

IRELAND

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EDITORIAL

FAILED POLITICAL ENTITY ON LIFE SUPPORT

● The inter-party talks starting this month in Belfast at the initiative of British minister Peter Brooke have been hailed, like similar British initiatives in the last 20 years, as an 'historic breakthrough'.

Describing as a breakthrough the fact that, after 17 months of diplomatic shuttling, four political parties have consented to sit around the same table is hardly surprising in this Northern Irish state — this "failed political entity" as the now Dublin Prime Minister once aptly described it.

Two months ago, the Brooke initiative was dying. What revived it in the end seems to have been the reluctance of any of the parties — the SDLP, Unionists or Dublin — to bear the final responsibility for its demise and for prolonging this 'political vacuum' which establishment political parties fear so much. All this was implied by the British side as they applied pressure on the parties. It worked.

Yet what room for manoeuvre is there in the Six-County context? The glow of optimism created by the intense British publicity drive around the talks is chiefly aimed at an international audience — see what we are doing for peace in Ireland — and will increase the arm-twisting on the parties to the talks: woe betide those who walk out or dig their heels... Yet what is there to give?

Unionists have made it clear: institutionalised power-sharing is out; a say or right to inspection for Dublin in Northern affairs is out; the South's constitutional claim to the whole of

Ireland embodied in Articles Two and Three of their Constitution is out.

The British have already reiterated their support of the unionist veto on Irish reunification. It seems to matter little to them that many international observers are puzzled as to why they seem to be hanging with such grim persistence to this, their last colony. Yet Dublin's cooperation is essential for the British to continue controlling the North of Ireland while insulating it from British political life.

This was what the Hillsborough Treaty, signed with Dublin in 1985, was about. The present talks are the opportunity for the British to try and bring the Unionists into that particular game plan: a British agenda, for British objectives.

Yet a majority of people in Ireland aspire to reunification — if opinion polls are to be believed. A majority in the South agree with the territorial claim expressed in their Constitution. Northern Nationalists, needless to say, wish to see the sectarian Six-County state dismantled.

Who will represent those views at the talks? The discussions will be held in secrecy and Sinn Féin, which represents these views and received the votes of 35% of Northern Nationalists, is excluded from them. These views are further banned from broadcast media in Ireland and Britain under the current censorship laws. The talks are not the 'democratic process' their organisers claim they are, but another waste of time, another addition to the lists of failed British attempts at propping up the most unjust and repressive state in Europe.



Sinn Féin

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POLITICAL

Irish unity the preferred option

● An *Irish Times* MRBI poll conducted in April and published on April 23rd, showed that people in the 26 Counties still had a strong attachment to Irish unity and neutrality.

Some 82% aspired to reunification, while there was a significant increase in the numbers who felt that unity was a realisable expectation. Compared to previous surveys, some 56% now believe that a United Ireland could be achieved within 50 years, compared to 29% in 1987 and 42% in 1983. Twenty per cent believe it could be achieved within 10 years.

Asked about the claim to jurisdiction of the North of Ireland contained in Articles Two and Three of the Constitution, 58% felt that it should be retained.

Almost two-thirds of all voters (65%) favour the retention of neutrality, with 36% saying this should be retained "in all circumstances". Only 24% felt that neutrality should be dropped in favour of EC political union, while only 14% felt that they knew enough to decide on the issue.

Sinn Féin preparing for elections

● Sinn Féin faces two major electoral challenges in the coming months. In the North of Ireland, Westminster elections could possibly be held in June. The party will be standing in 14 of the 17 Westminster constituencies and has already selected 13 candidates. Equally important will be the local government elections in the 26 Counties on June 27th, in which the party will be fielding at least 50 candidates.

In spite of censorship and harassment, Sinn Féin has stated that it is fully prepared for a June poll and has expressed confidence that the West Belfast seat of party President Gerry Adams will be held and that the party will improve on its overall performance in the 1987 Westminster election.

In Dublin on April 10th, the party launched a new policy document on local government in the 26 Counties. It proposes a more decentralised system, providing local authorities with adequate budgets and the power to meet people's needs. Sinn Féin said that the current approach to local government is neither democratic, efficient nor acceptable.

M15 cover-up

● The British police force has been instructed by the Director of Public Prosecutions not to investigate allegations that the Ministry of Defence and British intelligence, M15, conspired to cover up a 'dirty tricks' campaign in the Six Counties in the early 1970s.

In the light of this decision, the latest development in a 15-year-old saga, Colin Wallace, a former captain in the Ulster Defence Regiment, is considering suing the British Ministry of Defence.

The decision follows a complaint by Wallace six months ago that officials perverted the course of justice by secretly approaching the Civil Service Appeal Board in 1975 with a view to having him dismissed. He was later awarded £30,000 compensation when an inquiry uncovered that there had been interference in this employment.

Wallace, who held a key post at the British army's headquarters in Lisburn, County Antrim, until his dismissal in 1975, maintains that his former bosses in M15 wanted rid of him after his disclosures about a 'dirty tricks' campaign which he masterminded in the Six Counties in the 1970s.

The 'dirty tricks' campaign, code-named 'Clockwork Orange', was aimed at producing disinformation about Republicans — stories often accepted uncritically by an eager media based in Belfast.

Wallace had no qualms when the misinformation he concocted was directed against the IRA. However, he was forced to resign when 'Clockwork Orange' was extended to include covert operations against the British Labour prime minister, Harold Wilson, and to cover up the child abuse scandal at Kincora Boys Home in East Belfast, which involved leading members of the Six-County establishment and Loyalist paramilitaries.

REPRESSION

Catholic Bishop says 'Remove the UDR'

● The Archbishop of Armagh, Cathal Daly, has called for the removal of the Ulster Defence Regiment (a locally raised and exclusively Loyalist regiment of the British army) from sensitive areas in Tyrone, Armagh and Belfast because of "its persistent physical and verbal provocation of young Catholic people".

In referring to the high level of Loyalist murders and in particular to the murders in Cappagh, he pointed out that because the UDR is drawn almost exclusively from the Unionist and Loyalist community: "Their security role within the Nationalist community is seen and cannot but be seen as pitting one community against another."

The quick response from the Northern Ireland Office to Archbishop Daly's comments indicated that serious consideration had not been given to them, despite the fact that Daly is noted for his consistent and unreserved support for the British 'security forces'. In its statement, the NIO rejected the criticism and declared that: "Its [the UDR's] skills made it an extremely important part of the counter-terrorist effort."

The UDR has consistently been linked to loyalist murder-squads, either through membership or by directly supplying them with official documentation on nationalists (this prompted The Stevens Inquiry in 1990).

Border roads protests

● Up to 1,000 people travelled from all over Ireland to express their growing anger at the British army's closure of roads along the border. Many travelled by bus, train and car to Clones, Co Monaghan, on March 18th, and marched the two miles to the Fermanagh border at Lackey Bridge, where they were addressed by several speakers. The demonstration was organised jointly by the Border Community Associations (South Tyrone/North Monaghan and Fermanagh/Monaghan) and the Irish National Congress.

The local border population have re-opened Lackey Bridge on several occasions and the British army have repeatedly cratered it, demolishing the bridge and ripping away a large section of the roadway.

Fermanagh priest, Fr Joe McVeigh, applauded the local community association for their work in highlighting the closure of border roads and the curfew imposed on the people living along the border. He said that the campaign to keep border roads open would succeed just as the Birmingham Six Campaign had:

"These are our roads. We have travelled them for thousands of years and we will get them open again."

He pointed out that every road between Leitrim/Fermanagh and Monaghan/Fermanagh was closed, except those with permanent checkpoints,

where people continue to be harassed and intimidated.

Irish National Congress chairperson, Robert Ballagh, referred to the obvious contradiction where "people of power and influence in Irish society are quite happy to prattle on about the absence of freedoms and the abuses of basic human rights in other countries but are totally tongue-tied when it comes to Ireland".

He said that the Irish border, unlike any natural borders, was "an unnatural frontier which has divided neighbour from neighbour and community from community. It is a political boundary forced on Ireland by Britain: the only long-term solution to our problems will be the removal of the root cause which is the continued interference of the British in Irish affairs".

SHOOT-TO-KILL

RUC shoot-to-kill operation — unarmed Republican killed

● RUC and British army undercover units ambushed and shot dead an unarmed IRA Volunteer on April 10th. The killing of 29-year-old Colum Marks in a field in Downpatrick bore all the hallmarks of similar shoot-to-kill operations in the past. For hours after the killing, a blanket of secrecy surrounded the circumstances of the shooting, followed by misrepresentative statements.

The shoot-to-kill operation was carefully planned, with all but one entrance to the scene of the shooting, an open field, under close observation. Eyewitnesses have confirmed that in spite of their superior numbers and fire-power there was no attempt to challenge the Volunteer or to effect an arrest. As in other shoot-to-kill operations this gives the lie once again to the British government's claim that lethal force is used only as a last resort by its military forces.

Volunteer Marks was shot three times, once in the head. He was then dragged by two RUC members out of the field and, still alive, was held without medical assistance for over half-an-hour at the side of an empty house before he was taken to hospital. He died shortly after arrival.

MISREPRESENTATION

A subsequent RUC statement issued after the killing, laid heavy emphasis on having aborted an IRA operation because a mortar was recovered some distance from the scene of the killing — presenting this as justification in itself for killing an unarmed republican. This theme was quickly taken up by the local SDLP MP, Eddie McGrady, who all but congratulated, to the abhorrence of nationalists, the gunning-down of Volunteer Marks. Sinn Féin's constituency representative, Sean Fitzpatrick, called on McGrady to retract his comments, pointing out that "many nationalists in South Down are outraged by his acceptance of the RUC version of events", when it was clear that they had not used "minimum or appropriate force".

New pressure group to focus on human rights

● In Dungannon on May 20th, a new pressure group was established to systematically expose British abuses of human rights in the Six Counties. The conference was organised by relatives of victims of the British government's shoot-to-kill policy and relatives of victims of Loyalist death-squads.

The 'Relatives for Justice' group will focus on British state terror which has been ignored by the politicians, the media and church leaders. Niall Farrell, brother of IRA Volunteer Mairead Farrell (one of three unarmed IRA Volunteers murdered by the

Ultach Trust out of a £1.3 million EC package for community relations was sent with a copy of the 'Hurd guidelines' regarding the blacklisting of certain community and self-help groups in the Six Counties. The money, from the European Commission for Community Relations, is administered through the governments of each member state. The allocation decided upon by the British government is as follows: £500,000 to the Spirit of Enniskillen Bursary Scheme; £38,000 to the Northern Ireland Tall Ships Council; £15,000 to the Lurgan Pub With No Beer; and £500,000 to the Ultach Trust, along with a further £250,000 from the NIO.

The imposition of political vetting in the allocation of the funds means that none of the money can be passed on to the Irish-language umbrella group Glór na nGael. In August 1990, Glór na Gael were notified that their funding was to be withdrawn under guidelines set down by the then British Secretary of State, Douglas Hurd, in June 1985. Like the other community groups who have lost their funding in this way, Glór na nGael was given no explanation or justification for the decision, other than a photocopied press release from the Northern Ireland Information Service dated 27th June, 1985, which refers to plans "to ensure that Government financial support for community activities is not used to foster the aims and objectives of paramilitary interests."

Many language enthusiasts believe the NIO sponsored the setting up of the Ultach Trust last year because it was aware of the EC money in the pipeline and did not wish the money to go to Glór na nGael because of its vigorous campaign style.

Commenting on the claim made when announcing the grant by the NIO Community Relations Minister Brian Mawhinney, that the

present government has probably done more for the Irish language than any government since 1921, Gearóid Ó Cairealláin, editor of the Irish language daily paper *Lá* said:

"That's really not saying an awful lot. Really he should be ashamed to compare himself with any previous government of Northern Ireland. What rankles most within the Irish-speaking community is the way the government has dealt with Glór na nGael and I think they will have to resolve this issue before they can derive any benefit out of this extra money."

IRA Military Operations

● As March ended and throughout April, the IRA in Ireland's British-occupied Six Counties inflicted a series of military and psychological blows against the British military forces and their political counterparts in government. A number of leading members of loyalist paramilitary organisations, principally the Ulster Volunteer Force — responsible for the majority of the 13 sectarian killings so far this year — were also targeted.

Towards the end of March, there were several attacks against British forces engaged in fortifying observation posts along the border. Between March 22nd and 24th in County Fermanagh, IRA Volunteers directed heavy-calibre machine-gun fire at British army engineers involved in construction work on the Derryvallon Road post. In South Armagh, a long-established 'no-go' area for the British, soldiers involved in harassing the local population around the village of Cullyhanna came under sustained machine-gun fire.

In Derry on March 21st, an RUC civilian employee was shot and seriously injured as she

left the Strand Road barracks. In Trillick, County Tyrone, on March 24th, a UDR soldier was injured in an IRA gun attack. The IRA later stated the UDR man had been one of a four-member gang responsible for the sectarian murder of Omagh Councillor Patsy Kelly in 1974. The following day, in nearby Gabally, two more UDR soldiers were injured when IRA Volunteers fired on a UDR/RUC vehicle checkpoint.

In Belfast, the IRA left elaborate hoax-bomb and blast incendiary devices in strategic areas of the city which tied down large numbers of the British forces in clearance operations. There were also bomb attacks on the Henry Taggart and Antrim Road bases.

During April and the beginning of May, two members of the RUC, were killed in IRA bomb and gun attacks in Ballycastle and Lisburn, County Antrim. On May 1st, an RPG rocket attack in Belfast's Beechmount area resulted in one RUC man being killed and three others injured, one of them seriously, when a rocket ripped the roof off their heavily-armoured vehicle.

In Banbridge, County Down, on April 4th, a 1,000lb van bomb was placed outside the courthouse by IRA Volunteers who telephoned a 45-minute warning. The Courthouse and other surrounding buildings were extensively damaged in the explosion. In the following days, British army/RUC bases in Pomeroy, County Tyrone, on April 5th, and Belleek, County Fermanagh, on April 8th, came under gun and bomb attack. On the same day, British forces patrolling the streets came under sniper's fire in the Whiterock Road and Andersonstown areas of West Belfast. One soldier was injured in the latter attack. Other sniping and bomb attacks took place in Strabane, County Tyrone, on 14th April, and Belfast on April 16th, when, for the sixth time in two years, IRA Volunteers breached security at Shorts aircraft factory and placed a bomb which exploded after a 45-minute warning in the Central office block.

LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES TARGETED

In line with the IRA's long-standing position on not allowing itself to be drawn into a sectarian campaign but reserving the right to take action against identified loyalists involved in killing and terrorising the nationalist community — the IRA shot and killed two leading UVF members and seriously wounded another.

On April 6th, UVF member Derek Ferguson from Coagh, County Tyrone, was shot and killed at his home. Ferguson, the IRA said, had been responsible for sectarian killings in the Tyrone area. Six days later, UVF man David Jameson was seriously injured in a booby-trap bomb explosion in Portadown, County Down, while on April 13th, UVF man Ian Sproule from Killen, County Tyrone, was shot and killed. The IRA said that both UVF members had been involved in the sectarian killing of four nationalists in Cappagh in March.

What they said...

● On the acquittal of the Birmingham Six...

"Lives have been wrecked. The most fruitful years of a person's life have been ripped away and nobody has said sorry so far. I say sorry on behalf of the judiciary... I think it's a tragedy and it hasn't been sufficiently marked by expressions of apology on behalf of the judicial establishment." British Judge Pickles, calling for the resignation of the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Lane, as a way for the legal system to apologise to the Six.

● On the European Commission's ruling in favour of censorship...

"It really is a matter — more pressing than ever — for the unions and the journalists to develop a public debate around this question of whether a censored media should be allowed to continue in Ireland." Professor Kevin Boyle, counsel in the NUJ's case.

● On Sinn Féin's exclusion from the Brooke talks process...

"Don't let any group be left out of the negotiations. It is important that everybody be able to express their feelings. It was our experience in Southern Africa that when

people, authentic spokespersons, are excluded from talks, they are not likely to look kindly on the results". Southern Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu, speaking in Dublin in April.

"The decision to exclude Sinn Féin has nothing to do with our position on the rights or wrongs of the use of force. If opposition to force was the criteria for an invitation to these discussions there would be no one taking part!" Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams.

● On Britain's deplorable human rights record...

"Basic civil liberties and the enactment of the notorious Emergency Provisions Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act has exacerbated the conflict and eroded respect for law and order... These acts add to the deep resentment of many people in Northern Ireland, particularly in the minority community, but also a growing number in the majority community — who already experience the government's abuse of human rights." Former Nobel Peace Prize winner Mairead Maguire, who addressed the 3rd International Conference on Human Rights in Helsinki, Finland, in April.

Sinn Féin's demands

- Sinn Féin's ultimate objective is to create the political conditions necessary to secure a true and lasting peace in Ireland. This can only be achieved by:
 - The ending of partition arising from British rule in six of Ireland's 32 counties;
 - British disengagement from Ireland and the restoration to the Irish people of the right to exercise self-sovereignty, independence and national self-determination;
 - The setting of a definite date within the lifetime of a British government for the completion of this withdrawal;
 - The disarming and disbandment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment as part of the military withdrawal;
 - The calling of a Constitutional Conference to which all political parties would be invited. This conference to be responsible for determining the nature and composition of an emergent national police service and the judiciary. If Britain was sincere about disengaging and was committed to an orderly transference of power, this could be achieved with a minimum of disorder; and
 - The unconditional release of all political prisoners.

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Sinn Féin Foreign Affairs Bureau provides an International Information Service to subscribers in Europe, the USA and Canada. It consists of a weekly collection of articles from a wide range of Irish and British daily and weekly newspapers, as well as monthly magazines. In addition, there is a weekly issue of analytical and statistical data and reports on a wide range of issues relating to the political situation in Ireland.

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