

The

CAPTIVE VOICE



An Glór Gafa

Vol. 8 No. 2

Summer 1996

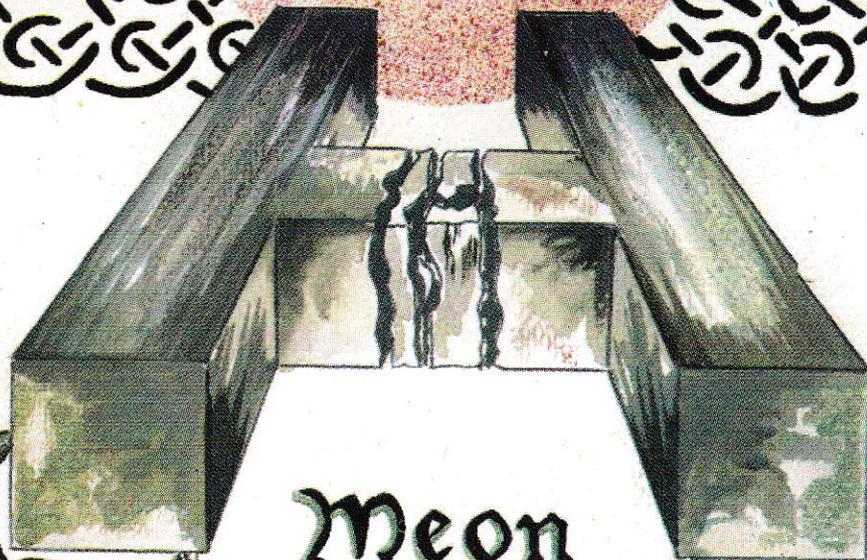
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The Voice of Irish Republican Prisoners of War

Gaeltacht

na

Fuiseoige



Meon
na
Saoirse

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.

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Cover illustration



■ By J.P. '96

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:

Conor Gilmore, Mícheál Mac Giolla Ghunna or Paddy Devenny,
H-Blocks, Long Kesh, County Antrim.

The

CAPTIVE VOICE



An Glór Gafa

TWENTY YEARS AGO this autumn the historic blanket protest began in the H-Blocks when a young republican POW refused to don a convict's uniform or be branded a criminal. His action and those of the POWs who followed him, changed the course of the republican struggle and indeed Irish history.

In these pages Ned Flynn describes the birth of that protest. It took five long years of struggle against British brutality and barbarism, and the deaths of ten comrades in 1981, before the blanketmen defeated the criminalisation strategy. Even then, the jail struggle was not over, but continued in a variety of resourceful and imaginative ways to create the present conditions in the H-Blocks: de facto political status and a communal way of life which provides a solid foundation for personal and political development.

The significance of that long jail struggle becomes apparent when we consider the actions of the British government with regard to the victimisation of our POWs in England and in particular the appalling treatment of Patrick Kelly. This is also outlined in these pages in an article by Gerard Mackin. In addition our women comrades have had to endure the brunt of many vindictive policies over the years. Therefore the present conditions in the H-Blocks are not a result of the British government suddenly deciding to treat POWs justly and humanely. Rather it was the strength and resilience of the jail struggle that forced a change of policy.

There are clear lessons here for the overall republican struggle. One is that ordinary people have the resources within themselves to overcome the might of Britain and its obstacles to self-determination. Another lesson is that Britain will never give us our rights; we must take them, as the blanketmen took theirs.

The present phase of our struggle is focused on building a peace process, a mechanism for achieving human, democratic and national rights. Yet this does not mean that the struggle is less intense. These rights will not be achieved over friendly chats with British government ministers where they suddenly recognise their responsibilities with regard to resolving the conflict in Ireland. Britain's response over the last two years has been to thwart peace negotiations at every turn, using every trick in their considerable tome of tricks: word-games, the denial of Sinn Féin's democratic mandate, the cynical use of the Orange card, the manipulation of the electoral system and of course that old favourite, the RUC baton charge on peaceful demonstrators. Therefore Sinn Féin's peace initiative is still an integral part of struggle, requiring us to utilise the full potential of the movement in resourceful and imaginative ways, from organisations' work and international diplomatic missions to street demonstrations and the radical theatre of the Phoenix Drama Group.

The success of the May elections for Sinn Féin underlined the effectiveness of this struggle. The British government introduced an unwanted and unnecessary election to delay peace negotiations; 116,377 voters turned this ploy into a stunning victory for Sinn Féin and a boost to the peace process. Elections are hard work at the best of times and the hundreds of Sinn Féin election workers are to be commended for their tireless commitment. They have shown that whatever self-serving tactics Britain might devise, the resourcefulness of the republican struggle will force them back to the drawing board — until eventually they will no longer be able to hide from real and meaningful negotiations.

The next few years will continue to be a struggle. There may be setbacks and there certainly will be British obstacles to progress. No one will hand us peace, justice and democracy on a plate. But if enough people do the political work, join the campaigns, perform all the various aspects of struggle with courage, resilience and imagination, then we will surely achieve our demands.

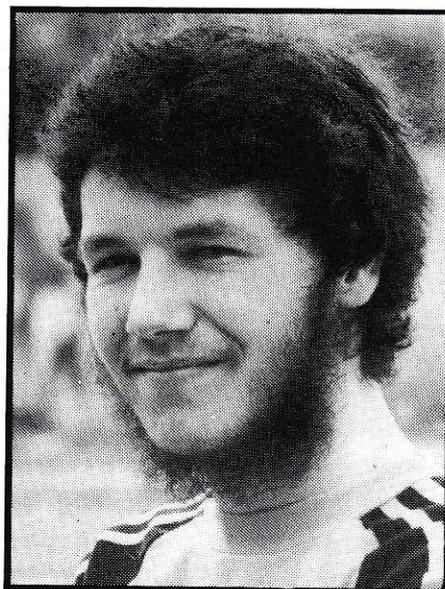
Ned Flynn from Andersonstown in West Belfast was 19 years of age in 1976 when he was sentenced and became the second man to enter the historic blanket protest in the H-Blocks. As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the beginning of that campaign, he reflects on how the protest started.

Birth of the blanket protest



TWENTY YEARS AGO, Britain's three-pronged strategy to break the republican struggle was in full swing, ie Normalisation, Ulsterisation and Criminalisation. Normalisation involved the British government portraying the conflict to the international community as one which was well under control, with a degree of normality now evident. Ulsterisation involved the Six-County sectarian militias of the RUC and UDR taking primary control of security, with the British army now playing a secondary back-up role. Criminalisation was a media-orientated policy, overseen by NIO officials, which portrayed the republican struggle as acts of criminals, with terms such as mafia-type gangsters, godfathers, racketeers and drug barons being circulated daily by the media.

Furthermore, the struggle was represented as sectarian, and this portrayal was fuelled by British military intelligence, who organised loyalist death squads and



NED FLYNN

even recruited a Military Reaction Force (MRF) within the nationalist community, mercenaries who were ordered to carry out attacks on nationalists and attribute them to loyalists. To reinforce criminalisation Britain declared that any republican prisoner

captured after 1 March 1976 would be classified as a criminal rather than a POW and as such would be treated accordingly.

To enhance the success of their three-pronged strategy the British government set up a conveyor-belt system to remove political opponents and community activists from the streets. It was a quasi-legal alternative to the use of internment without trial which was ended in December 1975 due to international and human rights pressure. The conveyor-belt system began in Castlereagh RUC Interrogation Centre, where people perceived as a threat to the state were tortured to extract a false confession. This was later confirmed to Amnesty International by none other than the resident physician Dr Irwin. After a long period on remand the victim was then brought before a Diplock nonjury court, where a single judge appointed by the British government would blatantly reject the medical evidence of torture and convict on the word of the RUC interrogator. The end result was the victim being dispatched to the H-Blocks of Long Kesh to serve out his sentence.

Like so many other young men and

women who entered the jail system in 1976 I was incapable of articulating Britain's cleverly-designed strategy but, as time would tell, the contribution of the men in the H-Blocks and the women in Armagh Jail was to prove crucial in turning Britain's three-pronged strategy on its head and reviving republican morale within the nationalist Six Counties. However, the cost in terms of sacrifice was high indeed.

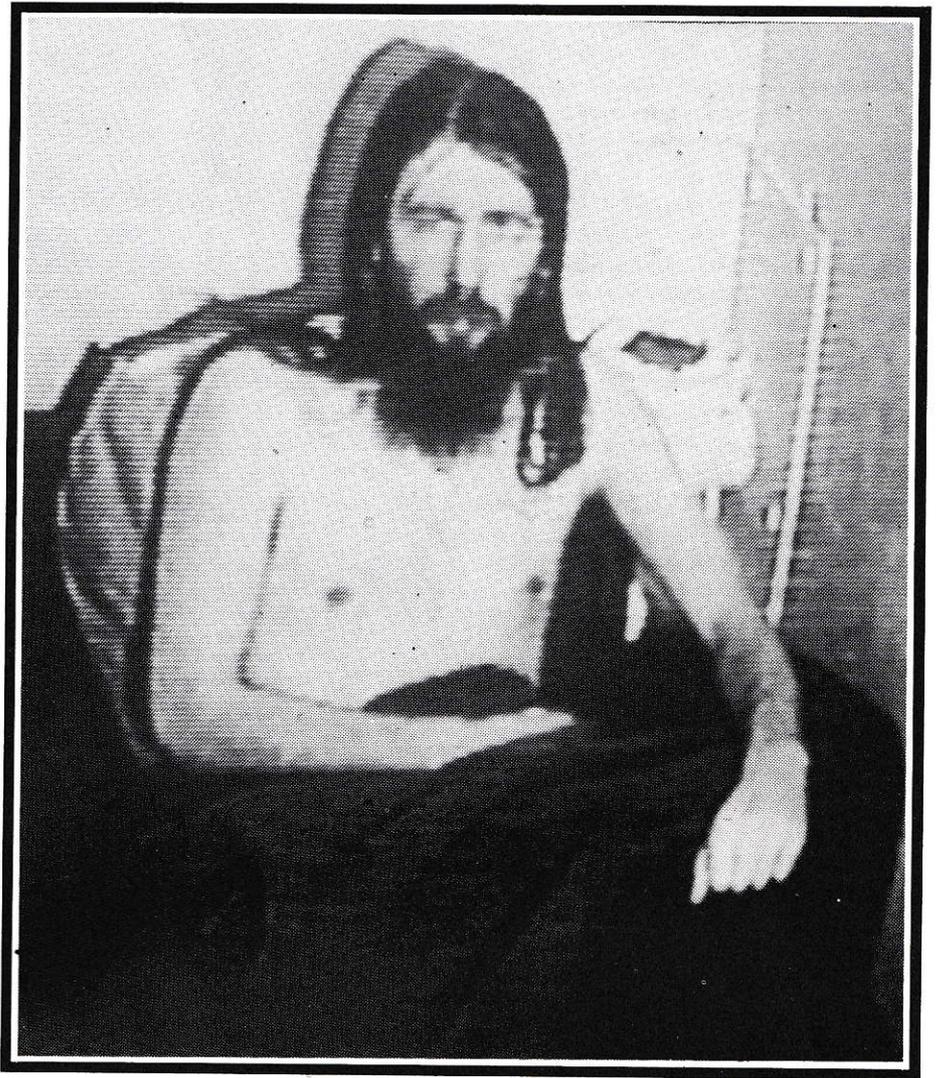
Crumlin Road Jail in the summer of '76 was overflowing due to the RUC's systematic roundup of nationalists. The talk on everyone's lips, beside their own impending "trial", was what lay ahead of us when we ended up in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh. No republican POW incarcerated after 1 March had been sentenced yet so we didn't know how Britain was going to enforce their criminalisation policy. While the fear of the unknown was playing on everyone's mind we were sure of one thing: we were republican POWs and irrespective of the consequences which lay ahead there was no way we were going to let the British government demonise us or our struggle.

In October 1976, three weeks after Kieran Nugent, the first man sentenced, entered the H-Blocks, I was sentenced to three-years imprisonment. I found myself in the unenviable position of travelling to the H-Blocks of Long Kesh in a "meat wagon" (an armoured lorry) with five loyalist prisoners. While the loyalists were generally chit-chatting amongst themselves on the journey up, I was overburdened with the sense of being all alone, wrapped up in my own thoughts, wondering what the impending welcoming party held for me.

On entering A and B wing of H1, which housed ordinary criminals, I told the screws there was no way would I wear the prison uniform or conform to prison rules because I was a republican POW. At this they laughed and told me in a threatening manner that I'd change my mind very shortly.

From that moment onward the screws tried every conceivable method the British government could conjure up to try and dehumanise us into submitting to their criminalisation policy. They moved me to C and D wing H1, which was not in use. I was put into a bare cell, given a blanket to cover myself and then the screws left without giving me any food or a mattress to lie on. I was in need of a friendly voice to give me some reassurance so I got up to the door and called out to Kieran Nugent, thinking he'd be somewhere in these two wings, but all I heard was my own echo resounding up and down the corridor. I was on my own.

Over the next number of days the screws kept up the psychological pressure, informing me at every opportunity that I was



on my own as Nugent had put the uniform on, but after a few weeks I found out he was in a cell in A and B wing. As the days went by I began to lose all track of time as well as weight because they were just giving me the bare minimum to keep me going. However, when they saw that this and the isolation was having no effect they switched tactics.

I was taken to the punishment block within the camp where I was charged and sentenced to 14 days loss of remission, 14 days loss of privileges and three-days solitary confinement, which was a bit ironic since I had been in solitary confinement since I entered the blocks and would remain so for the rest of my sentence. The real reason for my move to the punishment block became apparent when a number of screws came into my cell and gave me a beating.

All I could do was curl up into a ball and wait until it was over. Undoubtedly this was one of the lowest points of my time in jail; I was on my own, isolated from my family, friends and comrades and the screws took

great delight in informing me that much of the same and more was to come.

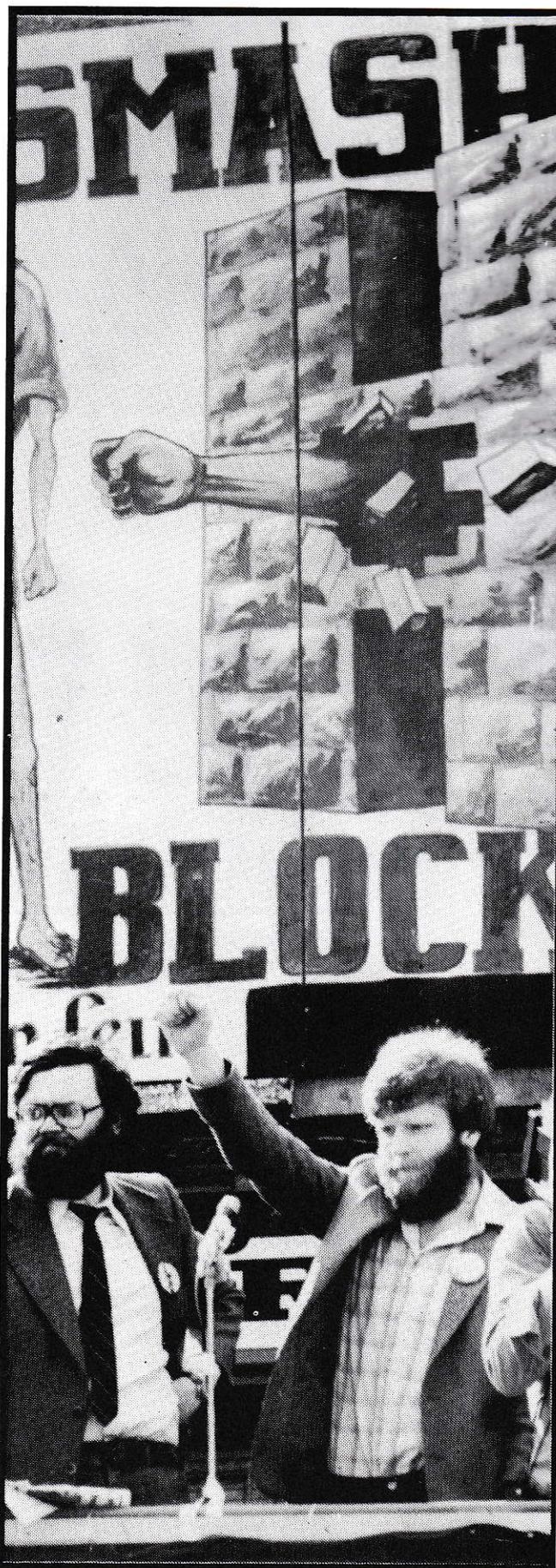
From what seemed like an eternity of complete isolation, but which in effect was only about three weeks, I was moved to A and B wing H1, where six of my comrades, sentenced a few days beforehand, joined Kieran Nugent and myself on what was now called the blanket protest. After my ordeal over the previous three weeks or so I can only describe the joy of hearing a friendly voice as akin to somebody giving me a million dollars. Sadly the luxury of spending time with my comrades, even if the conversation was conducted between walls, was short lived. Two days later I was on the move again.

The NIO was obviously desperate to fragment our unity from the inception of the blanket protest and they thought this was best done by singling out the younger members of the protest for specialised treatment in order that the blanket protest would crumble. Therefore myself, Kieran Nugent and Paul McEnarney, all under 21, were moved to H2, me to D wing, Paul to C and Kieran to B. Once again the

administration was hoping that isolation from our comrades would sap our will to continue the blanket protest and that us breaking would have a domino effect on the rest of our comrades.

Isolation was only one part of their strategy. Inhumane and degrading treatment as well as mental and physical torture were all methods designed to cause the collapse of the protest. Initially what little food they gave us was brought to the cell by ordinary criminals, but after a week or so they said if I wanted to be fed I had to leave the cell naked and go to get it. On one side of the wing there were ordinary criminals, on the other side the cells were all empty except for the one I occupied, so in order to get my food I had to go naked into a canteen full of men. The screws took great pleasure in making lewd remarks about certain parts of my anatomy and they encouraged the criminals to do likewise. At every available opportunity they paraded us like cattle. For example, every fortnight they forced us to go out to the circle (the central area of the block) naked so that the doctor could examine us and declare us fit to be punished. Picture the scene: on a freezing December morning a naked blanketman forced to stand for 30 minutes in front of 70 criminals and numerous screws; he is blue with cold and shivering from head to foot yet this so-called member of the medical profession declares him fit for anything. The NIO would go to any lengths in order to try and degrade us into capitulating and accepting their criminal status. For example, they told us we would be deprived of going to mass unless we went naked or wore the prison uniform and so it was, that rather than miss the sacraments, we went to Mass naked on a Sunday.

As well as the humiliating and degrading treatment we also had to contend with the physical abuse and the constant threat of it which was worse than the actual beatings. One screw in particular was given a free hand to do as he wished to the blanketmen and no one was left unscathed. Any young lad coming onto the blanket was put through a gruesome ordeal. He was always brought up to H2 at 5pm when all the screws were in



Kieran Nugent give the clenched fist salute at an anti H Block Rally in support of the blanket protesters

the circle and when he declared he was going on the blanket many of the screws joined in on stripping him naked and beating him senseless.

The deprivation was all-encompassing. We were locked up 24 hours a day, put into a bare cell at 8.30 that night. We had no books, radios, tobacco, writing material, or anything of that nature; all of these things were confiscated when we went on the blanket. By Christmas 1976 I'd been in the H-Blocks three months and I didn't even know if the outside world knew I existed because I hadn't seen any of my family as the screws wouldn't let us take visits unless we wore the prison uniform. Our only statutory entitlement was being allowed to write a one-page letter to our families every month and in return we were allowed to get one back, but when I had my first visit 18 months later my family told me they had received nothing. It later emerged that the screws ripped our letters up and held back mail from us to give us the impression that we were forgotten.

Christmas 1976 was a very bleak period for the blanketmen, but through all the trials and tribulations we persevered. Our resolve to remain steadfast to our principles and ideals as republican POWs was far greater than the resolve of the British government to break us.

The blanket protest continued for another five years, escalating into a no-wash protest and culminating in the 1981 Hunger Strike. By that stage Britain's criminalisation strategy and indeed its international reputation lay in tatters. The Republican Movement was resurgent, providing a solid foundation for the further development of the struggle and culminating in the present peace process. As for conditions in the H-Blocks, mindful of the sacrifices endured during our jail campaigns, I write this article 20 years on in an environment where we have de facto recognition as POWs and where we have created the opportunities for personal and collective development beyond anything we imagined possible in 1976.

ECLIPSES, FLUFFY FLOORS AND CINDY CRAWFORD

REVOLUTIONARY doctrines teach us never to accept anything at face value, but to always question the point in case. However, there are some questions which just defy an answer. For example, our two comrades Brogie and Fra Rooney were sitting somewhat stuck for conversation when Fra says: "I see there's going to be an eclipse tonight Brogie." To which Brogie replies: "Is that right? ...Where?"

THEY SAY that you can tell a lot from the way a man keeps his cell. For example, the cell covered in half-an-inch of sawdust and littered with lumps of soft mahogany obviously indicates someone with creative hands. Another cell might be liberally decorated with dogged-eared books and half-written articles, presumably the abode of a political activist. If there is a pile of dirty dishes under the bed, then it's the cell of one of our resident philosophers — too lost in metaphysics to clean up after themselves. Some cells have posters of Ché Guevara, others of Cindy Crawford — and some have both, which is a little worrying...

And then there's Craig Bannon, a big cuddly Fermanagh lad who so far has defied labelling under all the normal categories. But perhaps a recent incident might shed some light on his true character. One evening, as dusk began to fall and Craig came to life (there may be some Transylvanian blood in him) he approached Bik McFarlane and asked for a drop of Lenor (you know, the fabric conditioner stuff). Bik has the washing-machine brief at present, and an admirable job he is doing too with his own inimitable efficiency. But the wing supply of Lenor is precious stuff and only to be used for visiting clothes. So he regards Craig suspiciously for a moment but the big brown eyes finally get to him. He takes the Lenor out of the secret wall cavity and hands across the liquid gold, extracting a promise from Craig that he will only use a few drops.

Five minutes later and Bik happens to stroll past Craig's cell where the big lad is merrily mopping his floor.

"Finished washing your clothes already?" enquires Bik with his usual bonhomie.

"Clothes?"

"You know, with the Lenor."

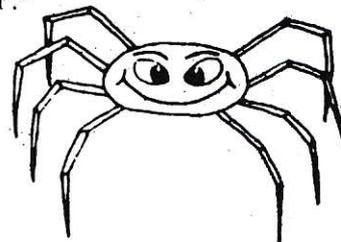
"Ach naw, naw Bik," says Craig in his distinctive Lisnaskea drawl. "Sure that was for me floor." And he gazes innocently at the mop bucket.

So now Craig has the softest, fluffiest cell floor in the H-Blocks, just like his own soft and fluffy nature. Just as well really, 'cos it didn't hurt so much when Bik bounced him off the aforementioned floor.

IRISH-LANGUAGE CLASSES have always been popular with republican POWs, right back to Frongoch Internment Camp in 1916. This present phase of the struggle is no exception, and the H-Blocks are fast becoming a Gaeltacht area, lacking only the windy beaches and turf fires, (but we're working on that). Of course not everyone is yet fluent, but there's no elitism in Long Kesh — our golden rule is that old proverb: "Is fearr an Ghaeilge bhriste ná an Béarla cliste" (broken Irish is better than clever English). So every POW is encouraged to use what phrases he has, things like "Cad é mar atá tú?" (how are you?) If in doubt they can always ask: "Cad é mar a dearfá...?" (how do you say...?) and their more fluent comrades will assist.

One man who is doing really well at his wing's Irish class is Noel Healy. Indeed it may not be long before he's ready to move to the Gaeltacht wing. The only problem is that, although normally a modest sort of chap, Noel's enthusiasm for his native language seems to have gone to his head. He's a bit like those mild-mannered people who turn into maniacs when they get behind the wheel of a car. In Noel's case he becomes a little supercilious in his Irish class.

Not so long ago Mada Moore asked the class: "Cad é mar a dearfá—" Before he got finishing the sentence, Noel interrupted excitedly: "Wait, wait, I know this one, don't tell me..." he screwed up his face in agonised thought and glanced around the cell for inspiration before his face lit up and he blurted out: "That means, 'how's your sister'!" He beamed at his fellow pupils with obvious pride in his knowledge of Irish. Mada paused for a moment, unsure of how to deal with this situation tactfully. In gentle tones he explained: "Noel, the Irish for sister is 'deirfiúr'."



By Red Spider ■

Apprentice

By Frankie Quinn, Long Kesh ■

I stood and watched him hit the nail,
Each strike as precise as a marksman's shot.
Crack came the hammer blow, another secure job
Stands on its own.
He'd take my hand in his, his rough leathered skin
All but cut my pureness.
Guiding my trembling fingers with nail between,

He'd drum, drum, drum on hollow board.
On hearing changing note he'd nod, I'd drive the nail home
To hidden rafter, I'd smile he'd say: "Carry on now."

I'd never master that sound. Him like a harpist
Tuning fine strings with every note.
His ear caught every differing knock
While I stood driving nails in air, stumbling at escaping
Timber within.
But now his thumb-nail remains blackened,
His fingers tremble as holding a delf cup hardens his
resolve.

Life in an English Jail

ON ARRIVING at the Kesh in August 1995, I was expecting the familiar set up as is found in every jail in England — come through reception, strip search, get your towel, sheets, cup, knife and fork and be shown to whichever cell the screws decide to put you in for the duration of your stay. Often you will find yourself to be the only republican prisoner in the jail and while many of the ordinary English prisoners will be supportive, at the end of the day you can only depend on yourself in the constant battle to survive. However, this was not to be the case in Long Kesh. I was totally taken aback by the surroundings and the warm atmosphere created by the lads here in the Blocks. Besides the conditions, the fact that we are not isolated from each other makes the Blocks the complete opposite to conditions under which fellow POWs in English jails have to endure.

By far the biggest problem for all POWs in any jail is trying to maintain some sort of contact with their families and friends. This problem is compounded a hundred fold in England. All visitors, even close relatives, have to wait anywhere between three and nine months before the Home Office will grant them security clearance to visit the POW. Prior to such clearance a closed visit (ie no physical contact) may be arranged at the discretion of the prison governor. However the inhuman conditions under which such visits are conducted, with the POW never able to touch or hug his loved ones, means that POWs generally refuse these visits. Often even close relatives will be refused security clearance and thus visits with them will be impossible. When clearance does finally come through that is the start of more problems.

Since most of the jails in which POWs are kept in England are out in the country and off the beaten track, journeys to them from Ireland are not only long but are complicated by many changes of transport on the way. This adds to the problems of journey time and cost. As a result

most POWs only receive visits twice or less each year. Visitors also have to run the gauntlet of security checks at port or airport terminals; often being stopped, questioned, arrested, threatened. They also suffer the constant threat of deportation under the PTA, whereby they know they will never be able to visit their loved ones in England again. Once they reach the jail they may be faced with petty indignities and the bigotry of the screws. They may find the visit disrupted, cut short or even cancelled due to the vindictiveness of the prison regime. Worse still they may find that the POW has just been "ghosted" hundreds of miles away to another jail without their being informed. In such cases often all they can do is return home without the visit.

Visits themselves are never private but are under the constant eye of screws and cameras as well as often being recorded. Physical contact is also curtailed between visitors and POWs. As a result visits are often conducted under conditions of extreme tension, which is further compounded by the fact that the visitors know they have to make the same long journey home,

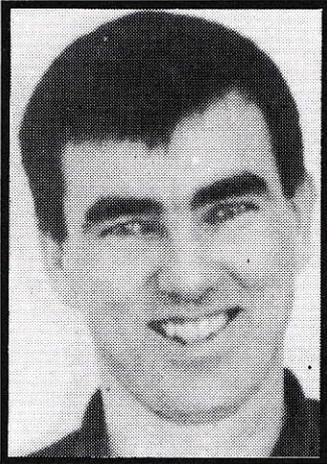


facing the harassment and intimidation again and the debts which have been accrued to pay for the journey.

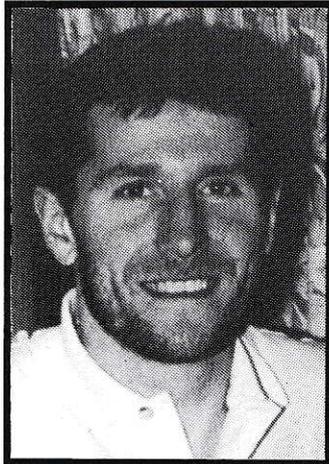
Since the cease-fire was announced in August 1994 Irish POWs in English jails have witnessed a marked deterioration in conditions, particularly in relation to visits. After the Whitemoor escape in September 1994 closed family and legal visits were forced on the prisoners involved. Then in June 1995 these closed visits were extended to cover all POWs being held in what are called Special Secure Units (SSUs) at Whitemoor and Belmarsh. The POWs have refused to accept these conditions and as a result many have not had a visit for the past 18 months.

Officially, contact between prisoners and their families is encouraged by the British government. Britain has also adopted the Ferrers Report (1992) and the European

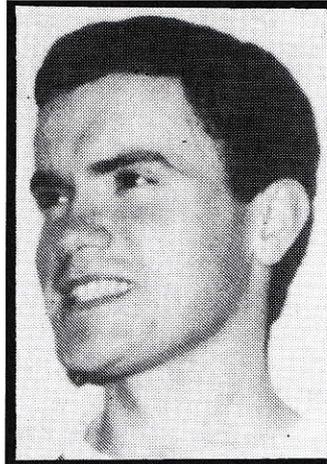
Convention on the Transfer of Prisoners (1983), both of which advocate the placing of prisoners in jails (and in countries) closer to their families. However, the British have continually placed barriers in the way of republican POWs to prevent them being moved to jails in Ireland close to their families. Anyone who has been transferred to Ireland to date has only achieved that transfer through the pressure of legal or protest action. Despite the peace process and the ratification of the European Convention by the 26-County government last summer, not one republican POW has been repatriated to the 26 Counties to date (February 1996). About a dozen POWs also remain in Britain because they have been refused transfers to the north. Among these are the five Irish prisoners currently held under appalling conditions (22 hour lock up, closed legal and family visits) in Belmarsh jail, London.



LIAM McCOTTER



LIAM O DUIBHIR

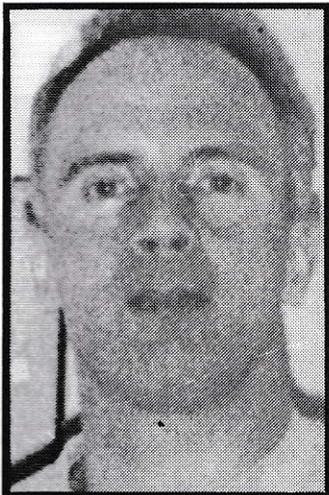


DANNY McNAMEE

They are Liam McCotter, Liam O Duibhir, Danny McNamee, Peter Sherry and Dingus Magee (who is also on protest).

When it comes to the issues of family illness or death it becomes even clearer that the prevention of links between POWs in England and their families is part of a deliberate and vindictive policy practiced by the British government. No Irish POW in England will be allowed compassionate parole to visit a seriously-ill family member or to attend their funeral in the event of a death. Since the cease-fire both Brendan Dowd (Whitemoor) who has served 21 years in jail, and Pat Magee (on temporary transfer to Maghaberry) have been refused parole to attend the funerals of their mother and father respectively. The same has happened prior to the cease-fire for many other POWs in English jails from the 1970s right through to the 1990s. No Irish POW in England will be granted compassionate parole for any reason.

Phones have been introduced to all English high-risk jails over the past three to four years. These are a great boon to Irish POWs in particular who have very few visits. However, they are highly restricted and restrictions have increased in the past years. POWs are only allowed to phone people who have been previously cleared as visitors by the Home Office and all such calls are recorded. Limitations have also been



PETER SHERRY

placed on the amount of phone cards which can be bought which is particularly disadvantageous to POWs phoning the 26 Counties. Attempts have also been made to link the buying of phone cards to money earned from doing prison work and to "good behaviour". Besides phone cards, POWs in English jails also depend heavily on the mail to keep in contact with family and friends. The delay or "loss" of mail is a favourite tactic of the prison authorities to harass POWs when it suits.

One of the major problems associated with jail in England is "ghosting". At about 6.30am in the morning, often on the morning of a visit and with no prior warning, a prisoner's cell door will be opened and he will be told he has ten minutes to get ready, he is on the move. He will not be told where he is going until he arrives at the next jail several hundred miles away.



'DINGUS' MAGEE

Neither will his family be informed where he is going, even should they arrive at the prison gate for a visit. He will be strip searched and told to wear prison uniform. POWs tend to refuse the prison near and travel naked and handcuffed in the cubicle of the armoured lorry or "horse box" as it is known. The journey often lasts from seven o'clock in the morning until five in the evening with maybe a stop-off in the punishment block of some jail while the screws get their lunch. In this block the naked POW may be subjected to taunts or harassment from the local screws. The prisoner will not be allowed to bring any belongings with him. These will arrive along with phone cards and any money he has in the shop a month or so later. As a result ghosted POWs will have to borrow clothes, phone cards and so on from other prisoners. Often a lot of his belongings never arrived, having

Longest-serving POWs



EDDIE BUTLER,
(Full Sutton)
Limerick, was 26 when arrested in 1975



HUGH DOHERTY,
(Full Sutton)
Donegal, was 25 when arrested in 1975

VINCENT DONNELLY,
(Frankland)
Tyrone, was 35 when arrested in 1976



BRENDAN DOWD,
(Whitemoor)
Kerry, was 28 when arrested in 1975



PAUL NORNEY,
(Maghaberry)
Belfast, was 17 when arrested in 1975



JOE O'CONNELL,
(Full Sutton)
Clare, was 24 when arrested in 1975 (Full Sutton)



HARRY DUGGAN,
(Frankland)
Clare, was 23 when arrested in 1975



Volunteer Frank Stagg commemoration outside Belmarsh 1996

been "lost". Delays in money arriving also prevent POWs from buying stamps and phone cards: the main methods for keeping in touch with families.

Ghosting has a very unsettling effect on long-term POWs and their families and is used as a punishment to disrupt friendship circles, routines, education or planned visits. It's akin, on a grander scale, to the way red-book POWs in the Kesh

were moved around from block to block on a regular basis.

Life in jail in England is much different from life in jail in Long Kesh at the present time. It's much more akin to the film version of what life in jail is like. Republicans there find themselves in jails with few or even no other republicans. In a jail of 800 there may be only half a dozen at the most. Due to the stand of the first republican

POWs in the 1970s and since, most ordinary English prisoners respect republican POWs and many build up friendships and show solidarity with them. However, jail culture in England is much different from here. One of the biggest problems in English jails is the drugs problem and the other problems which this spawns. Most ordinary prisoners in England are on drugs of one form or another. The

taking of hard drugs such as heroin and crack is widespread. Most of the violence among prisoners in English jails (stabbings, beatings etcetera) occurs as a result of drugs: inability to pay drug debts, different sellers impinging on others territories and so on. The same could be said for most of the theft among prisoners which is an everyday occurrence as addicts try to get valuables to exchange for drugs.

Prisoners do come together in solidarity to protest at conditions in the jails in England and Irish POWs will usually be to the fore in such protests. As a result of such actions Irish POWs have earned a lot of respect over the years from other prisoners in the high-security jails. Protests occur regularly and Irish POWs have been through the lot to bring about better conditions. Some have experienced years living in punishment blocks in solitary confinement, being denied visits and suffering beatings at the hands of screws. Over the years protests in which Irish POWs have been involved have often been linked to general prison

Irish POWs in English jails

THERE are a total of 43 Irish political prisoners sentenced in England serving sentences ranging from 16 years in the case of 68-year-old Joe McKenny, to the tariff of 50 years in the cases of Paul Kavanagh, Tommy Quigley and Pat Magee. Seven of the prisoners are now in their 21st year of imprisonment. Twenty-four are held in jails in England, nine are on temporary transfer to Maghaberry Jail and ten are on permanent transfer, six of whom are in Long Kesh. Those in England are categorised as High-Risk Category "A" prisoners and are currently held in four high-security jails at Belmarsh, Full Sutton, Frankland and Whitemoor. All of the prisoners in England have witnessed a deterioration in conditions since the IRA cessation in August 1994. New restrictions and rules have been introduced which make their situation worse than at any time since the mid-1970s.

conditions affecting all prisoners within the jail, ie food, visiting facilities and so on. However, Irish POWs have also been involved in protests which have specifically affected them, in particular over the issue of transfer. Two POWs, Michael Gaughan and Frank Stagg, died while on hunger strike over this issue during the 1970s.

As we write this article Paul Dingus Magee is now on Blanket protest in Belmarsh Jail, London. Dingus, like four other Irish prisoners, Liam McCotter, Liam O Duibhir, Peter Sherry and Danny McNamee, has been without visits for the past year and a half. Pat Kelly and Mick O'Brien were moved out of the special secure unit at Whitemoor after a prolonged protest against conditions. Due to tireless campaigning and massive international pressure, Pat has now been transferred to Portlaoise Prison. However he is

dying of cancer at least in some part due to neglect while in prison in England. Along with this, ten POWs are now into their 21st year of imprisonment in England.

As I wrote at the start of this article things have very much changed since I arrived here in Long Kesh. We can receive family visits each week and phone home 24 hours a day if required. This means a lot for our families. The children can come to visit each week, smiling and laughing, telling fathers of everyday things like how school is going. It may not seem like much but if you are one of the families who had or have a relative in an English jail it means a lot. Our thoughts are with the POWs in England and their families who face torment and torture now as we speak.

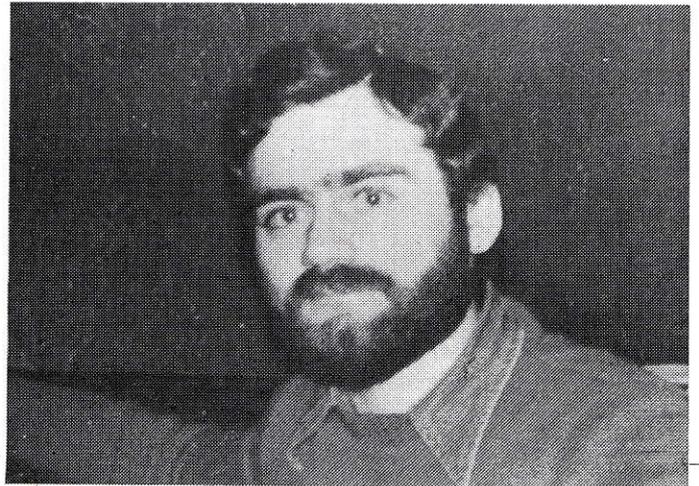
By Gerry Mackin,
Long Kesh ■



MICK O'BRIEN



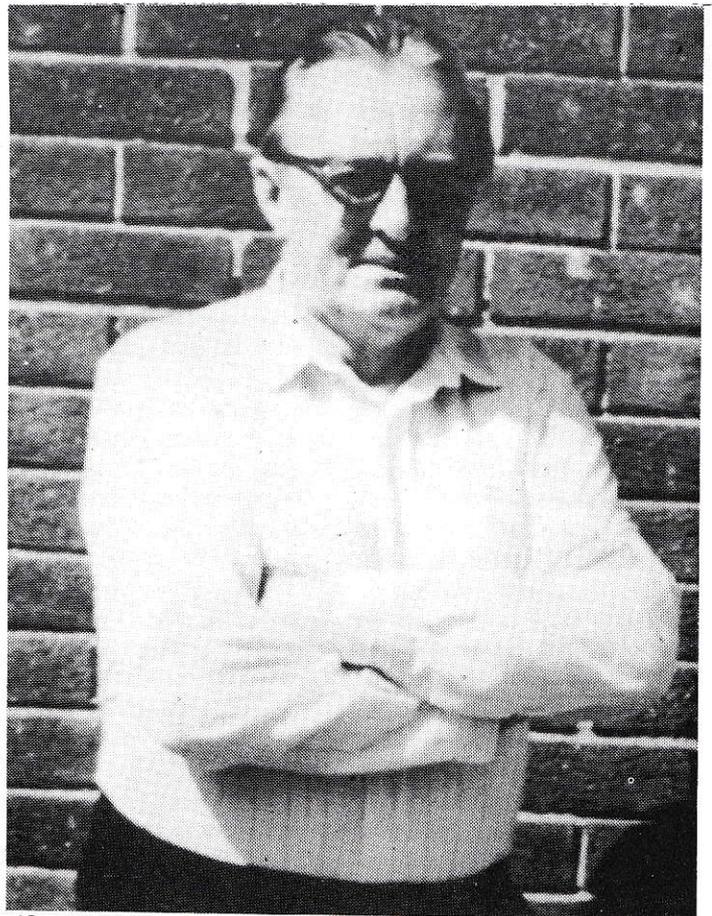
PAIRIC Mac FHLOINN



PAT MAGEE

Special Secure Units (SSUs)

FROM 20 June 1995 the British Home Secretary Michael Howard introduced closed visits for all 13 High-Risk Category "A" prisoners, eight of whom were Irish, held in the Special Secure Units (SSUs) at Whitemoor and Belmarsh. This move was the latest in a series of draconian measures against Irish prisoners in English jails introduced in the wake of the IRA cessation in August 1994. Closed visits are the latest step in the policy of aggression against the prisoners and their families. The Irish prisoners refuse to cooperate with the new visits regime and thus have no contact with their families. Within the SSUs a restricted regime of association with other prisons was introduced along with forced prison work. Access to gym, library, education, training facilities and religious services has been denied. Exercise has been limited to one hour per day in a small caged area. The prisoners are subjected to regular cell and strip-searching. Each SSU contains approximately six to seven prisoners confined in a small space year in year out and watched at all times by cameras and 12 screws. The atmosphere is thus very claustrophobic. Prisoners never leave the SSU except to avail of the hour's exercise. Since they refuse to engage in forced prison work all Irish prisoners are on 23-hour lock up in their cells.



JOE MCKENNY



Gaeltacht na Fuiseoige

TA SÉ thar a bheith tábhachtach in achan ghné den streachailt go mbeadh gníomhaithe, bíodh siad pobalchtánach nó nach mbíodh, iontach eolach ar an hathraithe a tháinig ar chúrsaí an tsaoil agus a thugann déis dúinn dul chun cinn a dhéanamh. Le linn 20 bliana de streachailt san Blocanna-H bhain cimid poblachtánacha tairbhe as déiseanna fóirsteanacha go rialta, agus b'amhlaidh an scéal nuair a cuireadh ar bun Gaeltacht na Fuiseoige i Sciathán C, H6, ar 29 Bealtaine 1995.

Ag an phóinte sin bhí sos chógaidh Óglaigh na hÉireann chóir a bheith bliain d'aois, agus mar a bhíodas ag súil thit líon na gcimid ar choimeád, a bhí lonnaithe i Sciathán C agus D i H6, ó 80 go dtí thart fá 28 fear. Sa chuid eile den champa bhí, ar a laghad, ceathrar cimid dúbailte suas ar achan sciathán, rud a chur ribe ar achan duine! Mar sin tharla go raibh na cillíní folamha i H6 mar fhreagra don chur thar maoil ar fud an champa uilig, agus aontaíodh cainteoirí Gaeilge measartha líofa a bhogadh isteach.

Nuair a bhí go leor cainteoirí Gaeilge socraithe i H6 tugadh le fíos go poiblí go raibh Gaeltacht na Fuiseoige ar an tsaol, le sraith altanna in *An Glór Gafa*, *AP/RN*, *Lá* agus *Nuacht na hÉireann*. Bhí neart leabhair, foclóirí, agus áiseanna eile de dhíth orainn ionas go mbeadh timpeallacht

fhóirsteanach ann do dhuine ar bith ar mhaith leo staidéar éifeachtach a chur isteach ar an Ghaeilge.

Mar sin scríobh muid chuig cuid mhór eagraíochtaí ar fud na hÉireann a bhfuil baint acu le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge agus d'iarr muid cuidú orthu. Taobh istigh de chúpla seachtain tháinig cuid mhór ábhair isteach chugainn agus anois tá leabharlann ar an sciathán atá lán le leabhair Gaeilge, buíochas le tacaíocht ón Chultúrlann i Béal Feirste, Glór na nGael, Conradh na Gaeilge, Gael Linn, Roinn an Chultúir Shinn Féin, An Institiúid Teangeolaíocht Éireann, Bord na Gaeilge, Aras Mháirtín Uí Chadhain, Coiscéim, Cló Iar-Chonnachta, An Gúm, Comhar na Múinteoirí, Iontaobhas Ultacht agus go leor meánscoileanna i mBéal Feirste agus Ard Mhacha.

Leis an timpeallacht a Ghaelú

ní ba mhó luigh muid isteach ar an sciathán a mhaisiú le póstaeirí, picitúirí agus comharthaí a raibh seanfhocail Gaeilge scríofa orthu, cosúil le "Is fearr Gaeilge bhriste ná Béarla cliste", nó, "Is fearr an tsláinte ná an táinte", srl. Phéinteáil ealaíontóir oilte na Gaeltachta, Jimmy McAlister, cúig phictiúr ar 'perspex'. An ceann is mó, atá lonnaithe ag bun an sciatháin, rinneadh le péint dubh agus ór é agus cuireann sé fáilte roimh chách, idir mhúinteoirí agus chimí ó na blocanna eile, a tháinig ar chuairt chuig Gaeltacht na Fuiseoige. Ar cheann eile tá íomhá Roibeárid Mhic Sandair agus an fhuiseog agus thíos an dáta ar bunaíodh Gaeltacht s'againne.

Roimh i bhfad bhí na ranganna Gaeilge ag gabháil ar aghaidh faoi lán seoil. Bhíodh an clár ama is crua acu siúd a raibh leibhéal an Fháinne Airgid bainte amach acu, le dhá rang achan lá, cúig lá sa tseachtain. Na fir eile a bhí ar chaighdeán ní ba airde ná sin bhíodh rang amháin measartha fada acusan achan trathnóna agus cuid mhór acu rinneadh iad amuigh fá aimsir bhreá mhí Bealtaine, Iúil agus Lúnasa. Ar 8 i.n. achan Aoine

bhíodh an ard rang bheo bhríomhar ar siúl sa chillín mór. Chlúdaigh muid a lán ábhar suimiúla ins na díospóireachtaí céanna, cosúil le forbairtí a bhain leis an phróiseas síochána, imeachtaí sa Ghaeltacht, cúrsaí a bhain leis an teanga, an saol ar na hoileáin amach ó chósta na hÉireann, an timpeallacht, an lucht taistil.

Taobh amuigh den teanga, tharla gurbh í an Ghaeltacht croí lár imeachtaí cultúrtha d'achan saghas. Trathnóntaí Aoine ghlac Bik McFarlane rang amhránaíochta a chuig fríd sraith amhráin as an leabhrán *Abair Amhráin*. Bhí an cleachtadh seo ina chuidiú mhór don fhuaimníocht — siocair go raibh an oiread sin ceoltóirí i láthair, cuirim i gcás Tarlach Ó Conghailigh agus Caoimhín Ó Cosgraigh ar an fheadóg stáin, Aontón Ó Néill, Seán Ó Daimhín agus Conchúr Mac Giolla Mhuire ar banjo agus maindilín, Pádraig Mac Giolla Bhuí agus Pól Dubhthaigh ar an ghiotar agus Bik é féin, níorbh fhada go raibh seisiúin bheaga agus seisiúin mhóra mar pháirt de shaol na Gaeltachta.

Bhí ceolchoirm ar dóigh againn i mí Iúil, nuair a d'fhág

Pól McGettigan slán linn agus arís níos déanaí i mí na Samhna nuair a bhí cóisir mhór againn do Sheán Ó Daimhín, Pól Ó Dubhtaigh, Micheál Tallon, Ruairí Mac Carthaigh agus Máirtín Ó Maolmhuaidh a tugadh cead a gcinn dóibh.

I mí Eanáir 1996 chuir muid an chéad dhráma Gaeilge ar an ardán sa Cheis Fhada, bhuel tá muid ag maíomh gurbh é an chéad cheann ar scor ar bith! Ba é an teideal a bhí air ná "Dúnmharú is Slád", finscéal greannmhar a bhí ann agus é bunaithe i dteach taibhairne i mBéal Feriste sna 1970í. Ba é Gearóid Mac Aodh an freastalaí agus ghlac Peadar Ó Cuinneagáin, Liam Averill, Collie Ó Dubhthaigh, Pádraig Mac Giolla Bhuí, Conchúr Mac Giolla Mhuire agus Aontón Ó Néill páirteanna na gcustaiméirí éagsúla.

Mar is gnáth le achán dhráma sa Cheis Fhada rinneadh a lán magadh ar an lucht féachana ach chan leath chomh dona agus a fuair na haisteoirí féin.

Nuair a tháinig mí Feabhra afách, bhí an Ghaeltacht ag teacht fá bhrú mhíllteanach. Os rud é gur mhair sos cogaidh na nÓglach ar feadh 17 mí, mhothaigh muid go mbeadh titim i líon na geimí go háirithe fir a bheadh ar choimhead. Ar an drochuair nfor tharla a leithéid de thairbhe: próiseas mall na gcúirteanna Diplock; reachtaíocht smachtúil rialtas na Breataine bheith ann fós; agus ar ndóigh, Ionad Ceastóireacht Chaisleán na Riabhach bheith ag feidhmiú mar ba ghnáth. Mar gheall ar seo uilig bhí meadú i líon na geimí, le ní ba mhó ná 20 ag teacht isteach le linn an gheimhridh. Mar gheall ar seo bhí an sciathán plodaithe agus ní raibh Gaeilgeoirí eile ábalta teacht.

Maidir le áiteanna eile ar fud an champa, anois de thairbhe gur cuireadh maitheadh de 50% i bhfeidhm athuair, chiallaigh sin gur scoileadh saor cúpla dosaen cime poblachtánach agus d'fhág sin cúpla cillín folamh ar achán sciathán. Mar sin de tapáidh an deis agus thángthas ar shocrú go mbogfadh an Ghaeltacht iomlán



ROIBEARD Mac SANDAIR

go bloc eile. Tháinig seo i gcrích níos deireanaí ar an 26ú Feabhra nuair a bog muid go Bloc-H8 go sealadach go ceann cúpla seachtain sular ghlac muid uilig sealbh ar H5.

Tá Gaeltacht na Fuiseoige lonnaithe anois i Sciathán D, H5, agus tá sé i bhfad níos buaine, is seasmaí ná mar a bhí riamh roimhe. Le cúpla Gaeilgeoir úr i ndiaidh teacht chuici níl dabht ar bith ná go bhfuil dul chun cinn míllteanach déanta ag achán fhear atá ag maireachtáil sa Ghaeltacht ó thaobh cumas labhartha na teanga de, ach go háirithe.

Cé go bhfuil ranganna tábhachtach is í an timpeallacht an rud is riachtanaí le líofacht na teanga a bheith ar do chumas agat. Déanann muid ár gcuid comhrá uilig trí mheán na Gaeilge. Is cuma más in ár suí sna cillíní atá muid, ag spaisteoireacht sa chlós nó ag ithe ár gcuid sa bhialann. Is ionann atá an scéal maidir le cruinnithe coiste s'againne fosta, a shocraíonn imeachtaí uilig an sciathán.

aidhm acu cuidiú le Gaelscoileanna a bhunú is a fhorbairt i Machaire Rátha agus ar an tSrath Bhán.

Anois tá an Ghaeltacht bliain d'aois agus tá muid i ndiaidh a ghabháil i bhfad thar na spriocanna a chuir muid romhainn ar tús. De bhrí sin tá muid thar a bheith muiníneach go bhfásfaidh Gaeltacht na Fuiseoige níos láidre, ní ba mhó agus go mbeidh sé mar ghné thábhachtach dár gcultúr agus dár bhforbairt mar chimí poblachtánacha, bíodh sin anseo sa Cheis Fhada nó i gcarcair ar bith eile in Éirinn nó thar sáile.

Agus muid ag smaoinéamh ar Roibeárd Mac Sandair a d'éag 15 bhliana ó shin ar stailc ocrais, déanann muid machnamh ar a chuid scríobhneoireachta agus ar cé chomh díograiseach is a bhí sé leis an Ghaeilge a chothú nuair a bhí sé ar an phluid. Siocair nach raibh pinn ná leabhair ag na fir pluid glaodh na focail Gaeilge timpeall na sciathán agus scríobhadh ar na ballaí cludaithe le cac, le taobhanna feadáin, taos fiacaile nó le boinn bheannaite.

Le linn colchoirm anseo ar na mallaibh bronnadh Fáinne Oir ar Dhaití Mac Adaimh, fear a bhí ar an agóid pluide an t-am deireanach a bhí sé istigh. Rinne Daithí machnamh ar a chuid cuimhneamh ar Roibeárd agus lean sé le óráid ghearr inar thrácht sé ar an dul chuinn cinn suntasach atá déanta ó thaobh athbheochan na Gaeilge sa champa seo agus sna comhphobail ar fud na hÉireann. Muid ag tarraingt ar mhí an Mheithimh i nGaeltacht na Fuiseoige tá an fhuisseog ag canadh in ard a cinn sa spéir os ár geoinn. Thíos fuithi sna clósanna cluintear idir Ghaeilge bhriste agus líofa á labhairt ag cimeí poblachtánacha agus iad amuigh ag spaisteoireacht. Iadsan a thug eolas an bhealaigh dúinn ar tús atá ár spreagadh is ár ngríosadh ar fad.

Más tá spéis ag éinne scríobh chugainn ar ábhar ar bith tig leo scríobh chuig Gearóid Mac Aodh ag an seoladh a leanas:

H5, Sciathán D, Blocanna-H, An Cheis Fhada, Lios na gCearrbhach, BT27 5RF.

Le déanaí rinneadh cinneadh le 'Cumann Gaeilge' a bhunú ar an Ghaeltacht. D'aontaigh muid go mbeadh dhá phríomh sprioc aige. Ar an chéad dul síos go gcinntódh sé go ndeanfaí ní ba mhó teagmháil agus cumarsáid le Gaeilgeoirí sna blocanna eile taobh istigh den champa seo agus le cimeí polachtánacha eile i bpriosún Machaire Beirí, Port Laoise, Full Sutton, Belmarsh agus Whitemoor.

Ba é an dara sprioc ná teagmháil a dhéanamh is an neartú le eagraíochtaí Gaeilge éagsúla ar fud na hÉireann ionas go dtiocfadh linn smaointe a mhalartú agus cuidiú lena gcéile cibé dóigheanna is féidir linn.

Bhéimis ag súil fosta leis an bhaint eadrainn agus Roinn an Chultúir Sinn Féin a neartú agus Gaeltacht na Fuiseoige a shlánú sa chomhphobal Gaeilge. Bheadh seo thar a bheith tábhachtach dúinn ar mhaith leo oibriú ar son an chomhphobail nó fiú post a fháil nuair a sacolfaí saor muid. Cheana féin tá cúpla iarchime ag obair ar scéimeanna atá mar

Chicken Lickin' and the Windy Day

A LIGHT FLURRY of snow covered the entire surface of the open car park. The footprints were those left by the old man, dancing from one corner to the next, his arms embracing an imaginary partner. Thinking it best to leave him to his routine I fixed my eyes instead on the old woman sitting by the oil drum fire, whom I approached with deliberate slowness. Flames from the crackling wood lit up her wrinkled face.

"Hi" I said, introducing myself to a glare as icy as the weather. "I'm Cojo."

"Bring any wood for the fire?" Her question as sharp as her look.

"Aghh, no, no, I didn't see any lying around," I said apologetically.

"Humph!" She tightened the string that held her oversized coat together. "Next time you come visiting bring some firewood." Her lifeless eyes returned to the flickering flames. I'm sure her teeth would have chattered, but she had so few, I doubted they ever came into contact with one another.

My numbed fingers fumbled to extract a can from my pocket. "I've got some soup," I said, eventually freeing the can from the grip of the material and holding it out towards her.

"CHICKEN!" she snapped.

I jumped a clear step backward, almost losing my grip on the can.

"No, no!" I stammered, my heart pounding. "Sorry. It's not. It's tomato."

"CHICKEN!" she shouted once more. "He's got soup."

In gliding, swooping movements the old man made his way along the side of the car park.

"Good evening," he said, taking the can from my still outstretched hand.

"Hi?" I replied. He punctured the can twice with a Swiss army knife and returned to his dancing.

"Pass the kettle beside your feet," she instructed. The blackened kettle felt full. From by her side she produced a saucepan. It too, like the kettle, had a scorched outer rim. Emptying the contents of the can into it, followed by the same amount of water she then to my amazement, produced a griddle which spanned the top of the oil drum and she placed the soup on top.

"Do you have a cup?" she scowled.

I felt a frown cross my own forehead. "A cup? No, I don't," I replied timidly.

Rummaging in a bag beside her, she produced three foam cups and handed one to me.

"Always carry a cup. It's one of the essentials. Any cafe owner will be glad to give you one or two. He'd rather do that than have you ask his precious customers for any money, God forbid!"

"Just like a bit of blackmail."

"No! They think it's blackmail if you ask them to put something in it."

Nodding my head, I moved a little closer to the fire, until the licking flames burnt the hairs on the backs of my hands. The soup had begun to boil. My mouth watered.

With perfect timing the old man reappeared and pulled up a crate beside his companion. He lifted the pan and poured three cups of soup. No words were spoken until he had taken three quick sips from his cup.

"I'll be thanking you for the soup young man," he said. His accent was strange, a hint of Dublin I thought, yet with something of a French air about it. At any rate it was peculiar.

"I'm Cojo," I said once more as the old woman did not seem to be volunteering an introduction.

"My name is Chicken, and this is young Mary," he smiled.

"Get out of it," she said into the steam rising from her cup. An awkward silence fell between us. In the distance the last commuters could be heard making their way home.

"You are new to the streets, friend, I take it?" Chicken asked.

"Two weeks." I stamped my feet and wished the hot soup would make its way down to my numbed toes.

"Ah, just a rookie then." His fingerless gloves encircled the cup which he held to his lower lip.

"Aye, I lived with my father until then. That's when..."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa son," he interjected, placing an outstretched hand in front of my face. "How you come to be on the streets is nobody's business but your own. We don't ask personal questions, nor do we expect them to be asked." I felt my face flush.

Chicken, finishing the last of his soup, shared what was left in the pot between the three of us. Taking several butts from an inside pocket he offered me one with



Illustration by Noel McHugh (Long Kesh)

outstretched hand, the tips of his fingers brown with nicotine. I declined.

"You don't smoke?" he asked, passing them on to Mary who carefully selected one and tried to squeeze it back to its original shape.

"No, I've never indulged." Thank God, I thought, as I watched him light the butt, his head askew to avoid singeing his shaggy beard.

"Just right, son. Devil's own poison sticks." He exhaled a mixture of frost and smoke.

"Do you have a bed for the night, son?" Mary asked as she gathered the empty cups.

"I've a cardboard box. It's stashed two streets away."

"What about blankets?" Chicken asked.

"No I don't have any."

"No blankets? And it ready to snow all night! Do we have any spare ones, Mary?"

"No, look, I couldn't take your blankets," I protested.

"I'll be all right."

"Nonsense! They're free."

"Free?"

"Aye, free," he said, as Mary handed me a bundle of old newspapers. My puzzled thoughts were obviously transparent for they both broke into laughter.

"Newspapers, son," he said. "Warmer than any fleece blanket and available free, courtesy of this little happy nation. You'll find them in bars, bookies and buses. All the B's just like bed and breakfast." They both laughed again. "That's a lesson learnt, son,

and another is: never lose your sense of humour for no matter what they take off you, they can never take that. Ain't that so Mary?"

"Aye," she said, resting folded arms over crossed legs.

The night got colder and Chicken, after making several cups of tea and keeping the conversation going, suddenly became quite and a little sullen. I guessed this was as good a time as any to take my leave.

"One more thing before you go, son," he said. "Be sure to place your bed in an empty shop door front that isn't facing the wind." Taking his advice, I bade them farewell and good luck for the future. Settling down that night was a lot easier than the previous nights. Following Chicken's advice, I found I was actually warm, lost somewhere in the crumpled pages of world news. Heavily laden eyes soon closed, and thoughts transformed not pleasant dreams.

The restful night all too soon gave way to a cold, damp, dawn and the sound of commuters, returning like an army of ants to fill offices and workshops. Cleaning up in the public lavatory, I washed my fortnight old growth, convincing myself that I had seen worse looking designer stubble. The luck I had wished on my companions the night before must have rebounded, as I touched for two pounds for helping a struggling old man to load a washing machine onto his trailer. All through the day, I collected scraps of wood with the intention of lighting my own fire. By night time, though, I found myself staring across the car park at Chicken, doing one of his dances with his imaginary partner.

"Hi Mary," I said.

"I see you brought some wood tonight, son." Her tone, like the weather, had mellowed.

"Aye, and that's not all." Unzipping my jacket, I took out three pasties and two chips. Mary, who had buttered some bread for herself and Chicken, proceeded to butter two more rounds.

"That smells good, son," she said, as Chicken finished his dance beside us.

"Good evening, Cojo." I was surprised he had remembered my name.

"Hi, Chicken."

"Here you are, son, have a seat and make yourself comfortable," he said, handing me a crate.

"You knew I was coming back?" The surprised tone of my question was greeted with a smile.

"Ahh, pasties. Haven't had them in a long while. Your timing's perfect. Mary and myself were about to have a cup of tea."

And not much else, I thought.

"So I see. You'd almost think Mary knew I was bringing something," I joked.

"Did I not tell you?" Chicken said in a serious tone. "Mary can see into the future." I smiled at him. "Oh yes," he continued, looking me straight in the eyes.

"And, just as important, she can also see into people's past." My smile disappeared.

"For instance," he went on, his voice in gravel-rasping tones. "She told me that, as a child, you were in an accident that almost cost you your sight."

Disbelief was soon replaced by anxious curiosity, for this had happened — but how could they know?

"You are running from something and don't want anyone to know your whereabouts." I felt edgy about Chicken's words and not at all sure that I wanted him to continue. Mary poured tea and he took half a cup before going on.

"You recently split up with your girlfriend, who you still have deep feelings for."

How was he doing this? I felt transparent. I looked at Mary. She smiled into her cup, quite aware that I was staring at her.

"You are a bit of a loner," Chicken's croaking voice went on. "You come from a family that isn't short of money."

"How do you know these things?"

He smiled.

"Chicken?"

"All in good time," he said between sips of tea. "All in good time. First, I'm curious as to how you came by the name Cojo."

"That's easy," I said, hurrying to tell him so he would explain to me how he knew so much about me. "I just took the first two letters from each of my names. Colin Jones, and there you have it, Co Jo.

He nodded his head and taking a draw from his cigarette,



closed his eyes as the smoke floated by his face.

"Chicken?" I need not have asked more. He could hear the curiosity in my voice.

"Just like your name son, the answer is simple. It's all a matter of observation and a little guess work. You have a faint scar over your left eye, but it has a jagged edge, not the precision slice of a surgeon's knife, and I deducted an accident."

I smiled and he continued.

"You are running from something. The reason I assume this is: you are a lad of what, no more than 19? You've been on the streets for two weeks and obviously don't want to stay in the YMCA or hostels where you think you'll be found too easily."

I remained silent.

"The recent split up with a girl, that was easy. You still wear the half-heart pendant with her initials. If you did not still have feelings for her, you would have sold it by now."

I touched the gold pendant with my fingers. I had forgotten it was visible.

"You are obviously a bit of a loner for it you weren't, your friends would have put you up. The reason I know your family isn't poor? The trainers on your feet could cost the best part of £100; the shirt you wore yesterday, although soiled, was of the best material, as is the one you have changed into today; a leather coat and Levi jeans are not the dress code of a poor upbringing. Am I right, or am I right?"

I applauded him and laughed, "You really had me going, Chicken. I thought Mary was the new Nostradamus of our age. You were close enough that I couldn't call you a liar." The three of us laughed. He placed some wood on the fire, causing sparks to dance amongst the smoke into the cloudless night sky. I told them of the day's events and listened to more advice on how to get food when times weren't so good. Once again the dry silence fell, which I acknowledged by bidding them both a goodnight.

Taking the first couple of crumpled newspapers from my box, I was startled by a scampering mouse that ran across my hand. I had to trail all the papers out to make sure no other mice had the same idea of taking my bed. That night's sleep was constantly interrupted by the rustle of papers blowing in the wind. I awoke to the blizzard that had been threatening for the past few days. The streets were covered. I had not been as fortunate as the previous day; even scraps of wood were hard to find, hidden under the blanket of snow. Shoppers and workers rushing home to their comfortable houses were in no mood to listen to pleas.

The car park seemed brighter than usual. Chicken sat by Mary's side at the fire.

"Hi folks," I said. "No dancing tonight Chicken?"

"Evening son. No, no dancing tonight."

Mary never spoke, but wheezed heavily.

"I couldn't find much firewood."

"That's all right son, it's hard to find in conditions like this, especially if you're a novice."

Chicken was making tea and toast while Mary rocked a little on her crate. "Are you feeling all right Mary?" Chicken answered for her.

"Mary suffers from emphysema". His voice unlike the night before, was soft and caring.

"Emphysema? That's something to do with the lungs, isn't it?"

"It's an illness that affects the cells in the lungs making it difficult to breath. At times like this she just likes to sit in silence listening to stories of when I travelled around the world."

"Can we not do anything for her? What about a doctor?"

"We don't have a doctor. The last time Mary was like this I took her to hospital. She walked out the next day."

Taking a cup of tea he carefully placed her hands around it. She took small sips between the wheezing. We took our own tea with a slice of toast.

"I asked you how you got your name, son, so I think it only fair to tell you how I got mine."

This explanation, I thought, was more for Mary's benefit than mine.

"I travelled the world as a merchant seaman," he began. "The captain of our ship was a man called Hargreaves; very strict in every sense. Any messing about and you were dropped at the next port of call. To keep ourselves amused when we had nothing to do we would bet each other at dares, some of them quite dangerous. It was through one such dare that I earned my name."

"Very often," he continued, "the wager would involve getting into the Captain's cabin, placing something inside and getting out without being caught. This was very difficult due to the fact that, when the Captain wasn't there his valet, a man by the name of Wesley — which we changed to Weasel — often was."

I watched Mary smile as he went on with his story.

"The bet on this occasion was for my opponent to place a chicken — which we had smuggled on board — into the Captain's bed. If he succeeded, my part of the bet was to retrieve it. Whoever failed, forfeited."

He took a break while I poured another cup of tea, making sure that Mary had a good grip on the cup.

"It was a stormy night, lashing rain, with fifty footer waves and gale-force winds tossing and rolling us, until even old Sea Legs Johnson could barely stay on his feet." Chicken's eyes were squinting as though picturing vividly in his mind's eye every second

Illustration by Noel McHugh (Long Kesh)





of the ordeal. "My opponent was successful in his part of the bet. I too, with a great deal of difficulty, managed in part to fulfil mine but on the way back to the galley I lost grip of the chicken. It flapped and squawked all over the deck. I chased it with all my strength, fighting against the elements and trying my best to remain upright and at the same time unseen from the control house. Eventually the bloody thing blew over-board."

Mary chuckled with a wheeze and we both smiled to see her happy. Chicken continued.

"The bet was of the type that the men had an input into what the forfeit would be. That's when some smart alec came up with the idea that I should dance like a chicken on every windy day in December, and believe me there were plenty. The men derived great pleasure from watching me prance about the deck like a chicken every

time the Captain's back was turned."

I laughed at the thought of this stocky character behaving like a chicken behind the Captain's back.

"Did he ever catch you?"

"He never actually saw me, but his first mate did. He also saw all the men laughing at what I was doing and promptly reported me."

"What happened?"

"I was dropped at the next port of call, Gdansk in Poland."

"Poland! How did you make it home?"

"Oh, that's when I decided to travel by land and explore the continent. I saw many, many countries, all with a thousand stories of their own. But they're for another time."

He put the collar of Mary's coat up and, with a tender touch, tightened the string around her coat. Her breathing was easier. With the firewood finished

there was little heat to be had from the oil drum. Large flakes of snow swirled on the biting breeze. The conversation had faded to short interruptions of long silences, but I decide to stay with them late into the night until Chicken said,

"Well, Cojo, I think I better get Mary tucked up for the night."

I offered to walk with them to wherever they slept, but Chicken politely refused, more concerned that I should get tucked up myself before the snow got any heavier. I wished them both a goodnight. Mary squeezed my hand instead of speaking. Being so late, I wondered if it was worthwhile climbing into my box. Five minutes of waling in a snow-covered deserted town soon convinced me of the benefits. Thoughts quickly turned to home and the comforts I badly missed.

I awoke to a fresh layer of snow and a breezy dawn. But, as I was soon to learn, this weather also had its advantages. I earned ten pounds helping stranded motorists and clearing snow from shop fronts. It was hard work but well worth the effort. Fatigue, though, took its toll and instead of visiting my companions I climbed into the paper-filled box. Tomorrow I would tell the story of how I earned this few pounds and maybe I too could bring a smile to Mary's face.

A solitary figure sat in front of the fire. "Hi," I said, dropping the wood by the oil drum and taking the sausages and chips from inside my coat. My eyes scanned the car park. "Where's Mary?" I asked.

His unblinking eyes never veered from the fire. I had to repeat the question twice before he acknowledged my presence with a heavy sigh.

"She's gone, Cojo."

"Gone! Left you mean?" He looked at me in silence for a moment.

"The last night you were here. She had a bad bout. I could see a smile on her face as they... lifted her into the ambulance." He stared blankly at nothing, his sentences unfinished. I sank on the crate beside him, Mary's crate. I put the food on the ground, my appetite suddenly gone. I had no words. My hand rested on Chicken's shoulder.

"She squeezed my hand," I said, my own eyes staring into the flames. No words were spoken for quite some time. I eventually made some tea.

"Drink this, Chicken," I insisted.

After I had persuaded him to drink two cups of tea, he turned to me and in a solemn voice said,

"Colin, the streets aren't for you son. Whatever you are running from, maybe it's time to face it. You have done all right in the time you have been here. Mary and myself discussed it each night after you left. You're a good lad. Trouble, you know, comes to us all at some stage in our life, some more than others. But running from it is no good — it's a long-distance runner and catches up with you some time. Better to face it at the starting-gate. Some people are meant for the street.

"You're not one of them."

I silently admired this man that I had known for such a short time, still giving advice at a time like this. We sat until dawn's early light. I listened to words of experience between long silent pauses. At the first sound of rush-hour traffic, I turned up my collar and, with backward glance, left him with a wave of hand and the words:

"Thanks for everything Chicken. I'll see you around."

But I never did.

By Dan Kelly, Long Kesh ■

VOICES: From Long Kesh to the Gasyard Wall

VOICES. The very word conjures up many images; of people talking, singing, whispering or of mystical sounds echoing in an unconnected air from their source of origin. This was my initial thought when I heard about the theme for this year's Derry Gasyard Wall Féile. It is a wholly appropriate theme for a community festival which is itself a voice of expression and creativity.

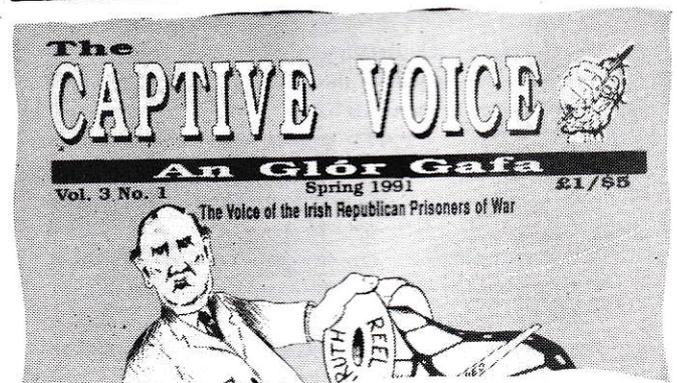
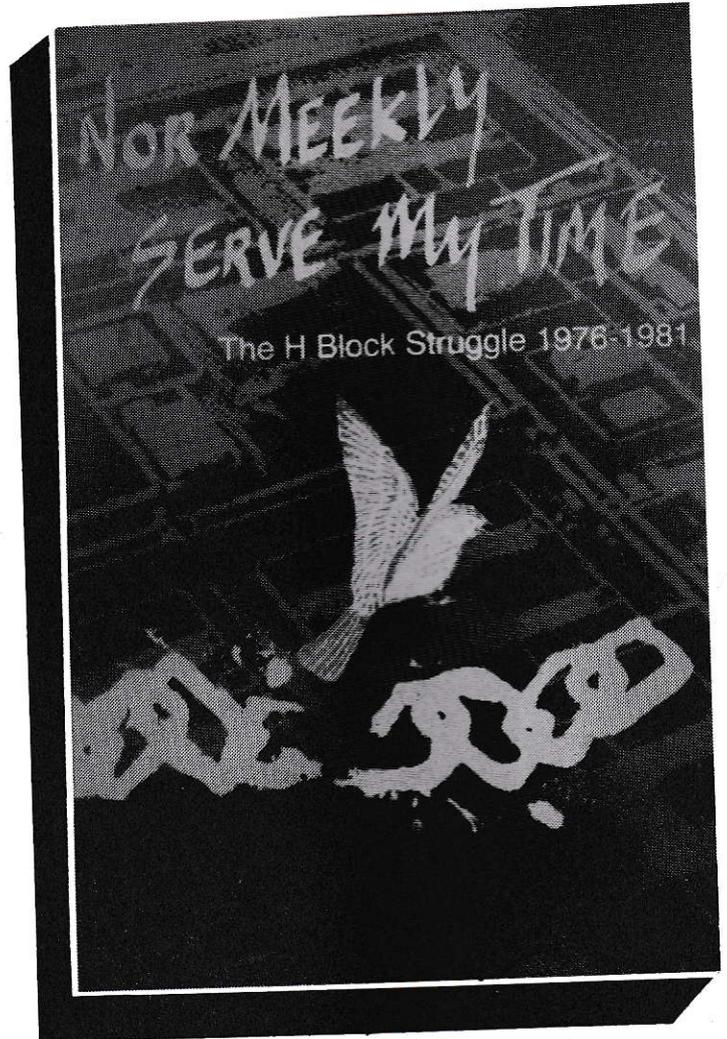
As a life-sentence POW, my physical presence has been removed from my family and community as well as the Republican Movement. When I first came into jail I feared that my voice was in some way removed also, that I had been silenced. I felt that my input into matters in relation to my family and community, as well as the liberation struggle, would become marginalised, isolated and even outdated as my sentence progressed. However, I have discovered the contrary to be true as I've found other ways of expressing myself and of making my voice heard.

Being separated from my family has in many ways strengthened the bond between us as we have developed ways of expressing our feelings and of giving voice of our emotions. The value we place on our limited contact is immeasurable and we don't waste time on fickle matters, but rather concentrate on the substantive areas of our lives. This is especially true when involved in a family crisis or dispute where my opinion is often sought. Ironically, my physical absence allows for a greater degree of impartiality which is appreciated and respected. As a result of this my voice has become stronger. My family also ensure, in as much as is possible, that I am included in all the normal family celebrations. I may not be there in person on such occasions but am very much present in conversation and in spirit. In this way my voice is kept alive.

Within the nationalist community there is hardly a single family who has not been affected by imprisonment since 1969. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, friends and neighbours have been imprisoned during this time. As a result, POWs have been an intrinsic part of the politicisation of nationalist communities. Throughout the years hundreds of thousands of people from nationalist communities have given voice to the struggle within the prisons by taking to the streets to highlight the many injustices inflicted upon prisoners.

One simple but vital aspect of the interaction between prisoners and the community is the art and craftwork that is sent out from the jails. Our voice, as expressed through these items of cultural and political identity, is present in thousands of homes in Ireland and abroad.

We also feed into the community through other art forms. Many POWs have developed creative writing skills and have written short stories, plays, poetry and have performed drama. *An Glór Gafa* itself is an example of our voice reaching the community in this way. Another example is the publication of the book *Nor Meekly Serve My Time* which chronicles the history of the blanket protest and hunger strikes and was written, compiled and edited by POWs. A more recent development in this area has been the establishment of a drama group in Long Kesh. Their



stage performance, within the H-Blocks, of a play based on the writings of Bobby Sands has aroused great interest beyond these walls. Plans are at an advanced stage to perform this piece as part of the 1996 West

Belfast Festival. The cast, who are all captured POWs, will stage the event while they are out on parole. These examples of how we share our voice within a wider community context illustrates how we have been able

to maintain and strengthen community bonds.

The Irish-language activities within our communities are a classic example of the success of cultural struggle by prisoners having a wider impact on the struggle for political change. While Irish-language groups had worked hard and with some success for many years to maintain and develop the language and Irish culture in general, the influx of released political prisoners into the communities provided a fresh impetus for this struggle. The effect was to increase the community's confidence in their own ability to define and express their own interests and aspirations independently. Thus POWs have, in this regard, helped to develop a distinctive voice for our communities.

Our political voice, which allows us to wear our imprisonment as a badge of pride, is central to all of this. It has given us a solid foundation on which to build and develop our input into the struggle at all levels. In the past our voice was heard through issues like internment, the battle for political status, the bulwark against criminalisation and of course through the historic period of the blanket protest and hunger strikes. For those who lived amidst such events, the memories of the struggle as it manifested itself on our streets and villages and in the international arena, will remain with us forever. Another aspect of the political expression of our voice arose from the desire of POWs to participate fully in the political debate and development within the Republican Movement. Some years ago we established our own H-Block Sinn Féin Cumann which affords us the opportunity to do this.

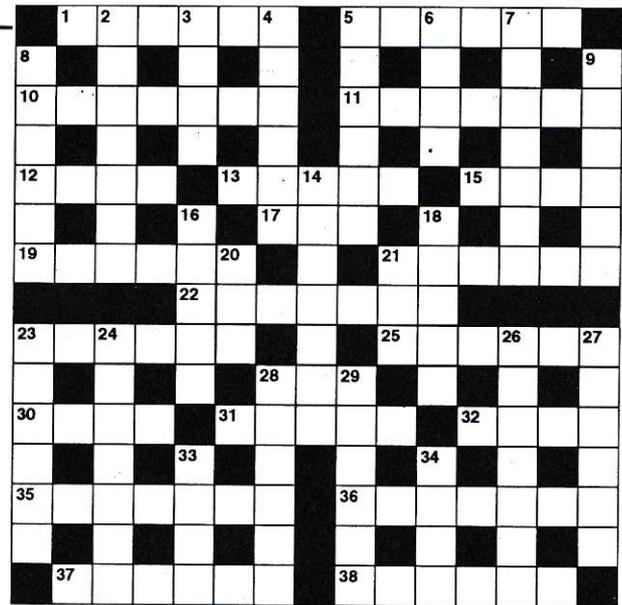
Our imprisonment has acted as a focal point for our friends and comrades at home and abroad. We receive correspondence not only from Ireland and Britain but also from America, Australia, New Zealand and throughout Europe. As well as voicing their support for us,

many of these contacts have also been the impetus for the establishment of international support groups which impact on the overall struggle. We receive visits from some of these groups which have proven to be mutually beneficial to us in both a personal and a political sense and has added to our understanding of other cultures. It also shows our very real human face, which is often unseen by those outside our own communities.

I have talked about the family and the community as examples of how we are involved in finding expression of our experiences and the relevance of this to the struggle. It shows the various ways of giving voice to a struggle which is vibrant and one that requires fresh ideas to build upon and develop a growing personal, community and political consciousness. The basis for all of this is the environment in which we live. This environment has developed out of the resilience of the blanket protest and the sacrifices of our ten comrades on hunger strike in 1981. It seems that present jail conditions are conducive to POWs developing in a progressive and creative direction.

The voice is a broad concept with many forms of expression. The areas I have touched on have a common thread. The nationalist community, within the Six-County state, continually struggles to have its voice heard. As republicans, we have an added responsibility to animate this process, to be at the forefront of giving expression to our identity and ensuring that our voice is one of strength, progression and equality. The voice must become the vortex of what Bobby Sands called, the spirit of freedom. No matter how our voice is denied, imprisoned, devalued or even murdered it will still be heard. It is through our creativity, the way in which we apply ourselves to this task, that we will enhance our spirit of freedom.

By Harry Maguire,
Long Kesh ■



ACROSS

1. Infamous Cambodian tyrant, (3, 3)
5. Strolled, hiked (6)
10. Spanish blood-sports participant (7)
11. Good-natured and kind-hearted (7)
12. Famous Mongolian desert (4)
13. Cumbersome (5)
15. Small change in Mexico (4)
17. Musical sound like cake-mix (3)
19. Biblical lesson (6)
21. Lodging favoured by students (6)
22. Lounge (7)
23. In a state of slumber (6)
25. Chunky or squat (6)
28. Dish, bowl (3)
30. Wolfe ... father of Irish republicanism (4)
31. To pester or harass (5)
32. Quantity of church-goers (4)
35. Humane, merciful (7)
36. South African freedom cry (7)
37. Set of numbers that form a sum (6)
38. Lookout, guard (6)

DOWN

2. Revolutionary month (7)
3. Writing, shin, scouring etc (4)
4. Revolved, gyrated (6)
5. Affluence (6)
6. Lower back, or type of cloth (4)
7. Flags, badges etc (7)
8. Icons (6)
9. Gunshot, like Mitchell's findings perhaps (6)
14. Abandoned (7)
16. Motorised form of transport (5)
18. Place to sleep (5)
20. Siesta (3)
21. Public transport vehicle (3)
23. Denounce, lay siege to (6)
24. Type of oil (7)
26. One who stays in during term (7)
27. Unimaginative male (3, 3)
28. What Ireland will be, inevitably (6)
29. Wandering tribes (6)
33. Surrender, relinquish (4)
34. Net profit (4)

SCRIBBLE PAD

ACROSS: 1. Pol Pot; 5. Walked; 10. Matador; 11. Amiable; 12. Gobi; 13. Helly; 15. Peso; 17. Doh; 19. Sermon; 21. Bedsit; 22. Parlour; 23. Clement; 25. Stubby; 28. Urn; 30. Tone; 31. Annoy; 32. Mass; 35. Images; 9. Report; 14. Forlorn; 16. Moped; 18. Birth; 20. Nap; 21. Bus; 23. Attack; 24. Linseed; 26. Boarder; 27. Yes man; 28. United; 29. Nomads; 33. Cede; 34. Gain.

DOWN: 2. October; 3. Pads; 4. Turned; 5. Wealth; 6. Loin; 7. Emblems; 8. Images; 9. Report; 14. Forlorn; 16. Moped; 18. Birth; 20. Nap; 21. Bus; 23. Clement; 25. Stubby; 28. Urn; 30. Tone; 31. Annoy; 32. Mass; 35. Images; 9. Report; 14. Forlorn; 16. Moped; 18. Birth; 20. Nap; 21. Bus; 23. Attack; 24. Linseed; 26. Boarder; 27. Yes man; 28. United; 29. Nomads; 33. Cede; 34. Gain.

The Long Kesh League Cup

MOST POWs take an interest in one sport or another. Whether it be Gaelic football in the yard or snooker in the canteen, every game is highly competitive. On the soccer front we were until recently used to playing block football only, where 22 men were picked on a rota system and would select two very even teams to ensure the match was as fair and closely contested as possible. More recently, due to hard work on the conditions front, we have been able to enjoy inter-block football where eleven men from one block play eleven from another. This again has been built on and we now have competition football running in the camp where teams from each block compete for trophies and medals.

The first competition took place in October 1995 and was won by a team from H7, after a hard-fought final against the competition favourites, H8, by four goals to one. Dee Nicell scores two great goals to win the cup which was donated by the Deery family of Derry. More recently we have had the Long Kesh League Cup, donated by the Crumlin Star Social Club. This turned out to be one of the most closely-fought competitions we are ever likely to have. Seven teams took part, two teams from Blocks 4, 5 and 7, and one from the remand block, H6. The teams played each other twice and the top four would go through to the semifinal stage.

With two games to go it looked like each block, except H6, would be represented in the semifinals. The boys on remand struggled to keep up with the other teams because of the lack of numbers. Although not able to qualify they didn't go out without a fight and Bertie Duffy proved to be their main dangerman.

H4's Team A had hit the top of the league with 21 points, one point short of quality for the Semifinals, having achieved some great results over the teams from H7. Their team included names like Beefy McEvoy, Burger McKenna, Harry Maguire and not forgetting the ever consistent Thomas 'Hatchet' Maguire at centre half. They looked certain to qualify, but it all went wrong for them in their

last two matches. With the remaining four teams all sitting with less points than H4 A, a draw from one of the games would have seen them through. Disaster struck in both games, however, and they went out, much to the surprise and relief of the our qualifiers. H5's Team G managed to reach 22 points first, the qualifying quota, to take them through to the semifinals by beating H6, 3-1, goals coming from Charlies McKieran (23) and Mickey Duffy (1).

H4's Team B, who were expected to do better, never lived up to expectations. They lost their way after a defeat by H5's Team F, by four goals to two, which put them out of the competition. Hard luck Bik maybe next time, but sure you look the part with the headband and wristbands.

H7's Team E needed to win their last two games to reach the required quota of 22 points for the semifinals. These two games would be against H5's Team F who had the likes of Peter Corbett in defence, Kevin McMahon masterminding the midfield, and Pat Muckian and myself up front. Over these two closely-fought games H7 came out on top, winning 2-1 each game. Harry Fitz was smiling at last and making predictions that the cup was going nowhere but H7. Gill was tight lipped, but confident. Team D, the other H7 team, won their last game by three goals to one over H56's Tam G to qualify for the semifinal.

It now stood that both teams from H7 were through along with H5's Team G. It was now down to H4's Team A and H5's Team F to battle it out for the first semi final spot with H4 only requiring a draw. The game was very closely fought like most and at half time the score line was 0-0. In the second half H5 turned around with the wind at their backs and soon took the advantage. A mix up in the H5 defence after a long clearance from Arder Nesbitt let myself in to score from the edge of the 18-yard line, 1-0. Two men were then sent off and this did H4 no favours. A mistake from Darcy McMenamim in the H4 goals let me in for number two. I then

completed my hat trick in the closing stages latching on to a Scanner Campbell cross to make it 3-0. Never mind Harry, we're sure you'll be back even with those dodgy ankles.

So to the semifinals. This is how it looked: H7's Team E versus H5's Team G and H5's Team F versus H7's Team D. The boys in H7 were very confident of an all H7 final, having turned H5 over during the earlier stages of the competition. In the first semifinal Seán Kelly's men held strong. The game went to extra time. Both teams cancelling each other out and the reason for this being Harry Fitz and Marty Gervin



taking care of Charlie 'Cole' McKiernan and Bap Hughes who are always a handful for any defence. Likewise, Tom McVeigh, Micky Duffy and Paddy McGilloway were doing the same to Gill, Paddy Hamill and the dangerous Kevin Murray, whose goals were instrumental in getting Gill's men to the semifinal.

No one was going to win this game in normal play so penalties had to prevail. A mention must go to both goal keepers, Seán Kelly for H5 and Seán Lynch for H7. In the penalty shoot-out H5 got off to a bad start missing the first two kicks, but after five taken the score was level at 3-3. Nothing was separating these teams and it was a pity that there had to be a loser. So to sudden death. First up was Seán Kelly for H5 and he scored. He then

had to stop Paddy Hamill's penalty and did so to become the hero. A bit of an all-rounder this boy Kelly. So Harry Fitz's prediction was wrong — no all H7 final.

In the next semifinal Micky Duff and the boys were to do battle against the Barney Campbells, Peter Corbetts and Finn McCools of this world. H5 led 1-0 at half time. In the second half H7 came out looking for the equaliser which wasn't long in coming. Great work from Rooney and Nicell to put Mickey Duff through to score a well-taken goal. But H5 weren't done for and within two minutes were back in front with the score line showing 2-1. It looked as if it was going to be an all-H5 final until with only seven minutes remaining an Arder Nesbit clearance was picked up by

Bobby Mahon who, from all of 50 yards, booted the ball high into the air and into the H5 net. Two each. In the final seconds of normal time Jimmy Canning in the H7 goal pulled off a great save from Kevin McMahon to take the game to extra time. Both teams went close to winning the game in extra time, but again penalties were to decide the outcome. In the penalty shoot-out H7 proved the stronger, scoring all the penalties required to run out 4-1 winners.

After the two semifinals going to penalties what price the final doing likewise? There were some good players on show for the final and the two teams looked very even. A strong wind was to play a bit part in the match. H5 started with the wind and after a nervous start by both sides H5 started to get on top when Charlie 'Cole' McKiernan put the ball in the net but was ruled to have fouled Micky Doc in the process. The boys from H7 were defending very well, making H5 shoot from distance which suited Jimmy Canning in the H7 goal. The closest any team came to scoring was a long-range free kick from Fudgie McFadden, which just dipped over the bar from all of 40 yards.

In the second half it was H7's turn to play with the wind, but it was H5 who settled well and played some nice football. Packie McMahon got the ball down and played some neat passing movements alongside Kevin Connolly and Tom Brennan. Mickey Duffy was as usual trying to create openings for Paul Johnstone and Dee Nicell, but the H7 defence were having none of it. Paddy McGilloway did a great job at centre half along with Mickey Duffy and the oul' veteran Tom McVeigh. No one looked like piercing either defence. The closest anyone came to scoring was when Micky Doc struck the bar — unfortunately it was his own bar. Unlucky Micky!

With extra time looking certain, and with only minutes to go, Paul Johnstone picked up the

all and went straight at the H5 defence, around one defender then a second, a goal looked on with big Paul going straight in at Seán Kelly, but the big H5 keeper did brilliantly to save with his legs. So to extra time, the game finishing 0-0. Would there yet be penalties? Both teams were trying their best to win the game before the dreaded penalty shoot-out could take place. Chances were now falling to both sides. It looked like a single goal would win the game and the competition.

That goal came when Seán Kelly took a long kick out. The H7 defence were trying to catch the H5 forwards offside, but Charlie Chuck with all his experience (15 years at the top!!) caught them and was in on goal. His shot was brilliantly saved by Jimmy Canning, but the ball broke to the ever-dangerous H5 flyer, Bap Hughes, who made no mistake from six yards out. One-nil at half time of extra time. In the last ten minutes the boys from H7 pushed to save the day with one last attack, but H5's defence stood resilient to keep their 1-0 lead intact. H5 had won by a single goal in a hard-fought final. Credit must be given to all the boys on the H7 team who made it a very closely battled contest. Well done Seán Kelly's men and last, but not least John Macklin, the PT1 who refereed the final very well.

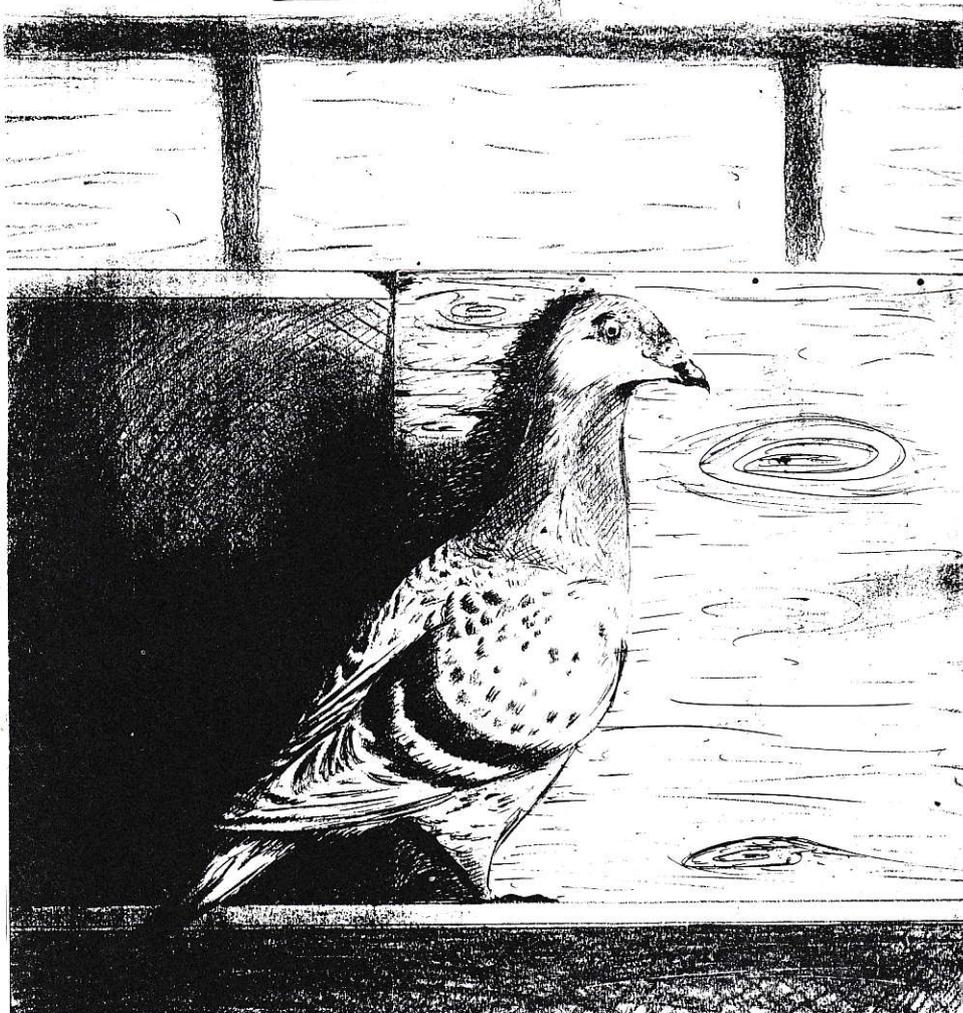
After the game came the presentation with Pádric Wilson doing the honours. Charlie McKiernan lifted the cup to loud applause from the H5 lads. Paddy McGilloway, who never put a foot wrong all day, was awarded *Man of the Match* and I took the prize for the competitions top goal scorer with a modest 20 goals to my credit. But let's spare a thought to H4's boys who undoubtedly will be all out to win the next competition. Lastly a special word of thanks to the Crumlin Star for donating the Long Kesh League Cup and the PT1s for donating the trophies.

By Ta McWilliams ■



SAOIRSE

Illustration by Fra Maher (Long Kesh)



I GUESS the winter of '78 is familiar to many in Long Kesh, for obviously harsh reasons: the ominous bite of chilling cold for those on the blanket protest will be forever etched in many memories. But for those present-day recipients of the gains of that protest, nothing much can be carved in stone about the bland, mild winters since. But I figure we latter day H-Blockers can reminisce about the summer of '95. Yeah! That was a year! Try telling kids how it was! Sunburned torture on tarmac; blinding eyes from the persistent glare of unrelenting sun rays; the arduous journey to the deep freeze for a cold drink. Will they ever believe us?

H-Block 8 last year was no different from other blocks. Republican POWs overdosed on the rays during the day and gazed emotionally towards the star filled sky at night. The summer seemed endless. We expected much that year by way of

political movement, but the sounds of Orangeism seemed to be the only disturbance to those long days. In H8 our only distraction during the long summer was the arrival of Saoirse. Now, before you go thinking that we on H8 had some scéal of sorts, hold on. I know

that "Saoirse", or freedom as it is translated in English, was on most people's minds that summer, but I can confirm that we didn't hear a thing either, besides the rumours from those know alls in the jail.

No, Saoirse is the aptly assigned name of a new member of our community in the blocks. Apparently by passing Lord Diplock and the H6 remand wing, Saoirse simply announced himself, or herself as was thought then, to the lads of B Wing, H8.

To make a long story short, Saoirse is a pigeon, and as is known to us now, a stubborn but fiercely playful cock. Saoirse — or simply "the bird" then — fell

rather than flew into our yard around June with what looked like a serious injury to its right leg. No one thought it would survive the night. It hobbled painfully across to pick up broken bread which almost every good soul had thrown across the yard; Barney Hughes' bakery couldn't supply enough for the lads to throw. But the bird survived the night, struggling to take shelter in a makeshift cardboard box.

The nights passed and the bird didn't seem to have the strength to take off for flight. What did move the bird to flight, hastily to the top of the shower house, was an attack by local rats, who saw our Saoirse as a late-night feed. Men stood on guard until late at night to fend off attacks. "Ceannfort" to the call and the trades — screws who masquerade as handymen — were hastened to lay poison. This did the trick. But the leg injury seemed to indicate that this bird might not manage to fend off other elements.

One couldn't help wondering if death wouldn't bring a peaceful end to its pain. But through the dedication of one man, Peter Bateson, and the help of one wood-craftsman, Barney Campbell, a pigeon loft of sorts was constructed, later to be developed and redeveloped to its present state of the art perfection. It had the security and comfort at least to give the bird a dignified existence. But during those first weeks and months it needed care and patience. It was obvious that the bird was scared of every advance which suggested that it hadn't come from a loft. How does one treat a wild, injured pigeon? Pigeonologists were in short supply at the time, although these was no shortage of advice given by men eager to befriend such a rarity.

With patience and fortitude, healthy feeding and nurture, and most of all, the totality of Saoirse's strength and natural instinct for survival, the pigeon prevailed over personal injury



Illustration by Noel Maher

and the evident dangers which surrounded it. Leg mended, weight gained and what looked like the agility and fierceness of a mountain eagle, Saoirse took to the skies, combing the terrain, as maybe in search of its place to go in life, who knows. Where does a mended pigeon go after such a temporary, but sustained hold up? Saoirse, Ean na mBlóe, made the decision to stay on in the yard and its loft.

With every opportunity to vacate this unnatural barbed-wired, concrete ghetto sprawling among the green landscape of south Antrim, why did Saoirse not seek out more attractive pastures, to go among his own, as they say? What can we humans possibly contribute to his existence, with the exception of pigeon seed? We know he does sneak off mid mornings and at times in the afternoons to some other spot in the camp. The lads reckon he has a 'ould one on the side, another natural and healthy instinct, not often afforded to republican POWs and others. No, Saoirse is here to say. Even when our block moved to H5, although a little unsettling to both Saoirse and the lads, he wasn't deterred

from negotiating his way back home.

Saoirse, the felled and injured bird who fought his way back to his won dignified strength was aptly named. His ability to adapt to new and ominous surroundings and to overcome adversity, embracing community spirits, and most of all to know where loyalties lie, reflects the struggle by republican POWs throughout the decades, epitomised during the blanket protest and hunger strikes.

By Joe Doherty,
Long Kesh ■

POSTSCRIPT: On Wednesday, 10 April, Saoirse brought a companion home to the block: a silver, grey pigeon, whether a young cock or a hen, no one seems to know. Ringed and pigeon-coup trained from around these parts, he/she has also become part of the H5 community. All we know is that Saoirse is commencing a recruitment campaign in and around the locality. Being a predominantly loyalist area, it is thought Saoirse is indulging in some cross-community activity.

In a Distance

By Thomas Marron, Long Kesh ■

Strolling around and around
Like the second hand of a clock.
Slowly but surely, getting there.
Getting where?

In a distance the sight of a tree,
The sound of a singing bird,
Civilisation,
But only in a distance.

To be alongside the tree
Or the singing bird,
A taste of freedom,
But only in a distance.

The trip comes to an end.
I reminisce
About what could have been.
But like all my thoughts
They are only
In a distance.

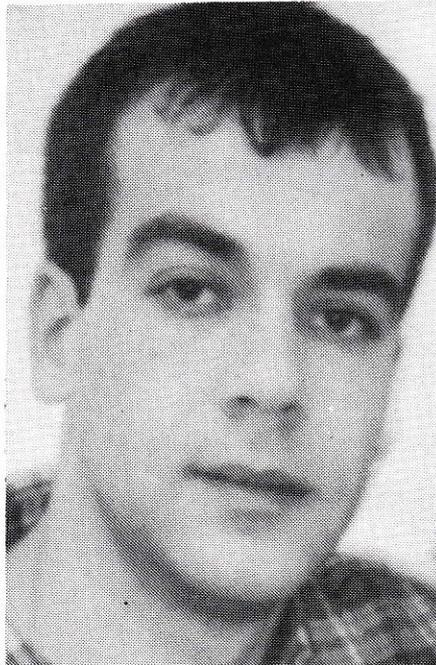
ANOTHER MISCARRIAGE

COLIN DUFFY, a republican from Lurgan, was charged in July 1993 and sentenced to life imprisonment in July 1995 for the killing of John Lyness an ex-member of the UDR/RIR. It is now June 1996 and the fight is in full swing to reverse that decision.

I have always maintained my innocence of these charges but obviously the courts didn't accept that. But why didn't they? Was it because the evidence showed beyond a reasonable doubt that I was guilty? No. The real answer is twofold. One is that I am a republican who has in the past embarrassed the British government by public pronouncements of collusion between the RUC and loyalist death squads in the murder of my friend Sam Marshall in 1990. The second is that the Diplock system by its very nature is unjust and is readily prepared to accept the evidence of RUC, RIR and UVF personnel. This was clearly illustrated at my own trial.

What was the evidence against me, one might ask. Well initially, at the time, I was charged there was a serving RIR soldier who claimed to have recognised me as the person who was present in Lime Grove, Lurgan, on 24 June 1993 and who was in the act of killing John Lyness. This witness, referred to throughout as Witness B, claimed to have been driving in the area at the time at a speed of 20mph and recognised "Colin Duffy" as the person he saw killing John Lyness. He claimed that I was dressed in a yellow T-shirt and wearing a baseball cap. However due to his speed, the 25-metre distance and the position of the gunman he was forced to concede that he had only a brief side view of the gunman.

After five months on remand and receiving my depositions there appeared another so-called witness, this time referred to as Witness C. He claimed to have been walking through Lurgan Public Park on the day in question, seen two cyclists cross his path in front of him at a distance of about 20 metres, both coming from the Lime Grove direction, both wearing cycling clothes, baseball caps and dark sunglasses. He claimed not to have recognised anyone there and then but that on meeting up with his friends a few minutes later and having been told that John Lyness had been shot dead he claimed to have reflected on this for a few moments and then realised that the men on the bikes may have had some involvement. It



COLIN DUFFY

then "sprung" to him that one of the men on the bikes was a person known to him as Colin Duffy who was pointed out to him nine years previously in 1993 in a public house while playing a pool match. He also claimed to have seen me on an occasion three years prior to June '93.

This was the evidence against me: two witnesses both claiming recognition of me on or about the scene. One might think this very strong evidence but if one looks closely it becomes clear that it is flimsy in the extreme.

Let's look at Witness C. Initially the crown had tried to keep his identity secret but it was ruled by another judge that this identity be revealed. A week into the trial we discovered that Lindsay Robb was the witness. The trial had to be adjourned for a week to enable the defence to investigate this man. It turned out that this was the same Lindsay Robb who was part of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) talks delegation to Stormont. This is the same PUP who have a stated public position of having a "close understanding" of the thinking of the UVF and the Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC). The defence was obviously concerned as to Robb's motive and credibility. Under intense cross-examination it was revealed that Robb's assertion that it was me who he had seen that day wasn't reported to the RUC until 2 July, after I had been charged and that fact broadcast on radio and television. His

initial contact with the RUC was made by way of the confidential telephone at 11.50pm on the same night, after having consumed a fair amount of alcohol. Even then he didn't mention the name Colin Duffy. One would think that this recorded message would have been an important piece of evidence for the crown and for the defence. We tried without success to have the tape produced in court, even though it was written down in an RUC log book at RUC headquarters that the tape had been put away for "safe keeping" when it was made. The tape still hasn't been heard by the defence, that is if there even exists a tape.

Lindsay Robb denied under oath that he had any knowledge or understanding of the UVF or CLMC's thinking. He claimed not to know that the PUP were the party which specifically "understood" the UVF's thinking. He also claimed not to know the make-up of the CLMC, a fact known to the public. It was amazing to hear him say that he didn't know that the PUP leaders Billy Hutchinson, David Ervine and Gusty Spence had spent time in jail for UVF-related activities.

As to the day in question he admitted that he didn't know whether Colin Duffy was the first or second man who crossed his path some 20 metres in front of him; didn't know whether either man had a beard, moustache or big nose. He agreed that his view was limited. When asked how he knew me he said that I was pointed out to him in a public house some nine years prior to 1993 playing pool. At that time, 1984, I was a mere 16 years of age and was never in a public house especially not the one that he claimed to have seen me in.

At the end of the trial I thought that my defence team had done a great job in showing firstly that the identification/recognition evidence was very poor, so poor that it could not have been relied upon and secondly, that there was a clear issue of motive and credibility attached to Robb's evidence. My own and my legal team's thinking was quite out of tune with that of the trial judge, Brian Kerr.

On 5 July 1995 he sentenced me to life imprisonment plus 20 years for possession of a firearm. In his judgement he relied heavily on the evidence given by Robb, knowing there were more fundamental flaws and weaknesses in the evidence of Witness B as regards the timescale for observation and other inconsistencies in his evidence, i.e. evidence given by other crown witnesses

OF JUSTICE

contradicting Witness B's claims that there was only one gunman and that he was wearing dark sunglasses.

The wheels had just started to roll in the campaign to have my conviction quashed when Lindsay Robb, key prosecution witness described by Judge Kerr as honest, reliable, credible etc etc (the accolades were endless), was arrested in Scotland and charged with conspiracy to procure arms for the UVF. In December 1995 he was jailed for ten years by a Scottish court after being found guilty by a jury of the charge. The Scottish judge described Lindsay Robb in somewhat different terms than did Judge Kerr. He was described as "the spider in the centre of a web of intrigue". The court and the jury accepted the prosecution case that he was the main character behind the gun-running escapade.

My own campaign has been attracting a lot of media attention. A campaign group known as the Friends of Colin Duffy has been persistently highlighting my case by marches, petitions, contact with politicians, clergy, human rights organisations and concerned individuals throughout Ireland and abroad. My solicitor also has been to the fore in this work and without her commitment and determination the campaign wouldn't be as strong as it is now.

I have an appeal pending. My case was listed for a mention in the appeal court in March 1996 when the prosecution intimated that the appeal would not be heard until after the summer recess, that being September at the earliest, due to the fact that they may have cause to use Public Interest Immunity Certificates (PIICs) in the case. This means that the prosecution can discuss matters with the judges without the defence being present. The PIICs and the ex-parte applications are some of the most unfair and unjust aspects of the legal system here in the Six Counties. In



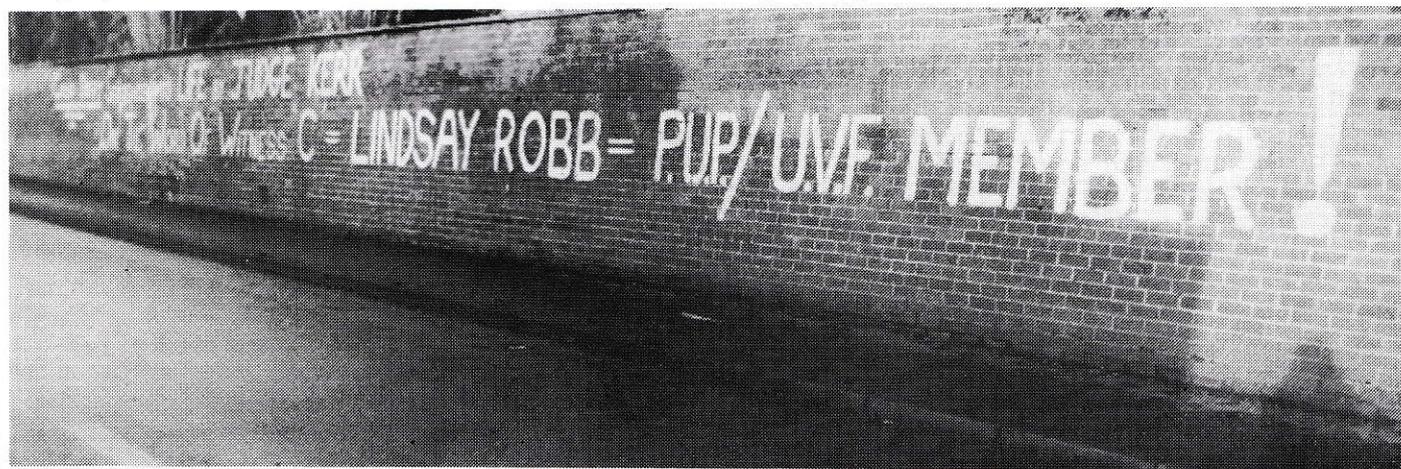
Colin Duffy's daughter calling the release of her father at a protest in Lurgan

order for me to find out, for example, if Lindsay Robb was under surveillance while giving evidence at my trial we need all the relevant information. This can be concealed by ex-parte applications where the defence can't even argue the case. Similarly if I am to call MI5 personnel who had Robb under surveillance to find out if the RUC were aware of it, the PIICs will be used. So, as can be seen, the interests of justice and fair play, which the British so publicly preach

about, cannot be met under the present judicial system.

What I hope to do now is create as much publicity as possible, highlighting the injustice of my case to make it very difficult for the appeal court to treat it in the way it has treated republican cases in the past. This I believe is the only way to get this conviction overturned.

By Colin Duffy, Long Kesh ■



Slogans calling for Colin Duffy's release

Sinn Féin 90th Ard Fheis: A POW delegate's view

IN MARCH this year I availed of one of my prerelease paroles to attend the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in Dublin as a representative of the H-Block cumann. It was my first time at such an event and I found it a very positive experience. When I first heard of the venue, the Ambassador Cinema in Dublin's city centre, I thought it a little strange for such a forum. However, after reading the well-researched and specially-produced booklet by AP/RN's Aengus O Snodaigh the choice of venue became clear.

A jovial Gerry Adams, later commenting on the history of the Ambassador Cinema joked that:

"Sinn Féin's Head Office must have wanted both the party leadership and the activists to view the bigger picture." He pointed out that the venue, formerly known as the Rotunda Rink, had witnessed many defining moments in Irish history including the founding of Sinn Féin in 1905 and the Irish Volunteers in 1913. It was also where over 100,000 people filed past the coffin of Constance Markievicz in 1927.

The cinema is situated in O'Connell Street, beside the monument to Charles Stuart Parnell. It was here that the Free State Special Branch positioned themselves, busily identifying and photographing delegates making their way into the cinema. Other less conspicuous branchmen sat in their vehicles across the street while numerous uniformed gardaí patrolled the surrounding area, periodically harassing delegates on their way to the Ard Fheis. When I glanced above the entrance and saw Sinn Féin Ard Fheis written in large bold lettering I was somewhat bemused, half expecting to see the movie title *Nixon* or some other Hollywood favourite instead. However this thought quickly left me as I entered the foyer of the building and was greeted by other delegates below large pictures of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation. This

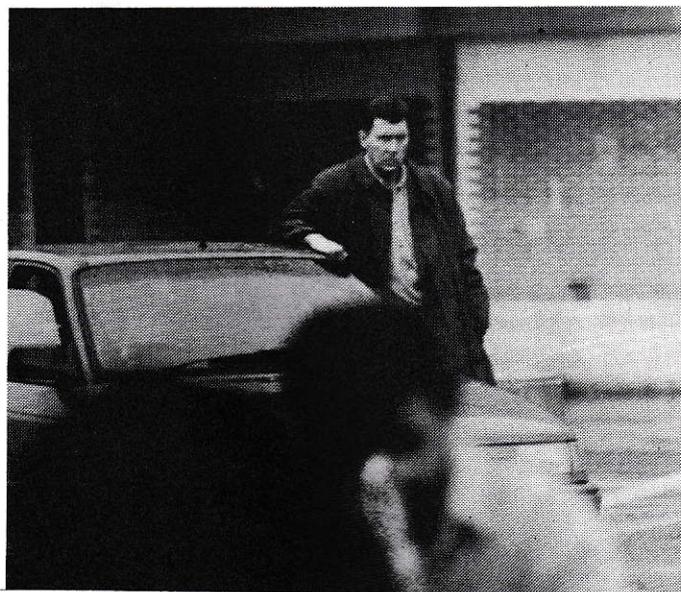
was all taking place under the watchful but friendly eyes of the many stewards.

After taking my seat in the hall and having met a few recently-released comrades I got down to my task. As delegate for the H-Block Cumann, I busied myself with the six motions which our membership wished to have ratified at the Ard Fheis. They were wide-ranging: our vision of a new Ireland; supporting the leadership; condemning the British government's continued refusal to fund Gaelscoileanna; the camp's concerns about the increase in drug abuse; and our alternative to the discredited and sectarian RUC. As this was my first Ard Fheis, I began to feel nervous about having to rise to the podium to propose the six motions. Thankfully each time I got up I gained just a little more confidence and applause from the delegates.

The many foreign liberation struggles similar to our own in Ireland were represented by spokespersons from around the world; goodwill and solidarity were expressed by all visitors. This included a very warm and passionate address to the conference by Ian Phillips of the African National Congress when, to loud cheers and applause, he saluted:

"The fighters, prisoners and activists of the Irish Republican Movement."

A more sombre mood then descended over the hall as the



'Democracy' at work — 26 Counties' version of the STASI

chair announced the next debate: Political Hostages. Many speakers highlighted the continued imprisonment of Paddy Kelly despite his critical skin-cancer condition. Nearly all delegates proposing the 23 motions regarding POWs demanded the immediate release of Paddy Kelly. The many motions proved how much we all are in the thoughts of our comrades "taobh amuigh". Colin Duffy's release was also called for, as it was fully explained how he was sentenced to life imprisonment in a nonjury court on the word of a UVF gunman, Lindsay Robb. The repatriation to Ireland of our POWs currently held in English jails was discussed. Delegates highlighted the lack of transfers to date despite the ratification by the 26-County government of the European Treaty on the Transfer of Prisoners. One motion from Leitrim's Comhairle Ceantair was rejected. It proposed making POWs the main priority of the peace process. Mary Ellen Campbell, a recently-released POW, urged delegates to oppose the motion, arguing that POWs

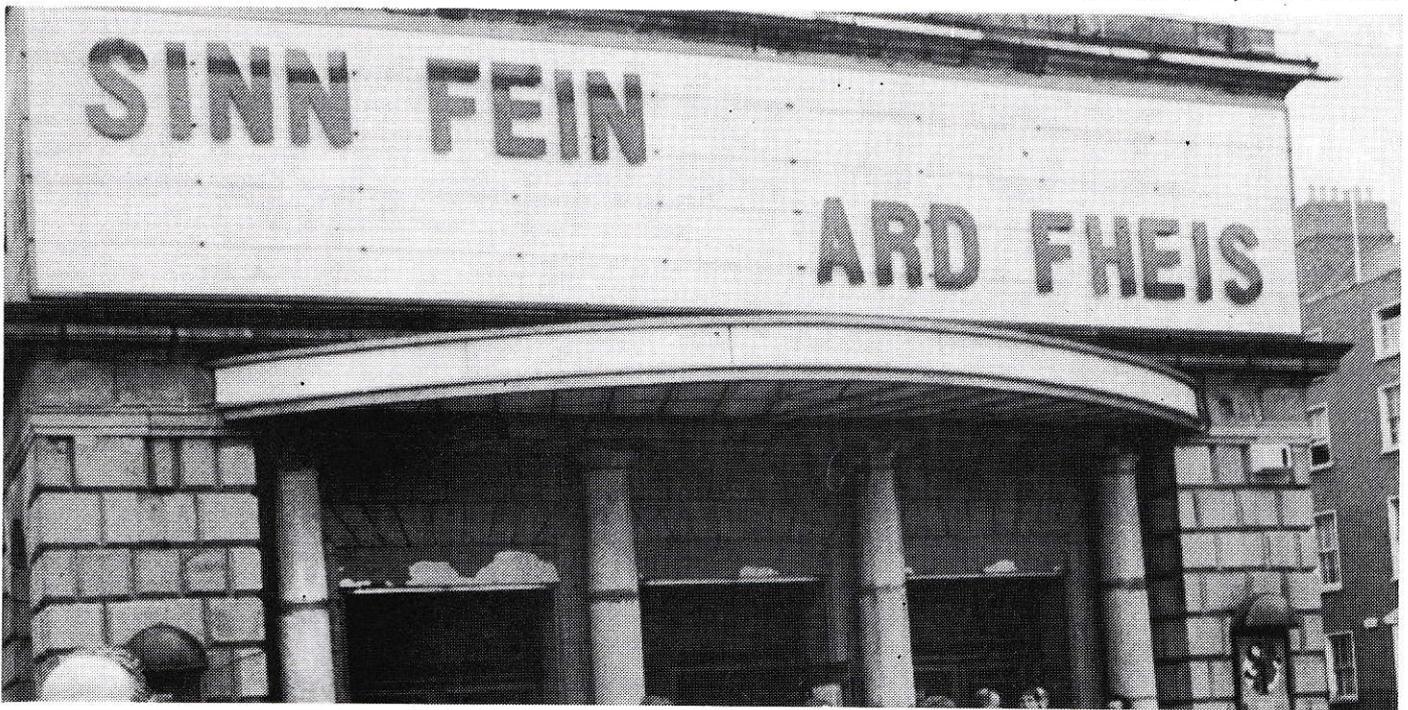


Gerry Adams at the Ard Fheis

had to be seen in the overall context of the entire struggle to obtain our objectives.

The issue of equality among Sinn Féin members was debated by delegates in a motion proposing ratification of a document on homosexuality, entitled *Moving On*. I was happy to see it adopted by the Ard Fheis. In the words of one speaker, it was simply a matter of common sense and compassion.

Gerry Adams concluded the



first day's events with an hour-long presidential address. He spoke of the many changes to our struggle he had witnessed during 13 years as party president. The address included an extension of sympathy to the families of the two men killed in the explosion at Canary Wharf in February. He also addressed the death of IRA Volunteer Eddie O'Brien who died while on active service in England. Volunteer Bobby Sands was mentioned too:

"That after five years on the blanket and all that he had to endure, he only spoke once of revenge, and that was by saying, 'our revenge will be the laughter of our children'." Adams then extended his hand of friendship to all our enemies, to make peace.

At the end of the presidential address and to the sound of the South African resistance song, *Something Inside So Strong*, delegates gave Gerry Adams a standing ovation which lasted more than five minutes. A large screen to the right of the stage showed pictures of all the H-Block martyrs and the release of POWs from Maghaberry, Portlaoise and Long Kesh last year. It also showed nationalist residents under siege in Garvaghy Road, Portadown, while thousands of Orangemen including David Trimble staged mass intimidation at Drumreece.

We were also shown the RUC baton charge on the people of the Lower Ormeau Road last summer. Finally we witnessed the many Saoirse and all-party talks rallies from all over the country which were held during the IRA's cessation. The atmosphere at this point was electric and for me was very moving and effective.

On Sunday morning I left my billet and waited for the 9.30am bus to O'Connell Street. Like most inner-city transport systems it did not arrive. As it was getting late I got a taxi instead. Immediately the driver asked me was I for the Ambassador? A little bemused I answered yes and asked how did he guess. "Your Belfast accent," was the retort. This driver was an excellent conversationalist and during the one-minute journey, I heard of his marriage problems, pirate taxis in the city and his brother doing time in Mountjoy for assaulting a member of the gardaí. He dropped me off outside Burger King not far from the Ard Fheis with a warm goodbye. So into this American multinational establishment I walked with the intention of having a nice cup of tea and a read over my notes from the day before. I would have gotten a better cup of tea in the basement of Crumlin Road Jail!

The first debate of the day

was on Justice and the Community. It mostly dealt with the issue of the drugs menace in Irish society. This increasing problem was discussed at length by speakers from Belfast, Dublin, Limerick and Derry. I also spoke during this debate as the H-Block cumann had proposed a motion commending all those activists involved in tackling this crisis, arguing the need for a community response throughout the 32 counties.

The other topics debated on Sunday were the upcoming elections in the Six Counties, youth and the controversial issue of a woman's right to choose. This latter motion was proposed by the women POWs in Maghaberry Jail. There was a list of 23 delegates wishing to speak, including myself. After reading the motion and listening to the various delegates, I decided to support the motion. The resolution in my opinion was simply that women in Ireland should have the right to take decisions which affect their own bodies, ie self-determination. Even with an amendment from the Ard Chomhairle, both the motion and amendment were defeated by the floor.

The Ard Fheis concluded with *Amhrán na bhFiann* sung by Lagan Valley Councillor, Pádraig O Maolchraoibhe. Over 100 motions were ratified by this

year's Ard Fheis, on subjects as diverse as the peace process, political prisoners, policing, economic issues and social justice. But, as I said, the most passionate debate was the pro-choice motion. Everyone exchanged their goodbyes, confident in their tasks for the year ahead.

Having "worked" all weekend and knowing I had to return to prison the following day, I was taken on a whirlwind tour of Dublin's pubs and nightlife. I am grateful to my excellent company and hosts for the evening for giving me a night to remember — go raibh míle maith agaibh. I was picked up the next morning and we made our way back north to Belfast.

It was both an honour and privilege to have represented the H-Block cumann at Sinn Féin's 90th Ard Fheis. It was a valuable learning experience. I also hope that I adequately reported back to my fellow POWs the feelings and views of all those in attendance at the Ambassador Cinema. I am also pleased that our six motions were accepted without amendment. It should give cumann members in Long Kesh confidence that motions, 3, 5, 63, 75, 107 and 123 were ratified by the 90th Ard Fheis.

By Mairtín Og Meehan ■

Quotations

"I see SDLP representatives turning up at British war commemorations with their poppies on but I don't see them wearing Easter Lilies."

— Sinn Féin's justice spokesperson, Barry McElduff, making light of the claim by Denis Haughey (SDLP) that if those who fought in 1916 were alive today they would be members of his party. *Irish News*, 9 April 1996.

"What happened to the big IRA bombing campaign which was expected over Easter? Readers may remember that Mr Howard rushed through parliament new emergency powers for the police by telling everyone this was going to happen... In the event, there was no bombing campaign but the police have still got their new powers. No one, however, seems to mind. Nor does anything point out that the IRA were angered that the government had failed to set a date for all-party talks, and that subsequently the government set a date for the talks; since then there have been no further bombs. It would help if, when dealing with the Irish question, people would occasionally acknowledge the obvious."

— Richard Ingrams' comments, *Observer Review*, 14 April 1996.

"The British government were playing politics by dragging the whole thing out, and hoping time would kill off the gunman, and it was a miscalculation. They should have had the talks off the ground much sooner. In some respects I have a lot of sympathy with what Sinn Féin are saying, because they were promised that within three months they'd get talks."

— Bob Gourley, trade unionist and PUP candidate in the May election. *Irish News*, 15 April 1996.

"They won't be wroth a penny candle."

— Fergus Findlay, Anglo/Irish negotiator, on the value of all-party talks without the participation of Sinn Féin. the *Sunday Tribute*, 28 April 1996.

"I would also say if the Royal Ulster Constabulary is continued to be perceived as those who side with the law breakers as against the law keepers then I dread to think what may happen if they day ever comes when they succeed in causing the Protestant people to rise up as one. I would also say that this police force would have no place to run and no place to hide."

— Rev William Hoey addressing fellow law keepers and Orangemen on the Ormeau Road Bridge after their attempt to march over the rights of Ormeau Road residents was thwarted. 28 April 1996.

"I have to do the marathon. It seems like the only way unionist can get down the Ormeau Road these days."

— Belfast Marathon runner, *News Letter*, 7 May 1996.

"Maybe I should repeat that last result. Sinn Féin twenty-two-thousand-three-hundred-and-fifty five."

— The West Belfast electoral officer savouring the historical moment — or rubbing it in? Belfast City Hall, 31 May 1996.

"The last to speak was Maria Caraher who said that as a republican and a woman she was looking forward to playing a constructive role in the peace process. But it seems she will be doing it without her unionist opponents in Newry and Armagh. Perhaps in practice for the all-party talks, they made a deliberate point of noisily waling out as she started her speech."

— *Irish News*, 1 June 1996

Tea and buns were not the only things on the menu in Seapatricks Parish Hall in Banbridge. Sour grapes were in bid demand among the unionists as the newly-elected Sinn Féin candidates addressed the electorate.

— *Irish News*, 1 June 1996.

"We hadn't won anything but we were so jubilant in the dressing room afterwards you'd thought we'd lifted the European Championship... Mind you, that feeling goes back long before football — all the way through the centuries to the old Braveheart days."

— Ex-Scottish soccer international, Alex McLeish, reminiscing about the historic Scottish defeat over England during the European Championships of 1981 supporting the maxim "soccer is not just a matter of life or death, it's far more serious than that". *Daily Record*, 5 June 1996.

"Bob McCartney said he was going to bring a breadth of fresh air to the talks. Instead he brought Cedric Wilson"

— OUP's Security Spokesperson Ken Maginnis on one of the chief clowns at the Stormont circus. 11 June 1996.

TV Review:

Inside the RUC

THIS SERIES, which spanned eight weeks during the winter and was screened amidst much hype and publicity, was intended as a PR exercise to show the "true face" of the RUC. The first programme, entitled *Routine Enquiries*, opened with a scene in Derry of two plain-clothes RUC men driving an unmarked car past the remains of burnt out vehicles on the morning after British paratroopers Leg Clegg was released from prison. As the two occupants of the car talked aloud about how this was the first serious incident since the IRA cessation of August 1994, they spotted a large articulated lorry parked about 50 yards away at the side of the road. The driver of the lorry was out inspecting his vehicles as the RUC men approached, all the while informing the viewer of their intentions: that being popular and friendly guys, they would stop and warn him of the danger of getting out of his lorry in a hostile area.

"Hello there, how ya doing?" said the peeler, masquerading as a concerned motorist.

"Howya doing?" the big friendly lorry driver replied in a distinctive South Derry accent.

"You in a bit of trouble?" asked the peeler.

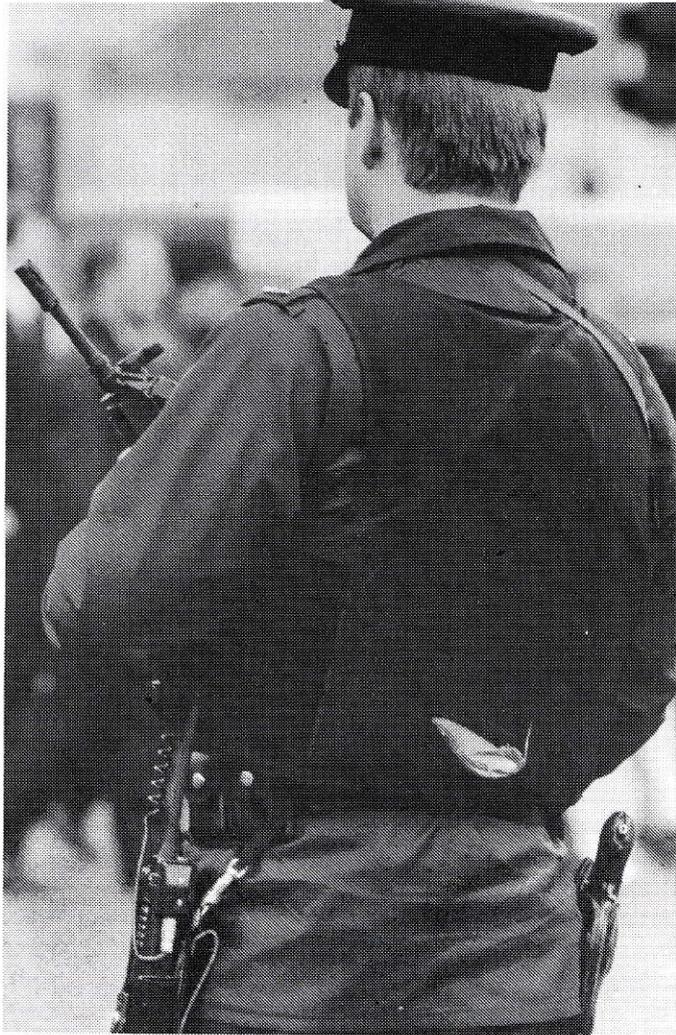
"No I'm just checking her. Why?" said the big lad, suspicions aroused as the two suits smiled at him.

"Ah, well, there's been a few bits of civil disorder..."

His suspicions confirmed, the lorry driver walked hurriedly out of view as the RUC man continued:

"...in the area here, what I would say is just move on if you could".

Apart from this incident, which was accurate in showing that the RUC presence is the main source of hostility in nationalist areas, the bulk of the first programme was spent fanning the collective RUC



be hard up for heroes. This was one of the most publicised of the programmes and was a classic PR exercise which attempted, by showing the arrest of Adair and his gang, to portray the RUC as an "impartial" police force (and protectors of nationalists). Unfortunately for Flanagan and co, the history of RUC collusion with loyalist death squads is so well documented that even Saatchi and Saatchi couldn't have pulled this one off. What this programme really showed was how loyalism is controlled by the state to carry out dirty deeds when required and to take the rap when these deeds become politically embarrassing. The day before this programme was due to be broadcast Johnny Adair walked off the loyalist wings in the H-Blocks and sought sanctuary in the prison hospital. Whether this was due to a latent embarrassment on his part or whether things were said that he feared would be aired on the programme remains unclear. He returned to the loyalist wings a few days later.

Episode four, which was broadcast on 4 January, was the crudest example of this doomed PR exercise. The main characters in this showing, three RUC men and their female colleague, were so patently unnatural that I cringed for the full 25 minutes of the programme. When the two "cops on the beat" called into Paddy

ego..

The second episode, chronicling life on the border, featured an RUC man stationed in Crossmaglen — or XMG as it's commonly known amongst targets of the famous sniper who frequents that locality. The RUC man spoke of how "everything has been thrown at us" in XMG which I thought was understating things somewhat. The nonchalance of the pilots in the low-flying helicopters shown in this episode reminded us that the filming was done during the cease-fire. The intention of this programme, would no doubt have touched the hearts of nationalists on the Ormeau and Garvaghy Roads, who are forced to live

under siege during the loyalist marching season — unpaid and unprotected.

The third programme in the series, *The Crown vs Johnny Adair*, outlined how Adair, a leading loyalist from the Shankill Road, loose talked his way into a 16-year prison sentence. The plan to snare Adair was the brainchild of Acting Deputy Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan (who incidentally is one of the more effective PR men in the RUC). Adair's abrasiveness, his mindless boasting about killing Catholics, doing robberies to supplement his dole and about loyalist drug taking was revealing in that it showed that the loyalist community must certainly

TV Review:

Devlin's house for tea and buns, I squirmed! (Devlin's obvious bitterness towards republicans has made him quite a sad figure these days). The RUC woman talked about sexual harassment from the female colleagues and her "nice house and lovely kitchen" in Hollywood, County Down, while the boys just talked about boys things. There was reference too about there being no "bad apples" in the RUC barrel and of the absence of discrimination. All said with straight faces too. In order to portray the RUC as some sort of Dixon of Dock Green type community police, plastic-bullet guns (de rigueur for "community policing" RUC style) were conveniently left back at barracks on this particular day.

The lengthy career of Detective Chief Superintendent Eric Andersons was detailed in the fifth episode. Anderson, who was instrumental in arresting and convicting the loyalist killers responsible for the gun attack on the pub in Greysteel, outlined his philosophy for success: "Lead from the front." This was similar to the programme about Adair in showing the RUC success in arresting and convicting loyalists. Fortunately for nationalists and unfortunately for this particular loyalist death squad, their latest killings were deemed politically-embarrassing and had rendered them expendable. However, Andersons did not investigate how the loyalist death squad came by its guns — since the same British government also arms the RUC and pays Anderson's wages. This programme epitomised what was wrong with the whole series — the complete lack of substance. For example, the detection of the killers was basically summed up in the following way: "We knew who they were, we arrested them and they admitted everything." It didn't actually show any of the good detective work talked about. Granted there are security (and political) reasons as to why the RUC don't wish to divulge their methods, which is understandable



The writing on the wall says it all!

from their point of view, but why then call the programme *Inside the RUC* when it quite obviously isn't.

Detective Kevin Sheehy's drug busters were next. This wasn't exactly intriguing stuff and did not show the relationship between the RUC and local drug dealers, many of whom are used as petty informers; neither did it examine Britain's counterinsurgency tactic of flooding nationalist areas with drugs in order to undermine community morale. It did contain raw language in abundance, however, and some of the undercover drug-squad detectives looked the part with their beards, hippie hairstyles and dress. The ability of a lone RUC man to walk into a house, through the front door using his own key, and come out a minute or so later with £50,000 worth of ecstasy tablets was amazing — though I couldn't understand why he didn't wait to catch the informer, I mean dealer, (same thing really!) red handed. There was a fair bit of attempted door kicking in this episode (the DMSUs are clearly more experienced at kicking doors) and also a few scenes of men hiding in bushes. The amateurish methods employed by Sheehy's drug busters left me with the thought of the ageing hippie from the Short Strand who was arrested by the RUC in 1968 for smoking cannabis. On being told that he

was being busted his immortal response was: "Yous lot couldn't bust me if I was a balloon."

The penultimate showing *The Middlemen*, featured two extremely friendly beat-walking chaps, one Protestant and one Catholic. The Catholic sergeant joined the police band because his wife felt it would be safer than normal duties. An appropriate joke about becoming "top brass" would have went down well here but the saxophone-sucking sergeant was far too serious for that. He saw himself as a career man — or a "30-year man" as it's referred to. The big jovial Protestant had almost completed his 30-year stint and the fact that he remained a constable didn't seem to faze him at all. In fact he seemed quite proud of this achievement. A genuinely remarkable achievement on his part was the fact that not only had he never, in all his 30 years as an RUC man been called upon to use his gun, he'd never even produced his baton in all this time! And cowboys don't eat beans!! The thought occurred to me that his superiors would have him posted to XMG after these revelations. This was basically a crude attempt, by showing a Catholic and Protestant walking the beat together, to portray the RUC as a nonsectarian force.

The final episode of the series entitled *War or Peace*, broadcast a

week before the IRA bomb exploded at Canary Wharf, was intended as "a day in the life" of the RUC Chief Constable Hugh Annesley and introduced us to his Inverness born wife. The fact that Dublin born Annesley met his Scottish wife in London underlined his cosmopolitan bona fides and was proof of his objectivity when dealing with people of a different nationality or political or religious persuasion — or so we were told. (That being a police Chief Constable wasn't enough to testify to this says more about the RUC than I think the programme makers realised.) During the course of this programme we were treated to a few behind-the-scenes glimpses of the top men — there evidently aren't any top women in the RUC. There was also the customary photo opportunity with American President Bill Clinton. Annesley's remarks in relation to the internal difficulties within the RUC included the profound comment: "If a clock is losing time you don't break it — you fix it." If there is one redeeming feature about this series, from an RUC point of view, it is the fact that they now have a new weapon of torture in their armoury — I for one would admit to anything if forced to watch this again!

By Paddy Devenny,
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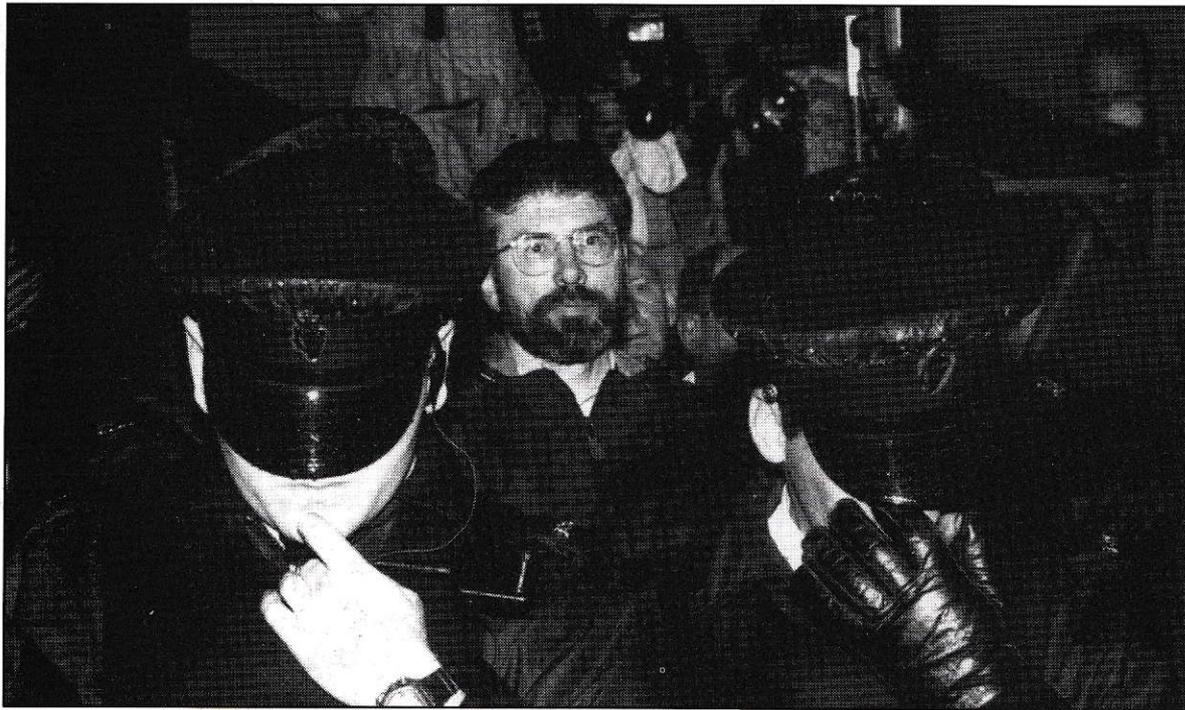
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