

The

CAPTIVE VOICE



An Glór Gafa

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The Voice of the Irish Republican Prisoners of War

Who really wants peace?



The CAPTIVE VOICE

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. ■

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Cover illustration



■ By Mícheál Doherty
 (Long Kesh)

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.

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The

CAPTIVE VOICE



An Glór Gafa

"There are no political prisoners in the United Kingdom (sic)". Thus declared British Prime Minister John Major in answer to a Tory backbencher in the House of Commons on the occasion when he summarily dismissed the Hume/Adams peace initiative. The comment amounted to little more than an aside to the main debate, but it says much about the arrogance of the British, and about their unreal and dismissive approach to the conflict in Ireland. It is not that they don't understand Ireland, as commentators often say. The British understand perfectly the situation here. They should — they created it. They understand too what is needed to bring peace. It is simply that they refuse to take the steps which will bring an end to the suffering.

While it is the British government which has the power and the responsibility, ultimately, to give peace to Ireland, there is a sense in which John Major is irrelevant in the peace process at this point. Major's own instinct is unionist, quite apart from the fact that he had tied his government's future to the votes of the Ulster Unionist Party at Westminster. It is clear that he has no interest in a solution to the conflict and has sought to deflect attention from the search for peace by a 'magnanimous' offer to Sinn Féin. It will have a place at the negotiating table, he says — if the IRA surrenders. Sinn Féin will be at the table no matter what. It has a democratic mandate from 40% of northern nationalists and does not depend on the whim of a British prime minister. Major's intransigence has made him an obstacle and hence an irrelevancy to the peace process.

The crucial question for the prospects of peace is with Albert Reynolds. Will he hitch his government to Major's on a twin track heading nowhere except towards further suffering? Or will he join the real Irish peace train to a demilitarisation of the conflict and the beginnings of true democracy in Ireland? The vast majority of people in these islands know that the Hume/Adams initiative offers the only hope of lasting peace. It is the responsibility of the Dublin government to bring all its influence to bear to fulfil that hope.

Reports of the death of the Hume/Adams initiative are greatly exaggerated. It has only begun. It may be a long road and republicans should not be despondent at the British government's response. The initiative has already succeeded in many respects. It has put the issue of self-determination firmly back on the agenda. It has caught the public imagination and won widespread support both North and South, in Britain and internationally. It has shown up as charlatans those who posed as impartial seekers of peace. It has exposed the shallowness of thought and the meanness of vision of the antirepublican clique in political and media circles in the 26 Counties — those who speak plaintively about the rights of *"the people of the North"* when what they really mean is the right of unionists to have a veto on progress, and those who have made northern nationalists nonpersons in their own land.

Major, Mayhew, Molyneaux and Paisley have all declared that there will not be *"peace at any price"*. This has become the codeword for those who will brook no change in the status quo and who refuse to contemplate equality for nationalists. The simple fact is that there will be change — there is no peace to be found in an internal settlement. John Hume has accepted this. Albert Reynolds must accept it. This is one of those moments in history when an opportunity is there to be grasped. In 1969, the Dublin government stood idly by and a previous opportunity was squandered. All democrats must ensure that this does not happen again. For the real peacemakers in Ireland and abroad, this is the time to keep maximum pressure on the Dublin government to live up to its responsibilities.

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD

REPUBLICANS take no satisfaction in tragedies like that which occurred on the Shankill Road on Saturday, 23 October. And no matter how many times we reiterate that statement, it will fall on deaf ears.

Every shade of unionism, every shade of pseudo-nationalism prefer instead to regurgitate the comfortable lie that the IRA is engaged in a sectarian campaign geared towards the annihilation of the Protestant people. Despite the fact that the IRA does not gun down innocent Protestants drinking in bars, shoot indiscriminately into taxis ferrying Protestant passengers nor bomb homes occupied by Protestant families, the apologists of the status quo still persist in perpetuating the lie that the IRA is engaged in a sectarian conflict characterised by such activities.

When a tragedy like that

which occurred on the Shankill Road happens, it is seized upon by people with no real interest in peace in order to distort the reality of what happened, what is happening and the tragedy of the situation in which we exist. The IRA is typecast as the demon of Irish politics, the perpetrator of war for war's sake and the only obstacle to peace. British politicians wax lyrical about the fate of innocent victims, the British queen expresses sympathy, meetings of the Anglo/Irish conference are suspended and our local politicians plough through the dictionaries for new words of condemnation of the IRA.

Lest I be misunderstood, let

me say quite categorically that the victims of tragedy have a right to sympathy. Their tears should be acknowledged and condolences expressed, to give them some, no matter how little, comfort in their grief. Anguish and the pain of loss transcends political boundaries, and none of us has a monopoly on it.

What I do question though, is the sincerity of the crocodile tears shed by people who are more interested in manipulating the emotional turmoil of people's grief than in genuinely seeking to find a solution to the problems of our divided society.

The Shankill Road bombing cannot be viewed in isolation. It did not happen in a vacuum and it must be analysed in perspective, unpalatable as that may be for some. It occurred against the

■ Gerard Hodgins
(Long Kesh)

backdrop of an unprecedented level of genocidal slaughter being committed against the Catholic people (41 assassinated this year so far). The UDA and the UVF do not even attempt now to portray themselves as "soldiers fighting the republican enemy". The whole thrust of their campaign is naked sectarianism, their targets each and every Catholic — irrespective of age or sex.

In an attempt to hold the UDA leadership accountable for their genocidal campaign against the Catholic people, the IRA planted a bomb at the UDA headquarters on the Shankill Road. That bombing went tragically wrong. It was a bomb intended for the UDA command structure, not a deliberate attack upon the civilian population of the Shankill Road.

The grief felt by the families of the victims of that particular bombing incident is no less real than the trauma suffered by the families of the victims of Castlerock, the Derby House and Devonshire Arms massacres, Seán Graham's betting shop... need one go on? All of which, in contradiction to the Shankill Road bomb, were premeditated, cold-blooded, intentional acts of naked sectarian terrorism. How many Anglo-Irish conferences were suspended for the Catholic victims of genocide? How often has the British Prime Minister got himself on the television to voice sympathy with the Catholic victims of loyalism run wild, armed and supported by the British state?

Are we, Catholics, children of a lesser god? Why does the spilled blood of the innocent Catholic and the tears of the Catholic mother never evoke the same reaction among British politicians and royalty as witnessed in the aftermath of the Shankill Road bomb?

Again I say it, the people of the Shankill have a right to sympathy. But when sympathy is expressed as a political gesture, it is hypocritical and shallow. If there is no parity of compassion with the innocent victims, then how can there ever be parity of treatment for the living?



● The Shankill Road bombing cannot be viewed in isolation. It did not happen in a vacuum and it must be analysed in perspective, unpalatable as that may be for some

On Saturday, 23 October, an IRA bomb exploded prematurely on the Shankill Road in Belfast. Ten people, including IRA Volunteer Thomas Begley, were killed. Acres of newsprint and hours of television time were devoted to the incident. What was barely heard amid the furore was the voice of republicans. Below, we present the reflections of two H-Block POWs on the tragedy and its aftermath.

The Myth of Loyalist Retaliation

■ Harry Maguire
(Long Kesh)

THE SHANKILL ROAD BOMBING was nothing less than a human tragedy. All opinion was unanimous on that point. Gerry Adams said that he was personally shattered and that there was no excuse for the bomb. He reiterated that his own and Sinn Féin's search for peace would go on, saying that the scenes on the Shankill Road should serve to underline the need for an inclusive peace process. It was here that the unanimity created by the bombing ended.

There was understandable anger directed towards the Republican Movement following the bombing. What were not understandable were the attacks on the whole nationalist community, not just the physical attacks by loyalist gangs, but verbal attacks by the pseudo-intellectuals who masquerade as politicians, churchmen and media figures. As so often in the past, they turned feelings of sorrow into a political bludgeon both to attack and to excuse attacks on the nationalist community.

As the loyalist killing machine moved up several gears, we in the nationalist community were told to expect "the understandable wrath of the alienated unionist community". We were warned that loyalist gangs would exact a heavy price in revenge for the Shankill bombing. This line, effectively in defence of loyalist murder gangs, was pumped out by a willing media and by public pronouncements from politicians and clergy. The Bishop of Down and Connor, the Right Reverend

Samuel Poyntz, declared that "the Hume/Adams peace initiative had died with the bombing". Politicians railed against the imaginary pan-nationalist front as they poured out a litany of condemnation, coupled with warnings of retaliatory loyalist violence.

There was an air of unreality in the nationalist community as the media set to work on its latest atrocity. Nationalists were being told that the Shankill bombing would spark retaliation — yet nationalists have endured loyalist violence for the past 25 years, a campaign of violence which predates the present IRA campaign. This obvious point appeared to have slipped the minds and agendas of most of our analytical observers. For an unseasoned observer of the Irish political scene, this oversight, while regrettable, would be understandable. But for experienced 'leaders' and journalists to have presented the Shankill tragedy as though it happened in a vacuum was a disgrace.

For the past 25 years —



● Loyalist death squads are not "exacting revenge" but are merely cranking up an ongoing campaign of murder and intimidation

indeed since the creation of the northern state — the nationalist community has suffered loyalist violence. While not wishing to delve too far into the pages of history, it is necessary, in order to place the Shankill Road bombing into its historical context, to plot some important milestones of our past. The suffering on the Shankill has its roots in that past.

The creation of the northern state was like a breach birth. To give it life entailed immeasurable suffering, pain and force. The state has since lurched from crisis to crisis, the latest beginning with its inability to cope in political terms with the civil rights campaign of the late 1960s. For daring to ask for equality, the nationalist community suffered "retaliation" in the form of the pogroms of 1969 when nationalist areas of Belfast and Derry were attacked by both the official forces of the state and its loyalist supporters.

The nationalist community is trapped in a bastard state and has been repeatedly punished through the years for demanding fair play. It has always been the same — whenever nationalists organise around the central issues of justice and equality, loyalist violence (never far beneath the surface of life in the Six Counties) bursts out.

After the Shankill bombing, as the loyalist gangs rampaged with increased ferocity, the nationalist community was all too painfully aware that loyalists were not "exacting revenge" but were merely cranking up an ongoing campaign. This campaign clearly has a dis-

tinct political agenda — the maintenance of the status quo by whatever means, including the use of violence. To portray loyalist violence as reactive ignores the fact that it does have its own agenda and its own twisted logic.

It was the "reactive" myth, however, that was presented to the world once again after the Shankill bombing. The media, politicians and clergy could not have been unaware that the UVF and UFF had already stepped up their campaign in response to the Hume/Adams talks. And before that, loyalists had used as their excuse the increase in the Sinn Féin vote in the local government elections earlier this year.

Anyone genuinely seeking the causes of loyalist violence would be forced to investigate the history of our conflict. This investigation would expose them to some unpalatable truths and the realisation that what is needed to solve our problems is a peace process involving inclusive dialogue.

And acceptance of that would lead to the inescapable conclusion that Gerry Adams and John Hume are the only leaders within these islands trying to establish such a process.

Those in the media, the political parties and the churches, have power to shape public opinion. Their failure to deal in an honest and balanced fashion with the realities of the conflict helps only to perpetuate the barriers within our society. To continue trotting out the same tired lies and misconceptions that have for years fanned the flames of bigotry and hatred in our country, condemns us all to further suffering. ■

Dole day

■ Aran Foley
(Portlaoise)

THE RAIN'S DESCENT was marked by an incessant static-like crackle as each drop fulfilled its destiny, exploding off the pavement, shop windows or whatever object fate had determined for it. Hundred of thousands at a time they fell, wave after wave, almost in unison. It was almost as if the rain erected a barrier, not physical but nevertheless effective between him and the rest of humanity.

He could see them. The mother, a child held protectively in her arms, racing for the sanctuary of the bus shelter. The old man, grim black umbrella furled, walking on seemingly impervious. Perhaps his nonchalance was affected, as old men often do, attempting to prove superiority over a frivolous and fickle younger generation. More likely though, he reasoned, the man had just been around too long to allow any disruption to this daily stroll.

He could hear them too. The three girls, magazines held aloft, futile shields, their ineffectiveness spurring on their laughter youthful and carefree. The newspaper boy, merchandise protected by a transparent plastic sheet. *Press* or *Indo*, he rolled the lot together. A foreign tongue to those not of the city. Distorted, like the headlines themselves, as the rain gathered on the plastic cover.

He could see them, he could hear them, he was intensely aware of them, but leaning in the doorway it was as if the rain was a one-way mirror through which he was observing the city from afar.

"How's it going, head!"

His heart missed a beat as Jimmy's greeting knocked him from his pedestal. Solitude, the necessary precursor for the illusion, vanished as the world came into cold sharp focus. Ah reality! — beam me fucking up, Scotty, he thought with a wry grin.

"What kept you? I'm waiting here the last 20 minutes." "Ah, the old bitch on my hatch," Jimmy scowled, as if that were explanation enough.

And indeed for a moment John thought he would leave it at that, which would suit him just fine; his perpetual state of boredom, topped off with mammoth cynicism, had not made for any great inquisitiveness. Jimmy went on though.

"She wanted to know when I last looked for work. That really gets to me, you know? Arrogant old bitch must reckon the place is coming down with work, only scumbags like me and you can't be bothered. Does she think we like living on thin air? 'Cos for what they give us, it might as well be."

"Yeah, bastards," John cut in, less out of solidarity than a desire to calm Jimmy down. Dole day was the only day they were able to do anything more than just simply exist. He was feeling good and didn't want any unpleasantness to ruin things. There followed a long silence so that by way of reflex obligation John asked tentatively, "What did you do?"

"I asked to see the supervisor and I says to him, look, are there any jobs going in here? Well I don't think so, says he. So I turns to your woman and says, there, now give me my fucking money!"

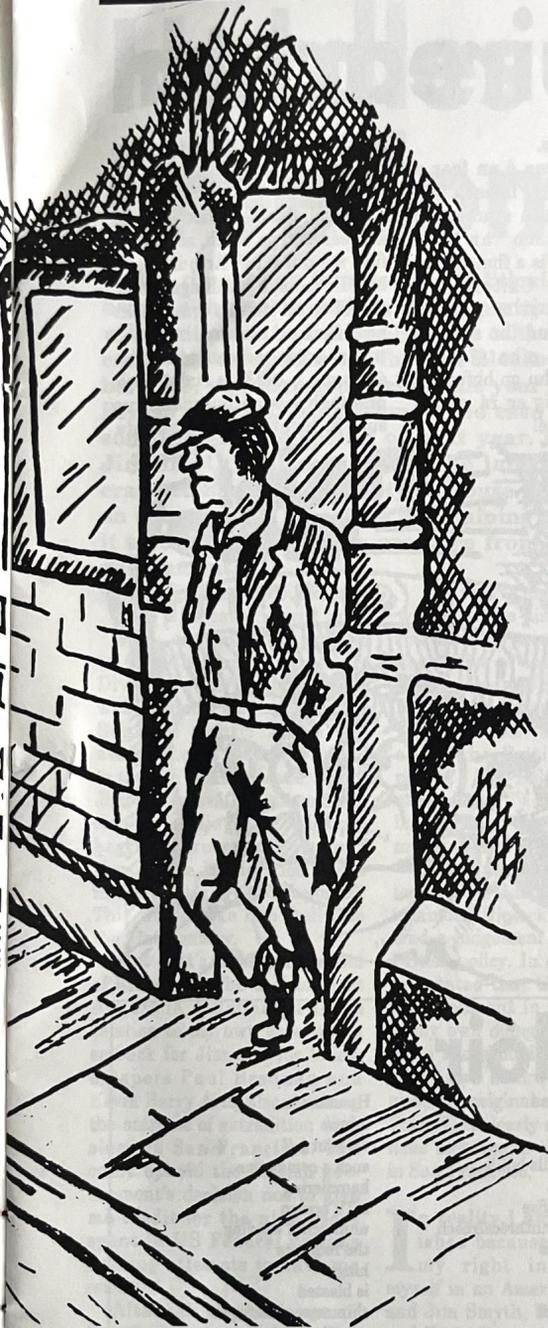
They were still laughing about it when they got to Grafton Street. The flagon of cider and two cans of lager each now carried had been bought in an off-licence north of the Liffey. Tramping round by Trinity College, the blue and white striped bag hanging lazily from two fingers, their eager pace seemed a defiance rather than an acknowledgement of the rain. Their scuffed Docs and dirty jeans scorned the fashionable scruffiness of the students.



The rain had slackened off but was still severe enough to keep the shoppers lingering in the shops. Traitors' Arch loomed up, ominous, a troll standing guard in the pass. Through its legs they caught glimpses of the grass, dotted here and there with flower beds, colour bursting and glistening in the rain like jewels.

Skirting the pond, they came to the bandstand. There were a few already there, a couple of punks and some other ne'er-dowells. They didn't really know anyone, although John recognised one or two from around. They jumped the rail and joined the group amid a murmur of greetings. It wasn't a formal gathering and the initiation was an open one.

"Any of youse know Sandra Byrne?" John asked. The taller of the punks told him she had been and gone.



■ Illustration by Artie Forbes (Long Kesh)

the whole point. He said nothing though and returned his gaze to the ducks on the pond.

A mallard and a hen had moved out from the side shortly after the rain stopped. He wondered if this was just a coincidence. The idea of ducks sheltering from the rain he found, well, preposterous. They were now side by side 20 or 30 yards out. Occasionally one or other would dive, thrusting its head into the water, disappearing with barely a ripple only to reappear moments later in almost exactly the same spot.

They seemed unaware of each other. There was no visible acknowledgement or communication yet they exuded an understanding, a mutual contentment that was palpable. Like the elderly couple basking in their golden years idealised in books and films, but who in reality are nowhere to be found. People just aren't like that, he thought. He drained the last of the cider and felt the warmth spread from his stomach.

"Are you coming down for a burger?" Jimmy asked.

"Nah, I'd better head on. Listen are you definitely going tonight?"

"Yeah, I'll see you there."

"Right."

He walked with them as far as the arch and watched them disappear into the throng. They were signing some song he couldn't make out, pogoing as they went. Two wild looking punks and Jimmy. Bizarre. Although they were now engulfed in the crowd, occasionally a mohican or Jimmy's near skinhead would appear briefly, like a weird fish jumping in a flooded river, as if to defy the impersonal uniformity that surrounded them.

He cut through on to Kevin Street. Passing the flats he was aware of the children playing noisily, fuelled by the excess of energy from their confinement during the rain. He felt envy at how easily they could make themselves happy, and a tinge of regret too. Tír na nÓg is not a place but a state of mind that vanished with age. He burst out laughing, drawing curious stares from passers-by. He was surprised at himself for such morbid thoughts. The night was young. And tomorrow? Well, that was tomorrow and really none of his concern.

Reaching the end of Patrick Street, he crossed over Thomas Street only just managing to avoid being run over as he did so. Christchurch aloof as ever, its back turned disdainfully on Wood Quay, looked on. Passing through its shadow and down the steep hill he came out by the Liffey.

Once the artery that brought life and growth to the city, it was now largely redundant — like a lot of people, he thought. She had not been well rewarded. There was a monument to her — or was that to some millionaire block? Anyhow, they had sure done a good job of poisoning her. She was beautiful still though and, while beauty is largely in the eye of the beholder, no self-respecting Dubliner would hear her insulted.

Crossing the Ha'penny Bridge he paused on its crest, wondering at what exact point southside became northside. A sudden image of a miniature Checkpoint Charlie nearly provoked another outburst of laughter but the drink was wearing off and he was able to spare himself the embarrassment. Arms folded on the rail, he gazed along the length of the river.

Up ahead he could see a train snaking its way along the small railway bridge, its lighted windows standing out in the dark like scales. He became aware of the encroaching darkness, and the car headlights coming at him along the quays glowed like cats' eyes. Behind the slowly moving train the green dome of the Customs House hovered like a flying saucer above the city.

Higher still, the oriental cap of Liberty Hall aroused vague memories from his old history classes — something about a bloke called James Connolly who had tried to stand up for the workers and had had his headquarters there. There was something too about the Brits bombing it from the river, and 1916, and all that. He wasn't sure... ■

"She went with her mate Sharon, there's a party on back in her flat tonight."

"Jasus, yeah," Jimmy groaned. "I bumped into her yesterday at the Ilac, I completely forgot."

"No problem, Jimmy. Are you going?"

"Well, there's not much else to do, is there?"

"I suppose you're right," John said. "Anyway, it might even be a bit of crack."

The cans were gone now and they were nearing the end of their flagons. The others had all moved off bar the two punks and Jimmy was engaged in a loud argument with them. Apparently Jimmy did not believe Sid Vicious had really been able to play his guitar. John smiled to himself. It didn't matter — surely that was

Lucht na gCasúireachta

TA a fhios ag achán mhac máthara gurb iad na lámhcheirdeanna an caitheamh aimsire is taithneamhaí a bhíonn ar siúl ag cimi cogaidh. "Bail ó Dhia ar na cimi bochta, ní bhíonn rud ar bith eile le déanamh ag na créatúir. Caithfidh go mbaineann siad sult is suaimhneas intinne as a gcuid saothair. Is furasta dóibh é cionn is go mbíonn an t-am, barr-íocht ama, acu chun iad a ndéanamh. Tá cuid acu iontach maith leis na lámha, nach bhfuil?"

Níl ach rud amháin le rá agam fán dearcadh seo thuas — raiméis amach is amach! Pleoid ar na lámhcheirdeanna! Dheaman a fhios ag am mhac máthara céanna ón spéir anuas díreach cé chomh doiligh, fuathach, tormánach agus salach is a bhíonn na lámhcheirdeanna.

Achan bhliain, gan teip, tagann lucht na lámhcheirdreanna anseo amach in éineacht le fógraí teilifíse na Nollag. Agus a leithéid de rúille búille níos chuala tú le do bheo. Ní chluin-tear ach an bualadh, an chasúireacht, an sábhadóireacht agus an sciúráil neamhthrócaireach ó mhaidin go hoíche... agus fiú i rith na hoíche féin! Is iomaí oíche a shílfeá gur ag briseadh cloch le hord atá siad in ionad cúpla tacóid a chur i dtuisle bheag. Oíche thormánach amháin bhí fear ar tí gearán a dhéanamh go dtí go bhfuair sé amach gurbh é "Dickel ar an bhodhrán" agus chan lucht na gcasúireachta a bhí i mbon an challáin. Seinteoir bodhráin, mar dheal! Mar bharr ar an donas, blosctar an craolachán, i rith na lae, ag bun an sciatháin chun cuidiú leis na sábháithe.

Rud ar bith ar an sciathán nach mbíonn greamaithe go teann, glactar é agus ní fectear go dea é. Déantar simléir theachníní de bharr thaos fiacla agus glactar gairbhéal ón pháirc mhór lena chur ar an ballaí. Baintear na cinn de na fir fhíochille fá choinne na murlán ar bhoscaf seodra. Cuirtear cúil chófraí isteach sna cláirseacha agus sna Crosa Ceilteacha. Ar chúpla sciathán áirithe is doiligh cófra a fháil nach dtitfidh do chuid éadaigh amach as a chúil!

Ní bhíonn ach beirt nó triúr coirpeach ar achán sciathán a bhíonn in innibh leagan úr

amach a cheapadh, agus cuirim féin formhór an lochta ar na grósóirí seo. Ní túisce a bhíonn cláirseach nó cros úr déanta acu ná go dtosaíonn na sluaite ar chóipeanna den rud a dhéanamh agus a athdhéanamh arís agus arís eile, agus éiríonn an rúille búille níos measa ná riamh. Tá scéal ag gabháil thart fiú, go ndearna duine éigin iar-racht cóip de chláirseach Derek Bell a ghlacadh ó stáileán na teilifíse agus Na Cheiftains ag seinm leo.

Ach is measa fós an rud atá le teacht, agus is é sin ná go bhfeiceann na teaghlach eile na cláirseacha, na crosa agus na boscaf seodra ag dul amach ar na cúirteanna. Ansin tosaíonn na ceisteanna agus na leideanna: "An bhfuil cead agat obair láimhe a dhéanamh?", "Cá bhfuil mo cheannsa?", "Shílfinn go ndéanfá bosca seodra fá mo choinne", "Fuair cailín sa bhus cláirseach bhreá mhór óna fear céile."

Agus ní túisce a ghéilleann tú don bhrú seo, agus b'fhéidir rud amháin a dhéanamh, ná go dtosaíonn na hachainíochta eile ag teacht isteach ina dtuille ó do dheirfiúracha is dheartháireacha, ó uncailí is aintíní, agus ó chairde nár chuala tú focal uatha leis na cianta!

Tá dóigheanna ag na fíorfhir ghlice an tuileoire seo a sheachaint. Is é sin, an chéad rud a dhéanann siad déanann siad chomh ciotach sin é is nach n-iarrfadh éinne rud ar bith orthu chóiche. Baintear geit as an chlann chomh luath agus a fheiceann siad an rud gránna ina shuí ann os a gcomhair amach agus bíonn an fear glic sona sásta leis féin nuair nach gluineann sé focal eile óna chlann fá dtaobh de na

lámhcheirdeanna.

Is mór an trua é an fear a chuireann a chroí isteach sna lámhcheirdeanna agus nach bhfaigheann ach an rud ceannann céanna is a fhaigheann an fear glic. Caithfidh a theaghlach bocht griannghraf a ghlacadh den rud ina shuí go brodíil ar an mhatal agus ligeann siad orthu go bhfuil na comharsana uilig ag rá gurb é an ola ar a gcroí é!

■ Le Seán O Daimhín (An Cheis Fhada)

Bhuel, thiofadh liom gearán a dhéanamh go brách, ach caithfidh mé dul a lúf. Ar ndóigh, ní bheidh codladh sámh agam mar gheall ar an tormán (gan trácht ar Dikel ar an bhodhrán!)... tuigim anois cad chuige a raibh éalú ann i 1983: is rud é nach dtiocfadh leis na buachaillí cur suas le lucht na gcasúireachta



Foclóir

Lámhcheirdeanna
saothair
gan teip
a leithéid de rúille búille
an chasúireacht
scáileán na teilifíse
an sciúráil neamhthrócaireach
an h-achainíochta
tuisle
blosctar
simléir theachníní
gairbhéal
na murlán ar bhoscaf seodra
gurb é an ola ar a gcroí é

coirpeach
leagan úr amach a cheapadh
na grósóirí
ní túisce
an sábhadóireacht
na leideanna
ord
ina dtuille
a sheachnadh
ar an mhatal
thaos fiacla

Handicrafts
labour
without fail
such a commotion
hammering
a TV screen
unmerciful sanding
the requests
hinge
is blasted
chimneys of cottages
gravel
the knobs of jewelry boxes
that they take an unctuous
pleasure in it
culprit
to hatch a new design
the instigators
no sooner
sawing
the hints
sledgehammer
in their floods
to avoid
on the mantelpiece
tootpaste

Hurdles to Freedom

By the time we go to press, the political extradition hearing in San Francisco dealing with Jim Smyth will have come to a close. Jim, one of the 38 republicans who escaped from these H-Blocks in September 1983, was arrested earlier this year on foot of a British warrant. A decision in the case is expected sometime in the spring of next year. Meanwhile, Jim Smyth will continue to be imprisoned in a cramped San Francisco city jailhouse. He succeeded on two separate occasions in obtaining bail only for it to be revoked under pressure from the British government.

Whatever the outcome of the case, it will most certainly be appealed to the 9th Circuit Appellate Division. After that, the trial will inevitably lead on to the US Supreme Court. These two avenues could take Jim Smyth to the end of this decade. And if Jim does prevail in the extradition proceedings, he will then begin a protracted journey through the immigration courts in his fight not to be deported. This would take him well into the 21st Century.

But that's far from the end of his plight. The decision last August in a Belfast court in relation to my own case was a setback for Jim and for fellow escapers Paul Brennan and Kevin Barry Artt, also awaiting the outcome of extradition decisions in San Francisco. The court upheld the British government's decision not to give me credit for the nine years spent in US Federal prisons fighting attempts to have me returned.

Although all three men in San Francisco are held on foot of British extradition warrants, their imprisonment will not be acknowledged by the British government. The years spent fighting extradition will be of no avail because, if returned, their time in US prisons shall not be credited to their time here. Needless to say, this is bringing undue pressure on them to drop their cases and simply return because of the threat that those years will eventually be *wasted*.

The court's decision basically wiped out the nine years that I had already served. It ignored the series of landmark legal decisions in US courts over almost a decade, decisions which had been formally accepted by the British (if under protest). The Belfast court dismissed totally not only those binding legal decisions but also my nine years of imprisonment.

In vague yet unapologetic terms Lord Justice Murray, an infamous Diplock judge, delivered a judgement in support of British policy. In essence, Murray stated that the fact of my imprisonment in America was of my own doing, saying that I could and should have returned of my own accord immediately upon my original arrest in New York. This clearly sends an ominous message to the three lads in San Francisco.

In reality I am being punished because I exercised my right in defending myself in an American court — and Jim Smyth, Paul Brennan and Kevin Barry Artt are being warned against similarly exercising their rights. The decision by Murray is disingenuous and lacks merit. When I was arrested in 1983 the existing treaty covering extradition between the US and Britain, agreed and co-signed by both governments, contained a political exemption clause. I merely invoked that provision and, to the disgust of the British, succeeded on a number of occasions in prevent-

■ Joe Doherty
(Long Kesh)

ing my extradition. Only in 1992 did the British prevail by way of a technical victory in the immigration courts.

Natural justice demanded that the nine years of litigation and imprisonment be taken into account. The British, however, wanted and got their pound of flesh in revenge for their years of defeat. Murray's acquiescence in this revenge not only showed his own lack of respect for legal decisions recognised and sanctioned by international law, but also exposed the British government's manipulation of the courts here in support of its political agenda.

Before Jim Smyth reaches these junctures though, he must confront the first extradition hurdle. Unlike in my own case, Jim cannot avail of the political exemption clause as the British government has since removed that provision from the treaty despite protests from internationally respected legal and human rights figures. Its removal was in response to Irish republicans' successful exposure in US courts of the contradictory nature of Britain's attempts to criminalise the struggle in Ireland.

The 1986 US/UK Supplementary Treaty is being used as a weapon against Irish republicans seeking refuge in the USA. But Irish-American and other civil rights activists did salvage a provision that requires US courts, before agreeing to extradition, to review the standards of protection for any Irish person who may be returned to a British jail.

So for the past several weeks many witnesses have been called to San Francisco to testify to the extent of British repression against Irish nationalists in the Six Counties. Such noted political figures as Bernadette McAliskey, Ken Livingstone MP and Neil Blaney TD have given evidence for the Smyth defence. Sinn Féin representatives too have been subpoenaed and various human-rights activists and lawyers called as expert witnesses to expand upon the wealth of documented evidence of abuse by the British government and its agents.



● JIM SMYTH

The British have called in their own expert panel. Many of the British government witnesses, however, are forced to invoke the Official Secrets Act when probed about specific acts, including the shoot-to-kill policy and interrogation methods used by the RUC. Prior to this, the British refused to hand over official documents relating to judicial inquiries into British army and RUC misconduct.

US Federal District Judge Barbara Caufield will review the evidence and make a decision sometime in the spring. There has been mounting pressure on her from the US State and Justice Departments to succumb to the British demands. But, as was evident in my own case, the US courts in most respects are independent of government control. We can only await the outcome in hope.

Meanwhile, Jim Smyth, Paul Brennan and Kevin Barry Artt contemplate the long incarceration ahead of them and the hurdles to freedom they must negotiate. But in doing so, the three Belfast men will highlight the contradictions in British propaganda in America and represent the very best in republican spirit. We salute their resolve. ■

Uneasy PC

Given the debate raging about political correctness, I was somewhat alarmed to learn recently that some of our comrades appear to have fallen prey to its wilder extremes. I have heard, for example, that some in the movement are insisting upon such usages as "Walkperson" instead of "Walkman". I have no particular axe to grind, but this is carrying things a little too far. There are valid cultural and political reasons why words like "mankind", "negro", "cripple" etc have fallen out of favour, but when one's use of language is taken as a test of one's credentials as a right-thinking person — or more to the point, a left-thinking person — then things are getting out of hand.

We have not reached a critical stage yet in this country but already there are signs that the left is beginning to take on board ideas of PC which have given rise to an unhealthy atmosphere in left-wing circles in the United States and in Britain. The controversy goes well beyond the type of words and phrases someone uses in everyday or academic discourse. The effect of these ideas is to impose a narrow set of criteria by which all statements of those perceived to be on the left, and therefore within the ambit of self-appointed intellectual guardians, are to be judged.

That is the most harmful effect of PC. It is aimed not at right-wing politicians or intellectuals, who are only too happy to be at odds with those whom they view as liberal commie faggots anyway, but at those very same liberal commie faggots. And that the strength of PC owes nothing

to genuine movements on the left is proven by the fact that its strongholds are the US Democratic party and North American universities, neither of which are hotbeds of revolutionary socialist subversion, except perhaps in the minds of the Ku Klux Klan and the John Birch Society.

So how does this impact on anyone involved in real politics? Obviously, it is not a great source of debate around Ballymurphy or Tallaght, much less Carrickmore, but its pernicious effects are carried into the day-to-day struggles of people by well-meaning individuals who pick up on what some middle-class feminist has to say about the brand name of personal stereos and then decide to pester anyone who says anything different. The test of a person's politics becomes not what he or she does, but what he or she says — and that is a sure recipe for hypocrisy and charlatanism.

■ Maitiú O Treasaigh
(Portlaoise)

PC is God's gift to those lefties who talk a good revolution and can use it to jump down the throats of simple proles. Some of them, who incidentally wouldn't know a picket line from a picket fence, have been up in arms recently about the use of the word "scab" by strikers. Apparently, it is offensive to people with skin disorders. Now that of course is just downright silly and you might get a laugh out of it, but it highlights the absurdity of the concept that politics can be changed by monitoring the words that come out of a person's mouth.

Much of the motivation behind PC is the desire on the part of some to substitute the agenda of a jaded '60s middle-class liberalism for the genuine concerns of working-class socialists. Those were the days (my friends) when campus "revolutionaries" believed that positive discrimination towards women and ethnic minorities, gay rights, abortion on demand and the legalisation of certain narcotics would hasten the dawn of human liberation.

Well, in most western capitalist countries, all of these have been implemented in whole or part. Certain aspects of their implementation have to be welcomed, others must be questioned — and such questioning should not leave one open to being called a fascist. What is clear beyond doubt is that none of the "successes" of

the liberal agenda has brought humankind one step closer to real liberation. That is why frustrated liberals are reduced to haranguing people about what they call their future, or about their reactionary devotion to Mozart instead of to some minimalist composer, or about their preference for Hank Williams over Madonna and her subtle (not to say lucrative) "undermining of the entire structure of the patriarchal post-capitalist culture".

It's about time that socialists cried stop. As anyone who knows beginner's Marx understands, you can't effect real change in how people view the world until you at least begin to change it. To believe otherwise would be to believe that the problems of the North can be solved by stopping loyalists calling nationalists nasty names, or that the problems of Black Americans can be solved by calling them Afro-Americans.

The real injustices of capitalist society and its attendant sicknesses of racism, discrimination, violence against women and so on, are caused by economic and social reality, and the aberrant ideas which people carry about in their heads cannot be tackled without first tackling those causes. The minute we forget that, we will become like Medieval monks waiting to pounce on every slip of the tongue as proof of heresy, oblivious to the gathering dusk of the Dark Ages.

QUOTES

"While Nelson was working for the British army as a double agent, his information helped greatly reduce the level of UDA violence. Since he was accidentally exposed by a police enquiry into the leaking of security force documents, the level of UDA killings has risen sharply." Jim Cusack, *Irish Times* 27/10/93. We wonder did it ever strike Jim Cusack that the sharp rise in the level of UDA killings might just possibly be due to Brian Nelson's role (with the assistance of his military intelligence handlers) in arranging the arms shipment, including 200 AK rifles and 90 Browning pistols, in January 1988 from South Africa, for the UDA and other loyalist paramilitaries?

"If you use the word [terrorist] enough, it spreads. So now it's fair enough not just in relation to those who carry bombs and guns but it's fair enough for those who belong to a political party that supports the right to carry bombs and guns. And if you extend it to that, well then, why not extend it to the families of those who belong to the party? And then why not extend it to academics who say that it's wrong to use the word terrorist? And so on and so on. What I'm saying is that there's no stopping this word once it's let loose — it's a Frankenstein and it becomes the ultimate justification... All these consequences of using the word terrorist bring us not a single step closer to figuring out how to solve the problem here." Bill Rolston, Senior Lecturer at the University of Ulster, Channel 4 documentary *Pirates and Emperors* 26/10/93.

"The two young Catholic men shot dead at Ballydugan outside Lurgan tonight were cousins of murdered Sinn Féin activist Sheena Campbell." Headline on Downtown Radio news bulletins 28/10/93, immediately following the murders of Gerard and Rory Cairns, demonstrating perfectly the process described by Bill Rolston — and without even mentioning the T word.

"Usually those who are in positions of authority use violence with a great deal of public support in order to maintain their position of superiority and then there comes a point whereby the victims of their violence retaliate. It's at this point that intellectuals, moralists, pacifists, feminists and everybody else who wants in on the act who has a theoretical point of view begins to say, 'If only you hadn't used violence we would be on your side'. My response to that is, 'Oh yeah?' " Bernadette McAliskey, Channel 4 documentary *Pirates and Emperors* 26/10/93.

Caller: *The killing of children by plastic bullets is also murder in my opinion.*

Candy Devine: *Maybe they shouldn't have been there.*

Phone-in on Downtown Radio 25/10/93. Nice to see that presenter Candy Devine treats the death of all children equally.

"I would always prefer to have 10,000 people on the street as opposed to one person out with a gun. I don't think we're every going to be able to stop the one person going out with a gun because of the situation which exists. But I think if it's only the one person out with a gun then it becomes a military struggle and the British can cope with that because they would have then isolated those carrying on the struggle to a very small number of people who are needed by the IRA. What they can't cope with is a wider community involvement and the person with the gun must always be subject to the political demands of the struggle." Gerry Adams, Channel 4 documentary *Pirates and Emperors* 26/10/93.

"As you know, I try to get out onto the streets of Northern Ireland as much as possible — I spent 40 minutes on the streets of Belfast last week and the overwhelming feeling of the people was for peace." The patrician Patrick Mayhew on BBC Radio Ulster 1/11/93 showing his common touch.

"We speak in this society of 16 being prisonable age, and young people who have an opportunity to progress to third level education quite often use the standard joke when asked what they are going to do as they get older: that they'll do either law or life. And the chances of them doing life imprisonment are statistically, within the nationalist community, greater than their chances of going to university." Bernadette McAliskey, Channel 4 documentary *Pirates and Emperors* 26/10/93.

"...he (Diplock Judge Ian Higgins) continued his judicial work with unflinching courage and with complete impartiality." Lord Chief Justice Sir Brian Hutton's obituary for his fellow judge, *Irish News* 7/9/93. Far be it from us to speak ill of the dead, but tell that to those convicted by Higgins on the basis of a confession beaten out of them in Castlereagh.

"I come from a working-class Catholic family in a very strong, tight, Protestant community. As a child, I was very aware of being an inferior class. As an adult, I certainly was in a situation where I could easily have picked up a gun. I do have nationalist tendencies, very strong ones, but not to the extent where I could feel comfortable killing a human being. I grew up with guys who went on hunger strikes. I know guys who've murdered and they are simple Joe Bloggs guys like myself, and they've experienced some things in Belfast that drove them to starve their bodies for 70 days." Actor Liam Neeson, *Daily Express* 28/10/93.

Aimsir Raibhach

Tá siad mo chéasadh
Anocht
Sa seomra geal
San fhoirgneamh dorcha
I gceantar an Chaisleáin.

Ach níl mé ann.

Ar nós na gaoithe
Lasmuigh (nach maireann)
A chaitheann clocha
Flichshneachta go fiánta fraochta,
Steallann na fir liatha
Raistí cáinte
Ar mo cholainn chorpánach.
Buailéann siad doirne,
Tugann siad speacha.
Ní thuigeann siad
Gur éalaigh mé
Tá tamall ó shin.

Ar foluain leis na feileacháin
Ildathacha,
Tá mé imithe
Chun tír iargúlta
Na n-aislingí óige,
Ag déanamh na bhfolachán
Ar mhacalla na doininne.

Anocht
Tá an ghrian ag taitneamh
Gan fhios dóibhsean.

■ Mícheál Mac Giolla Ghunna
(An Cheis Fhada)

LETTER

A Chara,

The increasing circulation of pornographic material among republican prisoners in Crumlin Road Prison and Long Kesh must be stopped. The dictionary definition of pornography is "indecent literature". My definition is that it is degrading, damaging and disrespectful to human dignity.

I, as a republican woman, will not tolerate the degradation of my sex from any quarter. The British crown forces on the streets subject republican women to verbal sexual abuse, using our own bodies to insult and harass us. In the interrogation centres our bodies are used to intimidate and terrorise us. In the prisons our women are subjected to enforced strip-searching, "state sponsored rape" in an effort to weaken their resolve.

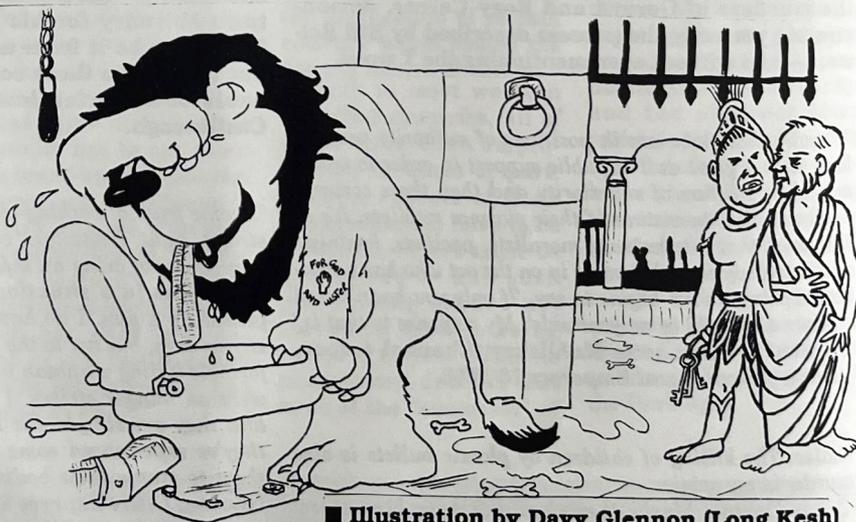
Our bodies are continually used against us to undermine our confidence in ourselves and our contribution to the struggle. It is therefore painful for us to discover that some of our male prisoners see no contradiction between their republican principles and their participation in or tolerance of the exploitation of women as objects of sexual gratification, which is the core of pornography.

By degrading women, you degrade us. And by degrading us, you degrade the struggle for which you have sacrificed your freedom and for which many including Maire Drumm, Miriam Daly, Mairéad Farrell and Sheena Campbell sacrificed their lives.

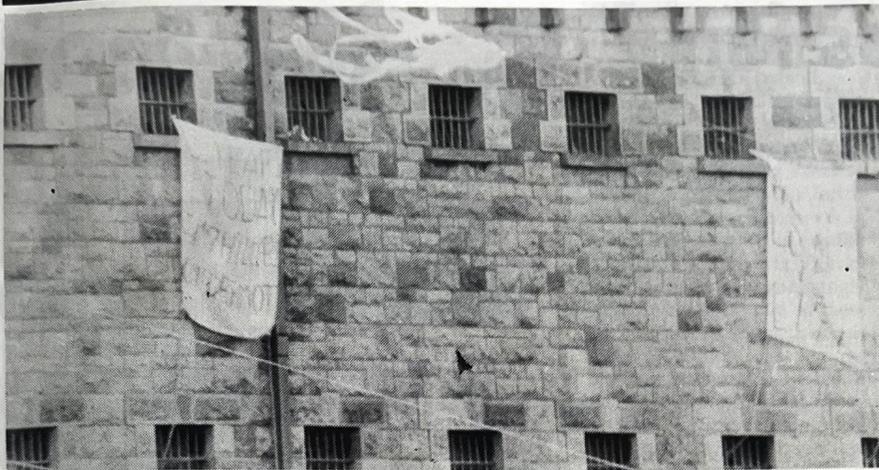
Is mise,

Concerned Republican
(name and address supplied)

"HAVE YOU
BEING
FEEDING
HIM
CATHOLICS
AGAIN?"



■ Illustration by Davy Glennon (Long Kesh)



Portlaoise's 40 year men

IN PORTLAOISE PRISON there are nine men serving 40-year sentences. Of these, three are in the republican unit: Tommy Eccles, Brian McShane (both Dundalk) and Pat McPhillips (Lurgan). They were initially sentenced to death but their sentences were commuted to 40-years without remission. They have each served over nine years and have no indication of release before the year 2024.

In 1989 the Sentence Review Group was set up by the government to make recommendations on the cases of prisoners who had served more than seven years. Although there are some aspects of the review process with which republican prisoners are unhappy, it is true to say that its introduction largely solved the issue of republican lifers which had been a problem for years. Six of them have since been released.

Because those serving 40-year sentences are not officially classed as lifers, however, consideration of their cases was specifically excluded from the terms of reference of the SRG. The authorities at the time refused to grasp the nettle of the 40-year men and solve the problem of how all long-term prisoners are dealt with once and for all.

In 1990 the Dublin government introduced a bill to abolish

the death penalty. The resultant act substituted a 40-year sentence with normal remission of those convicted of "capital murder", defined as the killing of a member of the state's security services or of a diplomat. Normal remission in the South is one quarter which means that those convicted would serve thirty years. Hardly a great improvement. Although the act is retrospective as regards offences, it is not clear if it covers those like the three in Portlaoise's republican unit who are already serving forty year sentences.

The act precludes the giving of remission above the normal to the 40-year men. Yet that need not necessarily mean that they cannot be released. Lifers are not eligible for remission either — they are released on ongoing "temporary release". Since the act allows for temporary release there is no legal bar

to the 40-year men being eventually released in the same way as lifers. All that appears to be lacking is the political will.

The provision of the act dealing with temporary release (which prisoners refer to as parole) states that it will be granted only in cases where there are "grave reasons of a humanitarian nature". This phrase is obviously open to interpretation, and how such reasons are defined is at the whim of those in charge of prison administration.

In December 1990, Brian McShane's mother died suddenly. Being single and the youngest of the family (he was only 20 when he was sentenced) Brian and his mother were very close and she used to visit him regularly. He was refused compassionate parole to attend her funeral despite the fact that no republican prisoner has ever dishonoured compassionate parole. If Brian's plight did not come within the definition of "grave reasons of a humanitarian nature" then it is hard to see what would.

The Whitaker Commission, set up in 1983 to report on the prison system, concluded that long-term imprison-

ment is damaging to the psychological well-being of the prisoner. Its findings are backed up by studies in many other countries. The Commission also pointed out that all prisoners need hope and the goal of release to look forward to. For a person who in 1993 has already served nine years, a release date of 2024 (or even 2014, with remission) is not a goal which he/she realistically contemplate. Surely the real potential for psychological damage to that person must give rise to "grave reasons of a humanitarian nature" as referred to in the act?

The people often forgotten in any discussion of long-term imprisonment are the families of the prisoners. Of the three 40-year men, Tommy Eccles and Pat McShane are both married with young families (as already stated Brian McShane is single). What hope can those families have? For their wives the future is one of lifelines and struggle as they raise a family on their own. They are faced with endless trips to Portlaoise to spend at most one hour per week together in the restrictive surroundings of a prison visiting room. Indeed, many families cannot afford to go every week so visits are often fortnightly or even monthly.

The trend in most jurisdictions is towards dealing with cases of long-term imprisonment in a more humanitarian manner. The Dublin government has in the past claimed credit for influencing the British, through the Anglo-Irish Conference, in improving the plight of long-term prisoners in the Six Counties. It is grossly hypocritical that it refuses to address the issue in its own backyard. The government's oft quoted concern does not, it seems, extend to Portlaoise.

The problem of how to handle men serving 40-year sentences is one that is going to become more and more urgent as time passes. It will have to be addressed at some stage. These men should be treated like any other republican prisoners and dealt with under the same parole and release criteria. The first step towards a solution would be to accept them as lifers and bring them under the existing review procedures. Hopefully this will happen sooner rather than later.

Harmless fun

What pornography means to me
Humiliation, rape, degradation,
Violence for all to see
Torture, dominance, exploitation.

(And yet you call this harmless fun!)

Soft porn, hardcore
Sadism, paedophilia, rape
With your films, magazine and much more
It's not only women you humiliate.

(And yet you call this harmless fun!)

Bestiality, anorectal eroticism,
Are you a closet misogynist?
Hate, violation, voyeurism,
Or just a secret masochist?

Do you call this harmless fun?

■ POW (B2 Maghberry)

Woman/ In a pig's eye

Perhaps it's that railway sleeper on your shoulder
That makes you feel you should be bolder
And bawl and shout and cry out loud
"Look here, I'm a woman and I'm proud!"
You should be careful if you please
It's a long way up from on your knees
With faltering steps you can't yet walk
And only just have learned to talk
Yet still you make that awful din
But it's you gave the world that awful sin.

You also shout that I'm to blame...
No! It's you who must accept the shame
That drives me upon great despair
To sometimes trail you by the hair
And kick your legs and punch your face
For in that there's no disgrace.

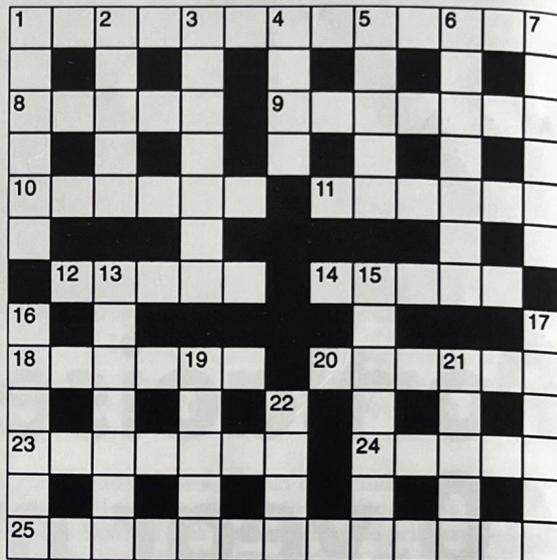
Get that load from off your back
It's self-imposed... Now stand erect
Yes, be yourself... That's all it takes
Just take it all... Accept the breaks
And know your place within the plan
Lose the sleeper and get a man.

Who knows what's best for you...?

■ Ella O'Dwyer (Durham)

Page 12 An Glór Gafa, Winter 1992

Crossword



Across

1. Without awareness (13)
8. Froing's partner (5)
9. Confused respect for a symbol of authority (7)
10. Disprove (6)
11. Imprisoned (6)
12. Rub out (5)
14. Band of lions (6)
18. Clear from blame (6)
20. Stupid angle (6)
23. Imitate a big bird recently extinct (7)
24. Short large animal (5)
25. Being mixed up, most IOs hamper change (13)

Down

1. Says (6)
2. This hanger is exciting (5)
3. Denies, nullifies (7)
4. Price for a confused Scot (4)
5. Musical drama (5)
6. Fixed, decided (7)
7. Surrenders (6)
13. Tell a tale concerning a nobleman (7)
15. Revival, renewal (7)
16. Atone or make up for (6)
17. They sing for a decade or so initially (6)
19. The South gets hot and bees gather (5)
21. Ones (5)
22. A noble look (4)

ANSWERS

Across: 1. Unconsciously, 8. Toing, 9. Sceptre, 10. Refute, 11. Jailed, 12. Erase, 14. Pride, 18. Excuse, 20. Obfuscate, 23. Eminent, 24. Rhino, 25. Metamorphosis.
Down: 1. Utters, 2. CHIT, 3. Negates, 4. Cost, 5. Opera, 6. Set-aside, 7. Yields, 13. Recount, 15. Rebirth, 16. Redeem, 17. Tenors, 19. Swarm, 21. Units, 22. Peer.

Some of my best jokes are friends

IT IS A SOURCE of some amazement to me, even allowing for the fact that we live in a period of political retreat, that in 1993 the political parties, organisations and ideas of the extreme right are once again flourishing across Europe. There has been a massive increase in reported racist attacks on Blacks and Asians with varying degrees of intensity, on a daily basis. The reasons behind this upsurge are complex and work on various levels. A popular perception that "these people don't really belong here" is compounded by the racist immigration policies of Western European governments and the current economic slump.

In my opinion — an admittedly personalised and, to some extent, anecdotal one — reaction in Ireland to these events is characterised by a sense of detachment and casual indifference. This, I believe, is the result of a perception that these events only happen elsewhere and that racism is not a problem in this country. Indeed many would argue, seemingly without any trace of irony, that racism is a British disease which Irish people experience only as victims.

As a consequence, there is to be found among Irish people a popular wisdom which states (according to one *Irish News* editorial) that there is an almost natural inclination to side with other oppressed people around the world. There was considerable national pride, for example, when Irish people contributed more per capita towards Live Aid than did the British.

This is a view breathtaking in its complacency. Even a cursory glance at the treatment of the Travelling community in this country will prove this. Not much siding with the underdog there. Anyone who has witnessed the abuse casually directed at Black British soldiers in the Six Counties — ironically even at the "anti-imperialist" rally in Belfast

each August — will know that crass racism is not solely the preserve of BNP supporters in East London. There can be a gulf between the motions passed at Sinn Féin Ard Fheiseanna and the actions of republicans on a daily basis, which is nothing short of astounding. Policy in many instances is what you do — not what you say you'll do.

There are some factors that go some way towards explaining the racism prevalent in Irish society. The close and unique relationship between Britain and Ireland involves, among other things, a largely one-way flow of information, with the British news media and a wide range of popular television

■ Tim Brannigan
(Long Kesh)

being consumed in Ireland.

That British society is saturated by racism, a legacy of its colonial past, is beyond question. An interesting exercise which demonstrates this fact is to look out for the contexts in which Blacks appear in popular television and adverts. Blacks are portrayed overwhelmingly in secondary roles and on those rare occasions when they are more prominent, the settings are usually clichéd — Blacks as sporting icons (look at those sportswear adverts) and as entertainers. You'll see few Blacks as business people.

Much of this reproduction of racism begins, predictably, in schools. Teachers often repeat unquestionably the history-from-above myths of Britain's imperial past and its part in "bringing civilisation to the natives". In many school textbooks "Blacks were portrayed unanimously as the most primitive of the world's peoples... The gulf between black and white was too immense to ever be breached" (Peter Fryer).

According to this world view, Ireland too was, it should be remembered, a nation in need of civilisation. And that's part of the irony I find in the attitudes and behaviour of many Irish people. A lot of the ignorance, intolerance and racism displayed by Irish people towards Blacks is almost identical to that held by British people towards the Irish. A famous Oxford historian visiting the United States in the last century encapsulated perfectly British contempt for both when he remarked: "This

would be a grand land if only every Irishman would kill a negro and be hanged for it."

Cultural imperialism has clearly left its mark in the commonsense wisdom of Irish people. Regrettably, the opinions of many on racial matters seems to own more to scrupulous attention to *The Sun* editorials than to any serious or prolonged contact with anyone racially or ethnically different. Too many people can repeat the old stereotypes about "Paki corner-shops", "dirty Arabs" and "lazy niggers". We are all influenced by our society and it should not be a surprise to find that racism has taken such a noticeable hold on Irish society. Some factors can be found to explain the existence of racism in Ireland, but not to excuse it. Ever.

The extent of the problem is not as great as in other European countries such as Britain or Germany, but this is due more to the lack of largescale immigration in this country than to any inherent sense of ethnic solidarity. Anyone familiar with the history of Australia or, more graphically, the United States, will be aware of the shameful role that many Irish emigrants have played.

Physical racist attacks in Ireland are sporadic, though no less real for that. Challenging racism in this country is therefore a question of challenging attitudes. This is unfortunately an awkward point. Challenging attitudes and language is pretty much the stuff of "political correctness". This concept has been so demonised by the media and the right that it is difficult to find a positive point of view on it. There is a literalism about in which, in its more extreme forms, has been made to sound ridiculous. While acknowledging its flaws, however, it is surely not much to ask that we all address people in forms that they don't find offensive and degrading.

The alternative, it seems to me, is that people carry on in the same lazy trajectory with their prejudices worn as some sort of badge of pride and their ability, indeed their willingness, to launch into racist tirades remaining as remarkable as it is commonplace. But then again, maybe they're "only joking".



● There can be a gulf between the motions passed at Sinn Féin Ard Fheiseanna and the actions of republicans on a daily basis

Each summer, republican POWs and many of our relatives and friends in the community extend a warm welcome to groups of Basques and Catalans, who are among the many delegations which come to Ireland to show solidarity with our struggle. There is, however, often much confusion and ignorance about the history, geography and politics of the Basque and Catalan nations.

Euskadi (the Basque country) and Catalonia are vibrant and dynamic nations which are rising after years of oppression under both the French and Spanish states. In the next issue we will deal with Euskadi. Here, Gerard Magee (Long Kesh) traces the history of Catalonia and provides a broad outline of the political and cultural situation today.

CATALONIA straddles the Pyrenees on the north-eastern side of the Iberian Peninsula and extends southwards along the Mediterranean coast. The present population is approximately 6,400,000. It has a history as a distinct region with its own separate language, culture and national identity dating back over one thousand years. Apart from Catalonia proper (also known as the Principat of Catalonia) the Catalan-speaking regions include Valencia and the Balearic Islands. Another small Catalan territory, Catalunya Nord (North Catalonia) lies on the French side of the Pyrenees.

Before the 8th Century, Catalonia as such did not exist. The area was the northern limit of the Islamic world and, while Islam was their religion, the inhabitants were of Roman and Iberian extraction and spoke a mixture of Latin and Arabic. In 759 the Franc lords from the north conquered the area now known as Catalunya Nord, turning it into a dependent Christian country. It was there that the Catalan language first evolved. During the 9th Century, the conquest extended as far south as Barcelona, which became the capital of the new country. In 905 the Catalans broke their ties with the Franc lords and an independent Catalan state was born. The first use of the term Catalan to refer to inhabitants of the area appears in 11th Century documents.

During the 12th and 13th Centuries, the country expanded southwards. Lleida was seized in 1150 and a new border established on the Ebre river. A century later, in the reign of King James I, Valencia and the Balearic Islands were conquered and populated

with Catalan speakers. This was to be the territorial limit of the Catalan kingdom. The Catalans set up many commercial bases around the Mediterranean and, in addition to Valencia and the Balearic Islands, Catalan is still spoken in the area around L'Alguer on the western coast of Sardinia.

In the 14th Century, the power of the monarchy was reduced and a Catalan government, known as the Generalitat, was established. At the end of the 15th Century civil war broke out between Generalitat and monarchy, during which the future Catalan king married the queen of Castille. While sharing one monarchy, the two countries remained independent nations, a fact illustrated by Catalonia's non-participation in Castille's conquest of the New World after 1492.

The status of Catalonia as an independent state with its own parliament, government and army, and Catalan as the official language, did not alter until the early 18th Century. At that time the king of Castille and Catalonia was seeking to dominate the Iberian

peninsula and, under the concept of royal absolutism, impose political and administrative centralisation. Spain was then merely a geographic term (much like Scandinavia is today) but it became the name of the new state formed after the forced integration of Catalan lands with Castille. The Catalans resisted but after a long war were finally defeated on 11 September 1714. This date has since been chosen as the national holiday of Catalonia, marking the final resistance of the Catalan people. With defeat came the abolition of self-government. The Catalan language was also banned and Castilian — what we know today as Spanish — was imposed.

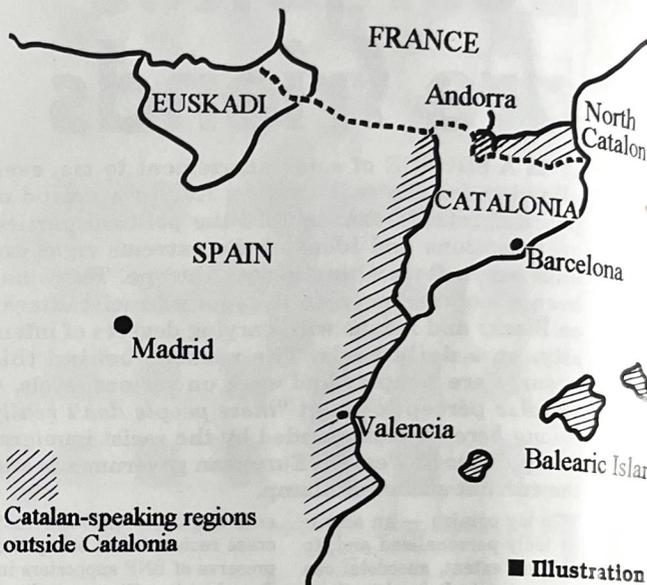
The Catalan people never lost their sense of a separate identity and Catalan nationalism reawakened during the 1830s. This nationalism was expressed initially through folk associations, but by the 1880s such associations had become an important forum for political expression. Events in Ireland at the turn of this century were seen as an example by Catalans and one associations in the 1920s was

called Nosaltes Sols, which in Catalan means Sinn Féin.

Following the establishment of the Spanish Republic in 1931, Catalonia gained limited autonomy. Its existence was short-lived, however, as the Republic was crushed by Franco's Fascists, with the aid of Hitler and Mussolini, during the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War. The dictatorship which followed lasted until Franco's death in 1975. During the Francoist period, every measure was taken to eradicate all forms of Catalan national identity. The functions of all administrative structures, the media and education had to be carried out strictly in Spanish. Trade union activities and traditional events expressing Catalan culture were banned, under enforcement of the Civil Guard and the Francoist police.

Franco's repression of Catalonia, with the objective of a unified Spain, was further enhanced by a massive influx of immigrants during the 1950s and 1960s. Many came from Andalusia, a very poor region in southern Spain. Sometimes,

Catalonic



■ Illustration

■ Gerard Magee
(Long Kesh)



■ Gerard Magee (Long Kesh)

the entire population of a town emigrated together and settled in areas around Barcelona. In Andalucía a small number of wealthy landowners owned most of the land, whereas in Catalonia the distribution of land was more equal among small farmers. Catalonia was also much more industrialised and had a powerful middle class.

More than thirty years of repression under the Franco dictatorship did not break the resilience of the Catalan people. Their national identity survived and the Catalan language was kept alive through its use in families, among factory workers, at markets and around the small towns and villages. The power of the dictatorship in its latter stages gradually grew weaker. In theory, education still had to be in Spanish but revolutionary schools, in which everything was taught through Catalan, sprang up. These were similar to the present day *gaelscoileanna* in West Belfast and other nationalist areas.

Franco's death was greeted

with celebrations in Catalonia and in the transition to "democracy" the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) came to dominate political power in Madrid. In 1980, Catalonia once again acquired autonomous government. The Madrid government was eventually to divide the Spanish state into seventeen autonomous regions, although this policy was adopted not in the national interests of Catalonia (or of Euskadi) but rather to stabilise the Spanish state.

Madrid viewed limited political, administrative and cultural decentralisation as representing no threat to the integrity of Spain. Unlike other autonomous regions, which are little more than provincial administrations within Spain, in Catalonia and Euskadi the Madrid government was dealing with two nations in their own right, both with a strong sense of national pride.

Although the devolution of political power fell short of the autonomy enjoyed in the 1930s, the present-day Generalitat de Catalunya (the Catalan autonomous government) took full advantage and transformed every aspect of Catalan life.

Among its achievements were the building of roads, schools, department stores and two new universities. Many of the new buildings are in a modern yet distinctively Catalan style. Imaginative architecture is a central part of Catalan culture and Barcelona's Town Council encourages young architects to follow this tradition. Education has also been modernised. The school leaving age has been raised and the number of students taking higher-level education has increased by 50% over the past ten years.

As one of the many languages around the world suppressed for centuries, the endurance of Catalan is remarkable and provides a positive example to Irish nationalists who are committed to the revival of an *Gaeilge*. Despite repression and the influx of Spanish immigrants, 68% of Catalonia's population speak Cata-



● More than thirty years of repression under Franco did not break the resilience of the Catalan people

lan as a first language in everyday use and 94% understand it to varying degrees.

Catalan is very vibrant in rural areas, with Barcelona the only relatively weak area due to immigration. This is being gradually overcome, however, as Catalan is now a compulsory subject for both native Catalans and the younger generation of immigrants. In many areas, education is carried out completely in Catalan. Between 1986 and 1992 everyday use of the language increased from 64% to 68% and is set to rise further as the Generalitat's policies take effect.

These linguistic policies were adopted by the Generalitat as a result of pressure from the people through various nationalist associations. The power of the media has further strengthened the language, with two television channels now in Catalan. The Generalitat has also worked at reestablishing the language for official use in governmental and administrative structures, and all applicants for government jobs must now

provide a certificate of fluency in Catalan.

Political parties and associations in favour of national liberation for Catalonia emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. Some faded away after a short period while others developed and grew in strength.

One of the more active and influential associations is the MDT (Moviment de Defensa de la Terra — Movement for the Defence of the Land). In the mid-1980s it worked in coalition with a small left-wing party, the PASN (Socialist Party of National Liberation) which had evolved during the 1960s. They favoured national liberation, unlike the more dominant independent communist party, the PSUC (Catalan Unified Socialist Party) which has been in existence since 1936. In 1987, the MDT split as a result of both personal and political differences, with those in the PASN creating Catalunya Lliure (Free Catalonia) as a broad front. Following the split, however, Catalunya Lliure did not get off the ground and today it



● The Catalan language and national identity was kept alive through its use in families, among factory workers, at markets and around the small towns and villages

remains a very small political group.

A much more significant Catalan nationalist party, with a firm commitment to independence, is the ERC (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya — Republican Left of Catalonia). It had been part of the former Catalan Autonomous Government in the 1930s but was a very small political party until the mid-1980s. The ERC grew in strength following the formation of a group called *La Crida a la Solidaritat en Defensa de la Llengua i Cultura* (Call to Solidarity in Defence of Language and Culture). In 1981, 100,000 people attended its inaugural meeting in Barcelona football stadium. While initial optimism faded, the ERC subsequently benefited from a large influx of the group's personnel into its ranks.

The ERC is currently led by Angel Colom, a young ex-seminarian and one of Catalonia's more influential politicians. In the June 1993 general election the party

polled almost 200,000 votes and gained a seat in the Madrid parliament. It is set to win even more support in the next Catalan regional election, since in Spanish state elections many Catalans vote tactically to keep the right-wing Popular Party out of power in Madrid. Nationalist candidates receive much more support in internal Catalan elections.

By far the largest nationalist party in Catalonia is the CiU (Convergència i Unió — Convergence and Union). Formed by the merger of two parties — *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* and *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* — the CiU has controlled the Generalitat since 1980 and currently holds 17 seats in the Madrid parliament. In Irish terms, the CiU is fairly similar to *Fianna Fáil* — although nationalist, it's a right of centre party with a pro-European position. One comparison that could not be made with *Fianna Fáil* is the CiU's more positive commit-

ment to their national language.

The CiU is led by Jordi Pujol, who has been president of the Generalitat throughout the past thirteen years of autonomy. The patriotic middle class is the party's solid foundation of support and, working upon the strong industrialised base, the CiU-led Generalitat has turned Catalonia into one of the most economically dynamic countries in southern Europe.

Not all developments have been positive. Interference and control by the Madrid government is still evident — the 1992 Olympic Games, for example, represented serious aggression against Catalan identity and culture. On top of this, the economic damage caused is only now beginning to be felt. Spanish state repression still exists. Prior to the Olympics, many Catalan nationalists were arrested and detained without charge for months. Most were former members of the MDT, although many were no longer

active with any political group. At present, there are around 20 Catalan political prisoners, some of whom were allegedly associated with the now defunct armed group *Terra Lliure* (Free Land).

In the June 1993 general election the PSOE lost its overall majority in the Madrid parliament. There was a right-wing shift with the Popular Party gaining 35 seats, 14 from the liberal CDS (Social Democratic Centre) and the rest from the PSOE. The CiU's 17 seats gives it the balance of power and the PSOE is dependent upon Catalan support to stay in office. The CiU is presently negotiating an extension of the Generalitat's powers.

The long-term objective, however, of all Catalan nationalists, is independence. If the level of political, economic and cultural development since 1980 is a measure of the progress a rising nation can make, then it is inevitable that Catalonia's link with the Spanish state will eventually be severed. ■

THE FIRST JOB

■ Rosena Brown
(Maghaberry)

JANUARY 1960 and I had just left school at Christmas so my friends and I decided to look for work. We went to the nearest factory. In the reception area was a little windowed hatch and beside it a bellpush with a notice saying Ring For Attention. As the window slid back, a chorus of voices asked, "Any vacancies?" The Miss Prim receptionist looked at us, turned up her nose as though an obnoxious smell had drifted up her nostrils and told us to take a seat. A much older woman resembling our former headmistress then called each girl up, took her name and address and told her to start on Monday morning eight o'clock sharp.

When my turn came I reneged. I would have to ask my da. I had overheard him telling my aunt recently that he didn't want me working in a factory; it wasn't good enough for me because I had brains to burn, he had said. I felt like telling him he had knocked them all out of me with the beatings I got, but then I wasn't supposed to be listening so I just kept quiet. He was a stickler for manners my da — "little girls should be seen and not heard" and "if you never have 2d, you'll have manners" were among his favourite sayings.

My friends pleaded with me to get round him. I had to wait till he was in a good mood, usually a Sunday night after a weekend full of booze. I told him about the factory needing workers and how I wouldn't need a lunch and how he'd save on bus fares as it was near home. "It's not what I wanted for you," he said sadly, "but I suppose you could give it a try".

I wondered what he did want for me. In those days the only work for young girls was either in the mills and factories or skivvyng. Not that things have changed that much. The mills and factories are almost gone, but have been replaced with

supermarkets and shopping centres. More markets for cheap labour.

In bed that night I prayed he wouldn't change his mind in the cold light of sobriety. I was awakened by his morning ritual of banging on the banisters and his barrage of obscenities. "Rise and shine, get out of your scratchers!" he thundered. (Oh, the sweet sound of an alarm clock in later years). "I'm up, Daddy!" I screamed as I swung my leg out of bed and banged my foot on the floor in pretence. At that he normally shut the big door and left for work. I never noticed anything different that morning as I drifted off to sleep again.

I had a rude awakening. My hair was tugged by the roots and he yelled in my ear, "Do you want this job or not?" He ordered me to get scrubbed and put on my Sunday best. My stomach heaved, please God, I prayed, don't do this to me. I will never forget those awful clothes which he had bought me for Christmas.

Swing-back coats with big collars, pillbox hats with a half veil that just covered the eyes and Louis-heeled shoes worn with 15 denier nylons were all the fashion. I pleaded tearfully with my da that all my friends were allowed to choose their own but it was no use. I ended up with a bright turquoise fitted coat, buttoned from the bottom to the neck, and to set it all off a little velvet collar and a half belt at the back.

The shop assistant had assured me that I would grow into it and indeed would get a good few years out of it on account of the extra large hem. I had no intentions of ever growing into it for I swore I would be dead before the day was over. I put on my best ankle socks and the dreaded heavy red shoes which were bought to see me through the next winter.

Then came the fuzzy white beret. I pulled it down over one ear the way Marlene Dietrich wore it in "Blue Angel". But no, my da said I looked like a fussy hussy and straightened it so it looked like a big pancake had landed on my head. There were no pockets in that damn coat and my two arms reached almost to my knees as I had to wear big — and I mean two sizes too big — furry white mittens. The thumb parts stuck out like they had a mind of their own and were hitching a lift back to Alaska, where the mittens probably belonged.

It was nine o'clock when I was marched over the Bone to the Mourne Clothing Company. I hung my head and hid behind my da's six-foot frame in the hope that no one would see me. I could have been going to the gallows the way I was feeling.

He rang the bell in reception and asked to see the manager. The older woman enquired politely what his business was. He told her firmly that it was a private matter and no concern of hers. She took a deep breath and her breasts rose so high under her dusty pink twinset that I thought they, as well as her face, were going to explode. Clerical workers in those days demanded respect from the peasants and I saw that she was about to let him know it. I looked at her pleadingly hoping she would say nothing — she must have felt sorry for me and merely said indignantly: "You'll have to wait".

■ Illustration by Micheál Doherty (Long Kesh)



That is when I plotted suicide. I would drink all his big white stomach bottle, I told myself, then lie on the bed with my rosary beads and pray that God would take me to heaven for all the suffering I had done. I'd have to leave a note, that's the way they did it in the films. I would say that my da was a bastard and I hated him. I would explain how he made me wear horrible clothes and wouldn't let me run to the dances and millions of other things, if I thought hard enough.

Then it dawned on me: What if I don't die? After all, he downed half a bottle of the stuff in the mornings and he was still alive. If my suicide attempt failed he'd kill me. Suddenly I had another bright idea. I'd kill him instead. I'd put rat poison in the rest of the bottle and he'd be dead before he hit the floor. A big smile came on my face as I was introduced to the manager and told to take a seat in his office. I looked like I had a pencil sideways in my mouth, the smile was like a permanent fixture all through the half-hour interview.

My father gave the manager his life story. He told how, as my mother was dead, I had run the house with great efficiency and assured him that I would never miss a day and would do all the overtime that was given to me. He then wanted to know if I would receive my wages in a sealed envelope: "There'll be no broken pay packets in my house," he declared.

The manager told him that I could start the next morning in the clipping room. Clippers were a half-crown and a new pink overall five shillings which would be deducted from my first wages. I would earn two pound four shillings and five pence for the first six weeks' training, then, if I proved to be a good worker, I would be put on a machine where I could earn between three and four pounds for a 40-hour week, with a chance of two nights and a Saturday morning overtime.

"You're on," said my Da. "You'll get your money's worth out of her, she's a good girl."

When we left I felt like a prize cow on market day. He looked like he'd just clinched the deal of a lifetime. Outside, he said he was heading on to work and I stood for a moment watching after him. It was the first time I noticed how his bad back caused him to stoop when he walked. I could hear his persistent cough as he rounded the corner and I thought sadly: bad back, bad chest, bad stomach yet he had never missed a day's work in his life.

I pulled off my beret and mittens and made my way home. I'll poison him some other day, I thought. I'm a big girl now. I've got my first job. ■

TR '93*

Got out yesterday,
For an hour.
Didn't really go too far, not
With a screw chained to me.
And some really well armed boyos
Keeping me safe and well.

Got out yesterday,
For an hour.
Nothing's really changed, not
That I saw much from the van.
And the fact that the hospital's
Only up the Dublin road.

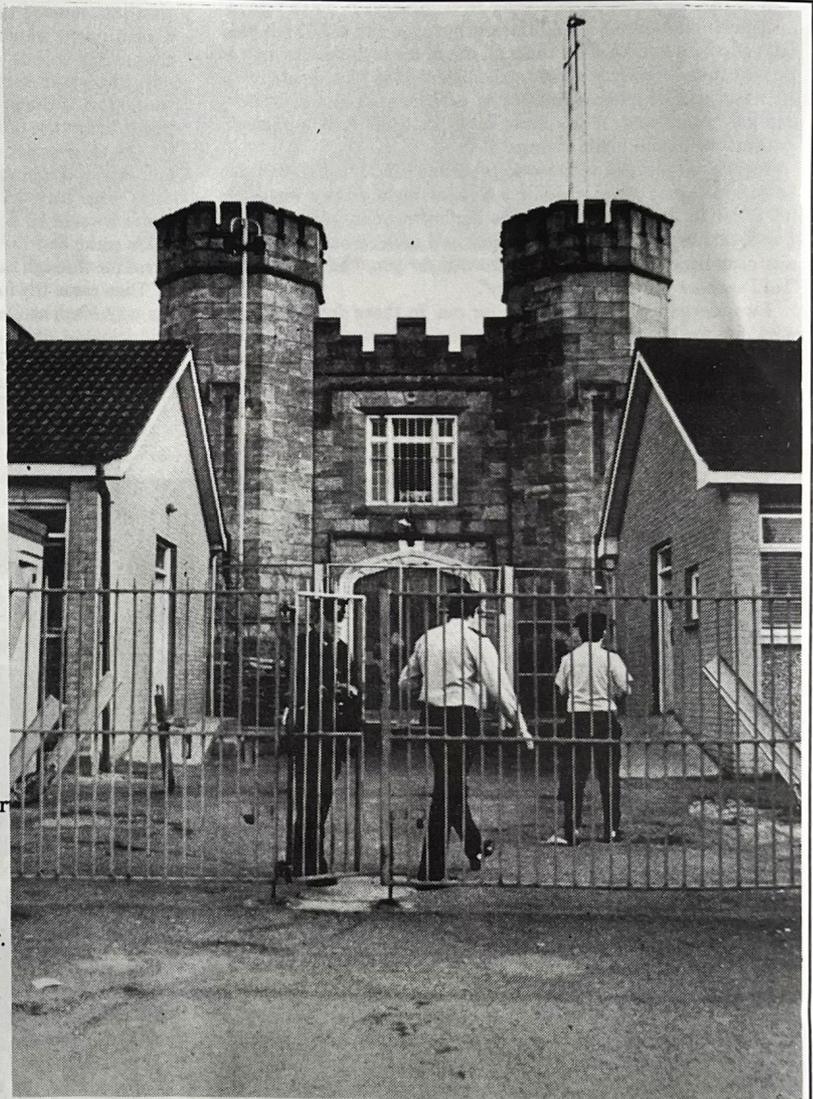
Got out yesterday,
For an hour.
It wasn't really TR, not
That I wasn't glad to be out.
And I did get to see all the
Lovely work done around the jail.

Got out yesterday,
For an hour.
The nurse was dead on, not
That we chatted, or anything.
And she didn't really mind reaching
Through all the security to check my br

Got out yesterday,
For an hour.
What an experience! not
That it really changed me, or anything.
And the boyos etc did a really fine job
Getting me back safe and sound again.

■ Eamon O Cléirigh (Portlaoise)

* TR — Temporary Release



From bourgeois bedding to nasal sprays

From the people who brought us microwaves and colour TVs, 20 years after they first came on the market, and plastic flip-flops God knows how long after their first appearance, we have the introduction of duvets to the H-Blocks.

It's truly the end of an era. Gone are the grey army blankets and the dreaded Matt Talbots (if you had ever been forced to lie wrapped in one of these coarse horsehair jobs, you'd know how they got their name). Of course, the conspiracy theorists among us mutter darkly that the whole thing is a devious Brit plot to destroy future resistance by republican POWs. They have a point, you know. How could you expect to be taken seriously if you announced that you were going on a duvet protest?

In my young days, such articles were called continental quilts (in Jimmy O'Reilly's young days they were called sabre-toothed tiger skins) and were to be found only in the homes of the aspiring middle class. Nice to see that some of the lads are still class conscious and aren't prepared to surrender to the bourgeois bedding without a fight...

Shortly after the arrival of the duvets in the wing, loud grunts and groans are heard emanating from Ta Cosgrove's cell. He emerges a few minutes later, sweat pouring down his generous brow, and hails the passing Anto Murray.

"Here, Anto, does your stripy thing fit alright?" he asks.

"What do you mean does it

fit?" enquires the baffled Anto.

"Look," says Ta, leading him into his cell. "I think they gave me the wrong size — I can't get the damn thing over it at all."

Whereupon, by way of demonstration, Ta resumes his struggle to put his mattress inside the duvet cover.

Barney Campbell, meanwhile, had had no such struggle. He's no fool — he knows that people who tell him that the duvet goes inside the stripy thing are trying to take a hand out of him. If it has stripes then it's a bedspread, sin é, and his duvet cover is still draped defiantly on top of his bed.

Programmes and films videoed after the night-time lockup are normally watched in the canteen over dinner time the following day. James Duffin is asked if he wants to stay out and watch a wildlife programme.

"What's it about?" he asks.

"Cheetahs," a comrade replies.

"Nah, I'll not bother, I don't like monkeys."

"No, it's about cheetahs — y'know, big cats like tigers and that."

"Do you think I'm daft?" says James, giving an old-fashioned look. "Didn't Tarzan have a cheetah? It was a monkey."

Competent communications are the lifeblood of any efficient organisation. Messages flow around the well-oiled machine, are directed to the right person and everyone knows exactly what's going on. And then

there are communications in the H-Blocks.

Micheál Mac Giolla Ghunna has a long and complicated message to deliver to the wing opposite. He goes into his cell, clambers up on the heating pipes below the window and calls across the yard. An answering shout.

"An bhfuil Gaeilge agat?" asks Micheál.

"Tá — lean ar aghaidh," comes the reply.

(For the the non-Gaeilgeoiri among you, Michael was answered in the affirmative to his query about whether the person understood Irish. Shame on you — go join a rang.)

Micheál then launched into a five-minute monologue. As he finishes there is silence from the other wing. Micheál is wondering where yer man has gone when suddenly Paud Mulligan burst into the cell:

"Micheál, Micheál, come quick!" he pants. "There's a guy shouting in Irish from the other wing for the last five minutes and I can't made head nor tail of it." (So much for the silver Fáinne Paud was awarded the previous week.)

Micheál stares at him.

"Micheál, what are you doing standing up on the pipes...?"

As the penny drops, Paud's voice trails off and he slopes forlornly back to his cell at the bottom of the wing.

Stephen "Burger" McKenna is not thin. In these politically correct days he is, let's say, calorifically challenged. He's out seeing the doctor this day...

Doctor: Tell me, have you lost any weight since you went on a salad diet?

Burger: Er, no. (He neglects to mention that he is known to supplement his

lettuce and cucumber with a more solid diet.)

Doctor: You know, they've brought out these new diet patches.

Burger: Like those patches to help you stop smoking you mean?

Doctor: Mmm, something like that.

Burger: God, I'd give them a go. Have you got any?

Doctor: Yes.

So he takes out a big roll of elastoplast, cuts off a six inch whack and sticks it over Burger's mouth.

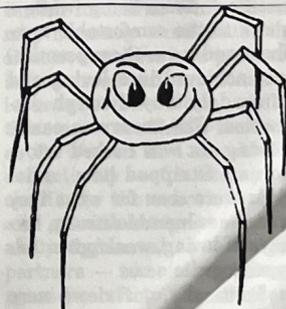
Speaking of matters medical, I discovered this little tale in my Doesn't Know His Arse From His Elbow file. During the summer Stevie Jamison, Liam Dougan and Ciarán Morrison were walking around the yard in the Crum discussing the good spell of weather.

Ciarán: It's alright for youse, but my hay fever is going mad these days.

Liam: I've got it too but I got a nasal spray from the doctor — you should get one.

Ciarán: What is it?

Liam takes the spray out of his pocket. Ciarán examines it curiously then promptly sticks it in his mouth and activates the spray. The look on his face because of the taste was nothing to the look on it when Liam explained what nasal means.



■ By the Red Spider (Long Kesh)

Open communication

BY DEFINITION, a relationship is the mutual dealings, connections and feelings that exist between two people — in other words, it's a two-way thing. Having read both the spring and summer issues of *An Glór Gafa*, we, as a couple, debated the points raised relating to relationships. It's a debate which incorporated a long and detailed communication between us concerning our position (one of us is in jail).

After serious discussion on how to respond, we came to the conclusion that the only way for us to express ourselves is to state what works for us and why. The prisoner half of our relationship arrived into it with the standard book of theory on feminism: theory okayish, practice zilch! The other half of us was emerging from ten years penal servitude in another relationship. We began with lust at first sight but the circumstances dictated a stand-off period. Lacking the physical opportunities, and with the fear on the part of at least one of us of putting theory into practice, we fulfilled our need to relate by beginning a process of communication which has grown in intensity and intimacy ever since.

Learning to talk was hard enough, learning to listen was so embarrassingly easy that it was harder still. The politics of us evolved through the correcting of mistakes. We began patiently practising what was being preached by living it on a daily basis. Breaking down the illusion that dedication to the revolution somehow precludes a commitment to another human being (while a shock to the comfortable love-them-and-leave-them practice) was achieved in a loving and comradesly way through discussion. The theory so easily flowing out was backed into a corner. Stripped bare, emotions were seen for what they were — vulnerable/strong, loving/self-loving, weak/potentially strong.

Politically, our views were and are compatible, even when the emphasis on certain issues differed. Physically, we

were happy learners about one another and about us as a couple. Emotionally, we entered a minefield committed both to us and to winning.

We make what we call "us time" on all issues. We discuss everything and anything openly because we have learned to trust one another and trust ourselves without inner emotions. We learned to talk — it's so easy once you learn to trust yourself. Having a loving trustworthy partner is obviously of enormous help, but nonetheless, it was a journey we each had to take on our own initiative since to trust someone else with your innermost fears or reservations is to find yourself. If you do not know yourself, how can anyone else love the real you?

Loving someone is knowing them, and to know your partner, they must be able to relate to you with all that they are, and you must relate similarly to them. We had both been taught to endure things supposedly in the name of love — and we have endured them. We now question emphatically why we should do so. Who says it must be that way? In our love we are forced to endure separation, deprivation, suppression, censorship and every other kind of restriction the occupation forces can inflict on us. What we refuse to do is inflict such things on each other in the name of love.

Our relationship is far from being all sweetness and light but we are in love and totally committed to winning the struggle on a daily basis. The core factor in that struggle is talking with each other. To have a relationship you must

■ Remand POW and partner

have something to relate to one another about, and the more you relate the deeper the relationship. It's that obvious that most people miss it.

We raised a point earlier about commitment to the struggle in general and how that commitment is often used as a "macho" shield by male comrades. The male half of us understands what our comrades Ella and Martina mean when they state: "*The typical male self-image, whilst difficult to abandon, may be blocking off richer identities behind it*" [see "Let's Talk" by Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson (Durham), *An Glór Gafa*, Spring 1993]. He not only understands it — he knows it to be true.

Living your emotions is a lot more fulfilling than keeping them under self-restraint. This is borne out by the fact that intimately knowing and sharing one another's thoughts, views and emotions has added to the physical intimacy of our love life. It's a very pleasant and pleasuring journey to make. The female half of us is relieved "of the loneliness and frustration of trying to understand for two" as Ella and Martina put it.

A note of warning — this process is ongoing and it's not one we would foolishly look upon as a fait accompli. The proof of any cake is in the eating. We are well into the second year of forced physical separation due to imprisonment and our relationship has therefore been faced with the problems that entails.

We wish here to discuss a point raised by our comrades Mary and Ailish in the last issue [see "How free are prisoners' partners?" by Ailish Carroll and Mary McArdle (Maghaberry) *An Glór Gafa*, Summer 1993]. That is, the sexual aspect of a relationship when one partner is imprisoned. It would not be honest of

us to address the question by talking in the third person, nor do we wish to sit in judgement on what other couples choose to do or not to do. We had already discussed the issue prior to one of us ending up in jail, but it was after that when we really got into it. Over a considerable period, we opened up to each other and, being in love, we naturally approached the issue with mutual consideration. We eventually came together somewhere between our two separate starting points.

We love one another and our relationship is totally voluntary. We did not "fall" in love, we stepped consciously and voluntarily into love. That subtle distinction is of immense importance because it makes null and void the illusory concept of rights over one another — such rights have no meaning in our relationship. What we give to us is given willingly and lovingly.

We do not believe in enduring something forced on either of us in the name of love, as we pointed out earlier. We would also accept a distinction between having sex and making love, the former being the physical sexual act and the latter an act engaged in by two people for mutual pleasure. (Ideally speaking, that is. We are well aware, of course, that people engage in, and are forced to engage in, sex for many other reasons but that is not the subject of the discussion here.)

For us then the answer to the curtailment of the love-making aspect of our relationship is to fill that lack through intimacy in other aspects of our relationship via the spoken and written means of communication open to us. We have become even closer, more intimate. We became friends when we first met, then our comradeship developed and finally we became lovers. That process is ongoing. It flourishes and deepens as it develops, as we develop. ■

A fighting battle

Share the early 1970s thousands of women have had to go to the front lines to work with their men. With their partners serving lengthy sentences they have had to struggle on their own in a very different way.

Marie's story is a testament to the strength of women who have had to go to the front lines to work with their men. With their partners serving lengthy sentences they have had to struggle on their own in a very different way.

How free are prisoners' partners?

The Spring 1993 issue of *An Glór Gafa* carried a lengthy interview with Marie, the wife of a POW, entitled *A Fighting Battle*. Here we publish the views of two women republican POWs in Maghaberry.

WHEN invited to comment on *"A Fighting Battle"* we were very reluctant to do so. Relationships are very personal and the nature of a relationship is for a couple themselves to define. Yet at the same time Marie's story holds lessons for us all, so by offering our comments we hope perhaps to add something to her story.

What she describes how she has coped on her own since her husband's departure. The feeling of being on your own is a very much to be feared. For would have the courage to be open with her...

She's a woman's magazine with... I have been a long time again... I was in the army for 10 years... I was in the army for 10 years... I was in the army for 10 years...

How did you feel after your husband's departure? I think it was a relief... I think it was a relief... I think it was a relief... I think it was a relief...

Relationship development is like a... The article is an account of a woman's... The article is an account of a woman's... The article is an account of a woman's...

Marie explains that she... Marie explains that she... Marie explains that she... Marie explains that she... Marie explains that she...



The *"CAPTIVE VOICE"* of an *Older Gafa*... The article is an account of a woman's... The article is an account of a woman's...

For POWs to accept that their relationship need not necessarily end if their partner were to have other relationships while they are in jail is one thing — to suggest that their partner should have other relationships is quite another. The concept that a POW by encouraging his/her partner to seek sexual release outside of the relationship might thereby strengthen that relationship is an extremely difficult one to comprehend in practice. The theory is easier understood — easy to accept even. But it seems to me that the concept could work only in an ideal world where the relationship is mature, with each partner completely secure in the integrity of the other's motivation, and where sexual jealousy is banished.

As Ailish and Mary state, relationships are a very personal matter and the nature of each is for the couple concerned to define. While there may be many similarities in situations where one partner is in prison, each relationship is unique. Therefore, while there are some things that we as POWs can and should do collectively — for example, challenge those both inside and outside the prisons who are judgmental towards our partners — some other things must be left to the couples themselves to decide as part of their definition of the relationship.

Most POWs are acutely conscious of the financial burden faced by our families and while we are limited in what we can do to help ease that burden, nevertheless we try our best not to add to it. This requires little effort and even less sacrifice. To admit the extent of the emotional burden, however, let alone to try to ease it, is unbearable for many even to contemplate. To think about it can be suffering in itself. Is this because we wish to see our loved ones suffer? Surely not.

We may never fully understand the effects that our imprisonment has on our partners. In her interview Marie comments: *"I used to say, 'I wish I was dead. I can't handle it' but I always put on a front."* That reveals much about how hard it must be. This is not to say that we don't try to understand, of course we do. We would be aware that our attitudes and how we express our understanding can give comfort in times of despair, but alternatively our attitudes may add to the despair. To recognise the emotional strain and the unrealistic nature of the expectations imposed on our partners is a start in understanding the

extent of the pressures they come under.

Ailish and Mary appear to imply, however, that POWs should encourage their partners to seek sexual release outside of their relationship. I fear that this suggestion would elicit as much support as would a call on the IRA to declare an unconditional and unilateral cease-fire and hand over all its weapons, and for Sinn Féin to submit to a 20-year period of political quarantine before even being considered given a voice in negotiations. This is not to make light of what is being said by the women; it is merely to underline the strength of opposition to such a suggestion because of the depth of sexual jealousy within society in general.

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In recent issues we have published a number of articles about relationships between POWs and their partners. Below are two more contributions to the discussion.

An Encouraging Concept?

■ Paddy Devenny (Long Kesh)

MANY COMRADES would perhaps have reacted defensively to the article by Ailish Carroll and Mary McArdle (Maghaberry) in the last issue (*"How Free Are Prisoners' Partners?"*, *An Glór Gafa* Summer 1993). Some might have been confused by it, others frightened — and some may even have dismissed it out of hand. Few, however, could ignore it.

The article, written in response to an interview with Marie, the wife of a POW (*"A Fighting Battle"*, *An Glór Gafa* Spring 1993) was intended to stimulate debate and discussion: to challenge the judgmental attitudes which exist in relation to POWs' partners; and to search for ways to help make the lives of our partners more bearable during the long years of imprisonment. These intentions should be welcomed by us all.

Many points were raised by the women in outlining the hardships faced by our partners and families on a daily basis. These ranged from the financial difficulties, which are quickly recognised and readily accepted by POWs, to the emotional constraints imposed on a loved one by the loss of a partner through imprisonment. Such constraints are also quickly recognised, but not so readily accepted — or rather, they are more readily ignored. Why is this?



Moving the goalposts

THERE'S ONLY ONE GLENN HODDLE! Only one Glenn Hoddle!

Yes, I declare, confess even. I am a dedicated follower of Tottenham Hotspur, London's finest football team. (OK, so Big Glennie now wears the Chelsea blue but to fans of my generation he'll always be a Spurs player at heart) Does it follow therefore that I am a willing victim of cultural imperialism? Let's face it, how can any self-respecting republican POW lend support to an English team playing what is essentially an English game? I don't know yet still I do it. (You think that's bad? I know one ex-POW who tells me she used to fancy Bryan Robson, one-time captain of England. Shame on her too!)

No doubt some will call me a purist, taking my cultural analysis too far. Perhaps I am, but it has to be said that anyone who follows an English football team

is tainted by cultural imperialism.

Hold on a wee second, I feel we all need an explanation. Where am I coming from with this sudden rush of cultural cleansing? Some time ago, the editor asked me to consider the phenomenon of POWs supporting English football teams and whether this is a form of cultural imperialism, with the implication that it must certainly be seen as such.

Ideological imperialism rules ok! He can well ask, given that he himself supports West Ham United which to all extents and purposes is merely an excuse for the British National Party to go on tour.

In the interests of objectivity, however, I decided to give it some thought. I suspect it is a form of cultural imperialism but sure we're all entitled to a wee

■ **Raymond McCartney (Long Kesh)**

defect or two. It set me thinking though: Why don't I just conduct a sociological survey of some of the willing victims of cultural imperialism on my wing? To protect the innocent, or rather to spare the guilty, I will not name names.

I approached my first victim.

"Why do you support Manchester United?" I enquired politely. (I confess I hate Man Utd almost as much as I hate Maggie Thatcher)

"Cos they're the best," came the very smug reply. Undeterred and hiding any anger, I continued: "But how can you support an English team which in essence is a manifestation of cultural imperialism?"

He gave me a peculiarly funny look and said calmly: "Mo chara (a wee bit of cross-cultural imperialism) Man Utd are managed by a Scot, they have

several Irishmen, a Frenchman, a Dane and a Ukrainian playing for them — to me it is another expression of my internationalism. I detest your petty narrow-minded nationalism."

He dandered on with a swagger, no doubt feeling he had put me in my place. Indeed, all I could do was whisper some not very culturally correct expletives about the editor. Having considered this internationalist observation, I am now heard singing in the bath: "There's only one Comrade Osvaldo Ardiles! Only one..." His answer did not, however, satisfy me as a full explanation of the phenomenon.

Iwaylaid another willing victim. This chap was at the aforementioned Man Utd and in his invective was a hint that nationality did matter, that imperialism did rule:

"Them Brits get away with

everything. *Best league in the world, my backside,*" he muttered darkly.

Here is a person who has the culturally correct stance, I says to myself. He was, however, wearing a Glasgow Celtic jersey. I approached him with caution and a couple of well thought out questions, set-pieces one might say.

"*You don't like the Brit teams then?*" I set-pieced, with suitable nuance.

"*What!!*" he roared, and shot me a look which said that any of our lads who supported them are lower than a Rangers supporter — well, perhaps not that low but nearly.

"*But what about Celtic?*" I persisted. "*Aren't they a Brit team?*" I don't know if I actually stepped back four or five feet as I asked the question, but I felt I did.

"*They're from Scotland,*" he growled by way of explanation. I thought it best not to point out that Scotland is technically part of Britain. I was left with the distinct feeling that Celtic (pronounced phonetically correct) is all embracing, including football but precluding my ignorance.

"*But they are playing an English game, aren't they?*" "*Look, if somebody gives you the ingredients for a cake, they can't claim to have baked the bloody thing.*" I was silenced. He

walked away muttering to himself, something about me being a brassneck and a Tottenham supporter. Some find that the two are synonymous. I moved Our editor higher up that hate league table, below Maggie but above Man Utd.

But what was I to tell him? That my findings were inconclusive? ("*Cultural imperialism? Nah, I prefer Mint Imperials,*" another of my survey respondents had declared.) But as luck would have it — and in this game you make your own luck — I found the answer to my problem in his question. The question itself was laced with his own cultural imperialistic tendencies: He had referred to "*football*" but surely he meant soccer?

In the part of Ireland I come from, football means one thing and one thing only — Clones-on-Sea, Croke Park, and all-Ireland Champions. A better question may have been. Is the phenomenon of all the POWs from Derry city now donning Oak Leaf jerseys a form of cultural revisionism? Never! As for me, I will remain a true blue cultural purist. "*Níl ach Enda Gormley amháin!*"

By the way, what time does out next match kick off... sorry, I mean throw in at? (Almost got caught offside in my cultural awareness there.). ■



● Manchester United - even more hated than Maggie Thatcher

■ Illustration by Davy Glennon (Long Kesh)



The GAA: ■ Declan Moen (Long Kesh) Compromise Rules OK?

With apologies to our Munster readers, Derry's victory over Cork in the All-Ireland final was, in the main, greeted with unprecedented joy. I was delighted with their win and surely there are few who would begrudge them their brief period in the spotlight. The people of Derry celebrated in great style and watching the festivities on TV, I was struck by the fact that it was the first time I'd seen a team consisting of six fullforwards, six fullbacks and two very full midfielders.

There were begrudgers of course including, predictably, loyalist elements who reacted to Ireland's premier sporting occasion by launching a vicious attack on

the GAA and its membership. As tens of thousands of people innocently celebrated Derry's win, loyalists reinforced their thuggish image by firebombing a Catholic family out of their Coleraine home, while in Cookstown they attacked the huge cavalcade which greeted the arrival of Sam Maguire to the county.

Now, to be fair to the attackers, they were merely

exercising their traditional right to protest at the anti-state activities of pan-nationalist front members and were also merely taking on board comments made by the North's most publicity shy constitutionalist, Sammy Wilson, who remarked in all seriousness that "the GAA is the IRA at play". To the type of person who believes that the Pope is on the IRA Army Council, this sort of comment from a respectable source like Sammy seemed to confirm what they had always suspected.

Unfortunately, this type of behaviour is by no means limited to Cookstown corner boys. In council chambers in Magherafelt, Coleraine and Cookstown, unionist councillors have been complaining about the amount of red and white flags on display — and no, they're not saying there's not enough of them. Their argument against this explosion (if that's the right word) of pan-nationalist colour is that the paint on lampposts is removed when the Derry flags are removed.



● The victorious Derry team who defeated Cork in this year's All-Ireland final to keep the Sam Maguire Cup in Ulster for the third successive year

There are two possible solutions to a problem of this magnitude. Firstly, the same unionist councillors should order local loyalists to stop tearing down the Derry colours, thus securing the paintwork (the flags will be needed next year anyway when Derry retain the title). Secondly, Derry could incorporate a blue band into their distinctive red and white jerseys. A sea of red, white and blue would soon put an end to complaints — and no need to worry about the paint — sure it's only money.

Some readers may, understandably, find it hard to comprehend this fierce hatred loyalists have of all things Irish or Gaelic. This isn't surprising because when examined in logical terms their antipathy is a nonsense. While one loyalist group attacks all institutions remotely linked to nationalism, another attempts to incorporate Cuchullain mythology into their culture.

Even ignoring the dubious claim that Cuchullain was Ulster's last line of defence against Free State aggression (led by King Albert?) if Cuchullain were alive today he'd turn in his grave since he'd probably be considered a pan-nationalist target. Not only did he speak the forbidden tongue but by all accounts he was one hell of a hurler — All Star material if you believe the hype. Yet in the fantasy land of loyalist paranoia anything is possible, even the transformation of Cuchullain into some sort of one man Ulster Resistance.

Attacks on the GAA are not, however, confined to the lunatic fringes of northern politics. Detractors of the GAA — normally kept in de garages — concentrate much of their ire on Rule 21 which denies GAA membership to the crown forces. For northern members, this rule merely reflects the fact that the crown forces have requisitioned GAA property in Crossmaglen, periodically kill or injure GAA members and engage in petty harassment of players and spectators travelling to and from GAA fixtures.

For certain politically-motivated individuals, Rule 21 justifies pinning a sectarian tag

on the entire organisation. Despite the wishes of these people, a large majority of northern GAA members oppose any attempt to dilute the nationalist dimension of the organisation. This dimension is no more and no less than the historical baggage carried by every organisation founded in politically divisive times. It achieves its significance today only because of the ongoing political conflict, and until this is settled, the GAA will retain this baggage.

I acknowledge that some people genuinely believe lifting the ban will banish forever spurious — and dangerous — allegations of sectarianism. But those operating to a political agenda wouldn't be content until the tricolour was banned from GAA grounds and the Soldiers' Song was silenced or replaced by something more suitable — mind you, if it comes to that and if the rumours concerning the legendary wealth of the GAA are true, how about 'We're in the money' as a replacement? For this type of character the term "compromise rules" is a statement of political merit and not a bastardisation of Gaelic and Aussie Rules football.

Where would it end? Perhaps the Hogan Stand carries unfortunate political overtones which might inflame loyalist opinion — the same loyalist opinion which has literally inflamed dozens of GAA club premises throughout the North. As a gesture of friendship, should the GAA consider changing its name to the Wogan Stand?

That's a bit far-fetched you might say, but how close are we to the formation of an RUC team? After Derry's win a senior RUC officer declared on Radio Ulster that he'd like to be able to do just that and, paranoid that I am, I was immediately suspicious. I know that the peelers are always on the lookout for a legal method of kicking Fenians, so I wonder was his interest sparked by the sight of Cork's Niall Cahalane flooring Enda Gormley with a left hook in the final and getting away with it? The peelers may have the last laugh though. Should



● Cuchullain — Ulster's last line of defence against Free State aggression or part of the pan-nationalist front?

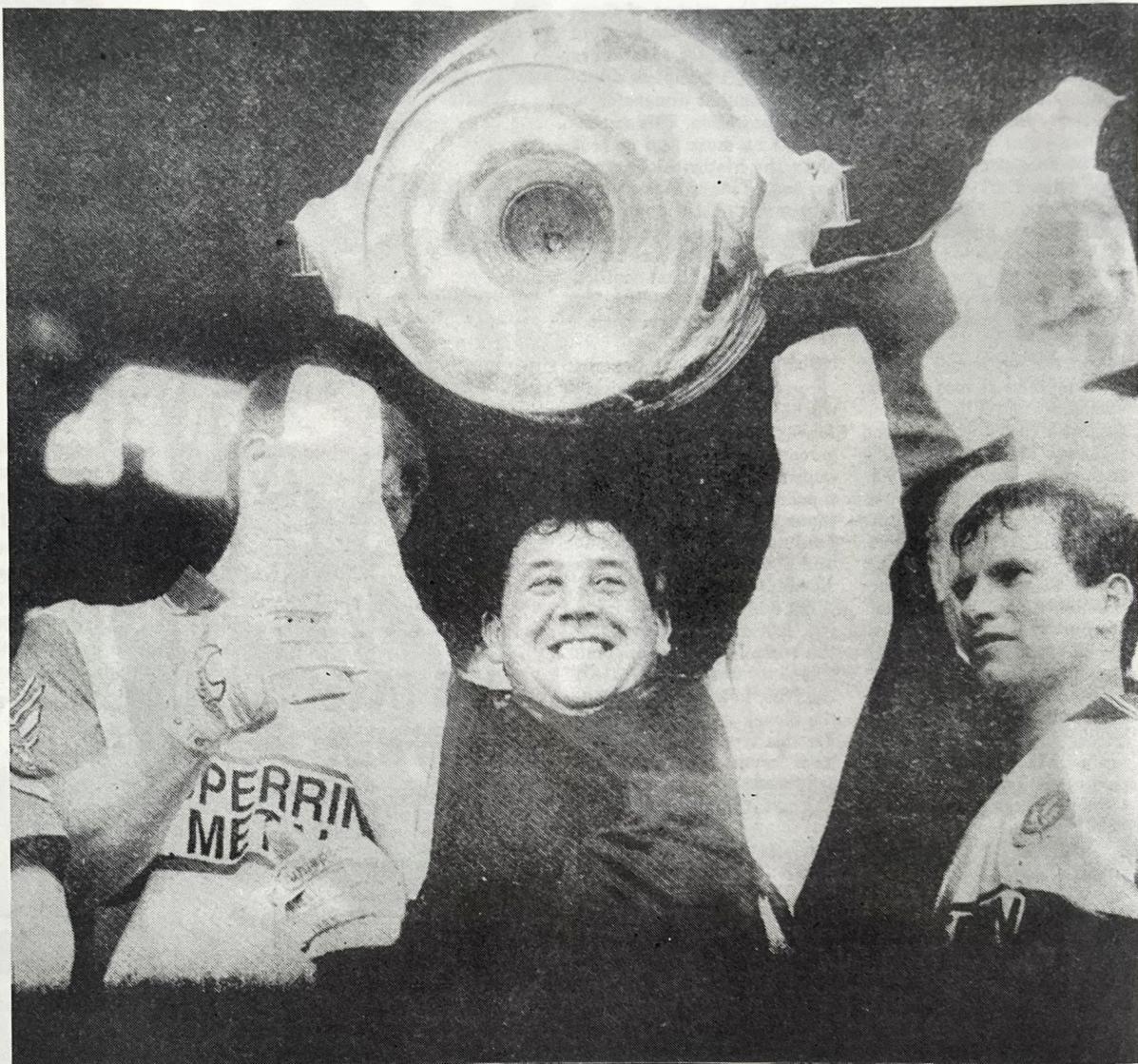
they ever form a team they'll probably be a useful side as everyone knows the Gardaí have been playing ball with them for years.

Speaking of the gardaí, there wasn't much sympathy for Special Branch man Tony Davis who was sent off in the final in highly suspicious circumstances. Tony was undoubtedly aggrieved at being wrongly accused of an offence, an accusation influenced by an over-hysterical reaction to the earlier behavior of his colleagues. It can be a mistake to rely on the judgement of one person in an incident of this magnitude and I think it's fair to say that the

referee succumbed to pressure from other sources.

Still, I have to say it: join the club, Tony. Republicans more than most understand the frustration associated with false accusations, over-reaction and decisions made under external pressure. So, no sympathy for Davis, as somehow I don't think he'd appreciate the connection between his situation and the arbitrary nature of non-jury courts up North and in the Free State. But no doubt he'll be relieved that he'll serve at most a couple of months' loss of football instead of the many years' loss of liberty facing republicans in jails in England and Ireland.

The GAA is unique in



● Political attacks on the GAA contribute to loyalist attacks on ordinary people...it is they who pay the price for throwaway remarks made by political opportunists

that no other sport is treated in such an overtly political manner. Some of our elected representatives seem to have a vested interest in keeping sport in politics. If you overhear someone commenting that a particular player kicks with the wrong foot, rest assured that it's not a Sunday Game panelist.

And let's be honest, people join the GAA to play or support Gaelic games — no one joins for political purposes. There are of course republican POWs who have played Gaelic games — sometimes at the

highest levels — and in all probability, IRA Volunteers still play, but as far as I know, they don't announce their presence. The simple fact is that loyalists believe, mistakenly, the GAA to be an exclusively Catholic organisation and therefore in targeting its members they are more likely to cut down on mistakes (that is, killing non-Catholics).

Despite the threat hanging over their heads, thousands of people throughout the Six Counties participate in GAA activities

on a voluntary basis. The fact that the national games are flourishing and that the GAA is the largest sporting organisation on the island is entirely due to their selfless dedication. Political attacks on the GAA contribute to loyalist attacks on ordinary people for whom politics is often a dirty word. It is they who pay the price for throwaway remarks made by political opportunists. Great caution must be exercised when commenting on the controversies surrounding the GAA as a liberal interpretation of these comments

can provide spurious moral justification for loyalist killers.

On a happier note, and by way of apology to our many friends in Cork who may find it hard to stomach the mention of Sam Maguire, word has it (and you didn't hear it from me) that given the level of point scoring exhibited by certain politicians, Cork are planning to sign up a few for next year's full forward line. Peter Robinson with 'Barry's Tea' emblazoned across his chest? Aye, and no doubt he'll be playing under the Wogan stand too! ■



● The Labour Party conference of 1982 saw the party rid itself of the Militant Tendency

Labour: A Party Fit For Imperialism by Robert Clough. Larkin Publications, BCM, Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX Price £4.95.

This book should be required reading for any working-class activist who may still harbour illusions that the British Labour Party actually represents the working class. It exposes Labour's duplicity since its inception and its connivance with the ruling capitalist class of British society. It also highlights the manner in which labour, both in and out of government, has consistently sapped working class political potential, leaving Labour free to pursue the interests of that privileged sector it represents.

The introduction to the book raises some of the questions facing a Labour party that has suf-

fered four successive general election defeats. Should it reduce or indeed sever its links with trade unions? Should it support some kind of proportional representation? Should it end its commitment to universal benefits?

Clough says that such questions fill the Left with dismay, particularly the question of breaking with the trade unions. It is generally believed that such a move would be an historic setback and would leave the working class with no independent representation. He argues, however, that the belief that the Labour Party represents working-class interests is baseless — "Labour is not, never has been and never will be a party of the working class" he states. The book goes on to present an articulate analysis of the Labour party which leaves the reader in no doubt as to its true character.

The opening chapter, "The

foundations of the Labour Party", deals with the emergence of the Labour aristocracy in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the establishment of trade unions by this privileged stratum and their support for British imperialism. Having established the organic links between Labour aristocracy interests and the interest of British imperialism, Clough goes on to describe the emergence of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the Labour Representative Committee (LRC) and the adoption of the 1918 Labour constitution. He reveals the conservative and racist principles embodied in the programme Labour and the New Social Order, which refers to "the moral claims upon us of the non-adult races" and gives a commitment to the maintenance of the empire (euphemistically termed 'a Britannic Alliance').

The next chapter, "The Labour Party and British Impe-

rialism 1900-1945", gives a clear exposition of the unscrupulous support given to British imperialism by Labour throughout the first half of this century. This support was based on Labour's recognition of the relationship by which British imperialism could afford to reward the loyal labour aristocracy in return for its compliance in the ruthless exploitation of colonial possessions. Labour's support for imperialism spanned two world wars and countless colonial confrontations which resulted in the deaths of millions of workers.

In "Labour and the reconstruction of the Imperialist Order 1945-51" Clough focuses on the manner in which the post-war Labour government spared no effort in plundering the colonies to pay for Britain's war and rebuild the finances of its capitalist masters. The methods employed by the Labour government of the day

are exemplified in the deployment of a large military force in Malaya — setting up concentration camps, putting prices on the heads of known political activists, using assassination squads and even unleashing Dyak headhunters to terrorise the nationalist population.

The fourth chapter, "Labour and British Imperialism since 1951" describes how Labour played the role of "loyal opposition" from 1951 to 1964. The party fully endorsed the systematic replacement of colonialism

by neocolonialism, a process whereby the bourgeois component of national liberation movements is built up while any working class or peasant component is ruthlessly suppressed. Labour's reactionary character was again obvious when, in government from 1964 to 1970, it defended the apartheid regime in South Africa and sent troops into Ireland to bolster Stormont's sectarian statelet.

Having highlighted Labour's shameful history of complicity with British impe-

rialism across the globe, in the fifth chapter, "Labour and the working class 1918-45" Clough turns to the equally disgraceful manner in which Labour has betrayed the British working class. During this period, Britain's economy was in decline as capital poured out of the country and was invested abroad in order to seek the high returns which British imperialism required to buy off its labour aristocracy.

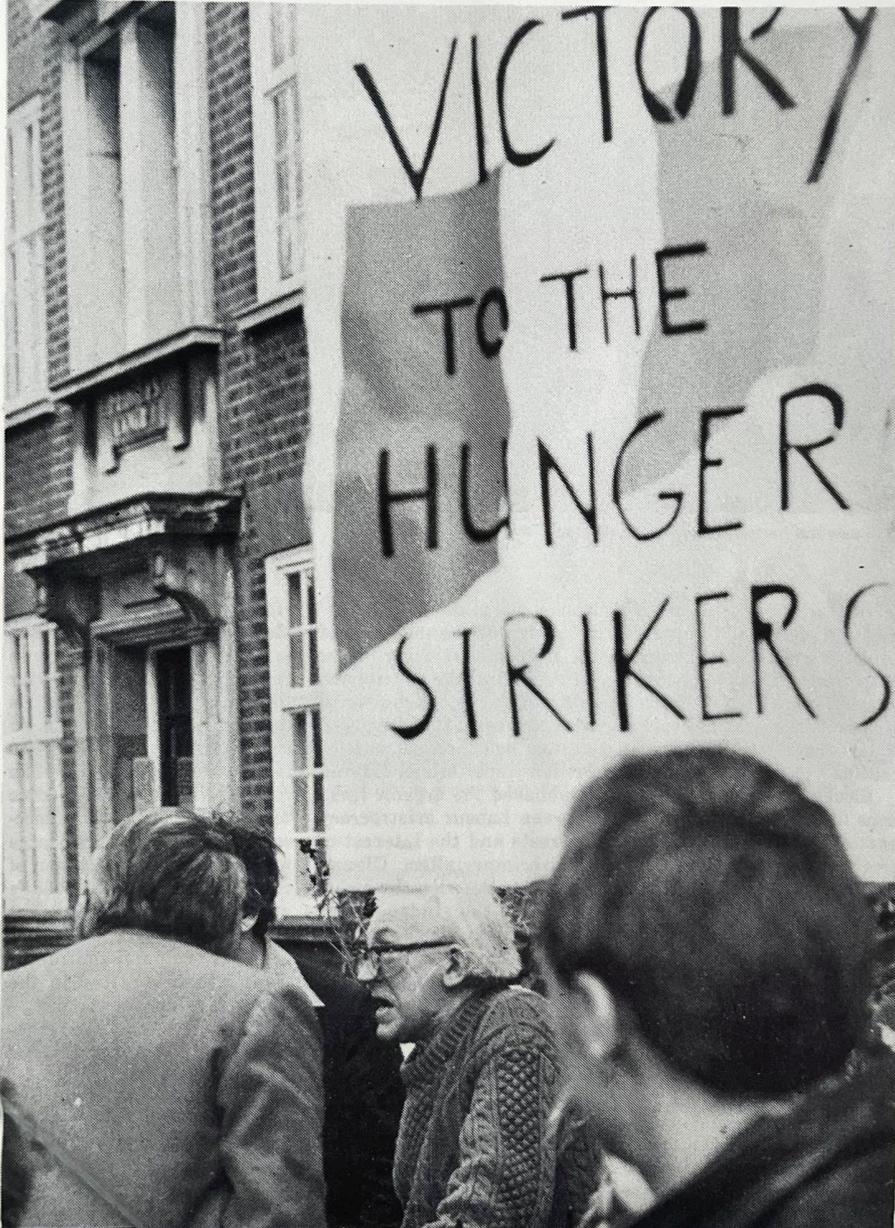
However, this economic decline resulted in massive domes-

tic unemployment and unemployed workers were forced to organise in a struggle to win basic benefits. This initiative, in the form of the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) was opposed by Labour and it was left to communists to give expression to the demands of the NUWM and to organise the working class. Indeed, not only did Labour undermine and oppose the NUWM but it actively enforced the despicable "not genuinely seeking work" clause which was used arbitrarily to deprive the unemployed of benefits, both through the Labour-controlled Boards of Guardians and while the party was in government in 1924-29 and 1929-31.

The final chapter "Labour and the working class from 1945" is a further exposure of the true interest of the Labour party and its disregard for the interests of the working class. It describes the composition of the post-war party and the MPs who made up its parliamentary arm. Given its predominantly middle-class character, it is no surprise that the Labour Party had little problem implementing the huge cuts in public spending in the 1970s. The people worst affected by these cuts were, of course, the working class.

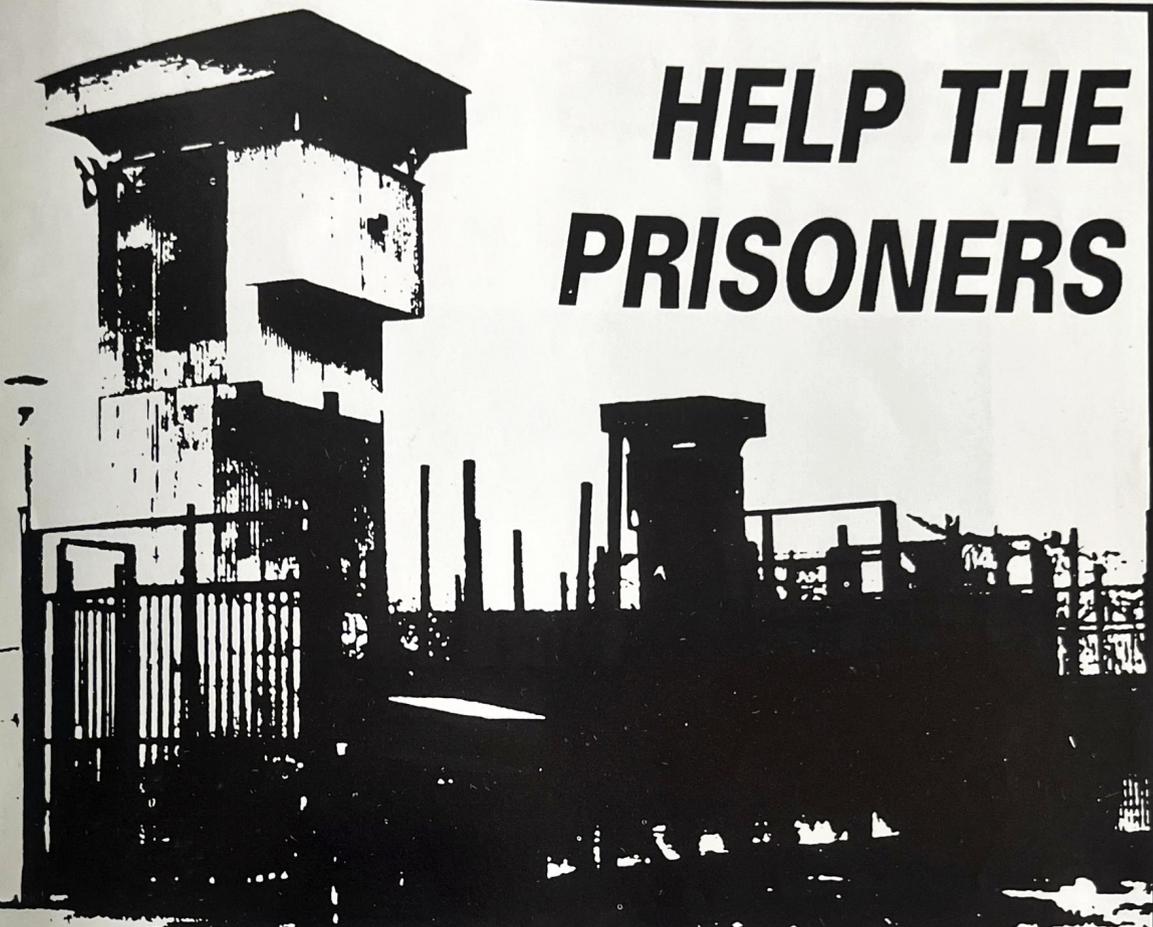
Labour's racism, apparent since the party's inception, is shown to be undiminished. Witness the introduction of the 1965 and 1969 Immigration Acts. When Thatcher came to power in 1979, Labour again assumed the role of loyal opposition. From its support of Thatcher during the 1981 Hunger Strikes to its role in the isolation and defeat of the 1984-85 miners' strike, Labour was consistently pro-imperialist and anti-working class.

Robert Clough's book is packed with historical examples and factual material which smash the illusion that Labour represents the interests of the working class. Anyone who is still labouring under that illusion would do well to read this book as it is only with the realisation that Labour is not, never has been and never will be a party of the working class, that the real work of building such a party can begin in earnest.



● From its support of Thatcher during the hunger strikes to its role in the isolation and defeat of the miners strike, Labour was consistently pro-imperialist and anti-working class

■ Gary Adams
(Portlaoise)



HELP THE PRISONERS

SUPPORT An Cumann Cabhrach & Green Cross

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

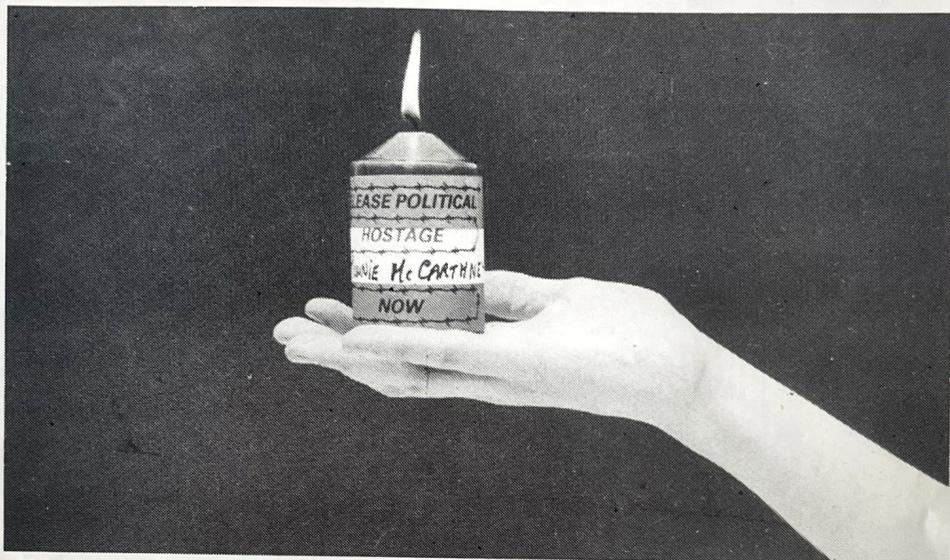
All donations, enquiries and offers of help should be addressed to:

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