● Maghaberry Prison

important to us here in Maghaberry as we are a very small group of women POWs in a jail where the rest of the prison population are, in the main, non-political.

The visit was scheduled for Tuesday, July 24th, just little over a week after the ceasefire. When I awoke that morning the wing was alive with the noise of everyone else trying to get ready. It was like trying to organise a day's outing for a large family - a family of eight women. As one can imagine, all eight women trying to get ready at the same time involves careful planning in order to avoid absolute chaos. With patience they have to work around one another in order to ensure that each gets their turn in the bathroom, the use of hairdryers, ironing and all the wee odds and ends which you know should have been done at the start and you find you still don't have the time to do them in the end. So with this in mind I decided to remain in bed until the rest were finished - I'm a great believer in not getting out of bed one minute earlier than is absolutely necessary.

By ten o'clock everyone was ready. We had bags

packed with flasks, cups and biscuits and we were ready to go. Shortly after that we were called out and made our way to the visiting area. Instead of using the visiting area itself we were put into an adjoining room which is normally used for prisoners and visitors to get their photographs taken together. It was the only suitable place to accommodate a visit of this size.

We were there to welcome the delegation when they came in. There were three Sinn Féin representatives, Pat Doherty, Siobhán O'Hanlon and Pat McNamee. There were the introductions, the shaking of hands and hugs all round. Everyone seemed to naturally feel at ease and relaxed from the outset, the way one feels when in the company of friends.

The introductions over with the next priority was to get a cup of tea into everyone's hand and with that done we sat back and began the discussion. We obviously had a number of questions and each was answered in a full and frank manner. The discussion was in depth as regards the political situation as it was current then. But the

delegation assured us that their visit was only the first in a series of update discussions as the process progressed. True to their word a delegation paid us a visit in September.

The second visit was planned for Thursday, September 18th. This time it was a delegation with a busy schedule for it was to spend the morning in the H-Blocks and in turn visit us in the afternoon.

This time there was none of the morning rush and I could snatch those extra couple of minutes sleep without all the noisy preparations on the wing. When it reached three o'clock in the day we thought the visit wasn't going to take place but shortly afterwards we were called out and with our packed bags we returned to the room to greet this new delegation of six Sinn Féin representatives led by Martin McGuinness. By this stage it already seemed like we had become 'oul hands' (well sort of), at this type of thing. Again the discussion was open and sincere, very positive and very encouraging.

The proceedings ended with Martin conveying a message of solidarity with ourselves and our families, which was both uplifting and touching.

Both the delegation visits left in their wake a feeling of confidence among us about what lies ahead, despite some of the difficulties we are sure to face. We, the women republican POWs in Maghaberry, know we are facing that future with a strong Republican Movement and we look forward to further meetings with Sinn Féin representatives as we progress towards our objectives.

■ BY ROSA McLAUGHLIN
MAGHABERRY

QUOTES

"When I speak to RUC officers on the phone, the hostility, the sheer hatred, comes down the line. They are polite to my face, exaggeratedly so. But behind my back they say what they like..."

What the RUC don't realise is that, although it can unsettle the person being interrogated, it doesn't have any effect on me. It just makes me more determined to do my job honestly."

Rosemary Nelson, one of a number of solicitors who gave evidence to a UN Special Investigator investigating the independence of the legal system in the North. - [Ireland on Sunday, October 19th 1997]

"Pat was chosen because he was beating the system at its own game. His murder was ordered by people in the British military and legal establishment."

Geraldine Finucane, widow of lawyer Pat Finucane, who was murdered by the UDA with the co-operation of British military intelligence. - [Ireland on Sunday, 19th October 1997]

"You can't divorce the threats and abuse of lawyers from the whole system which is intended to humiliate and intimidate people into making confessions. It's all part and parcel of the reason people will never accept the RUC as an impartial police force. Never."

Peter Madden, colleague of Pat Finucane. - [Ireland on Sunday, October 19th 1997]

"They could have saved Robert's life - but they didn't. They could have suspended the police officers who sat in their jeeps and did nothing while he was stamped and beaten to death - but they didn't."

"Our lives mean nothing. If you're Catholic you simply don't count."

Diane Hamill, sister of Robert Hamill, who was kicked to death by a loyalist mob while an RUC patrol looked on. - [Ireland on Sunday, October 12th 1997]

"Martin (Robert's younger brother), is now the centre of attention for both loyalists and the RUC. Police officers have, on occasions, got out of the jeeps and confronted him, batons in hand. One drove past him so close, it struck his ankle. They know him and he knows them."

- [Ireland on Sunday, October 12th 1997]

"See when you get there (the Ormeau Bridge), youse are to bang like fuck and blow your brains out."

Pauline Gilmore of the Right to March Campaign instructing bandsmen on how best to trample on the rights of the residents of the Lower Ormeau Road. - [Home Truths (BBC!)]

"She was young and pretty, vivacious and caring, misunderstood and reviled. She died needlessly, in tragic circumstances, and the British media made much of her death. Her short life was filled with hardship. Her name was Mairéad Farrell and she was shot dead in cold blood by SAS assassins in Gibraltar on 6th March 1988. For the life of me I can't remember having an opportunity to sign any book of condolence."

Séamus Keenan in an article entitled 'Under Martial Law of the Hypocritical Media'. - [Irish News, September 6th 1997]

"I'm sorry Princess Diana is dead, but I do not see why my

whole life should change as a consequence... And if you really want to feel moved, read the accounts of the murder of Kathleen O'Hagan by the UVF as her tiny children looked on. Now that was real tragedy."

Séamus Keenan in the same article - [Irish News, September 6th 1997]

"I didn't know that this photo was going to be so famous."

Alberto Korda, the photographer who took the photo which immortalised Che Guevara. - [USA Today]

"The fact of the matter is that her (Brid Rodgers') attitude displays a mindset within the SDLP which prefers to blame others for its own failings."

"In a real sense the party is at a crossroads. Its support is solid, but the ballot box - independent evidence - shows that Sinn Féin is the party on the move."

The Irish News editorial answering Brid Rodgers' absurd claim that the paper was "more pro-Sinn Féin". - [Irish News, October 22 1997]

"Those who object to my visiting Libya have no morals and I will not join them because I have morals."

"Col Ghadaffi is my friend and he helped us at a time when we were alone, and the ones who are stopping us from coming here were helping our enemies at that time."

Nelson Mandela, on a visit to Libya in a rebuff against the US and Britain, the main backers of the UN sanctions against Libya. - [Irish Independent, October 24th 1997]

"Quoting Napoleon, David Trimble once maintained that no plan survives contact with the enemy..."

"The UUP leader has gone where no other unionist leader before him has ventured by taking his party into the all-party talks, but there is plenty of evidence around to show that he still believes in adherence to a strategy which ultimately led to Napoleon's downfall."

Geoff Martin, News Letter journalist. - [News Letter, October 25th 1997]

"Even though Sinn Féin has a genuine electoral mandate, I do not regard Sinn Féin as an ordinary political party."

John Bruton, displaying his anti-republican arrogance. - [Irish News, October 24th 1997]

"It is this attitude of mind which was the root cause of the collapse of the last IRA ceasefire. We now know that it was not only the mindset of the British government and the unionist parties, it was the attitude of the Taoiseach."

The Irish News editorial commenting on Bruton's remarks - [Irish News, October 24th 1997]

"It may have slipped the attention of some of our more southern-fixated politicians and commentators, but the context of the situation in the North has altered radically in the past few years. Even the most moderate of nationalists who live there have come to see Sinn Féin, and in particular Messrs Adams and McGuinness, not as the bogeymen of Section 31 Ireland, but as the purveyors of hope and the possibility of peace"

John Waters outlining a reality John Bruton and co continue to ignore to their own cost. - [Irish Times, October 21st 1997]

Guilty by [Press] Association

A great actor died this year, probably quite a few died, but I was particularly sorry when I heard that James Stewart was dead.

For as far back as I can remember James was familiar to me. He was among that great bunch which gave us the brilliant Saturday night thrillers and the classic Sunday afternoon black and whites.

James, they say, had 'great screen presence', it's a star quality, apparently; it made him, along with the likes of Bogart, Fonda, Cagney, Mitchum, one of the 'Hollywood greats'. Their screen presence was great alright for it survived from that 'golden era' and it transferred well onto our 20" black and white at home. I was captivated, I loved watching them.

My father was from their era and when I was young I imagined that they would be just like him - strong, decent and honest - only, cool as well. But of course the reality is I don't know what they were like because I didn't know them. I never saw the person, only an image, a media creation, part of an industry, the finished product presented to us all by the image-makers.

Still, I reckon I liked James Stewart. I liked his work, I liked watching him act, his face has been forever familiar to me, that face did belong to a person and that person was no more. I didn't know the man, I didn't grieve at his

death but I can say that I was sorry.

But what a difference a week makes!

Within days of James dying one of the TV channels, in his memory, was showing a season of his films. We were getting the chance to watch again such gems as Vertigo, The Naked Spur and Rear Window. Maybe James popping his clogs wasn't so bad. After all he had long since ceased making such films and whilst we had them what in truth had I and millions like me lost through his death? His family and friends were no doubt in grief for the man but the rest of us, the image-watchers, well, we just put our feet up and enjoyed the re-runs.

None of us can have failed to notice the re-runs post-

Diana. But for the Press it was a quandary. It wanted to be the family in grief but at the same time its instinct was to throw the feet up and run the repeats.

The process began with them apologising for the less complimentary things they had said of her in less hysterical times. Whilst hysteria usually brings out the less rational side in people it bestowed upon the editors an uncanny ability to see truth and express honesty. And the truth was they loved their 'queen of hearts' and in all honesty they were hypocrites for ever expressing anything to the contrary. She was a saint. But a saint, as the American writer Ambrose Bierce once wrote, is but "a sinner revised and edited".

Of course as we got the re-



● JAMES STEWART — I liked his work, I liked watching him act

runs there was no shortage of material to revise and edit. All those pictures, all those gains from a trade they were continuing to denounce - the drug barons condemning the poppy growers. But they did admit that they were hypocrites - so that's alright then. However, they, along with the British nation were deep in grief - we know they were because the Press said so.

Grief causes one to reflect, often bringing with it feelings of guilt, especially if the death has been untimely and tragic. One can dwell constantly on "if only". 'If only we hadn't bought that bike', 'If only we had had a smoke alarm', 'If only we had been with her'.

Whilst such grief at an individual level can be almost unbearable and everlasting, grief in the media, regardless of how individuals within it might feel, is borne only for so long as it's a viable product.

Diana was a media-product - in life and death. For millions the Diana they knew in life was but an image - the creation of a few - as was the reaction to her death. Millions of mourners, we were told, were united in grief. Yet of those millions very few would ever have met Diana, never mind have known her. Of those millions who had ever grieved for a loved one how many could claim that it was really grief they were experiencing over Diana's death? Many may have felt a loss of sorts, however, it was but a few who decided that a whole nation was 'united in grief'.

It was not insensibility caused by grief which made people feel the need to queue for hours in order to sign a book of condolence, to travel hundreds of miles and sleep in the street so that they could see a funeral; it was an insensible response to a media event.

The 'ordinary' people felt close to her, it was claimed, because she cared for the less fortunate, because of the effort she made for less attractive charities. Many AIDS sufferers, lepers and homeless I'm sure are grateful



● Diana was a media-product - In life and death. For millions the Diana they knew in life was but an image - the creation of a few - as was the reaction to her death

that she attempted to break down barriers but how many of that 'nation in grief' who are not actually affected really care?

A letter writer to the Observer pointed out an example of hypocrisy surrounding the events of that week. On the train in which she was travelling were groups of women with bunches of flowers and notes of love for Diana. They were approached by a seller of the Big Issue a, magazine in aid of the homeless; he was curtly turned away. Fortunately for these women there were no AIDS sufferers or lepers on the train to intrude upon their grief, to spoil their fast-track journey to the biggest media event of their lives.

One woman summed it up in a TV interview. She had travelled to London with her young daughter. They were going to sleep in the street, she said. Her child was young, too young to understand, but she wanted her to be there just so that one day she could say that she was. It reminded me of the

bloke heading into Wembley Stadium for the Live Aid concert who said, "I missed Woodstock, I'm not about to miss this." Never mind the issue, where's the gig?

Yes, Live Aid, those faraway days when it was discovered that people were dying from hunger in the world and the media persuaded us all to feel guilty about the crisis in underdeveloped countries. They haven't reminded us much about it since, which is just as well when you consider that 14 million children alone die each year from the effects of hunger and disease. I mean how much guilt can one take? We might begin to reflect and come up with 'if only'. 'If only the poor countries weren't in hock to the World Bank'. 'If only the 'democratic powers' didn't prop up those oppressive regimes'. 'If only alternatives to capitalist structures were allowed to operate', 'If only...'

No, they rarely make us feel guilty and when they do they ease the pain of guilt and

parting with money by giving us events such as Live Aid - value for money and atonement.

You could also get value for money in post-Diana grief. If you were feeling guilty about having helped kill her by encouraging people to chase her with cameras you could get 'super' 24-page supplements with your daily newspapers. Photographic accounts of Diana's life to ease your pain. Of course if you could cop onto the contradictions in that there was no need to worry for already the Press were back in the land of the living, ie making a killing. To have even, what they consider to be, the lowest of their pecking order under the critical spotlight might be too costly. They were getting that "if only" guilty feeling without the grief. If only there was someone else but the Paparazzi to put the guilt on. So, the revelations regarding the driver were a God send. It was a new angle on an aging story. Here was a real villain, he was drunk, he was wreckless and he was French.

But the Paparazzi aren't out of the picture yet. Things would have been different for them, 'if only'. If only they were involvd with a death in Lurgan, Belfast, Bellaghy, Aghalee or Castlewellan. Things are handled differently there - so long as the dead are Catholic. There's no claim, there's no blame, the so-called investigators maintain an 'open-mind', the media, without a villain, lose what little interest they had - and there you have it, the unexplainable deaths of Michael McGoldrick, John Slane, Sean Brown, Bernadette Martin and James Morgan. No media clamour to point fingers or accuse.

But it is different for the Paparazzi and some of them must be feeling hard done by that they are facing manslaughter charges under the so-called 'Good Samaritan law'. What is that all about anyway? Those French, eh? They have a law which compels people to give assistance when someone is in

danger. What they need is someone to take the lead, they need someone to set an example, they need a force like the RUC.

In the early hours of 6th July this heavily-armed force decided to assist the residents of Garvagh Road. So, without need of a law - or regard for the law - the RUC just waded in wielding their batons, firing their plastic bullets - breaking limbs, busting skulls, smashing faces, until they had kindly assisted all these people off their own streets - for their own good. And just to help them feel all wrapped up and snug they tucked them into their estate and kept them there for hours. Later that morning as they changed their bloody bandages those people felt really cared for when Ronnie Flannagan told them that the RUC had visited this assistance upon them because apparently out there somewhere there are nasty people who might want to hurt them.

Of course the nationalists of Portadown already knew as much. Sure it was only a couple of weeks earlier that a loyalist mob had kicked Robert Hamill to death in the town centre. Ronnie's men were close by then as well. That group of RUC men sitting in their jeep only feet away from where Robert was being killed must have felt very vexed indeed. For they did have their batons with them, they did have their plastic bullets with them, but with all those feet jumping on top of him they couldn't get close enough to Robert to strike him with either - for his own good.

No, we don't need a Good Samaritan Law here, we're much too civilised. Our civility knows no bounds especially at times of death. No matter about events or our best laid plans, we are prepared to put them on hold out of respect. Unless the dead is a murdered Catholic taxi-driver, the event is Drumcree II and you are David Trimble with plans to meet Billy Wright. But the week after Diana died things

were at their most civil. The evening news announced a list of events which had been cancelled or suspended. There were council meetings, choir services, WI meetings, the picket at Harryville, garden shows, village festivals ... and that's normality for you, right in there among jam preserving and marrow growing is the grotesque intimidation at Harryville. Of course if the media wanted to it could make people feel guilty about the fact that here is the only group of people in Europe who have to run an organised gauntlet of bigots every week in order to get to their place of worship - and it would make us feel guilty - 'if only'. If only it wasn't a group of Catholics in the North of Ireland. If only the story was about some spoilt rich person who has to hide in plush hotels from mobs with cameras, who has to sail away in a luxury yacht to escape attention, or drives fast cars through city streets to find another rich hideaway. But no the story is about Catholics under attack in Harryville and when the bigots delay intimidation for a week their respectability is put up there among the choristers and the rose pruners.

Still, I'm sure even the respectful hate-mob in Harryville is glad to see the wave of media hysteria post-Diana begin to recede. Now they can get back to their intimidation without interruption. But I hope it isn't too late for the unfortunate woman who was about to open her new shop. She had everything in place, including the stationery printed and a sign up out front. It was to be a very trendy clothes shop by all accounts. She's a modern girl, she wanted a modern image, she wanted a name which was the sign of the times. It was while reading an article about Diana a few months previously that she thought she had come up with the perfect name - Paparazzi. Well, how was she to know that Diana was to change from a wasteful playgirl to the queen of hearts? The

Paparazzi were now the bad guys, not a good image, and she didn't know what to do. She was considering changing her stationery and all the paperwork which would mean a loss of thousands. She didn't want to be insensitive and offend anyone, she said. Fair play to her, I say. If she does give up her business adventure she should get hired by the RUC and she'd be able to explain that it's not witty to drive around mid-Ulster with a King Rat symbol on your vehicle. But maybe I could just suggest one solution to the lady's predicament. She should keep her stationery, keep her big sign with the name on it and just move shop to the Falls Road. As the media can tell you, the people in West Belfast aren't in the least bit sensitive.

Mind you there does seem to be sensitive people out there somewhere as a Belfast DJ found out to his cost. He

tried his best, he was getting with the mood. He thought it would be nice to play a collection of songs in tribute to Diana but fell foul of some listeners when he began with The Cars number "Who's going To Drive You Home?"

It just wasn't safe to be in the public eye - or ear. Everyone must have felt a bit like Diana's ex-father-in-law on a trip to a foreign country, you just knew that sooner or later you would say something to cause offence.

However, by the 13th September, a type of calmness had returned which meant that the Belfast Telegraph extra, one week after Diana's burial was able to, without a murmur of protest, give us the great headline 'Dig Deep for Di'. But as her ex-in-laws know only too well, with the media on the beatification trail, one will only need scratch the surface.

■ BY PADDY O'DOWD
H-BLOCK

Child of Pain

Rain slowly soaks,
Cold wet tar,
Hair strung faces,
Mothers tears seep to earth,
My hand held secure.

Bodies, heat intense,
Feet, legs all still,
Each sheltered close.
Grey drizzle impacts,
Cold, so cold.

Mammy!
Shss - son,
Death silence crushes down.
Peeping through triangular spaces,
Black crosses,
White bands,
One, two..... thirteen.

Mammy, don't cry.
Daddy!
Why's mammy crying?
Bent to knee,
Holding me tight,
He cries too.

■ BY PAT KAVANAGH
PORTLAOISE

RÁITEAS DON SLÓGADH Ó NA CIMÍ SA CHEIS FHADA

Ba mhaith leis na cimir poblachtánacha i gCampa na Ceise Fada beannachtaí reabhlóideacha a chur chugaibh uilig anseo i gCo Mhaigh Eo ar an ócáid den Aonú Slógadh Déag de chuid Shinn Féin.

Tá súil againn go mbainfidh sibh tairbhe agus sult mor as an ócáid, as na cainteanna, as an chomhlúadar is as an chraic. Tá súil againn go dtabharfaidh se seo spreagadh, misniú, meanma agus fuinneamh do gach uile duine anseo sna laethanta atá le teacht, leis an fhód a sheasamh ar son cearta na Gaeilge is cearta na hGael.

Mar sin de, tá súil againn go mbeidh daoine ag imeacht as an áit seo ag deireadh an tSlógaidh, athnuaithe is athneartaithe le athbheochan na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn sa tír seo - ó dheas is ó thuaidh.

Tá stair fada suime sa Ghaeilge i measc chimí cogaidh in Éirinn le blianta fada anuas agus tá sin le feiceáil fosta le linn na tréimhe den strácáilt. Mar

shampla, bunaíodh Gaeltacht sa champa seo sna cásanna i rith na seachtóidí agus bhí urlár Gaeltachta i bPort Laoise le fada an lá. Lena chois seo, labhraíodh an Gaeilge ar an achán sciathán le linn tréimhse agóid na pluide sna Blocanna-H. Muiníodh an Ghaeilge fríd na doirse de na cillíní gan úsáid leabhar nó aiseanna ar bith eile ag an am. Tá sé cinnte gur chuidigh an íomhá sin, de dhaoine cosúil le Bobby Sands agus na fir pluideanna ag foghlaim na Gaeilge i gcoinníollacha millteanacha, ag scairteadh na focail Ghaeilge amach fríd na doirse druidthe, srl., ta se cinnte gur chuidigh an íomha sin leis na mílte daoine a spreagadh leis an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim taobh amuigh, ar fud na Sé Chontae go háirithe. Tá sé cinnte fosta gur spreag an íomhá sin, i bpáirt ar a laghad, an



● Ag labhairt ag an Slógadh, Ard Rúnaí Sinn Féin Lucifla Bhreatnach agus Pádraig O Coscra

athbheochan a tharla sa Ghaeilge sna Sé Chontae ó thús na n-óchtóidí. Fosta, nuair a scaoileadh saor na fir pluideanna as na blocanna chuidigh den-shampla acu go mór leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn ina gceantracha féin. Bhí iar-chimí bainte le hógóidí ar son cearta na Gaeilge, le bunú naoínraí, gaelcoileanna, ranganna Gaeilge agus a lán tionscamh eile agus bíonn an baint ann go fóill.

Tá muidinne sna Blocanna-

H an lá atá inniu ann, thar a bheith bródúil as an pháirt a d'imir ar gcomráidithe ar an phluid leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. Tá a fhios againn go bhfuil dualgas againn fosta páirt a ghlacadh san athbheochan agus tá muid ag iarraidh ár seacht ndícheall le sin a dhéanamh.

An lá atá inniu ann tá sciathán lán-Ghaelach ar dhá bhloc poblachtánach sa champa. Ar achán sciathán eile taobh amuigh de na Gaeltachtaí bíonn ranganna Gaeilge ar siúl ag labhairt na Gaeilge le cluinint go rialta. Ba mhaith linn líon na gcainteoirí sa champa a mhéadú agus 's é sin ceann dár bpríomhaidhmeanna. Tá a fhios againn go bhfuil sé tábhachtach an nasc eadarainn agus pobal na Gaeilge taobh amuigh a neartú fosta agus beidh muid ag obair ar aghaidh an bhliain seo chugainn ar an aidhm sin go háirithe.

Ní féidir linn a bheith libh go pearsanta inniu ach tá muid sásta go mbeidh iar-chimí ann i bhur measc atá abálta labhairt ar ár son.

Arís, ádh mór oraibh leis an Slógadh.

Beir bua

Na Cimir Poblachtánacha
An Cheis Fhada
Deireadh Fómhair 1997



● Bronnann an Comhairleoir Sinn Féin Clionnath O Suilleabháin (Cloch na gCollite) Gradam na Poblachta ar Conchubhar Mac Giolla Mhuire agus Deaglan Mohan, agus iad á ghlacadh ar son na gclimí poblachtánach i gCeis Fada

Drugs: a Community Fightback

It's not often that you can manage to get universal agreement on any one subject but ask anyone in Dublin do we have a drug problem in the city and every answer will be a resounding 'yes'.

But agreeing that we have a drug problem and finding agreement on how we should deal with it are two completely different things. There are a range of opinions as to who should be responsible for tackling the problem, where the problem stems from and even as to who are the victims and who are the guilty.

Many see the problem as being insurmountable, they don't know where to begin dealing with it at an individual, family or community level.

Others say that it should be left to the state agencies to deal with the problem, they are supposed to have the expertise, it is they who get the budgets, paid for out of our taxes.

First and foremost it is essential to recognise that drugs, their effects, know no social barriers. For whilst it's true that many working-class areas are ravaged by the plague of drugs, drug abuse has no prejudice or conscience, working-class, middle-class, regardless of creed or race, it destroys lives, breaks up families and undermines communities.

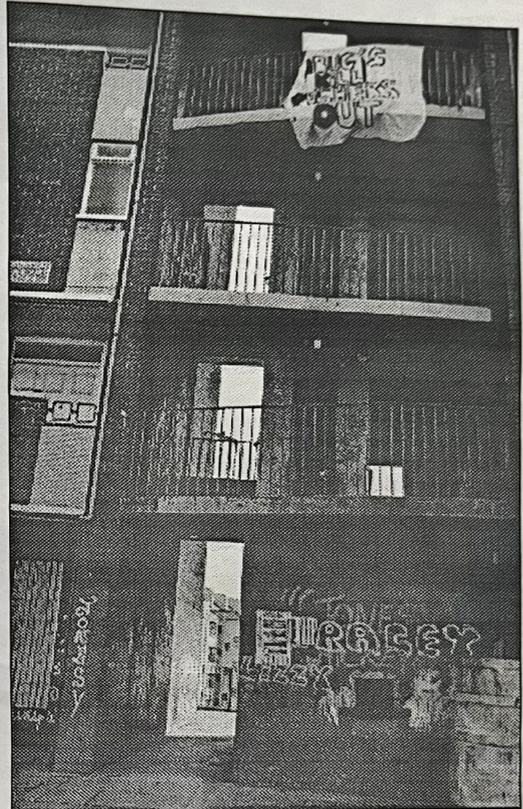
Of course in terms of a whole community being blighted we know from our experience in Dublin that it is the working-class areas which feel these effects. As in many, if not all, areas of life the state has failed the working-class in its fight against drugs. If wealthy areas of Dublin were preyed upon by the drug barons we can be assured that they would not be in business for long. If a whole generation of the children of the wealthy were in danger of being lost to drugs

we can be assured that proper preventative measures and treatment facilities would be in place. But they're not. Yes, there are victims among the middle-class but their whole community has not become victims along with them, have not been stigmatised, have not been neglected. Whilst in the deprived areas of Dublin our young people suffer, our community suffers and we are left with a vicious circle.

In order to break this cycle more and more people are coming to realise that we have to find the solution within our own communities, we must treat drug abuse as a community problem. But what does that entail?

For the past number of years now voluntary and community groups have been working with people most affected and most at risk from drugs. Too often they have been left with not only too few resources but very little broad community support. Therefore it is necessary for everyone to work together and for a community to be prepared to be educated not only to prevent more people becoming addicts but to recognise that drug abusers in our communities are not social outcasts.

When a drug abuser seeks help it is a big step for the addict, it is the first step in a long, difficult and painful process. The community not only needs something in place to help these people but the community as a whole needs to support that programme. In the past perhaps the most difficult part of the work encountered by volunteers who work with



● Of course in terms of a whole community being blighted we know from our experience in Dublin that it is the working-class areas which feel these effects

drug addicts has been the battle, not in making the addict understand what was needed, but in getting the communities from which they came to understand.

No-one is denying the difficulties in getting communities to understand the type of work which needs to be done at a local level. But the message must be put across that it is a mistake to believe that we can solve the drug problem in our areas by sending local addicts somewhere else to be treated. This simply does not work, it has been tried and it has failed. Local addicts should be allowed to be treated in their own areas with the help of their local community. This proposed solution has often been dismissed by people who

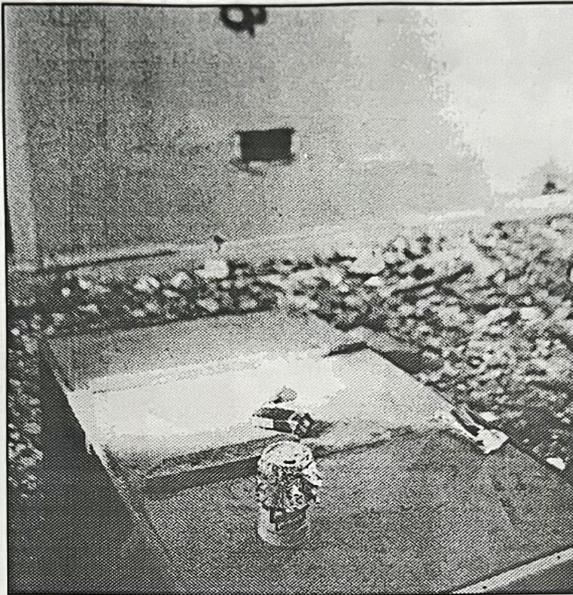
still see the solution as being beyond the reach of ordinary people and the addict as being beyond the reach of reasonable sympathy and assistance. People do have understandable misgivings, no-one is attempting to portray drug abusers as saints; in order to feed their habit many of them prey upon their own community, stealing and then involving themselves in all sorts of anti-social behaviour whilst under the influence. No, they are certainly not saints but we do need to recognise that they are nevertheless victims.

How can the community help such victims? What is needed is proper funding and a workable programme. There is no reason why funds cannot be made available to local areas and for people to have control

over what happens within those areas. Of course, experience is needed to run rehabilitation programmes, but that experience has been there for years, it's just that for the most part people didn't see it or chose not to notice it. Individuals and groups have worked with addicts throughout the years without recognition from either the state or the community. We need to give such people assistance and insist upon the state recognising the importance of their work. A programme needs to be in place and targets set so that positive action is being seen to be done.

Most addicts want to be cured of their addiction and when and where an addict seeks help, that help must be available. What hope is there for such people if when coming forward to go onto a rehabilitation programme they are told there are none available and they must go on a waiting list which will mean at least a year's delay before they begin to get treatment. The state agencies are clearly failing these addicts and in so doing they are failing our communities. It is a national disgrace that the drug problem is being allowed to virtually spiral because of a lack of willingness by those in power to tackle it in a serious manner and give whatever assistance is necessary to those who are directly affected and who have such great potential in helping curtail the spread of the problem.

By being prepared to work within our own areas we should be able to treat local addicts in a more successful way. By working as a community we are able to reduce the pressure addicts come under from outside their community. Again it should be emphasised that addicts are victims, the real enemy of us all are the drug barons and drug pushers. It is counter-productive to evict those people from our areas while at the same time making their victims believe that they have no choice but to follow them. The addicts need to be freed totally from their grip whilst of course ensuring that the



confrontation of pushers continues so as to make it impossible for them to get any more of our young people under their influence.

It is clear that even at present there is a momentum within some communities which could carry the fight against drugs forward into another phase. There are some very effective methods being deployed to help protect our young people through education about the danger of drugs. Youth Clubs have been very much to the fore in outlining what drug abuse means for the individual and the family. Public meetings also allow people to remain updated on what's going on in regards to drugs in the area, how great the current risk, the methods being used to target teenagers. Parents have a greater understanding of the signs so that they can recognise at an early stage if any of their children are into solvent abuse or dabbling in drugs.

Parents also work together as a force for the community by conducting nightly patrols in the area to ensure that known drug dealers are not able to peddle their wares on the streets. Such community action also provides an early-warning system, pushers can be identified, attempts to recruit young people to do their running for them can be

exposed more quickly.

It is important that the community as a whole is open and vocal in regards to its detestation of the drug trade. A community, by being active, can help young people to say no without fear. Knowing that a community is strong can give that young person great personal strength as well. A strong community sends a clear message to drug barons and their dealers that the people are moving forward and they are not going back to the time when drug dealing and abuse made it almost impossible for people to walk their own streets. The parasites which bled the people for so long will never get a grip on such a community again.

Unfortunately, experience has shown that working-class communities becoming so empowered are not opposed by the criminals alone. It is clear that the powers that be view this as a threat to the also. The Gardaí, obviously with the sanction of their political overseers, have been active opponents of community organisations. They have continuously paid lip-service to the battle against drugs and now when they have been forced to become more active they cynically abuse whatever faith local people might have placed in their efforts to help. This has resulted on occasions

in the ludicrous situation whereby Drug Squad officers have attended public meetings and issued good advice to the community. But once the meeting begins to disperse their colleagues in Special Branch are at hand to harass the meeting organisers.

But the most criminal, cynical abuse of them all is when the Gardaí quote figures indicating an increase in arrests under the Misuse of Drugs Act, but they neglect to inform the public that such an increase is due partly to the arrests of Anti-Drugs activists. They use legislation, which was intended to fight drug barons, against the most vociferous and active opponents of the drug trade. The fact that this has been allowed to go on virtually unchallenged is an indictment against those groups and individuals, particularly the Catholic Church, who have the power to do so very much more but have failed to do so. With the exception of some very fine individuals, the Catholic Church has for the most part let the community down on this issue. Drugs are the greatest problem facing many communities, groups and individuals within these communities should not be allowed the luxury of picking and choosing 'safe issues' on which to stand up and be counted. The communities need everyone to stand up together.

It has been through years of hard work by too few groups and individuals which has raised the issue of drugs to where it is today. Otherwise the problem would be unimaginably worse.

People are now beginning to sit up and pay attention and whilst they do, the message needs to be hammered home that communities are in themselves the first and last line of defence against the scourge of drugs. If the spread of drugs is to be halted, communities need the resources, the facilities, the trained personnel and the programmes to treat the addicts and prevent more young people adding to their number.

■ BY DEREK SWEETMAN
H-BLOCKS

HIGH-FIVES, HIGH-DIVES AND GHOSTS ALIVE

XFILES FANATIC, Scallop Hill, is convinced that he's being stalked by extra-terrestrials - and they're hungry. According to Scallop they cunningly placed a mouse in his cell so as to feed their addiction to - Snickers! In Scallop's cell was a box of 48 of these nutty, chunky bars which belonged to the wing - then the bug-eyes aliens hatched their dastardly plan. Upon discovering the mouse late one night Scallop cleared everything out of his cell and duly despatched with the little fellow. Mission accomplished he moved everything back into the cell - except for the Snickers. They were gone! Scallop tells us. The whole box!! he claims. They have never been found.

A more rotund Scallop (who now calls himself Agent Scully) sits up all night in marathon sessions waiting on the little green men to return so he can catch one and prove to the wing that he didn't feel peckish that night. The truth is out there.

Of course in Long Kesh things can go awry and the truth is truly down to earth - ask Barney Campbell. After being searched during a wing raid Barney is returned to his cell only to discover that his 'city' of neatly made cottages has disappeared - it had taken weeks of painstaking labour to complete them and have them set out in perfectly laid rows. "The bastards," screams poor Barney out the door, "they've taken all my cottages!" A lengthy pause follows as realisation dawns.

"Ahh, Jesus! They've even taken the bloody table they were sitting on!!"

Our Barney's amazing powers of observation knows no bounds.

He's nearly as sharp as Kevin McShane. After the tunnel was found in H-7 the lads on that block were moved with only the clothes on their backs to H-8. They were allowed no possessions and were told that they were to remain locked in a bare cell with only a table and bed for the foreseeable future. This attempt at mass punishment seems to have been lost on Kevin. Climbing out of the van in H-8 he points excitedly at the large white extractor fan on the canteen window exclaiming, "Hey great, look lads, this block has Sky TV."

Boy was he in for a shock - there wasn't even a dinner-plate on the block never mind a satellite dish. Five minutes after being locked in his bare cell his depression

was complete when it dawned on him that the tunnel was meant to get a few livewire POWs out, not Cable TV in.

But the way things are you just wouldn't know what is being dug around about the camp. Feilim O hAadhmaill remains hopeful. One morning Feilim was shaving when the screw shouted into the wing that H-8 would have use of the football pitch that day. Feilim came rushing out of the wash-house, his face lathered up, looking confused. He almost collided with Paddy O' (a very reliable source, I might add) and asked, "Did that screw say that we were going to the swimming pool?" The startled Paddy took to his heels thinking that Feilim had lost it.

Some discerning comrade has now changed the words of the song 'Smoke gets in your eyes' to 'Soap gets in your ears', which gets poor Feilim into a right lather. Razor sharp is the Red Spider, eh?

We all have our communication problems though and no more so than Joe Doc. Although back in Ireland almost 6 years, since his extradition from the USA, he is still deemed a 'yank'. It has been his own fault, it took him a while to remember that the fridge was not an ice-box or that Irish Republican POWs in Long Kesh call a bin ... well ... a bin - not a 'garbage can'. The 'dude' was once bi-lingual now he has gone the opposite extreme. Gerry Gearon hasn't caught on yet and tries to converse with Joe in his once adopted tongue. Joe is 'education officer' in H-4, D Wing. He arranges classes and looks after pens, jotters, rubbers, sharpeners and such like.

One day Gerry approaches him obviously fresh from having watched the latest film from the Bronx. Putting forth a high-five he said, "Hey, bro, press my flesh with an eraser."

Joe somewhat confused explains that he has only one for his own use.

Gerry unperturbed repeated his request (in his best American accent). Joe, convinced that someone was winding young Gerry up told him that he could search his cell but he wouldn't find one.

About half an hour later a beaming Gerry meets Joe on the wing. "Yo, man, looky what I got here," said Gerry brandishing an eraser at Joe. "I thought you said you only had one but you've got a bloody box full of them."

Joe, reddening increasingly, finally realised.

"Oh, a rubber," said Joe, trying to claw

back ground, "I thought you wanted a razor."

The hell you did, pardner.

IT'S TERRIBLE the influence of TV but what would we do without it? Jail can be tedious, some POWs would watch anything to pass the day. In H-5 for example Fra, Packy, Kevin and Brogie (a Red Spider regular), enjoy putting the feet up with a cup of tea and coffee among this tedium to watch Oprah Winfrey.

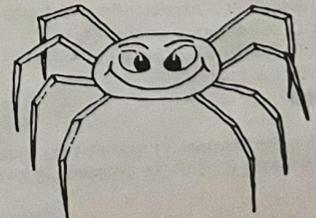
One day a woman was being interviewed on stage when a picture of her husband appeared in the corner of the screen bearing the caption 'Joan's Husband, Stan, Backstage'. Brogie's face contorted as he assimilated this new piece of information. He rolled this knowledge about in his mind. A snigger turned into a fit of laughter. The rest of the group, jealous of Brogie having more fun than them, asked what was so funny. Brogie amid giggles spluttered, "Backstage, that's the most ridiculous surname I've ever heard." How could anyone complain of tedium with Brogie about?

BUT WHO NEEDS TV? Tony McColgan prefers the old tradition of story-telling. He was spinning a yarn to Dessie 'Snapper' Christie about seeing a ghost the night before. Snapper, concerned that Tony might be afraid told him not to worry, "As my mother used to say", remembered Snapper, perhaps not so accurately, "it's not them dead ghosts you should be afraid of - it's the live ones."

I don't know which is scarier - Tony's ghost story or Snapper.

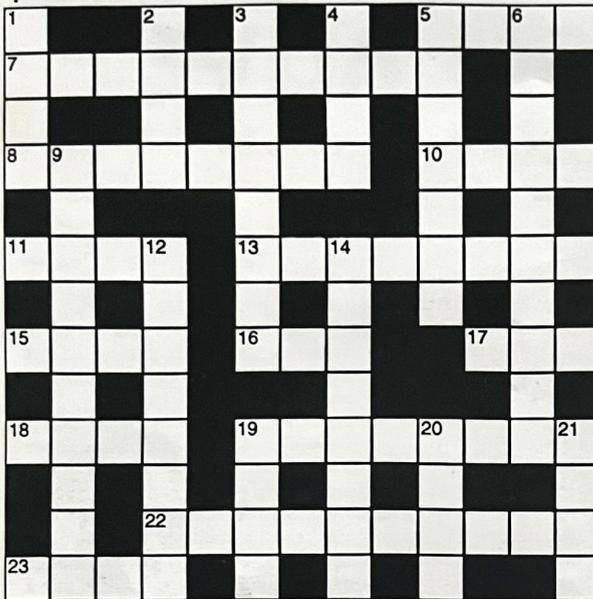
The very same Snapper ruined the magic of TV for everyone when the delightful Mr Blobby appeared on screen one night. Snapper wondered aloud, "Is there somebody inside him?"

As a one, twenty pairs of eyes looked at the questioning Snapper and wondered the same thing.



■ BY RED SPIDER

Crossword



ACROSS

- 5) A ship's breadth at its widest part (4)
 7) Something for holding or containing what is put into it (10)
 8) Advising or advice (8)
 10) A white mineral used in medicine or dyeing (4)
 11) To encourage or assist in a crime (4)
 13) Of sound (8)
 15) To try to win favour by obsequious behaviour (4)
 16) The shorter of two signals in morse code (3)
 17) To defeat (3)
 18) A disc of diffuse light (4)
 19) People who do not believe in any of the world's major religions (8)
 22) To send back to a person's own country (10)
 23) The native name for the abominable snowman (4)

DOWN

- 1) To trail along the ground (4)
 2) An alcoholic drink of fermented honey and water (4)
 3) Required level of quality (8)
 4) The highest point (4)
 5) For the reason that (7)
 6) Projectiles and their propellants (10)
 9) Unable to be endured (10)
 12) Food cooked over charcoal in a clay oven (8)
 14) Survives longer than (8)
 19) A feeling of expectation and desire combined (4)
 20) To call a person or ship (4)
 21) To lose by a natural falling off (4)

ANSWERS

ACROSS : 5) Beam; 7) Receptacle; 8) Guidance; 10) Alum; 11) Abet; 13) Acoustic; 15) Fawn; 16) Dot; 17) Pip; 18) Halo; 19) Heathens; 22) Reparatate; 23) Yeti
 DOWN: 1) Drag; 2) Mead; 3) Standard; 4) Acme; 5) Because; 6) Ammunition; 9) Unbearable; 12) Tandoor; 14) Outlasts; 19) Hope; 20) Hail; 21) Shed

Father's Homecoming

He came home today, thirty years unseen
 Under Bolivian skies,
 Our unforgotten father,
 The revolutionary
 Who shone like the Havana sun.

His vision still fresh in the minds
 Of his beloved people,
 His children
 And his enemies.
 Time, love and hate have eroded nothing.

Santa Clara holds the heart now
 That still beats.
 His wisdom strong,
 His word unbroken,
 The revolution exultant.

A warm breeze stirs the red rose
 On the mausoleum,
 Wet with tears
 Cuba is your pillow now
 Welcome home.
 Hasta la victoria siempre.

For Hildita, Aleidita, Camilo, Celia and Ernesto.
 ■ BY PAUL McCULLOUGH
 H-BLOCKS



HELP THE PRISONERS

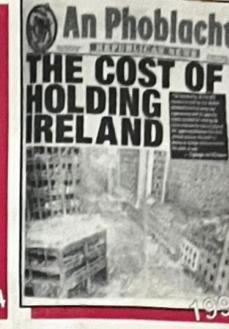
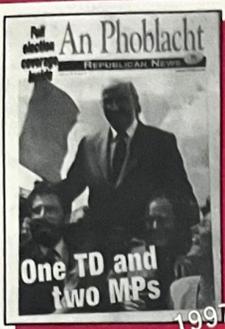
SUPPORT An Cumann Cabhrach & Green Cross

An Cumann Cabhrach and Green Cross are two organisations, staffed by voluntary unpaid workers, which exist to alleviate some of the suffering of republican prisoners and their families. Dependent solely on public subscriptions and collections, these bodies provide weekly grants to dependants of over 700 republican prisoners in jails in Ireland, Britain, Europe and the US, pay expenses and arrange accommodation for relatives visiting POWs and provide finance to purchase clothing and other necessities for these prisoners.

All donations, enquiries and offers of help should be addressed to:

**An Cumann Cabhrach,
44 Parnell Square,
Dublin 1.**

or
**Green Cross
51/55 Falls Road,
Belfast 12.**



1998 sees the twentieth year of publication of the merged *An Phoblacht* and *Republican News*. Over the years *An Phoblacht/Republican News* has been unmissable if you want to be up to date with republican politics. Every Thursday the paper brings you all the stories, analysis and political debate within the vibrant republican community.

As the paper develops and expands, make sure of your copy every week by taking out a subscription today. Why not order a subscription for someone as the perfect political present?

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Ireland.....	£35
England, Scotland, Wales.....	Stg£40
Europe Surface.....	Stg£45
Europe Airmail.....	Stg£65
USA.....	US\$100
Canada.....	Can\$120
Australia.....	Aus\$120
Elsewhere.....	Stg£65/US\$110

Telephone:

I enclose cheque, postal order, etc for £

Please debit my credit card for:

1 year 6 mths (length of sub)

Card No:

Exp. Date: Month..... Year

Name:

Address:

.....

.....