

Irish Republican Information Service

Teach Daithi O Conaill, 223 Parnell Street, Dublin 1, Ireland. (No 135).

Phone: +353 - 1 - 872 9747; FAX: + 353 - 1 - 872 9757; e-mail: saoirse@iol.ie Date: January 22, 1996

SIX SENTENCED BY SPECIAL COURT IN DUBLIN

THE no-jury special court in Dublin sentenced five men and a woman to a total of 35 years on January 19 for possession of a shotgun and a revolver "in suspicious circumstances" in Tallaght, Co Dublin on May 4, 1995.

There were clenched fist salutes from the dock and loud applause and shouts of "Up the Republic" from their supporters, relatives and friends in the public gallery when the sentences were announced the three judges, led by Justice Morris. Those sentenced were Martin McGrath (45), Bundoran, Co Donegal; Sean Moore (25), Monaghan; Richard Wallace (30), Limerick; Josephine Hayden (48) Dublin; Joe Mounsey (36) Ennis, Co Clare and George Buckley (21) Dublin.

Josephine Hayden is Ard-Rúnaí (General Secretary) of Republican Sinn Féin and a member of the organisation's Ard-Chomhairle. Along with Sean Moore and Martin McGrath she was sentenced to six years imprisonment while Richard Wallace was sentenced to seven years.

The four refused to plead when arraigned on January 18 and pleas of not guilty were entered on their behalf. George Buckley and Joe Mounsey pleaded guilty to charges of possession of arms and ammunition and were sentenced to five years each.

All six were found not guilty of having the guns and ammunition with intent to endanger life and with intent to commit a robbery. The six were arrested when a van was stopped by armed Special Branch men near Tallaght village following a surveillance operation.

In a statement on January 19 Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, President, Republican Sinn Féin noted that the sentences were imposed while two more members of the British Royals were being escorted around the 26 Counties amid very heavy security. In his statement he said:

"The severe sentences of seven, six and five years imprisonment imposed on six Republicans for possession of a shotgun and a small calibre revolver at the Special non-jury Court today must be seen against the background of British Royal visits to the 26 Counties on the same day.

"Dissent was quelled by police action with people who protested being arrested under the new Public Order Act. Simultaneously Mr Bruton demands that all political sections accept the report of the International Body on Arms even before it is published.

"The direction of 26-County State policy is clear with those who accept British rule in Ireland being feted and their supporters released from prison while those who continue to reject British occupation are jailed and all dissent is crushed," he said.

Josephine Hayden was removed to Limerick jail on January 19 while the five men were sent to Portlaoise jail. As happened on several occasions in 1995 they were then immediately moved to other jails as the Provisionals in Portlaoise objected to the presence of the Republican prisoners. Martin McGrath, Sean Moore and Richard Wallace are now in Limerick jail while George Buckley and Joe Mounsey are incarcerated in Cork jail.

Two other Republicans appeared at the Special non-jury Court in Dublin on January 16 and 17. Clareman Michael Hegarty (43) and Robert McGilloway (28) from Derry were arrested following the discovery of explosives in an abandoned van near Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan on November 10, 1995. A member of the Republican Sinn Féin Ard-Chomhairle and former county goalkeeper for the Clare hurling team, Michael Hegarty was remanded to Cork jail until January 30 next. Robert McGilloway was remanded on continuing bail until the same date.

MITCHELL TO BACK UNIONIST VETO, CALL FOR ARMS SURRENDER DURING TALKS?

THERE was speculation during the past few days that the Mitchell Commission on the surrender of arms will recommend in its report this week that political parties in the Six Counties accept that the constitutional position of the Six Counties under British rule cannot be changed except with the consent of a majority in the occupied area. This means, in effect, accepting the unionist veto and the continuing occupation of the Six Counties by Britain.

In addition, the Sunday Tribune (January 21) reported that the Mitchell Commission will also recommend "staged decommissioning" in parallel with all-party talks in the Six Counties, which were intended to begin by the end of February 1996. This aims to get around the British insistence on Washington Three -- some surrender of arms by the Provisionals before being admitted to the British-sponsored talks -- by a fudge. Other likely elements of the report according to the Sunday Tribune are a commitment to abide by the outcome of the talks, "a promise which in practice would mean accepting the verdict of a referendum within the North on the terms of any agreed settlement". It is unclear whether Mitchell will pronounce on the Ulster Unionist Party suggestion of elections to a Stormont assembly which drew contradictory responses from the Provisionals on January 12-14 last.

On the idea of a surrender of arms in stages Provisional leader Gerry Adams said on January 21 that he was "not ruling in or ruling out anything. I don't have weapons, or any authority or responsibility [for weapons]". On January 10 the Provisionals' submission to the arms surrender body proposed that armed groups would destroy their own weapons "in a verifiable manner". Adams said that two or three years ago he could never have imagined the Provisionals making such a submission. This showed how far the Provisionals had travelled from its position two or three years ago, he told the Irish Times (January 22).

One British-backed death squad figure told the Sunday Tribune (January 21) that if the Provisionals agree to the unionist veto and accept what the majority in the Six Counties decides, as far as he was concerned "the war is really over". Unionists are likely to give the Mitchell Commission report a "warmer welcome" than Republicans, the paper concludes.

Meanwhile the head of the Dublin administration, John Bruton, called for a commitment beforehand by all parties in the Six Counties to accept the Mitchell Commission's recommendations, despite the fact that the British government has stated that it will not be bound in any way by what they insist is merely an advisory body. Captain James Kelly, a dissident Fianna Fail member, reminded Bruton on January 19 that the last time such a demand was made to accept a report before it was issued was the Boundary Commission report in 1925 which copperfastened the Border and provoked decades of political turmoil and resistance. Bruton's office in Merrion Street has been tagged "Glengall Street" by other Dublin civil servants, referring to the Belfast address of the headquarters of the Ulster Unionist Party.

BOYCOTT STORMONT, SAY ULSTER DELEGATES

WITH the report of the International Body on arms due for publication on Wednesday, January 24 Comhairle Uladh (Ulster Executive) of Republican Sinn Féin meeting in Monaghan on January 21 called for a boycott of any New Stormont under whatever guise. Elections to any such body should also be boycotted as candidates are required to subscribe to a political test oath the delegates from all nine Ulster counties said in a statement.

Advertising in nationalist newspapers in the Six Counties for 55,000 American visas in a lottery was seen as a means of "cleansing" nationalist areas of resistance to British rule.

Support by Senator Mitchell's body for the Unionist Veto in the Six Occupied Counties could only serve to make that report irrelevant as it was the vote of All-Ireland in the context of British withdrawal that really counted.

CANCER PRISONER SEEKS TRANSFER

RELATIVES of Paddy Kelly, who is recovering from a third major operation for cancer on January 18, have called for him to be transferred from Maghaberry jail in the Six Counties to Portlaoise prison in the 26 Counties. Kelly was transferred from Whitemoor prison in Britain to Maghaberry in December last after spending more than 100 days on a no-wash protest during the summer. Kelly has disclosed that doctors have found two new "spots" on his lungs and that he feels he is living on borrowed time. The transfer to Portlaoise is sought for Kelly, a County Laois man, so that he can be near to his wife and family who live there.

BRITISH PRISON REGIME -- ILL PRISONERS HANDCUFFED AT ALL TIMES

AN Irish prisoner in Britain with AIDS was refused bail in London on January 15. The emergency application for bail was heard following protests over the woman's case. The woman, identified as 'Jane' was arrested last November and charged with conspiracy to supply heroin. She has since been on remand in Holloway prison. While she was receiving treatment at St Mary's Hospital in London for AIDS-related illnesses she was shackled to a prison officer at all times.

The woman's solicitor, Sarah Cleary, said that no reason was given for refusing bail. The solicitor said that 'Jane' was too ill to walk more than a couple of hundred yards and wasn't an escape risk. Following the publicity surrounding the bail refusal the British Home Office announced on January 17 that the handcuffs had been removed. However, the spokesperson for the Home Office refused to say what new security measures had been introduced. This case is the latest in a series of reports of ill prisoners in Britain being shackled at all times while in hospital, including pregnant prisoners being handcuffed while in labour.

HARSH REGIME FOR IRISH PRISONERS

BRITAIN'S hardline policy towards Irish political prisoners was highlighted on Friday, January 19 when an Irishwoman serving a life sentence for explosive charges in England had her appeal to the Belfast High Court for a judicial review of the refusal of the British Home Office to grant her temporary parole to visit her sick father refused.

Ella O'Dwyer (35) of Roscrea, Co Tipperary, was sentenced in England in 1986. She was transferred to Maghaberry prison near Lisburn, Co Antrim, in July 1994 but remains under the control of the British Home Office as she is a "temporary transfer prisoner".

Her application was refused by the British Home Secretary because she is a Category A prisoner and there is a policy that they are not released to go outside the British jurisdiction. However her barrister pointed out that a number of Category A prisoners had received such releases with one travelling to the 26 Counties who had subsequently returned to prison.

Also a delegation comprising of members of the 26-County parliament met with five political prisoners being held in Belmarsh prison in England. Speaking afterwards they said the five men had marked weight loss, were locked up 23 hours a day with no access to education facilities or books and were woken every half hour during the night.

RUC OPEN FIRE ON STOLEN CARS

TWO members of the RUC Special Branch opened fire on what is believed to have been a stolen car in Belfast city centre on Tuesday, January 16. Witnesses said three shots were fired in the incident, which happened at around 4.30pm as employees in nearby offices were leaving work. There were no reports of any injuries. The incident serves as a reminder of the continued presence on the streets of Belfast of armed undercover RUC units.

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