

END BRITISH RULE NOW!

EDITORIAL

In the run up to the two separate referendums that followed the Stormont deal, Francie Mackey, Chairman of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, stated the following in the "Irish News", "what we are witnessing with this deal is a humiliation agenda, which will do nothing but see British rule strengthened".

The most spectacular example of what Francie warned about occurred on the 11th of February 2000. This was the suspension by the British government of the structures of the Stormont deal on the basis that the Provisionals would not fully surrender at a time demanded by the Ulster Unionists. This move by the British was a slap in the face for the Dublin government. It also showed clearly that the British establishment is still secure in the knowledge that it can heap any amount of contempt on Aherm and Co without the remotest chance of as much as a syllable of protest.

HEGEMONY

Indeed in a rare moment of frankness from a Provisional spokesperson, Pat Docherty told RTE television that Peter Mandelson at a meeting with Sinn Fein following the suspension was "a disgrace, he spoke to us like an overlord dealing with the natives". So, Pat where does that leave all the talk of "equality" new found "influence" and an end to "unionist domination".

The reality the Provisionals have to face is that having as Brendan Hughes recently put it "left the heart of Republicanism behind" they are powerless to oppose what is still quite clearly the political hegemony in the six counties, that is British state backed Unionism.

It is vital that Republicans understand the fact that Peter Mandelsons decision of the 11th of February was a seminal moment in exposing the political manoeuvring of the last number of years. Republicans have rightly pointed out that the Stormont deal and the resulting referendums can in no way be seen as the will of the Irish people. Two separately worded referendums, with unequal impact, held in the context of "peace" or "war", with 30,000 foreign troops in the country, was seen by Republicans for what it was, a perversion of democracy not an exercise of it.

Republicans who pointed out this lack of democracy came under an unprecedented wave of attack; we were told we were "undemocratic" that in the words of Bertie Aherm we would be "crushed". Other

political leaders in the twenty-six counties told the world that no one would be allowed stand in the way of the Stormont deal. Yet when Peter Mandelson with one stroke of a pen brought the whole deal crashing to bolster Unionism, the silence from the Dublin establishment was deafening. The likes of Rory Quinn came out with statements that "now was not the time for recriminations". Not one word of condemnation from the "peace" groups or the churches. The only conclusion is that even those who shouted it the loudest never believed the deal represented the will of the people.



Peter Mandelson and Brian Cowan.

TIMETABLE OF WITHDRAWAL

Mandelson's actions also exposed the facile argument that the only alternative to this discredited deal was conflict. The very procedure the British government used to scuttle the deal is the means that holds out the best way to end the conflict in Ireland. The British government should put a bill before its parliament outlining a timetable of withdrawal from Ireland; the present strength of the Labour government means now is an opportune time for such a move.

In the context of such a timetable a genuine and sincere process of peace can begin on the island. In an interview with the *Fourthwrite* magazine, Brendan Hughes gave the following summary of the Stormont process, he said "We have no enthusiasm now, it is not because people are war weary - they are politics weary. Hughes went on to say "The same old lies are regurgitated week in week out. With the war politics had some substance. Now it has none. The political process has created a class of professional liars and unfortunately it contains many Republicans".

One of the main lies of those Hughes generously still refers to as Republicans have peddled is that of "soft" Unionism. We were told all sorts of move-ment were possible with Unionism under Trimble.

David Trimble's true colours were shown in early March in a London courtroom where the Ulster unionist leader was giving evidence in a libel trial connected to the book "The Committee- Political assassination in Northern Ireland" a book in which Trimble's name appears. The journalist Nick Martin Clarke reported that among the assertions in Trimble's evidence were that "the Orange Order was a fraternal organisation, collusion was not institutional, Stalker was rightly removed, RUC collusion in Finucane was not proven, and that the Garvaghy Road was the Queens highway". Enough said.

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The most positive development of recent times is the fact that Republicans are meeting, debating, and formulating strategies on how to move the struggle forward. The luxury of wallowing in anger or despair at the direction in which the Stormont process sidetracked Republicanism has been well and truly cast aside. Inspiration for the road ahead can be got from looking at the example of people like Rosemary Nelson one year dead in March.

Volunteer Ronan Mc Loughlinn the anniversary of whom will take place in the coming weeks and Volunteer Diarmuid O'Neill whose murder was covered up by the British establishment in early March. These people and others refused to look the other way and in their different contributions challenged British misrule in Ireland. The call for everyone to play their part to end British rule is as relevant today as it ever was.

WEAR AN EASTER LILY



HONOUR IRELAND'S DEAD

PROVOS ISSUE DEATH THREAT TO PAPER SELLER

A Belfast Republican was visited at his home in West Belfast on Monday 13th March by two well known Provisionals, who issued him with a death threat that he would be shot if he continued distributing the Sovereign Nation or raised funds for Republican prisoners dependants.

This ghastly development has come about because of the rapid increase in distribution of the Sovereign Nation in Belfast attributed to this individuals effort.

Rory Dougan, speaking on behalf of the National Executive of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement said "It is ironic this should take place within hours of Mr. Adams publicly encouraging freedom of speech amongst the Republican family."

"This latest attempt to stifle debate will not deter Republicans from voicing opposition to British rule in Ireland. Republicans have always defied attempts to censor them from whatever quarter."

NELSON FAMILY DENIED JUSTICE

In mid March the British Government rejected calls for an independent inquiry into the murder of Lurgan solicitor Rosemary Nelson one year ago.

The decision is a snub to those in the Human Rights and Legal fields who had demanded an inquiry. 100,000 signatures supporting calls for a fresh investigation into the circumstances surrounding Rosemary's murder were presented to the British government in the run up to the decision.

"This anniversary is important in refocusing people to make it very clear that the campaign for truth and justice is not going to go away," said Mr Robbie McVeigh, chairman of the Rosemary Nelson Campaign.

"We want to make sure that Tony Blair begins to take responsibility for some of that ultimatum."

A mother of three children, Mrs Nelson



Rosemary Nelson.

(40) died after a bomb exploded under her car in Lurgan, Co. Armagh.

Rosemary had made public on several occasions the death threats she had received from members of the RUC. The Nationalist people of Lurgan have no doubt that the same force aided Loyalists in the booby trap murder.

Events took place in London, throughout Ireland and in the United States to mark the anniversary.

They included an admobile touring London, Belfast, Derry and Dublin, carrying the question: "Mr Blair, if you can't protect human rights defenders, how can you protect human rights?"

Michael Burke in a statement from the 32 County Sovereignty Movement said "Even in death Rosemary Nelson is exposing British hypocrisy and the fact that state backed death squads can act with impunity in the six counties."

In a further affront to the memory of Rosemary Nelson a Belfast solicitor who has taken on the work of the murdered Lurgan woman was refused personal protection by the RUC.

Padraigin Drinan yesterday alleged her plea for security was recently turned down despite a catalogue of attacks and bomb threats spanning 10 years.

Ms Drinan, who succeeds the late Mrs Nelson as lawyer for the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition, claimed her application for personal protection was turned down six weeks ago after several months awaiting a decision.

The solicitor said she had reported the incidents to the RUC, which include a booby-trap incendiary device placed under her car.



Bombed wreckage of Mrs. Nelson's car.

Ms Drinan also believes her personal details, including a photograph, have fallen into the hands of loyalists.

Ms Drinan revealed yesterday that she contacted both the Irish and British governments two weeks ago, detailing the list of incidents. Neither government saw fit to contact her back.

Despite fears for her life Ms Drinan, a close friend of the late Mrs Nelson, added: "Before Rosemary died we chatted about the threats. I will continue to do the work that Rosemary did and I hope that if anything happens to me someone else will come along and do the same."

"I'm not being brave, it's just the way things are - you get through it. In a way I'm in a better position than Rosemary was - I don't have children. That was the difference. Rosemary was left with a family. I don't have that."

PARTITION BY COERCION

By Joe Dillon

PARTITION - Never sought or democratically sanctioned by the Irish people.

The claim by the Unionists that coercion against them lay behind the demand for an end to partition must once and for all be exposed for what it really is, an attempt to deny in the first place that the Irish people are a sovereign nation. Indeed the plot to partition Ireland was hatched long before any boundary areas were decided and long before the overall population of what is now known as the six counties and the Twenty Six Counties had any say in the matter.

When Gladstone first heard the partition idea being mentioned, his answer which is on record, was to say:

"To go down that road is to invite disaster for the Unionist and British viewpoint that exists in Ireland, and would one day lead to a situation where the largest body of opinion would challenge both politically and most likely violently this enforced arrangement."

He argued instead, that a devolutionary plan at that time - which later became known as the Home Rule Bill for Ireland - was the best option for securing Britain's long term plan for keeping British interests in Ireland secure, and the "British Isles" intact.

At no time did the British ever consider allowing Ireland to proceed democratically to decide their own future; in other words, Ireland was not to be recognised as a sovereign nation. So it will be seen that the British parliament to this present day has pursued her argument - that Ireland is not entitled to make her own political decisions outside of British involvement. However, the shift to the argument - that the British will leave Ireland if the majority of what is called the Six Counties asks them to do so, is now being used to accuse Nationalist Ireland of attempting to coerce the Unionist population.

This cunning development is necessary, in order that the British involvement in Ireland has the appearance of a democratic arrangement. In truth the British presence in Ireland exists today on the same basis as it always did and that is:

That the Irish Nation does not have the right to national sovereignty.

That the Unionists have a legitimate right to remain inside the Union.

It can be seen from the above argument that the various Treaties drawn through the years always insisted that the overall position would develop along the lines of a Westminster plot. Ironically, the twenty-six county state uses this very same argument for political stability. The Referendum held to allow Britain to maintain sovereignty over the Six Counties is proof of this.

We now have a situation where the British parliament is claiming internationally, that the Irish people have retrospectively sanctioned the British plot. This has indeed been a masterpiece for the real coercionists namely, British imperialists. It also raises the question, who is the real coercionists on the island?

In view of the Unionists position since they refused to attend the all Ireland Parliament, set up in Dublin on January 21 1919 after the result of the December 1918 election and instead supported a continued attempt by Westminster to rule Ireland against the democratic mandate of the people for their own national parliament. The Unionist sup-

port for the British military campaign to crush Dal Eireann and the democratic wish of the Irish people, clearly puts them into the coercionist camp, and the slogan that "Home Rule would be Rome Rule" became their grounds for opting out. The Unionist T.D.s refused to attend the first meeting of Dal Eireann and make their case before the National parliament for a political arrangement. Instead they sought to deny the democratic will of the Irish people, leaving them equally guilty with the British for all the deaths that have occurred since, in the continued struggle for National sovereignty. Apologists for the Unionists conveniently forget all this.

The subsequent passing of the two Acts of Partition by Westminster, which led to the setting up of the Free State in the south and Stormont in the north, led to the Civil War. We must bear in mind, that in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Treaty in 1921, the British had insisted that the Irish delegations could not be met as members of a sovereign Irish parliament. The British were meeting the Irish delegation as elected members under British administration as a result of the 1918 election.

The British made it quite clear that they alone were the Sovereign Parliament and rejected Dal Eireann's claim to be the Sovereign Irish Parliament. Initially, the Irish delegation led by Eamonn De Valera opposed the British position. He made it quite clear to the British, that as elected representatives of the Irish people, they were duty and oath bound to uphold the expressed will of the Irish people and could not accept the British rejection of Irish sovereignty.

A second meeting was arranged after fudge on the issue of sovereignty and a second delegation led by Michael Collins returned to London, entering again into discussions with the British. The main bone of contention was the issue of loyalty to the crown (Oath of Allegiance) i.e. sovereignty.

The British refused to consent in any shape or form to the Irish claim to sovereignty. Without dwelling too much on the reasons why the Irish delegation agreed to sign the Treaty, they returned to Dublin and an unbelievable blunder took place, when the Dal agreed to debate the Treaty document which challenged not only their own position as the sovereign parliament, but also the sovereignty of the Irish people.

A vote was taken and 64 to 57 voted in favour of the Treaty. It was subsequently put before a partitioned Ireland i.e. the Twenty Six Counties for ratification. It is hard to imagine why a proper challenge was not mounted from within Dal Eireann to this violation of the declared will of the Irish people at the ballot box.

The argument that a small majority voted in favour of the Treaty is a nonsensical position to take up, as indeed is the claim that De Valera walked out. He did nothing of the sort. Having taken part in the vote and having not effectively challenged the presence of the Treaty document itself as being beyond the right of a sovereign parliament to debate in the first instance, he in effect failed to protect the sovereignty of Dal Eireann. When in fact what he should have done was to walk out in opposition to a document from a foreign parliament challenging the sovereignty of the Irish people. This fatal flaw in his position had detrimental

effects for the Republican Army's position in the civil war.

The no longer sovereign Dal Eireann proceeded to set up a Provisional government under the Treaty Acts. And sought support for the Treaty before an electorate of 26 Counties. This alone violated the sovereignty of the Irish people and cannot be argued that it replaced the 1918 mandate. It can now be seen that the 26 county establishment joined in with the other two elements in the coercionist camp. They proceeded to use military force against those who opposed this violation.

They did this by setting up an illegal army, i.e. The Free State Army to challenge Ogligha na hEireann, who were resisting the right of the former National Parliament to usurp the Sovereignty of the Irish people. Up to this present day, this situation has continued.

It is only with the lodging of a challenge by the 32 County Sovereignty Movement on behalf of the Irish people (April '98) that a proper move to correct both the Dublin Government's, British and Unionist's violation of National sovereignty has been laid before international arbitration.

While many people will be dubious as to whether the 32 County Sovereignty Movement will be successful in getting a hearing is understandable. Indeed obstacles arose the moment the document was lodged with the UN. However, this challenge with the U.N. is made on behalf of the Irish Nation, not on behalf of any party or sectional interests. It is my view that every true Irish person should actively give their support to this challenge made by the 32 County Sovereignty Movement at the UN.

The Dublin Government has notified the 32 County Sovereignty Movement that as a result of the signing of the Boundary Acts of 1925 they cannot challenge or raise the issue of sovereignty with the British. This remarkable admission will come as no surprise to Republicans, but it does explain how the Good Friday Agreement proceeded along the lines that it did, namely to accept Britain's claim to sovereignty over the Six Counties.

By allowing Britain to retain sovereignty through the Good Friday Agreement, demands now made by Sinn Féin for an end to the British and Unionists vetoes, defy logic. One must remember that Sinn Féin entered into negotiations accepting the British and Unionist sovereignty over the Six Counties i.e. consent. They also called for support for the removal of Articles 2 & 3 from the Free State Constitution. Like De Valera the Sinn Féin leadership have failed to protect the sovereignty position of the Irish nation in negotiations with Britain. As a result of their position, Sinn Féin can now only argue domestically within the realm of Westminster, regardless of Sinn Féin propaganda. Sinn Féin can no longer argue the Sovereignty position.

ENTERING AND ACCEPTING THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM

By Belfast Republican

One of the arguments advanced by the Provisionals and their supporters outlining their view in relation to the de commissioning, I prefer to refer to it as a surrender and destruction, of their weapons is to cite the case of the Fionna Fáil party of 1932 and the Workers Party of the 1980s. The Provos asserted that neither of these political groupings were required to hand over or abandon arms before their entry into government, and they were adamant that the same criteria should apply to them. That position has changed dramatically of late, following the seismic shift of the Provo leadership's political stance in the summer, and can be born out by the swift, over night obliteration of the "red bullet, not an ounce" slogans, which could be observed the length and breadth of West Belfast. Their late is reminiscent of and similar to the earlier erosion of the signs, which echoed the message that there would be "no return to Stormont". The embarrassing scale and speed of the U turn performed concerning that promise was too great for the Provo spin doctors to fend off, therefore, their instant obliteration was essential.

The citation by the Provos of the stance taken by Fionna Fáil in 1932 to justify their position and the Workers Party in the 1980s betrays the alarming fact that the scale and the magnitude of the betrayal involved in pursuing the political path upon which they have chosen to tread, does not appear to have dawned on them, which would render them politically naive in the extreme or that they are deliberately deceiving their own supporters. The latter is a feat, which they have managed to perform with consummate ease since December 1993. They spent eight months deliberating and seeking clarification of the Downing Street declaration when the political message contained clearly outlined the political principles upon which any future political deal to be based. They rejected it and then proceeded to enter a process the entire foundations of which contained the principles enshrined in that declaration.

They claimed that the framework document was merely a piece of paper when in fact it was affirmed by the London Dublin Governments that any future deal had to be arrived at within its parameters. Martin McGuinness posed before the media in Downing Street and claimed his synoptic support that he was about to enter that building to negotiate for a "United Ireland" when he was fully aware that such a proposal or outcome was never on the agenda in this particular process. They accepted the Mitchell Principles and rushed with embarrassing haste to board Tony Blair's settlement train, following his Balmoral speech which is widely regarded by historians and political observers as being one of the most pro Unionist speeches ever to have been delivered by a major British political figure since the days of Randolph Churchill and Andrew Bonar Law. The acceptance of separate referendum north and south of the British imposed border was the final twist to the political stratagem into which they had entered and led their followers and it is my contention that the Provisional leadership were fully aware of the political direction in which they were moving. However, unlike Fionna Fáil in 1932, and the Workers Party they were not moving into a Free State administration, but in the words of Martin McGuinness, "we entered the political arena with the heart of the Unionist establishment". Perhaps Martin was uncertain as to what exactly it was he was going for, given the intoxication nature of the occasion and the atmosphere generated by the appearance of the Balcombe Street Courthouse of the London and Dublin governments, but in the context of political reality it was a decision that had to be made. They were entering the political arena and had decided to embark upon what was to be the legacy for partition, Abandon articles 2 and 3 of the southern constitution and move the twenty six counties closer to membership of the British Commonwealth. In all the history of British, splits and schisms in the republican movement since December 1921 they were going where none before had ventured. They were entering the political arena, which was the very antithesis of republicanism, "we as it is a monarchical system, and were going as far as becoming 'Ministers of the Crown'".

One of the most obvious loathed and unacceptable to Irish Republicans, articles of the Anglo-Irish treaty of December 1921 was the required oath of allegiance to the British Crown for the twenty-six county administration. It was a prospect, which created anathema among Republicans, especially those volunteers who had waged such a valiant

struggle against British Crown Forces in the 1916-1921 period. The Crown was the powerful physical symbol of British rule in Ireland and throughout the British Empire. It represented and authorized the actions of their government, army, police and judiciary. It was portrayed on Orange banners, along with the Bible as being "the secret of England's greatness" while the conquered peoples of the earth, on their knees, gazed in subservience at both, as if to confirm the racial superiority of the "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant" over all other races.

Irish republicanism is a political philosophy which was forged by the principles of the American declaration of independence and the French Revolution. It advocates that government should be of the people, for the people, by the people. "It rejected all concept of monarchy, autocracy and aristocratic privilege and was based on the general ideas of Liberty, equality and fraternity." The Provos are entering a political system which places monarchy and privilege at its apex and the so-called ministers will be enforcing British Crown legislation. In fact the precise procedures followed in order to set up the Stormont administration had to be ratified by the British Crown and the Privy Council. The aforementioned body is a sinister secret, shadowy organisation who are officially described as "the Sovereign's body of advisors". Its membership is composed of the members of the British political, military and legal establishment. James Moynahan and Enoch Powell were both Privy councillors. Some political commentators try to give the impression that the Privy Council is merely a symbolic institution, which wields little power. Do not be fooled by this assertion. Study the writings of British Labour MPs Tony Benn and Denis Skinner which outline in detail the role played by the shadowy group in opposing and undermining the Governments of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan.

Crown, Judiciary, Lords and Commons, and of course the Privy Council. This is the spiders web of the political system into which the Provisionals leadership have led their supporters, whose bitter disillusionment becomes daily more evident. The Provos in the words of Alan McGuinness of the SDLP are no longer Republicans but constitutional nationalists. They follow in succession a long line of so-called constitutional nationalists who professed a dual allegiance to Ireland and the Crown. John Redmond, Arthur, Joe Devlin and Gerry Fitt are some of the individuals for whom a pro-fessed loyalty to Ireland and the demand for a limited form of legislative home rule within the British political framework could comfortably be aligned they argued to a sense of loyalty to the British Crown. In contrast individuals such as Patrick Pearse, as he did at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, describes himself and all Irish Republicans as "men of one allegiance and one allegiance only" and that was to Ireland and the Republic. To Irish Republicans any notion of acceptance of and loyalty to the British crown and its political system was heresy. In his book "The Politics of Irish Freedom", Gerry Adams states that when we refer to the term constitutional nationalists in the north we should remember that it is a British political framework within which this term is applied. The Provisionals have now taken their place quite comfortably within that system. On the day that took office as Minister of Education, designated, in the British administration at Stormont, Martin McGuinness described his new found status as a privilege and an honour. Martin and his cohorts should take the honest and political correct step of immediately changing the name of their party. They have forfeited their right to take their present political stance under the banner of Sinn Féin. They have deserted the memory of those who sacrificed their lives for the Republic and those of the past three decades, who sacrificed their lives attempting to end British rule in Ireland. They have insulted our intelligence, set back our political aims and brought immense pain and disillusionment to sincere and genuine Republicans. You cannot be a British constitutional politician and an Irish republican simultaneously. The two positions are a complete and total ideological contradiction. It's time for the Provisionals to take the honest decision and cease using the political label of Republican. You have abandoned republicanism for the trappings of your British paymasters and attempt to gain more with your pathetic pleas to have office facilities allocated to you at Westminster, the heart of the Empire and the antithesis of republicanism.

DECOMMISSIONING TO DISBANDMENT

British colonial secretary Peter Mandelson suspended the assembly, calculating that Sinn Féin's political need to keep Stormont ministries would compel the party to concede unionist demands.

Mitchell

The current Stormont Deal crisis stemmed directly from the Mitchell re-negotiations during the prior crisis. Ulster Unionist Party head David Trimble's refusal to appoint or convene an executive until his party's "no guns, no government" demands had yielded Provisional decommissioning, culminated in re-negotiations with the former United States Senator George Mitchell presiding.

Trimble then agreed to form a cabinet which included Martin McGuinness and Bairbre de Brun, without a prior surrender of arms. However, amidst the euphoria accompanying the formation of a Stormont executive, the UUP chief boasted to party confidants that he had received clear commitments that Provisional decommissioning would take place shortly after the cabinet began to function.

Later Sinn Féin members would deny having given such pledges. However, Trimble was confident enough to risk his political future and submit a signed, post-dated resignation letter held by his party president, Josias Cunningham, to take effect if Provisional decommissioning had not begun before a special meeting of the UUP ruling council on 12 February.

Palatable

In the immediate lead-up to the UUP deadline on decommissioning there was a flurry of activity. British Secretary Peter

Mandelson introduced legislation at Westminster which would authorise him to suspend the Stormont Assembly. Mandelson expressed publicly his intention to suspend Stormont, rather than allow Trimble's resignation to take effect.

Dublin officials including Bertie Ahern and his Foreign Minister Brian Cowen, kept pressing the Provisionals for a movement and were assisted by the British and the White House. A wide range of proposals was suggested to Sinn Féin, in order to make the surrender of arms more palatable. A link might be made between Provisional decommissioning and British Army troop reductions. (Although the British Army threatened resignations if there was any formula which equated the British and Provisionals.)

Involved

Further proposals were said to include a public decommissioning event by the Provisionals before the May deadline, coupled with a full one-year extension for the final completion of decommissioning. News reports indicated that Gerry Kelly was deeply involved in the negotiations and that Brian Keenan had refused to convey proposals requested by Sinn Féin.

De Chastelain Reports

De Chastelain then issued two reports approximately four hours apart. The first report was entirely negative. It expressed Provisional assurances of support for the Stormont Deal process, and guaranteed no threat to the deal from his members. However, the report noted, "our sole task is decommissioning and to date we have received no information from the IRA as to when decommissioning will start."



PIRA disbandment likely.

Four hours later a second report was issued which much more positive in tone. This report claimed "particularly and significant and...valuable progress, the assertion made to us by the IRA representative that IRA will consider how to put arms and explosives beyond use in the context of the full implementation of the The Good Friday Agreement."

The total offer to de Chastelain was believed to include both an affirmation of intent to decommission and a meaningful timetable for full disarmament. The proposals were claimed as a "major breakthrough" by Gerry Adams and recommended by senior Dublin officials. Mandelson however proceeded unilaterally to suspend Stormont in advance of the UUP meeting, amidst conflicting claims about when he was briefed about the new decommissioning offer.

Back Door

Both Mandelson and Trimble rejected the new Provisional decommissioning proposals as too ambiguous. Trimble received an overwhelming endorsement from his party council, and promised that he would not re-enter

Stormont without a further endorsement of his party.

Ironically Sinn Féin angrily called for a return to Stormont, while UUP applauded its suspension.

The Republican grassroots raised serious questions about the shift in the Provisional position. In December 1995, the Provisional had stated there was "no question of I Óglagh na hÉireann meeting the ludicrous demand for a surrender of IRA weapons either through the front or back doors."

Similarly in March 1996 "decommissioning either through the front or back doors" was categorically rejected as "an unrealistic and realisable demand which simply wouldn't be met." There had clearly been a seismic shift on the issue.

The Provisionals announced that they were pulling out of disarmament talks amidst a series of meetings with Mandelson and the UUP which left Sinn Féin members complaining that the Stormont Deal was "in tatters," facing a brick wall of both a British government and a unionist veto.

Content

Remarkably similar proposals of the Provisional decommissioning offer were then leaked to *Ireland on Sunday*, the *Sunday Business Post*, and the *Irish Times*. These included structured proposals and a specified timeframe for decommissioning in the context of British demilitarisation and the continuation of Stormont.

These were later repudiated by a Provisional spokesperson, but the reports raised questions as to how three normally sympathetic

publications received the same leaked proposal simultaneously. One of the three, the *Ireland on Sunday*, pointed the finger directly at the Provisional in criticising an "about face" on its proposals.

Alliance

Following two weeks of "drift" in the political process, the ALLIANCE PARTY put forward a sixteen point plan which included all parties re-committing to the Stormont Deal; Republicans and loyalists renouncing violence; normalisation of the British troop presence; submission of detailed inventories of arms and a timetable for decommissioning; a meeting of the Executive on a day of reconciliation would also see the first act of decommissioning.

Similar proposals were echoed by the SDLP. Dublin spoke of reconvening the Irish Forum. Such moves would inevitably result in an endorsement of a surrender even by all parties other than Sinn Féin and leave them under even more pressure to decommission.

Disbandment

As the British and Dublin look feverishly for an avenue to restore the Stormont Deal before the St. Patrick's Day meetings in Washington, National Security Advisor Jim Steinberg conducted meetings with all the parties.

A possible proposal which was muted during these discussions was disbandment of the Provisionals. Disbandment would, of course, go much further than a decommissioning event, removing the Provisionals forever from the political equation. It might also be easier to sell to the Republican grassroots than an immediate tangible surrender event.

Garvaghy Residents Under New British Threat

The Garvaghy Road residents have come under a renewed threat with the British government taking steps clearly designed to facilitate an Orange Road march. These steps, which included granting new authority to the Crown Courts over loyalist marches, and new appointments to the Parade Commission itself, were taken as nationalists mark the anniversary of the death of the Garvaghy residents', civil rights solicitor Rosemary Nelson.

MAC CIONNAITH

The Garvaghy Road residents continue to be under siege, with Orangemen having recently renewed protests and pushing towards a return to the nationalist road, either before or on the first Sunday in July. A key factor in preventing such a march over the past two years had been the campaign of community resistance, and international publicity effort by the residents' committee, led by Brendan Mac Cionnaith. The determination of the residents has made it politically untenable for the British to allow an Orange march despite British inclinations to favour the Orange Order, and to support the Ulster Unionist Party

head David Trimble in his parliamentary constituency.

CROWN COURTS

The British government is now following two strategies which will facilitate an Orange march, while deflecting criticism away from itself! The first strategy would consist of granting a new authority to Crown Courts to intervene and allow a march.

The British have signalled their intention to incorporate the provisions under the European Convention of Human Rights in the 1998 British legislation controlling the conduct of the Orange parades.

These provisions, including specifically Article 11, which guarantee right of assembly and right of expression of views, are expected to be used to allow the Orange Order to overturn adverse rulings by the Parade Commission.

Moreover, these criteria could change the calculations of the Parade Commission itself.

A decision by the courts would allow the British to deflect criticism by claiming their hands were tied by the courts of the European Convention.

COMMISSION

The Presbyterian minister, Rev. Robert Magee, who helped broker the loyalist ceasefire will rejoin the commission from which he resigned in 1997. Anthony Holland of the Personal Investment Authority Ombudsman Bureau of London

will chair the commission. Other new appointees include John Pringle, a retired Crown high court judge; John Cousins of Queens University; Castleareagh Alliance Councillor, Peter Osborne; and former Gaelic Athletic Association president, Peter Quinn.

CHALLENGES

The appointments were immediately criticised and challenged by nationalists. Solicitor Padraig Drinan, on behalf of Garvaghy Road resident Evelyn White, filed a legal challenge to the new appointments contending that British Secretary Peter Mandelson had appointed a pro-loyalist commission. Only one member of the commission, Peter Quinn was regarded as a nationalist.

CONCESSIONS

There were also growing concerns that the British government and David Trimble would seek to orchestrate a Garvaghy Road march as part of negotiations on a return to Stormont. There are fears that either the British or Trimble would seek to obtain a private assurance on Sinn Féin opposition to a march. Residents have questioned whether in exchange for concession on other issues, Sinn Féin would follow the same approach as it did with the Patten Commission. Publicly it would issue a muted statement of opposition and send a few prominent members to any picket. At the same time it would, in accordance with such an understanding, not engage in a mass mobilisation as part of an effort to block the road confront the RUC.

O'NEILL MURDER WHITEWASH

On the 18th of February a British inquest jury returned a verdict that the murder of Diarmuid O'Neill was a "lawful" killing.

Diarmuid O'Neill, 27, was murdered when armed police burst into his room at a guest house in Glenholme Road, Hammersmith, west London on Sept 23 1996. Outlining the case to the jury of five men and five women at Kingston Crown Court, Dr John Burton, the coroner, said: "It is no secret that part of the operation went wrong."

Describing the police tactics, Dr Burton said: "Basically the intention was this: it was to try to take people by surprise in the middle of the night. They wanted to get in with a duplicate key without making any noise, but what happened was that the key didn't work. They then tried to break the lock using a battering ram."

The electronically powered ram, known as an "enforcer", went through the door, destroying the element of surprise. Dr Burton said: "The next thing that happened was that they fired teargas into the room, shots were fired by the police. There was shouting, swearing, banging and shooting. It was chaotic."

Det Chief Supt John Bunn, who was acting head of the police on the night and bore overall responsibility for the operation, told the inquest that the raid was the culmination of an extensive surveillance operation involving the police and security services.

O'Neill was one of seven people who had been tracked in Operation Tinnitius, which started on Aug 11. On Sept 20 substantial quantities of explosives, detonators and Semtex were found at Abacus storage, a lock-up facility in north London. Mr Bunn told the inquest that the guest house had been covertly broken into and searched on several occasions, but no explosives or guns were found.

Rory Dougan commenting on behalf of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement said: "The British security forces admit that they swept the guest house for arms several times and had found none, they also admit having Diarmuid under constant surveillance. Given this information the murder is a clear example of state execution."

Oath to British Monarch Remains

Britains Lord Chief Justice in the six counties Robert Carswell continues to support the idea that barristers wishing to be promoted to the rank of "Queen's Counsel" (QC) must swear a declaration that they will "well and truly serve Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II" before being allowed to practice at the senior Bar.

The issue of the QC's declaration is at the centre of a lengthy and complex court challenge brought by two Belfast barristers, Seamus Treacy and Barry MacDonald who were both promoted to QC rank before Christmas. The two men were prevented by Robert Carswell from for-

mally taking up their new positions unless and until they swore the declaration.

They have sought a judicial review of the matter on the grounds that the declaration is discriminatory and offends the terms of the Stormont deal. They also object to the declaration because their professional body, the Bar Council agreed two years ago to recommend replacing it with a more neutral form of words which omitted any reference to the Queen.

The British legal system is still an integral part of the occupation

structure in the six counties, and it is still rotten to the core. A Criminal Justice review was part of the post deal scenario according to the British. The reality is that three months into the new year the review has not been published. Incredibly the excuse given is "printing difficulties". The real reason is that British civil servants in the administration do not want to see an independent judicial appointments system. They are also blocking an independent prosecution service. This situation is yet another indicator of the fact that a corrupt regime needs corrupt structures to survive.

EQUALITY MYTH FURTHER EXPOSED

Organisers of the St Patrick's day carnival have been forced to go to the high court in Belfast to challenge Belfast city councils decision to refuse funding for the event to mark the national holiday. But they expressed disappointment that the high court hearing will not take place until after the event. Last year unionists pulled the plug on funding - only six weeks before St Patrick's day. Speaking after yesterday's high court decision Caitriona Ruane of the St Patrick's Carnival Committee said: "We have been granted leave for the judicial review but unfortunately it will not happen until later in March". "The council's decision sends out the wrong message to peo-

ple in Belfast. Despite being directly discriminated against by the council we are still determined to make this year's carnival the best ever." "Despite the funding refusal over £15,000 has already been raised for the festival through door-to-door collections. Matt Larkin, National executive member of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement for the Limerick area commenting on the situation said: "In recent times some have said more votes will somehow make a difference to British rule, yet after two decades working the local government system in the six counties nationalists cannot even get a gesture towards a St Patricks day parade from Unionism".

Radio Free Eireann Interview with Brendan Hughes

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John McDonagh: Could you just give us your background with in the Republican Movement how you grew up and why did you join and how did that come about?

Brendan Hughes: Well, I joined the Republican Movement in 1969 when my father had a history of republicanism, my grandfather was in prison, my father was in prison, my mother had been arrested, um... I grew up in an area of Belfast which was predominantly Protestant, and growing up most of my friends were all Protestants and there wasn't a great deal of Republicanism about during my youth except through father's background, and my father would be pretty private about that except on occasion where he would talk about his cousin being shot dead in York Street, and stories about my grandfather and so forth.

But in 1969 when the pogroms came about, when houses were being burnt down, when the B-Specials were shooting up Divis street and so forth I became involved in the movement then actively, through a cousin of mine it was a guy called Charlie Hughes who was shot dead in 1971 by the Officials, the Official IRA.

By that time in 1970 a split had occurred with the Irish Republican Army, the Provisional wing of the Irish Republican Army was formed. I became involved as a member of that organization and through that um... Initially it was for defence against attacks by the B-Specials, the RUC, and the Loyalist mobs and defended places like Bombay Street, the areas where I lived myself which was up the Grosvenor Road, and when the British Army came in... The war actually started then with the British Army. The British Army raided houses in the lower Falls where I lived and looked for arms caches which the IRA had hidden, which resulted in the Lower Falls Curfew. Which I was involved in. There were people there from the 40s campaign the 50s campaign, like Bill McKee, Pádraig MacAirt who were long time republicans and who had seen this as an opportunity to bring about a united Ireland and that is actually when I got most totally involved in the Republican Movement... in the Republican Struggle against the British.

John McDonagh: So were you arrested at that time?

Brendan Hughes: I was not arrested until 1973. I had been on the run from 1970 and the British troops had raided my house looking for me, arrested my father, interrogated my father, and then released him 48 hours later to walk home with no shoes on in his bare feet. Um... So from 1970 until 1973, I lived in a different house every night, I moved from house to house. The British were continually raiding, trying to capture me. Um... They actually started to... It was they who nicknamed me The Dark, it was they who called me "The Dark", the British troops, but from 70 to 73 I just was constantly on the run.

John McDonagh: And how old were you at that time?

Brendan Hughes: I was 21

John McDonagh: And then how did your capture come about?

Brendan Hughes: I was arrested on the Falls Road along with Gerry Adams and Tom Cullen. By that stage the British media, the press in England, had headlined news articles about me being the commander of the IRA or being Operations Officer of the IRA in Belfast. And we were having a meeting on the Falls Road, my self, Gerry and few others when the British Army raided the house and arrested us all. I was taken then to... we were all taken to Spring Field Road RUC station where we were interrogated by ten plain clothed British troops... uh... British undercover operatives and we were tortured. Uh... I was continually tortured for over a period of up to eight hours I was beaten with small markers. I was tied against the wall and continually punched and kicked. I was then tied to a chair and continually beaten. They put a weapon in my... a gun a 45 in my mouth... and pulled the trigger, but obviously it didn't work. They threatened to shoot me there and dump me on the Black Mountain and put out a statement out saying that loyalists had killed me.

John McDonagh: And what were you being charged with at that time?

Brendan Hughes: Nothing. Nothing... I wasn't arrested with anything um... I was... when they were interrogating me, they were trying to get me to sign a statement that said I was member of the IRA which I did not. So after a period of fourteen or fifteen hours I was handcuffed, manacled, and thrown into the back of an armored car, and driven to Long Kesh where I was interned... for an indefinite period... um... with out any charge. I was charged with anything. I was just thrown into Long Kesh Internment Camp.

John McDonagh: And then how long were you interned?

Brendan Hughes: I was there for about eight months then I escaped from Long Kesh. I escaped in a garbage truck. What happened was that I was put inside a large bag... uh... with rubbish, sawdust, and all the garbage of the camp. The guys who came to lift the rubbish... a lorry came every day. I was thrown in the back of the garbage truck and after four or five hours in camp the truck left, I left Long Kesh and up toward the hill, I broke... I was able to release myself from the bag, jump out of the lorry, and then, I had a little luck to Newry where I had some money coming out the jail, were I was taken and I was driven to Dundalk where I was eventually free.

John McDonagh: Was there any chance of you being crushed within the garbage truck?

Brendan Hughes: No. No it wasn't that type of garbage truck it was an open type truck. I'd remember the biggest danger was... before the truck left the camp uh British soldier would push a large spiked object through the rubbish... and it actually happened that day. But I had a bit of luck that day and at both times they missed and I wasn't hit. But at that period when this happened I knew exactly what was happening, because we had

done some intelligence work on it we knew the whole process. But I took the chance and it worked OK they did not spike me. But I must admit at the one stage I felt like jumping up and shouting that I was here in fear of being spiked by this... its like a large spear.

John McDonagh: And then how long were you free at this stage, how long did you stay free?

Brendan Hughes: Well... I got across the border I got a new identity. I had my hair dyed and changed my who appearance and came back. I was back in Belfast within ten days. Um... 1974 May 1974 I was arrested in Belfast again. I was arrested on the Malone Road in a large house on the Malone Road which is totally outside the working class area. Which was a policy of mine at the time, to move outside the working class areas because it was becoming so hard to move around. I established an identity as a travelling salesman and set up home outside West Belfast all together. But I was travelling into West Belfast every day with a suit and a briefcase and so forth. I was often stopped by British troops and RUC, but I always got by... until the particular time when they raided the house and arrested me along with weapons and munitions detonator and so forth.

John McDonagh: And then what, were you charged or sentenced at that stage?

Brendan Hughes: I was charged with possession of weapons and sentenced to fifteen years, they then took me out again and charged with me escape from Long Kesh and gave me one and a half years. I went into Long Kesh and... sometime in 1978 I became OC of the Prisoners in Long Kesh. Um... At one period there was a bit of a riot and being OC I attempted to stop the riot. But in doing that I was accused of causing the riot and I was taken out and sentenced to another five years.

The morning I went to court. My position as being OC of Long Kesh, I would go out every morning and negotiate with the governor of the prison on conditions and people would be these requests, and I would have to sit and meet and talk to the governor and request these things the prisoners were going for. Sometimes it was a mandolin, sometimes it was a guitar, sometimes it was a pair of boots or medical equipment or something like that... and I would go and sit... and it would be quite cordial and quite friendly and I was called Mr. Hughes, or mostly Commanding Officer. Um... shortly afterwards I was taken to court, sentenced another five years and I found myself put in the back of a truck and taken down to the H-Blocks of Long Kesh. I was walked in, told to strip uh... thrown into a cell naked... and with a blanket around me.

John McDonagh: Did they ask you to wear a prison uniform?

Brendan Hughes: They asked me to wear a prison Uniform... Yes.

John McDonagh: And then you refused?

Brendan Hughes: I refused to wear a prison uniform, because I didn't see myself as a criminal. I was a political prisoner.

John McDonagh: And at that stage how long had the blanket protest gone on in the H-Blocks?

Brendan Hughes: The Blanket Protest had gone on almost two years uh... I had been in contact with the... Me being OC of the prisoners of Long Kesh I was also the OC of the prisoners in the H-Blocks, but at no time did I visualize the conditions of the men in the H-Blocks, until I got there... But I had put an appeal against the five year conviction because I was... I actually had a prison officer who went and gave evidence to the fact that I was involved in any sort of riot. I was involved in trying to keep the peace intact, but I think at that period they wanted me out of Long Kesh and they gave me the five years. Soon afterwards with the prisoners they asked me to take over, because it was totally disorganized there was two blocks at that time there was H-5 and H-3 and there was an OC at H-5, and OC at H-3 and there was no communication at all, because at that period they were not taking visits, there was no papers, there was no radio. There was absolutely nothing at all. Everybody had long hair and long beards... I felt a responsibility to try and change that... So I dropped the appeal against my five year conviction and became OC of the two blocks H-5 and H-3.

I then started to organize, cause I knew um... that the prison authorities had my people, our people totally under control, they were totally... the place was spotless clean... screws... the Prison officers as they were called, were totally in control of this and the people there was over a 150 men here at the time... were not going anywhere. So my... point was, we need communication... we've got up the protests we need to do something... And actually I initially suggested... and this might be hard to believe, but its actually true, that we put on the prison uniform... and we go into the system... and we wreck the bloody place. Just totally wreck the prison, because either way we were stuck in the cell 24 hours a day no fresh air no showers no nothing... but the people that were there for two years found this very hard to take, so I was decided that we couldn't take that way, so then I ordered that people would begin to take visits and I said, you had to put on the prison uniform. That was OK, as far as I was concerned. It was compromise we had to make for the point of us making communication and to get more outside to what the con-

ditions were really like. And from that uh we went right into the Blanket protests and went right into the Hungerstrikes.

John McDonagh: But Brendan before you get into the Hunger Strikes maybe you could explain how you ended up on the Dirty Protest?

Brendan Hughes: Well... Because we began to take visits, because we began to smuggle things in. We began to bring pens in, bits of paper in we began to smuggle things out... uh... we called them barges which is a communication wrapped up in cellophane, it was placed up the anus, sometimes up the nose, and it would be passed over sometimes in the mouth. It would be passed over on a visit. Uh... The Prison authorities realized what we were doing because obviously they were reading cells and finding pens, and finding tobacco and finding stuff. So they introduced a mirror search. What happened on the visit is that they came, took you out of the cell, walked you up the end corridor, and forced you to squat over the mirror. We refused to squat over the mirror, so we were physically forced over the mirror so that they could look up the anus. They would then badly mistreat us... mess with us going out on a visit... coming back and the shower thing. They were supposed to give a shower once a week. They wouldn't do that. Sometimes they would give, let one person go for a shower other times they wouldn't. And since most of the time when people went for a shower, they were getting physically and verbally abused. So the order was given finally... No more showers. We stopped going to the showers. We refused to wash. So they began to bring buckets around... buckets of water and throw them into the cell. Often just throwing them on the floor and water would spill and we supposed to wash with this... So the order was given to smash the basin, smash the jug... which were plastic uh... we smashed all those so they stopped doing that. Uh... It came to the point where we had to stop going out of the cells all together

because of the physical abuse and verbal abuse every time we left the cell. And that's what developed into the dirty protest. We started to smear excreta in the cell... we wouldn't wash, we wouldn't go out... and the cells just became uh... infested with rubbish, with urine, with excreta and the situation that they were given.

John McDonagh: And how long did that last?

Brendan Hughes: That lasted almost three years, but it was slow development because throughout the protest we eventually destroyed our beds, smashed them up, smashed the windows so all we were left with was a mattress, all we had were blankets and a mattress on the floor. And they would come in, most nights they would come in with hose pipes and just open the cell door and you'd get hosed down. Other times they would come in with very strong disinfectant and throw a bucket of disinfectant around you to the point where it brought tears to the eyes and was very painful. Uh... after we smashed the windows, they came and put iron bars on the windows... we were totally sealed in and this carried on for almost three years.

John McDonagh: Was there any heat the cells I mean was the wind coming in form these grates

Brendan Hughes: Yeah... you wake up like you in the morning with snow on you... yeah the windows were totally open until they put the grills on. Even with the grills on very often they turned the heat off on the cold winter nights and in the hot summer days they then turned the heat on um... they took a large machine, uh... we used pour out the urine out the cell doors at night and they would put this large sucker machine to let the... and leave the machine on all night. It was like a generator going all night, uh... they left the lights on all night and as I said in the winter nights they would turn the heat off.

John McDonagh: This would bring us up to 1980, how were you able to communicate and organize a hunger strike within the prison?

Brendan Hughes: We had a line of communication with the Irish language at night we would shout the windows uh... in Gaelic... what was happening uh... we were able to send communications... A guy would go on a visit with a communication... if I wanted a communication to H-Block 3 I was in H-Block 5 and I wanted a communication to H-Block 3 I would uh... write a communication and give it someone going out on a visit and often other people in H-5, H-6 H-7 would meet on a visit and the communication would be passed on that way but by and large it was done through shouting at nights the quiet nights, Long Kesh was a very quiet place at night... and were able to shout from one block to another block... pass the communication from one wing to another wing and on to another block. That... That is how we done it.

John McDonagh: And how did you come to the decision about the Hungerstrike?

Brendan Hughes: Well... because we were getting so much publicity uh because of the conditions we were in and remember that for two years these men had been sitting and no one knew anything that was going on that we were being brutalized, we were being tortured being totally mistreated, by 1980 people were beginning to realize that there was something wrong. The

Main break through was when Cardinal O'Fiaich, the Catholic Arch Bishop... the Catholic Catholic of Ireland... or visit the prison. But he was only allowed to visit the prison... or visit the people from South Armagh where the cardinal had come from but by pure coincidence I was in a cell with a guy from Armagh and Cardinal O'Fiaich came in and I spoke to him and he was really really touched by what he had seen and he walked out of the prison gate and he made a public statement on television and said the cells in the H-Blocks looked like the streets of Calcutta. From then on Cardinal O'Fiaich began negotiations and his contact with me was priest called Father Alec Reid and Alec was chaplain in the prison and Alec kept contact with me and always told me that the Cardinal was doing things. The Cardinal was meeting behind the scenes, we actually began meeting other priest, Father Alec Reid, he was totally gentleman... behind the scenes and Cardinal O'Fiaich went to see Maggie Thatcher... and I wasn't there at the meeting, but I was told that Maggie Thatcher was totally insulting the Cardinal, uh... we had our hopes really built up there that we were getting a breakthrough and I was getting word back through Father Alec Reid that there were things happening... hold on because we had been threatening hunger strike for about a year now and we were actual going to call one. We were actually back, then one day I got a visit from Danny Morrison who had come to me, on the visit that Maggie Thatcher had shut the door on the Cardinal and there was nothing.

And we had almost four hundred men here who were sitting waiting... sitting on the blanket for years... and all their hopes were built into this... into Cardinal O'Fiaich making some sort of progress, and here we had Maggie Thatcher just shut the door in his face... and I was told this on the visit... I got a visit from Danny Morrison and Danny told me... he brought a cigar up for me that day... the only time you smoke on a visit I smoked the cigar and he told me that the door was closed, Cardinal got nothing... and I didn't know what I was gonna tell these people... uh... and we never ever spoke until after eight o'clock and there was only two screws left in the wing.

And I was entering the cell that day and Bobby Sands was at the cell next to me. And Bobby was obviously at the pipe right away. We used to dig holes in the walls so we could communicate. And I told Bobby it was in the air and we have to organize a hunger strike. Bobby absolutely was in total agreement with it and from there we started to organize the hunger strike. That night I got up to the door... it was half past eight at night when everything was quiet on the rest of the prisoners knew except myself and Bobby that the whole process with Cardinal O'Fiaich had fallen through and I then said what then happens, and that we had no alternative but to call a hunger strike. And...

I remember the total... utter silence... uh and that night... Bobby had a great voice for shouting... Bobby done most of the shouting, most of the communication in the H-Block at the window... and we began the work later that night through the communications through Bobby and the Irish language. And I mentioned earlier on that... Long Kesh was a quiet place... it was a really silent place that night.

The next day, over the next couple of days, I got communications back in from the other blocks, volunteers, I asked for volunteers for hunger strike, uh... I think there was a 148 volunteers... and I wanted six... from each county... and I got a hundred a forty-eight names in... it was only a couple of days. Um... my self and Bobby selected six people. Actually Bobby wanted to go on the first hunger strike and I decided against it. I felt the responsibility that I should do it I called it and I should be on it... the process started from there, six of us went on hunger strike...

John McDonagh: You represented Antrim?

Brendan Hughes: Yes.

John McDonagh: What were the qualifications and was it a tough decision to pick one from the other counties, how did they qualify?

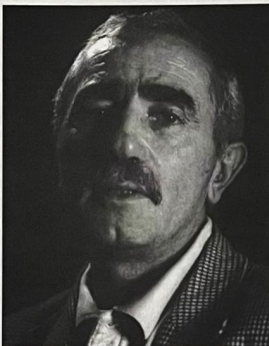
Brendan Hughes: It... it was very very hard. Very very hard to pick people. One person I had rejected was a guy called Sean McKenna... and Sean begged me and begged me... to choose his name... and I eventually did. The other qualification was... there was people from the Irish National Liberation Army there as well, and we allowed one of theirs... one from that organization to go on the hunger strike. The biggest majority of the people in Long Kesh at that time were Provisional IRA people... um there was a small group of INLA people and they demanded that they had a representative on the hunger strike and we agreed to that... and it was a guy called Sean Níne, a guy who was in the INLA went on hunger strike with us.

John McDonagh: and what happened to that first hungerstrike in 1980?

Brendan Hughes: Uh... the hunger strike went on for... fifty three days. On the forty first day we got representation from British Civil servants who had come in and produced this document... as an attempt to settle the hunger strike... we had away... at this stage six of us were within the prison hospital, and we had met in what is called the Canteen Room and we were allowed some time to discuss it. We went back into our cells... Ten days later they came back again with another document which they produced, which we studied and which we believed was a possible... was possible solution to the problem. Uh... on the fifty-third day, the day the hunger strike ended, a priest who was representing us met a British civil servant at a Belfast... report and the only way that the priest could recognize this was that he would have a red carnation in his coat. The priest met this civil servant or whoever he was with the red carnation who passed over a document.

That night the night the hunger strike ended, Bobby Sands and the priest was in the prison hospital, at this stage uh... Sean McKenna was in a coma... uh... and was almost dead... The doctor Dr. Ross, who was our doctor at the time, told me that Sean had only a few hours to live. I believed that we had the basis of a solution. They rushed Sean out on a stretcher.

At this stage I was still able to walk and there were two priests there, Father Murphy and Father Connor who helped me out into the hallway when they were rushing Sean out and Doctor



Brendan Hughes.

Ross begged to save Sean's life, and I said it, "feed him..." intravenously. Sean... was... uh... was immediately put out on support machine and the hunger strike was actually over. The document that the priest brought me believed was a sentence. Bobby and the priest was there there was me and um we believed. I read because my eyesight was gone, but the priest who had brought the document to us was overjoyed. I mean we were overjoyed as well because Sean wasn't going to die and none of us were gonna die and we had a settlement. We believed we had a settlement.

Over the next few days... I believe it was the prison regime itself that was responsible for causing the collapse of that agreement. They refused to accept clothes, they refused to accept certain pieces of clothes. Bobby had taken over. When I went on hunger strike, I handed my position over to Bobby... Bobby Sands when Bobby was in the negotiations I was still recovering from the hunger strike in the hospital, uh, he was in constant contact with me. They were bringing Bobby up to the hospital every day to see me.

The prison officers who were running the jail hated the whole deal. They detested us. They believed that we had won and they done their utmost, including the Prison Governor to sabotage the whole thing. I believed they did sabotage it... and leading to the point of where Bobby sent a communication up to me that they had stopped allowing Bobby to come to see me at one stage. Uh Bobby sent a communication to me that he didn't see any alternative here except another hunger strike. Uh I fought with Bobby actually over this. I didn't believe that we should go on a second hunger strike. Bobby was the OC and I was not, that's the facts as they stood and they went on hunger strike, and it was Bobby's decision that the second hunger strikes take place.

John McDonagh: Now a significant part of this second hunger strike which happened in 1981 was the election of Bobby Sands to the British Parliament for Fermanagh/South Tyrone. Maybe you could describe to our audience what was that like and was that a big gamble by putting him up because he had lost it in the night we discredited the Hungerstrikes, but what was it like in the prison and how did you find out that we had won the election?

Brendan Hughes: Well we... we didn't have any form of communication. Any form of communication we had we used to uh... struggle it in... into small pieces, small articles or whatever we had no newspaper, no radio, no television, and when we heard that Bobby was elected... We were, elated, I mean the whole world knew that he was elected before we did... We did feel like... we believed or hoped... that... Jesus this must end now, then they must give in now, they must give us our demands...

John McDonagh: But Brendan, when you were figuring out to have him run did you think it was a big enough gamble that if he lost the election, it would have hurt the chances of the Hungerstrike, I mean how... what was that thought process like? About that you took a gamble on it?

Brendan Hughes: We actually on the inside didn't have a great deal of influence in that it was the leadership on the outside that had that, and they were supremely confident and we had a great deal of faith in the leadership on the outside and when they decided to run Bobby in the election we believed that it was the right decision and we believed that we should do it, and we heard the stories about the support we had out there and we knew the sympathy was out there, so we were pretty confident that Bobby... Bobby would make an impression. Uh... But we also really believed that if Bobby was elected we would... If practically break the British role and we would get our demands. The thought process was dictated from the outside.

John McDonagh: And then what happened after the election?

Brendan Hughes: Bobby died. They, they allowed him to die... and... nothing... nothing changed within the prison, uh. As I said we didn't have any sort of communications at that time at all... and all I'm doing... and all I have been doing is looking back at reading about that period, because we were totally isolated at the time a totally and totally demoralized at that time when Bobby's election didn't make any difference and then when Bobby died and within the whole world knew before we knew... a priest came to my cell in the early hours of the morning after Bobby died and told me... and I knew it at dawn as the priest walked into my cell... that Bobby was dead, and it was... just an... abyss... to us.

John McDonagh: And did you have any ceremony inside the prison?

Brendan Hughes: Yeah well... we were locked in the cell... all silence... silence... is a thing we know very well in the jail, and we had a two minute silence thing uh, and that Sunday after Bobby's death that the only time we came out of our cells... we went to mass... we had our social mass in the jail... every wing had a special mass in the jail for that, but then the whole process started all over again, ten died...

John McDonagh: Then it was called off in the Fall and then I believe the demands were implemented by the Thatcher administration.

Brendan Hughes: The demands were implemented... yeah the demands were implemented by the fact that we were without, they allowed us our clothes, they gave us our clothes after the deaths... and we went out... out of our cells, and it was totally different regime all together... you know, we had shoes on, we had clothes on, we had dignity... and these same people who had tortured us all these days were still there uh you went into the prison system, they forced us to work we wanted to work and they sabotaged everything we could get out hands on. We broke all machines, we destroyed everything we could get to disrupt the whole prison regime so eventually when it came to the point that they wouldn't let us go to work any more, so we won that demand. The demand not to work... not to take prison work. And over a period of a year all of the demands we had asked for we had. And we had our own clothes our free association, we were treated as political prisoners, we had a representative as OC who the prison governor had to recognize and in fact we had won all the demands that we wanted.

John McDonagh: And it came at great cost.

Brendan Hughes: It came at too big a cost I think... yes

John McDonagh: Did it mainly have to do with Thatcher intransigence through the whole negotiation of the whole Hunger strike?

Brendan Hughes: Her intransigence? Yeah, I think it was largely to do with that. I think that there were people there in White Hall, in the British government who would've been quite prepared to give us what we had. I had spent almost eight years in prison with my own clothes with political status, and here they were trying to take it away from us uh... and eventually they had to concede that we were political prisoners, they could not control us, they tried to control us uh... they couldn't we resisted every attempt to the point where ten men died... and Thatcher... Thatcher. That woman, Thatcher, just could not accept the fact that we were political prisoners... we were fighting for a cause.

John McDonagh: Which brings us up to what is going on today and I want to go back into the prison, because there's been a lot of discussion that the process that was designed in 1988 had its germs in... within the discussion group with Gerry Adams, Bobby Sands and your self about a way forward, a way out of what was going on. How much of your guys were a part of that thought process which brought us to the treaty that was signed in 1998? and was it even discussed that the way to a United Ireland was to bring back Stormont and some of the thing that have come about out of the process?

Brendan Hughes: Absolutely not. Um... a lot of us within the prison some of us were in our teens some Twenty-one... all young men. A lot of us went in with uh... not a great deal of political thought in our heads. Within Long Kesh with in the the cages of Long Kesh uh, we began to push and I remember Gerry... Gerry was the main driving force behind this, that we needed politically educated rank and file. Within Long Kesh we began to do that. We had debates, we had discussions, we had arguments... we read about the Palestinian Cause we read about the South African Cause, we debated all these causes and we became politically educated, we became not just a soldier who was just a person who was able to fire a gun, but a person who was able to think uh before he fired a gun. So all that started there I mean I was in the cages with Bobby Sands and I was in the H-Blocks with Bobby Sands and went through this whole situation where we became and we knew... that before we went into the prison there was Sinn Fein and the IRA all the fighting we were doing we were creating a party called... the SDLP actually became the nationalist voice of the IRA, though they were not representing the IRA but the SDLP was largely created by the war that was going on and we knew that if your going to fight a war, then you gotta be able to fight a war and be able to talk after the fighting stops. So the whole sort of people who are involved in the struggle now, are politically educated ex soldiers.



H-Block Blanket Protest.

John McDonagh: OK now you were released in 1986 and in the interview that you did with a magazine that you did with the web address later on, you stated that you went to work for contractors in West Belfast and how you were reminiscing about what your father had said that nothing much had changed after all the suffering that went on and everything that was going, that you were still being exploited by what you were calling cowboy contractors?

Brendan Hughes: Yes. Yeah. Uh... I remember the story my father used to tell me like when they all got out of jail people like Billy McKee, my father, Proinsias McArt and so forth uh they were sort of alienated by society and they could not work anywhere, so they had to take, any sort of work they could get uh. I remember feeling that that was so sad. I mean here were people who went to war trying to bring about a democratic Socialist Republic and they are working for these people who are exploiting them. When I got out of the prison in 1986 I found myself right in the same position again. I couldn't have worked outside West Belfast I had to stay here... but the only work I could get would be on a building site, and these people, they were Catholic, they called themselves nationalists, but they were doing the same and were paying people 15 to 16 pounds per day where the average would be 30 to 35 pounds per day, and that still persists today. And its not just Builders, there's loads of employers who do the same. And me being a republican and we don't believe there is anybody outside the Republican Movement that can bring about any changes. The problem I feel is that republicans are sitting back and there are some of them there who have made careers out of politics and have left the whole principle, that ten men died for and hundreds of men died for and hundreds of men went to jail for, behind. And I think they need to be wakened up and it needs to be pointed out to them that as I said in the article, it takes a great deal of pain for me to come to the point where I could put pen to paper and write this... And I do it reluctantly, but I do it through necessity and I do it through uh... and I also do it for my comrades who die...

John McDonagh: But Brendan you do have people like Marion Price who have spoken out against this Agreement and then they are ostracized in republican clubs where she's not allowed into some. Some of the songs that were written about her in the 70s are not allowed to be sung in the clubs, I mean you are talking loyalty but it's also a great risk within a community that you

were born and raised that you're going to be ostracized for those views

Brendan Hughes: Yeah, but unfortunately that's a risk we have to take. I mean Marion an Dolores would be comrades of mine. Uh... and some of the people who would ostracize people like that or ostracize people like me, I have no time for. Let their petty little minds ostracize rights, but anyone who would want to ostracize every attempt to ask them a question... do you agree with everything the republican movement is doing? If they do, then okay, then go away from me, I have no time for ya. If they don't agree, and they don't say anything... then I think they're a moral coward. At least Marion has the guts to stand up to and say something that she believes is wrong. I don't necessarily agree with everything Marion says, but I absolutely agree with the right for her to say, or anyone else to say what they believe in

John McDonagh: But Brendan one of the whole problems about this whole process is that started with Gerry Adams and John Hume and it's been banged around in the press its called a "Pan-nationalist front" Never at so no time do they say its a pan-republican front, so its quite obvious that Republicans had to go over to a nationalist point of view in order to join that front, because I can tell you in America there has always been a pan-nationalist front with the Irish government, with Ted Kennedy, with the American Government and with John Hume always stopping people from getting visas to come into this country so

in an actual fact what happened is a certain part of the Republican Movement has joined that pan-nationalist front.

Brendan Hughes: Yes and that's a part of it. I think that's the point I'm trying to make. I think they need to be pulled back from that. I think we need to get back to the principles of republicanism, the principles I was brought up with the principles of James Connolly, of Liam Mellows, of true Republicanism, and I see the people... some of these people going about now... and they would just be happy to be members SDLP. And the SDLP is not a party that I would be involved with. Sinn Fein some of the Sinn Fein Leadership now, I don't want to be involved with them. I want Republicanism back to its roots.

John McDonagh: But then they'll tell you then the doors will shut the visas will stop... we'll not get into the White House on St Patrick's Day, the fund-raising will stop in America and well be an isolated party. Where by if we have all these doors open maybe we can make some progress, but there is a price to open those doors.

Brendan Hughes: Well, I mean, if you have all the doors open and you walk through the doors and leave your children behind, what the hell is the sense of leaving the doors open if you leave your children behind?

We're talking about the Republican family here, a family that's been fighting a war for so many years. I think if you are honest and sincere and you stick by the ideas that you fought for, then in what if the doors close, then kick them down, then say, uh I mean there no use have these doors open if actually your leaving everything behind now... and I'm afraid that there are some people in the leadership who are prepared to do that.

I... I talk to people everyday on the ground and most of them ex-talkers, and all Republicans, and most of them are very unhappy with the way things are going and I know the point that your making. You have to get some doors open somewhere, but I don't think you should have to leave your principles behind to do that.

John McDonagh: Now Brendan in your wildest dreams when you were fighting to bring down the local government in the six counties called Stormont, that you would see a day when you would actually have Sinn Fein begging the loyalist to join Stormont and actually having them administering British rule in Ireland and being paid by the British to do it? Now in your article you stated you think there was an insurgency programme going on by the British government to mould a republican leadership that they can deal with. Maybe you can explain how this came about when you have members of Sinn Fein fighting to get into a British government in the six counties?

Brendan Hughes: Yeah... It's something I could never visualize in my wildest dreams, I never visualized that whatsoever. The Problem is like in 1972 the cease-fire... the IRA cease-fire... the British Government tried to get people involved in this long drawn out ceasefire just at the end of the war and it was recognised within a period of two weeks... it was recognized and the war was back on again.

In 1975 they released certain people they arrested certain people and released certain people. Gerry Adams was one of the people arrested I was one of the people arrested, they released other people from the prison who became the leadership in the republican movement. And within the prison people like my self and Gerry opposed the cease-fire and some of the articles Gerry wrote many articles warning the leadership that your getting drawn into long drawn out cease-fire, the British are trying to stop the war. And their trying to mould the type of people they can deal with. And as I said they selectively released people from prison knowing they would be in the leadership and knowing their profiles and knowing the British could deal with them. In the nineties I think they have done the same. They have allowed a leadership to develop. They have pumped millions into here. I mean there's centres all over the place in West Belfast and North Belfast, people have gone into these centres and become career people and they are being paid very decent wages, certainly a lot more than the people in the building situation were being paid, and the British have encouraged this... and here ya have other people... to the point where ya have people breaking away forming the Continuity IRA, the Real IRA which I am not a supporter of, I think the leadership needs to look at itself and needs to find out, are they playing the Brit's game here? And I believe they are. I mean going to the point where the construction of a Republican begging loyalists to go into Stormont... Its... Its just so hard for me to swallow.

John McDonagh: Also we had Martin McGuinness stating in this country that when these votes were taken, that he was voted in by the Irish people and he was voted by the Irish people to administer British rule in Ireland, but then the rug was pulled out from under him when they just passed a law in London negating any vote that just took place in Ireland and just made unless you play the game, we can give you your role be a Minister and we can also take that away.

Brendan Hughes: That... that's... Exactly what I think the whole thing being sent just a farce. It never ceases to amaze me how we have allowed ourselves to get into this position where the British control everything here, they still control everything here the RUC's still here, the whole structure's still here the judiciary is still here, uh the murder machine's still here and um I mean hospitals are getting pulled down schools are getting funds cut, um... we find ourselves in a position where Republicans are administering this, and we don't have any control.

How far down the line do we go here? Do we start putting on Wigs and joining the judiciary, the British judiciary and start administering British justice in Ireland? At the moment or when the assembly was going we were administering British rule.

How far... How far do we go here? To me the whole thing seems to me sometimes to be a complete farce. I mean where the hell is Republicanism going? All I'm trying to do... I don't have an alternative, people keep saying to me if your going to criticize put up an alternative. I don't have an alternative, the alternative is within the republican movement. I think there has to be an open an honest debate.

You heard about the Humes Adams Document... What is it? Have you seen it?

John McDonagh: Nope.

Brendan Hughes: I haven't seen it. I don't know what it's all about! What was said or even came out of the document that brought this whole process about? I don't know. The reason why people like me and Anthony McIntyre and the rest of the people that are involved with the writers group, we want to know what's going on? And we don't know what's going on, we can see what's going on but what's the purpose any more?

John McDonagh: But a lot of it Brendan and you can see a lot of people just walking away from the movement saying listen I've given so much of my life I can't do it anymore and take some of the benefits which are coming in, some of the economic benefits that are coming and people are getting disillusioned. I mean how are republicans to over come that when there are job opportunities opening up and if you take the road your taking those job opportunities are going to get very small.

Brendan Hughes: We're not talking about Job opportunities here. There are people in jobs Okay, I mean I'm not in a job, thousands of people aren't in a job, there's 1,800 people who lost their jobs this morning cause people just closed down the shipyard. Uh... What are we talking about here? I'm talking about the Republican Cause, I'm talking about justice, about working for people's right for a job, I'm not talking about a handful of selected people walking into well paid jobs and having good salaries. And even that with all these people I'm talking about within well paid jobs, it can stop tomorrow if the British decide to pull the plug. These well paid jobs and these people who are in jobs have no control over their own lives! There's 1,800 men who lost it in the ship yard today. I mean, I don't want that... they have no control over that... So I mean we're talking about jobs here, I mean you can have a job, but have no security. I want a job and I want security in that job, and I want a job for my son and a job for my daughter, I want security! I want to have control over that... a job's a job but security is the most important thing.

John McDonagh: Well Brendan we've been speaking almost an hour here and I'm very grateful to you for putting it on the record. What do you recommend we do, particularly here in America, where we have a lot of Republican people living in the tri-state area, and people will be listening on the internet, who were forced to come to this country because of some of the things that are going on.

Brendan Hughes: I think they should look at the situation, look at the background, look at the history of what Ireland has done to itself. Look at the people in America you're talking about now, who had to leave Ireland, I don't want to have to leave Ireland. I don't want my children to have to leave Ireland, what I think we should do is talk, debate, if you think there is something wrong, say it! It may hurt some people, but if you believe your right, I think you should speak up. I think people should have a great look and not be carried away by the mass media stuff... look into the belly of the beast and see what's really happening and...

I know so many people here in Belfast and throughout Ireland who are disillusioned and who are walking away and who just don't see any hope, but what I would hope to be able to do, would be to give them a view where they can feel able to contribute to the debate. And I think the debate is the most important thing and its their way out of this and look back into Republicanism and what is Republicanism all about? And that is all I would want them to do

John McDonagh: Yeah, Brendan, in this country too, people in Irish Northern Aid on the Clan na Gael are always being marginalized there is this looking up there, saying look we're in the White House look there's a picture of Gerry Adams dealing with Clinton, and I would have to believe a lot of people on the Falls Road would say look how far we've come look at the pictures... We're on the front page of the New York Times, there's been clubs or business that you couldn't get involved with and now allowing in people with Republican backgrounds to get involved with and people are looking at this as a way forward that this is it's a great thing that's happened.

Brendan Hughes: I would say... I have a house, and I paint the whole outside of it beautiful, and inside the house there's no furniture... What the hell use is the house?

The audio copy is on www.iraradio.com
You can listen on the internet via live stream on www.whalfer.org

LONDON MEETING ELECTS FIRST 32 COUNTY SOVEREIGNTY MOVEMENT COMMITTEE IN ENGLAND

At a meeting held in the Mazenod social club in Kilburn (North London) on Saturday the 12th of February, the first 32 County Sovereignty Movement Committee in England was elected.

Outlining the aims and ideals of the organisation, Francie Mackey, Chairman of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement told those assembled that he was honored to be invited to the inaugural meeting of the new committee. Francie went on to say that he was aware that "those present shared the common con-

cern regarding the failure of the so called peace talks with the British government. The British government supports and always has supported a unionist veto, and as a matter of policy denies national sovereignty to the Irish people".

Francie continued by outlining some of the gains of the last thirty years which have been lost with the Stormont deal including political status, he explained "republican prisoners were only released on "license" not unconditionally. These prisoners could be rearrested

at any time and imprisoned, in other words they remain political hostages".

Michael Burke, national organiser of the Movement addressed the meeting, encouraging those present to vigorously campaign for the immediate repatriation of the three republican prisoners in England- Darren Mulholland, Liam Grogan and Tony Highland. Michael told the meeting that he was "heartened and encouraged by those he had met at the meeting.

The next item on the order of business was

the election of an officer board. Those elected were:

Chairman- L. Vaughan
Vice Chairman- M. Stapleton
Publicity Officer- P O Hannan
Secretary- M. Holden
Treasurer- P. Stapleton
Membership Secretary- L. Mhgilliconi

A press conference followed at which Francie Mackey was interviewed by the British national press on the Sovereignty position.

Letters to the Editor

A Chara

The clear evidence that the will of the Republican people is against any further involvement in the Stormont circus came with the response to the call from Gerry Adams for "mass mobilisations" following the suspension of the deal.

The first call to mobilise saw 18 people assemble in West Belfast and half that number in Derry. A week later a well publicised call to march was attended by 400 people in Belfast. This number included people bused in from outside.

Recent political events have raised the question of democracy within the Provisionals. Any democratic political body that had been led to such a disaster by its leadership would remove them without hesitation. In fact any democratically elected leadership would acknowledge its abject failure and stand aside. Then again megalomania is a terribly blinding thing.

Pearse McDonald
Andersonstown
Belfast

A Chara

Comments made by David Trimble as he left a London court after giving evidence in a case related to the book "The Committee-Political Assassination in Northern Ireland" raise serious questions about the agenda of the Sinn Fein leadership.

Trimble pointed out neither Adams or Mc Guinness ever brought up his involvement with Loyalist paramilitaries during their several meetings.

In fact Adams declared last year in relation to Trimble "we are all on the same side now as pro-agreement parties".

It is similar to the Sinn Fein's not pointing out in any concerted or high profile way the fact that calls for decommissioning are a joke when it is a reality that there are over 130,000 legally held firearms in the hands of Unionists.

In the context of Trimble's denials of involvement with Loyalist death squads it was interesting to see

him attend the funeral of UVF commander Richard Jameson and eulogise him as a man who had "contributed much to the community in Portadown".

Enda Carr
Monaghan Town.
Co. Monaghan

WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE GOOSE...

Dear Editor,

Just got done reading this weeks' editorials and stories about Northern Ireland by writers employed by the usual English, Irish and American mainstream newspapers. Evidence all again that some colonial ties never die. For instance, editorials this week in *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe* papers called on the IRA to turn in their weapons to save the so-called peace process. Of course, this has been the hue and cry of the mainstream American media for the last several months (if not years). Curiously, there has been no call from our 4th estate to have the Chechnyans disarm. Apparently, what's good for the British bulldog, is not good for the Russian bear, which leaves us to believe that we are once again witnessing a peculiar institutional reflex: when British M16 (England's CIA) has Feinain gas, our English-American infested State Department farts out "terrorism" for our WASP and WANNABE owned newspapers to sniff up like submariners gasping fresh air.

This digestive alignment of political propagandists is no accident. And while it may not be a conspiracy, it certainly is at the very least an ongoing coincidence of elite institutional interests in England and the United States worthy of our weariness. In fact, not too long ago on December 1st, 1999, *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette* said it all when they published a pro-GFA/IRA disarm editorial along side a Russian-bear-eating-Chechnya cartoon. The PPG could just as easily have substituted the British bull-

dog eating Ireland and saying same: i.e. "Ireland is 'urp' an internal matter.". But then they could not have had their Bill Clinton caricature in this cartoon expressly wishing the British bulldog indigestion as it did the Russian bear.

After all, no way would an American President or an English-American owned and operated newspaper hold the British to the same objective standard of international behavior that they hold the Russians. For instance, has *The PPG* or any mainstream American newspaper ever published an editorial or cartoon critical of historically successive U.S. State Department policy which completely recognized and genuflected to England's claim (that Northern Ireland was an internal not international matter) by always assigning diplomatic responsibility for Northern Ireland to the American Ambassadors in the Court of St. James in London rather than to the American Ambassadors to Ireland in Dublin?

Don't get us wrong, we don't want to see the Russians in Chechnya anymore than we wanted them in among other places East Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia or Latvia, or the Indonesians in East Timor, or the Americans in Vietnam or Puerto Rico, or the French in Algiers or Vietnam, or Iraq in Kuwait or that's right—the British in any way shape or form in Ireland or in any of their other former or current colonies. By our way of thinking, what's good for the Russian goose ought to be good for the British gander and everyone else in the international community. But apparently, our mainstream media, like British M16, doesn't think so.

That's why they can write, probably without even blinking, that "...successive British governments... have disclaimed any selfish interest in the (Northern Ireland) province...". Oh, really? Then why haven't they relinquished their internationally unlawful claim of sovereignty and left? Because words are cheaper and the GFA a bargain basement buy for new and improved colonialism. Would the American Government and Media be so uncritically accepting of Russian disclaimers for Chechnya? The American Media too often buys hook, line and sinker the British propaganda that the problems in Northern Ireland are all just the result of a religious conflict in need of a GFA resolution which will guarantee continued British colonialism by way of a new and improved partition. No real attention is paid to the facts of British colonial conquest and domination. Whereas, when the colonial French "outsider" population, who were mostly Catholic,

were in violent conflict in 1950's Algiers with their then mostly Muslim Algerian "insider" subjects, no one claimed this to be a religious conflict in need of a GFA-like resolution. Everyone recognized it for what it was—a fight for who controls what is now independent Algeria, the Imperial French or the Nationalist Algerians.

The same analysis holds true for Chechnya. No one claims that its just a religious quarrel between the mostly Muslim Chechnyans and the mostly Atheist or Orthodox Russians. Its nationalism versus imperialism. Can you imagine what the mass media's critical editorial reaction or Bill Clinton's reaction would be if the Russians proposed a similar GFA-like resolution to the bloody Chechnya conflict and then disclaimed any interest in the place without ever leaving it?

Better yet, can you imagine what the U.S. Senate's reaction would be if George Mitchell proposed same GFA in treaty form to the U.S. Senate after an alien nation invaded the northeastern United States (starting with Maine) and got used to living and discriminating there? After all the other Senators hung him for treason from the nearest tree outside (for proposing that the U.S. give up its territorial claim to Maine so that the invaders can more freely determine by an artificially gerrymandered veto whether Maine can join back up with the States), their scathing eulogy would no doubt quote American Revolutionary Benjamin Franklin who said during our own War against the British that:

"Those who would trade freedom for peace, will have neither..".

That is why the usual mass media is not honestly going to be able to blame the IRA for the failure of the so called "Good" Friday Agreement. All parties who signed off on this fraudulently procured document will get Pax Britannia, not peace or justice. Which is why we should all ignore this current editorial hue and cry from our government and mass media and be like Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (who never gave up their armed struggle for freedom and never capitulated to a Good Friday like agreement which would have guaranteed the white minority in South Africa a gerrymandered majority until they decided otherwise) and hold on to our 2nd Amendments!

Sincerely,

Fionnán O'Se & Eoghan O'Suillabhain
Liam Lynch Chapter of the Irish Freedom Committee
P.O. Box 3286
Pittsburgh, PA 15230

APOLOGY

It has come to our attention, that owing to circumstances beyond our control, mail sent to our P.O. Box in Dublin was returned to sender with out our knowledge.

The Editor apologises to all concerned.

Please note the new
P.O. Box number is:
P.O. BOX 7614
Rutland Street
DUBLIN

*All letters or opinion articles can be posted or emailed to the editor.
Email: mackmorb@iol.ie*

Visit our WEBSITE at
www.32csc.org

BLOODY SUNDAY - CLEGG: BRITISH INJUSTICE IN ACTION

The British government is continuing to implement a policy of using judicial whitewashes to protect British Army troopers who commit shoot-to-kill murders. This policy was illustrated twice last month with the destruction of more rifles used on Bloody Sunday in Derry, and the overturning of the Corporal Clegg conviction.

WIDGERY

The British instituted the Saville inquiry into "Bloody Sunday" as a confidence-building measure during the Stormont Deal negotiations. As part of what was claimed would be a new dispensation under the Stormont Deal, an inquiry was set up to establish the truth about the Bloody Sunday murders of fourteen civilians by the British Army in 1972.

This inquiry was widely expected to overturn the findings of the Widgery Tribunal which whitewashed the murders.

It has now been confirmed that the British Ministry of Defence has destroyed 13 of the rifles fired by the British troopers since the British government established the Saville inquiry. The deliberate destruction of this crucial forensic evidence following the demands of the British Army

to maintain the anonymity of the troopers, shows a deliberate policy of obstructing any search for the truth about the murders.

FAMILY

Greg McCartney, a solicitor representing the family of Jim Wray, one of the Bloody Sunday victims, said the timing of the disposal of the guns was highly suspicious.



Bloody Sunday

He said: "Saville has made it clear that he wanted all material relevant to the shootings to be preserved and made available to him, and it is beyond belief that the Ministry of Defence should consider the rifles fired by soldiers on the day do not fall into that category.

"We have now been robbed of the

opportunity to carry out our own tests. Why hold onto these rifles for 26 years and then begin destroying them at a rapid rate as soon as the incident becomes the subject of a new inquiry?

"The families hope that this inquiry will eventually make it possible to bring criminal proceedings against those responsible for the killings, but one of the most crucial pieces of evidence in any murder trial is the murder weapon."

Only 5 of the 29 rifles submitted for ballistic testing to the original Widgery Tribunal are still available and those may be fitted with new barrels.

Forensic experts retained by the families had hoped to match the rifles with bullets recovered from the bodies of victims because each rifle was numbered and allocated to a named trooper; the victims' families hoped to be able to identify the troopers who fired the lethal shots. The British Army's decision to destroy the rifles had blocked such efforts by the victims' families.

CLEGG

Meanwhile Corporal Lee Clegg, the only trooper found guilty of any of the charges in the murders of the two

Belfast teenagers and the severe wounding of a third, had his guilty findings overturned. He will receive compensation of £30,000.

Clegg was one of a number of troopers who opened fire on a vehicle carrying Karen Reilly, Martin McPeake, and Markiewicz Gorman. The shots were fired after the vehicle had passed the checkpoint. Karen Reilly and Martin McPeake were murdered, while Markiewicz Gorman was wounded.

A few weeks after the murders, the Parachute Regiment whose members fired the shots, designed a despicable wall mural glorifying the murders on the troopers' mess hall.

Troopers also collaborated on a cover-up story, which was rebutted by the forensic evidence.

CROWN

Clegg was originally found guilty. However, that conviction, which at the time quelled

a massive public outcry, was overturned. Clegg will be compensated, and no one is now held responsible for the murder of the two, unarmed Belfast teenagers. Once again, crown courts have whitewashed the murder of Irish civilians committed by British troops.

EX PRISONERS STILL POLITICAL PAWNS

The "fury" and "strong protests" Provisional spokesman Martin Ferris claimed to have expressed in the aftermath of the arrest of Angelo Fusco would seem to have fallen on deaf ears. The Dublin authorities only waited a month before their next act of provocation against former Republican POWs

Early March saw the arrest of Paul "Dingus" Magee in connection with extradition warrants from the British authorities in the six counties. Even though the Dublin authorities had claimed that Fuscos arrest was a "fluke", Magee was arrested by the

same detective who arrested Angelo Fusco. Both arrests happened in the same area.

Magee, a 51-year-old father-of-four from Belfast, appeared before the supreme court in Dublin.

Fusco is currently on bail awaiting his appeal against the 26 county supreme court order directing his extradition to the six counties for the killing 20 years ago of SAS Captain Herbert Westmacott. Magee and Fusco were both part of the IRA active service unit behind the SAS operation.

Both were sentenced to life imprisonment in their absence after escaping from Crumlin Road jail with

six other men during their 1981 trial.

They were also both later recaptured in Tralee and served sentences there for the Belfast escape.

In 1993 Magee was convicted at the Old Bailey in London for the previous year's killing of Special Constable Glen Goodman in Yorkshire.

He was again jailed for life, but two years ago he was switched to Portlaoise.

Alan Browne spokesperson for the 32 County Sovereignty Movement branded Magee's arrest as "unbelievable". In a statement Browne further said "recent weeks have seen the murderer of Karen

Reilly and Martin Peake, Lee Clegg, walk from court free of any charges. The arrest of Paul Magee who had openly visited his family in Belfast on several occasions should be seen in this context. If any further evidence was needed that the present political process was about trying to defeat Republicanism above all else, we have that evidence in the arrests of Fusco and Magee."

He concluded "The 32 County Sovereignty Movement calls for the immediate dropping of any warrants against these men. They should be allowed return to a normal life with their families".



A GREAT PATRIOT LAID TO REST

Today is a sad occasion; however, we are honoured to be present at the laying to rest of a great patriot - Tess Kearney.

Tess was the granddaughter of a Fenian. Her family had to leave Derry, when her Republican father refused to sign the oath of allegiance to the British crown. This meant losing his job in the post office Eventually the Kearney family came to live in Dublin As you can see, Tess was born into separatist republican tradition and she embraced it wholeheartedly. She admired the writings of Thorns Davis and John Mitchell. Her faith in the 32 county Irish nation remained with her to the end.

Although she had a successful career as an accountant in banking and in a Catholic newspaper and travelled all over Ireland with An Oige in her younger years, she channelled her great energy into the cause of Irish freedom. Tess served An Cumann Cabhrach for many years and served on the committee of the National Graves Association for almost 50 years. During the last 20 of these she was a leading force, who effected the repatriation of Roger Casement and Barnes and McCormack and Dunne and O'Sullivan from England, the Connaught Rangers from India and Frank Ryan from Germany. Up to the moment of her death she was involved in trying to get the Forgotten Ten removed from the prison yard in Mountjoy Jail and give them a Christian burial. It is disappointing that her Trojan efforts fell on the deaf ears of our Dublin government.

Tess was 77 when she died. In recent years she suffered a great deal of poor health. Indeed, her health was permanently damaged in the Talbot Street bombing of 1974. Nevertheless, she burned with a bright spirit and when she felt it necessary, she discharged herself from the hospital bed to carry on the work. I will mention one example: when Tess heard that the Croppies Acre was in danger of being turned into a bus car park for the new National Museum, she turned in a magnificent effort for the television cameras and organised a campaign "Save the Croppies Acre" within ten days. But for her the present 1798 Memorial Park would never have happened.

Tess was not only a leader, organiser and councillor, she was also a loyal friend to those in need, but she didn't suffer fools gladly. She had a great sense of humour, which I'm sure many of you remember.

The National Graves Association of Ireland of 74, Dame Street, Dublin (to give it its full name) is an independent organisation, which cares for the graves and monuments of the patriot dead of every generation. We are not affiliated to any party or movement, political or otherwise.

It says in the Bible "By their fruits you shall know them." During the last ten years with Tess as its secretary, the National Graves Association was streamlined into an effective organisation, which restored and erected numerous monuments. Look around you at this fine memorial to Kevin Barry and his comrades, erected under the stewardship of Tess. She has left the association in an excellent state to continue our patriotic work in perpetuum.

Ni bheidh a leithéad ann arís.

Oration at the graveside of TESS KEARNEY, delivered by Sean Dougan 9/2/2000

Maghaberry Death Threats for Republican Prisoner

Loyalists have made death threats to a Republican political prisoner and his wife during visits at Maghaberry Prison. It further appears that the prison wardens have acted in collusion with the loyalists.

Assaulted

Thomas Crossan, age 28, of Belfast, who was recently scalded in an attack by loyalist Clifford Peeples, and who had received stitches to the head after an assault, had been threatened by the loyalists during family visits. Even more disturbing are threats made to his wife and four children during visits. Thomas Crossan, who has been on remand since January 1999, was charged with possession of firearms connected to the Continuity Irish Republican Army.

Children

L s have threatened to cut his throat and scald Mrs Crossan. These threats, made during visits, have made it extremely worrisome for the family to visit the prison. Mrs Crossan is now said to be "terrified" of bringing her children on visits to see their father," according to Geraldine Taylor of Republican Sinn Féin.

Compounding these concerns is the involvement of the Maghaberry staff. Mr Crossan has changed his visiting days on several occasions. Each time loyalists who are guilty of the threats are changed to the same day. This could not happen except with the active cooperation of the warden.

This collusion is part of a policy in which Republican political prisoners are deliberately separated and allocated cells surrounded by loyalists in order to break their resolve.

32CSM IN BRITAIN - 32CSM IN BRITAIN

EASTER 1916 RISING COMMEMORATION SOCIAL

FRIDAY 5th MAY 2000 @7.30 p.m.

LEWISHAM IRISH CENTRE,
2A, DAVENPORT ROAD, RUSHEY GREEN,
CATFORD, LONDON, SE6-2AZ.

*Rebel ballads with the McNamara Brothers
*Prominent Speaker (to be confirmed)
*Bookstalls (Green Ink Bookshop
& Robert Hamill Campaign)
*Late Bar
*1916 Exhibition-

CONTACT ADDRESS FOR LONDON COMMITTEE 32COUNTY SOVEREIGNTY MOVEMENT

Mr Patrick Mc Clory
377 Edgware Road
London W2 1BT
England.

CONTACT ADDRESS FOR NORTH WEST (England) COMMITTEE 32 COUNTY SOVEREIGNTY MOVEMENT

Department 111
225 Wilmslow Road
Rusholme, Manchester M14 5LN
England.

EASTER COMMERATION - MANCHESTER

Easter Sunday Wreath Laying Ceremony
Moston Cemetery, Manchester
Time to be confirmed by contacting North West Committee Mail Box

Website:32csc.org

e-mail: freedom@32csc.org

IRISH REPUBLICAN WELFARE ASSOC.

*Support the dependants of
Irish Republican Prisoners
by Sending contributions to:*

A.I.B. BANK
Dundalk, Co. Louth
Account: 58130183

STERLING DONATIONS
FIRST TRUST BANK
Sort Code: 93 80 25
Account: 13053071
Ship Quay, Derry

The following is an updated list of Republican Prisoners who will not qualify for early release because of their political views.

Portlaoise Prison.		D.O.B.			
Pascal Burke	Married	9/1/64	8 years	Dublin	
Danny Mc Alister	Married	26/2/55	8 years	Dublin	
Saorise Breatnach	Single	9/7/74	7 years	Dublin	
Philip Forsyth	Single	9/10/73	7 years	Dublin	
Paddy Mc Donagh	Married	7/10/63	6 years	Dundalk	
Larry Keane	Single	28/3/57	15 years	Kildare	
Kevin Murray	Married	13/5/53	12 years	Dundalk	
Kieran McDonagh	Married	19/8/61	6 years	Dundalk	
Tommy Larkin	Married	?	5 years	Dundalk	
Anthony Beggs	Single	24/12/62	Remand	Dublin	
Damian Lawless	Married	9/1/69	Remand	Dundalk	
Martin Conlon	Single	12/11/69	Remand	Armagh	
Alan Ryan	Single	3/6/80	Remand	Dublin	
Anthony Ryan	Single	22/8/75	Remand	Dublin	
Stephen Kelly	Single	9/1/82	Remand	Dublin	
John McDonagh	Married	?	Remand	Dublin	
Seamus McGrane	Married	26/5/54	Remand	Dundalk	
Seamus McGreavey	Married	25/10/52	Remand	Co. Meath	
Michael Hegarty			sentenced		

P.O.W.'s England
1 Tony Hyland Single 25years Dublin

Whitemoor Prison
Longhill Road
March, Cambridgeshire
England

2 Darren Mulholland Single 22years Dundalk
G- Wing
Frankland prison
Brasside, Durham,
DH1 5YD, England

3 Liam grogan Single 22years Kildare
C- Wing
Ful Sutton Prison
Yorkshire, W04 IPS
England

Maghaberry Prison
Marin Duffy Single 3years Lurgan
Karl Reilly Single Remand Belfast

Hydebank
Brendan Burns Single Remand Belfast
Young offenders Centre
Hydebank Wood, Belfast

Limerick Prison
Josephine Hayden Married Sentenced
Limerick City, Co.Limerick

(We regret any omissions, the list is updated as soon as information is received)

Hand-made craftwork by Republican P.O.Ws
Recommended donation:

Mirrors (20" x 16") £75
Mirrors (unframed) £45
Bodhrans £70
Belts (Mens & Womens) £20
Handkerchiefs £15

All donations go to
Republican Prisoner
Welfare Association
for the dependants
of Prisoners.

STATE SIDE FENIAN VIEW

BY
MARTIN
GALVIN

Washington Search for Stormont Deal Breakthrough

It seemed that all roads or at least all flight plans led to Washington. Dublin officials Bertie Ahern, foreign affairs minister Brian Cowen, and minister-of-state Liz O'Donnell were enroute from departure points as far away as Australia and Hong Kong. British Colonial Secretary Peter Mandelson left Westminster to host the British Embassy events. A full delegation of Sinn Féin members attended led by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. David Trimble would lead the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) attendees, while John Hume and Séamus Mallon would lead the SDLP. It was the last St Patrick's Day of the Clinton presidency, and with the Stormont Deal "in tatters" suspended by the British government after little more than ten weeks, the parties had come in search of a dramatic breakthrough.

Legacy

In preparation for the St Patrick events, President Clinton had clearly put in a major effort to achieve such a breakthrough. The Administration had hoped that an Irish solution would one day be remembered as one of the historic accomplishments of the Clinton presidency.

John Steinberg, a National Security Advisor, had been dispatched to Belfast in advance of St Patrick's Day to search for some basis of reviving Stormont. Clinton scheduled an exhaustive sequence of meetings. The President who had personally interceded at critical junctures of the Stormont talks, and had nominated former Senator George Mitchell his special envoy, took meeting after meeting with each of the dele-

gations in turn. He made personal appeals, offered bargaining chips, and negotiated in between the various photo-sessions, pressing each of the parties to break the Stormont Deal impasse. There was to be no breakthrough.

Indeed the reaction to what was in reality an insignificant statement by David Trimble merely served to underscore the extent of the impasse.

Trimble

Trimble's so-called initiative made at a Washington press conference prior to the meeting with Clinton was in fact no more than a revival of what he believed was agreed during the Mitchell re-negotiations. Last winter Trimble had agreed to enter into a Stormont administration with places for two Sinn Féin ministers based upon what he believed was an unequivocal commitment to a decommissioning surrender event within a specified time period thereafter. Trimble has always claimed that this was the deal agreed with Sinn Féin during the Mitchell re-negotiations that led to the convening of Stormont. He was so firmly convinced of this pledge on decommissioning, that Trimble would submit post-dated letters of resignation to his party.

Trimble's actual statement in Washington was "we are prepared to be involved in a sequence where there are no arms up front."

He then insisted on guarantees of decommissioning by the IRA, and proof with which to answer those within his party who queried why there would now be disarmament. "If we do it again

it has to be against a background of absolute certainty...they will decommission." Trimble's aide in fact emphasised that the UUP head had made no shift in position when allowing for the possibility of reconvening Stormont without prior decommissioning, provided the disarmament issue was "dealt with." Trimble re-emphasised the 22nd May deadline for disarmament.

Trimble had obviously hoped to appear to be 'reasonable' by floating what amounted to be a more rigid reformulation of the Mitchell formula which had already failed and indeed brought about the Stormont collapse. In fact, Trimble would claim in an interview with the *News Letter* that he was hardening his stance.

Political Career

Even this reprise of last winter's Mitchell framework was too much for many within Trimble's own party. Fellow MP, Jeffrey Donaldson said he was "astounded," that Trimble would espouse such a position without broaching it with his party. Willie Ross, another UUP member said Trimble was "going to ignore the clearly expressed wish of the unionist party." John Taylor refused any public comment before speaking with Trimble.

David Burnside, another UUP member, has put forward a binding motion making Trimble's participation in any new Stormont dependent on retention of the name 'Royal Ulster Constabulary' (RUC).

Trimble must face a UUP meeting this Saturday, 25th March, in Belfast. He faces the possibility of a stalking horse

challenge to his own party leadership which could signal the beginning of the end of his position atop the UUP. He faces the Burnside motion on the RUC name, which could emasculate his negotiating authority and indeed his political career. There are also the possibilities of more strings, conditions, and party pledges being extracted which can otherwise tie Trimble's hands, and make him more figurehead than leader.

Republican Veto

Both Dublin officials and the SDLP immediately attempted to exaggerate the importance of Trimble's words, with Brian Cowen talking about "positive material on which we can rebuild trust." Their objective was to create a momentum by media, and then coax concessions from Sinn Féin.

Sinn Féin offered little response beyond scepticism. Gerry Adams alluded to politicians coming to the United States and "putting softer tones on what is really a hard line." Mitchell McLaughlin said Trimble would "overturn" his offer or have any proposals "reversed by his party."

The problem for Sinn Féin is that it faces difficulties which equal or surpass those facing Trimble. Sinn Féin faces what is rapidly becoming a Republican veto over the concessions demanded by the British and Trimble as the price of a return to Stormont ministries.

Clearly within the Republican grassroots and the Irish Republican Army, the opposition to further Stormont concessions has thus far blocked a decommissioning surrender event. The emergence of principled criticism by

Republicans of the calibre of Brendan Hughes, *Fourthwave* magazine, the growth of the Sovereignty Movement, distribution of the *Sovereign Nation*, etc., are signs that any further surrender of principle would mean a further loss of crucial support. Even the public admissions that the Stormont

Deal is "in tatters," facing a brick wall of a British and loyalist veto, are telling concessions, from those who so recently boasted of a united Ireland by 2016.

The small turnouts for demonstrations in Belfast, Tyrone, and elsewhere have further shown the loss of grassroots confidence in the Deal.

Cruz

The real crux of the Stormont impasse lies at the heart of the Deal itself. Nationalist representatives signed and urged support for a deal that was to be a transition to justice, equality, and ultimately a united Ireland. Loyalists accepted the Stormont Deal as a final political settlement which solidified British rule, and preserved a veto over any substantive change which could undermine their privileged position.

The British have drawn Sinn Féin into Stormont, will continue to back unionist veto, and use issues like decommissioning to preserve their rule and interests in Ireland. There can be no breakthrough which can truly overcome such contradictions inherent in the Stormont Deal and there was clearly none to be found in Washington on St Patrick's Day.

GEORGE PLANT COMMEMORATED

A Chaire,

Failte romhaibh go leir. Fellow Republicans it is a privilege and an honour to have been invited here today, to pay tribute to the memory of an illustrious son of the historic county of Tipperary George Plant.

This region of Ireland has played a consistent, noble and heroic role down through the centuries, both in asserting the National identity and rights of our people and standing to the fore in the vanguard of the struggle for independence from British Imperialist domination.

Witness the courage displayed by the people of Clonmel under siege by Cromwell's 'Ironsides' in 1650, the 350th anniversary of which is being celebrated this year. Assess the impact of Kichham's 'Knocknagow' on the national psyche; the formation of the Gaelic Athletic Association in Thurles in 1884; the Soloheadbeg ambush of January 1919; the tales of the exploits of legendary figures such as Sean Hogan, Sean Treacey, Dan Brean and Dinny Lacey; the stories of valour and horror which emanated from the Gaeltéis and the Knockmealdown mountains in the Black and Tan and Civil War periods; the brutal episode of events in Croke Park, Dublin on Bloody Sunday November 1920 and how they affected the people of Tipperary. These are just some examples from Irish history, which illustrate the prominent role played by the 'Premier County' in the struggle for national liberation.

George Plant was born in 1904 at St. Johnston, Fethard the second son of Protestant parents, Albert Plant, a Wicklow man and Kathleen Haydon of St. Johnston. In 1918 George and his brother James joined Na Fianna Éireann. George later joined the Irish Republican Army and was described by his officers as "possessing qualities which he used to the full." During the Civil War George,

who was a member of the seventh battalion of the famous Third Tipperary Brigade, took the Republican anti-Treaty side. He was imprisoned in Templemore Jail, from which he escaped. Like thousands of other Republican Volunteers he and his brother James were forced to leave the country, because of the hostile and discriminatory policies of the Cosgrave Government following the end of the Civil War. They went first to Canada and then the United States. In 1928, at the request of the I.R.A., the two brothers returned to Ireland. Following a bank robbery in Tipperary town they both received prison sentences, and on their release they returned to the United States. Following the appointment of Sean Russell as Chief of Staff in April 1938, George once more returned to his native shores convinced that a more militant stance was about to be taken on the part of O'Gallagh na hÉireann. In this regard his judgement proved to be correct. In response to the I.R.A. campaign the Dublin Government, in July 1940, under an Emergency Powers Act, took power to try persons, charged with offences specified in a Government Order, before a court composed of only three Free State Army officers. Moreover, if such a court found an accused person guilty, it could only impose a death sentence, and no appeal could be made against the conviction or the sentence. DeValera's infamous Military Tribunals had arrived. This was the legislation that was to be used against George Plant.

At Collins Barracks Dublin, on the 11th November 1941 he was charged with the killing of a suspected informer Michael Evereux. On the 31st December 1941 the Minister House Government made an order (No. 41 F.) under the emergency legislation, directing that Plant and three other men O'Connor, Walsh, and Davenport be tried before a military court. To this day friends and comrades insist that the Dublin Government singled out George

Plant for special treatment. In support of this view are the facts that O'Connor was released on a technicality and that Davenport and Walsh had their sentences commuted. Finally, the insensitive treatment of his family, his mother was still alive, by the 28 County administration created a groundswell of bitterness.



Former hunger striker Maon Price gives oration at George Plant commemoration.

They were given no opportunity to visit him in the short week between his conviction and execution. A request by him to see his infant son, also named George, was agreed to on condition that a screen separate them. Since he wished to hold his child in his arms for the last time he spurned the Free State offer. The first news his family received of his death was on radio. An official telegram arrived on the morning he faced the firing squad - but after his death. Under such circumstances was ended the life of George Plant 'the pride of Tipperary' in Portlaoise Prison, at the hands of Free State military policemen on the 5th March 1942.

Like countless other Republicans before him, and since, this noble patriot was a victim, not of British Crown Forces, although the influence of their political masters plays a key role in shaping the mindset of the personnel involved and structuring the political system which has sent hundreds of Republican

Volunteers to their graves at the hands of fellow Irishmen. George Plant was the victim of a mindset which is the residue of centuries of British domination and control of our country compounded by the emergence of the concept of Free State neo-colonialism following the implementation of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty. It can be seen daily in the pernicious influence of Anglicisation which continues to permeate Irish society even at the dawn of this new millennium. It is the subservient mentality of the Seanin and the West Brit. It is a failing on the part of many, but not all, Irish people whereby they are impressed, not by the positive and progressive aspects of British society, but by the worst characteristics of the British imperialist ethos and the racist, reactionary mindset which that empire spawned.

When such behaviour is replicated by individuals such as Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness the spectacle is quite nauseating. The sight of Gerry and Martin dining on Westminster Embankment and pathetically appealing for office facilities at the said institutions are a firm indicator of how far the Provisionals have moved their political stance since the 1970's, when they repeatedly declared to emotional thronging crowds in the North, "that the only time they would enter Westminster was when they would go in to blow it up." With the establishment of the 1998 Stormont Agreement the Provos were firmly sucked into the partitionist spiders web of the British Political system. Thankfully however although their supporters could not see the magnitude of the surrender of core Republican principles involved with the acceptance of the Mitchell Principles and the 1998 Agreement, the prospect of the decommissioning of weapons was too bitter a pill for a majority of even the most syco- phantic of their followers to swallow. As a result the basic inherent contradictions involved in the partition process are being exposed and consequently the Stormont Deal is crumbling.

One important lesson which Republican opponents of the 1998 Agreement have

learned is to assess the strength and cohesion of our political foes drawn from a wide spectrum. They represent the British, Irish, European and U.S. political establishments in addition to the S.D.L.P. and former comrades. Given the potent strength of such a huge alliance it is imperative that we as Republicans, utilise all our strength, talents and energy in opposing this latest sell out of fundamental Republican principles and refuse to allow ourselves to be side-tracked into the cul de sac of petty minded party political intrigue. Our allegiance is to the concept of the sovereign, independent 32 County Irish Republic, declared in arms in Easter week 1916, ratified by the Irish people in the General Election of December 1918 and the First Dail Éireann in January 1919. Fellow Republicans I appeal to you never to lose sight of our ultimate goal, the political objective of George Plant and his comrades, nor allow yourselves to be subsumed in the whirlpool of allegiance to the personality cult. You are all fully aware of the end result of the historical and present day precedents in that sphere.

As we daily watch the Provisionals prancing eagerly past the statues of Carson and Craigavon at Stormont and sit comfortably under the gaze of Britannia, are we witnessing the latest addition to the club for political opportunists with the possibility of a repeat of all the sickening historical baggage such a blatant political U-turn entails. Against the background of present day political developments in our country the life and death of George Plant shines like a beacon of truth, honour, and principle. In the words of Brian na Banban:

"With the faithful and fearless who fell in the fray, with Neilson and Barry we will place him today; With the martyrs of Manchester deathless in fame, And with Barnes and McCormack We link his proud name, GEORGE PLANT the pride of Tipperary"

Go Raibh Mille Maith Agaih go leir