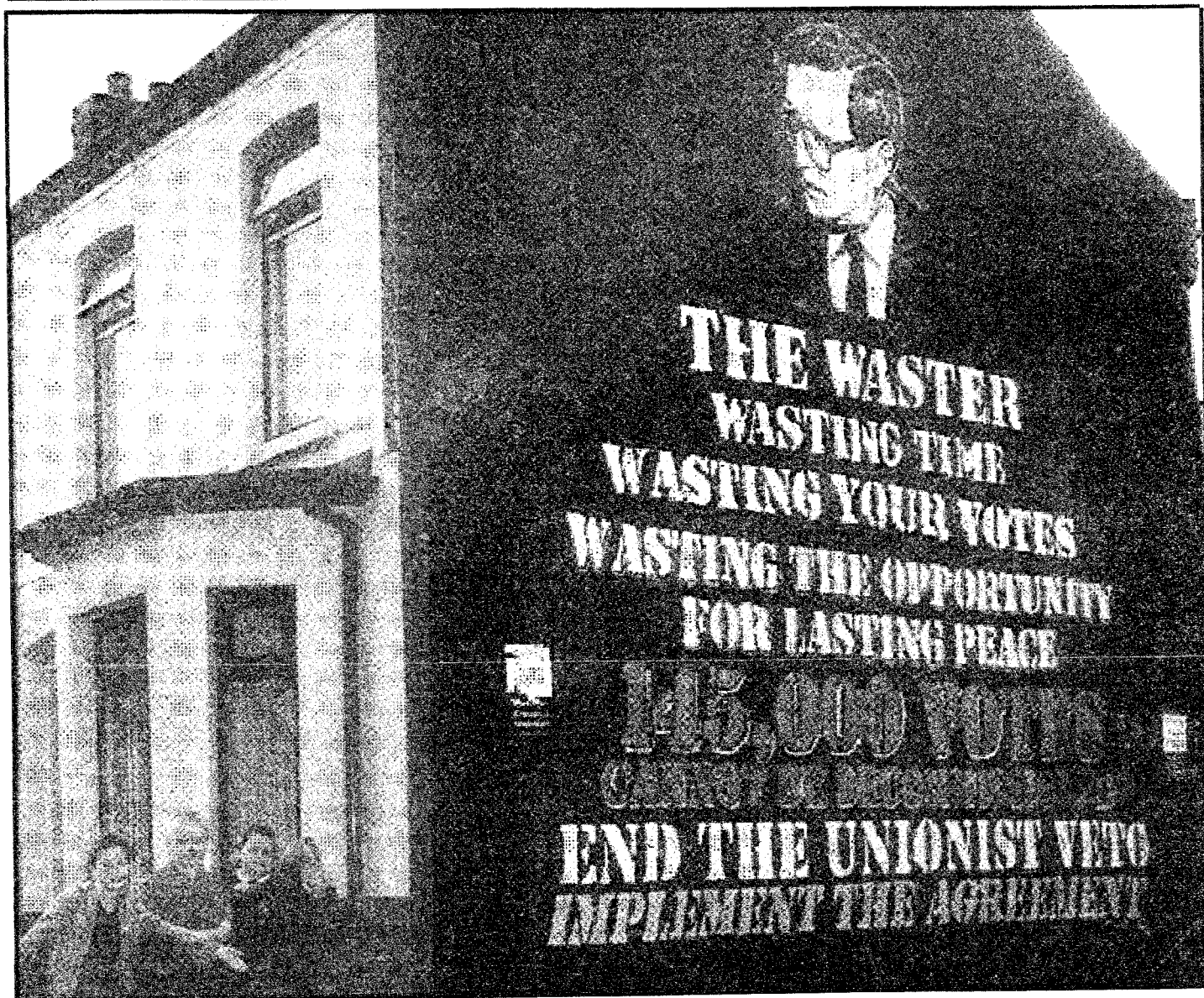




ING NEWS

Spring/Summer 2001 Comhdháil Náisiúnta na hÉireann PO Box 2814, Dublin 7.



- Waiting for change, Falls Road, Belfast, March 1999.

In West Belfast the writing is on the wall for David Trimble and has been for some time now

It should be clear to all by now that the North's First Minister is incapable of delivering on the Belfast Agreement. He lacks the integrity and honesty required to lead Unionism into democracy. For all his talk of wanting to build a "pluralist parliament for a pluralist people" he remains a member of the sectarian Orange Order.

Pluralism is incompatible with Orangeism and if Trimble was being truthful about his newfound pluralism he would have resigned from the Orange Order, after all, you lead by example. Instead, we have the exclusion of Sinn Féin ministers from the North/South Ministerial Council and a promise to resign unless the IRA decommissions their weapons.

Unionist tantrum throwing over the lack of decommissioning by the IRA has been a constant feature of the peace process. It is

their current excuse for not implementing the Agreement. The finger has been pointed at Sinn Féin, but it is the Unionists and the British government who are to blame.

The Agreement requires all parties "to use any influence they may have, to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within two years following endorsement in referendums North and South of the agreement and in the context of the overall settlement".

Since the beginning of the troubles in 1969, it has been Unionism and the British government that have had the most influence over the actions of the IRA. The British establishment tried to apply a military solution to the political problem that it created in the North of Ireland and the peaceful protests of the Civil Rights Movement were met with state violence. In 1971 the IRA responded to British policy by killing their first British soldier. The escalating conflict (which caused the deaths of over 3,500 people) broke in stalemate in 1994 with the announcement of a ceasefire by the IRA to facilitate all party talks. The failure of the British government to establish all party talks nearly two years later undoubtedly influenced the IRA to break their ceasefire and the announcement of a date for all party talks by Tony Blair, with his New Labour majority government, clearly influenced them to re-instate it.

After a lot of negotiating an agreement was finally reached and ratified by the Irish people in dual referenda North and South. Following that came nearly 2 years of unionist foot dragging and a refusal to form an Executive because the IRA hadn't decommissioned. While unionism was placing so much importance on the destruction of silent guns the world looked on and saw nationalists waiting for "*the right to live free from sectarian harassment*" to be implemented; the murder of human rights lawyer Rosemary Nelson in suspicious circumstances; the non-implementation of the less than adequate Patten report on Policing; countless pipe bomb attacks on nationalists by loyalists and increased British army patrols in places like South Armagh where they couldn't patrol prior to the ceasefire. In "*the context of the implementation of the overall settlement*" how might all of this influence any decision on decommissioning that the IRA might make? Indeed, how might all of this influence the actions of dissident republicans?

The real reason behind Unionist intransigence is not decommissioning but equality. The Northern statelet was created by the British to maintain Unionist supremacy. This artificial majority preferred to fight a 30-year war to maintain that privilege and status rather than give into demands for civil rights and avert any violence. It is the supremacist mindset of Unionism that needs to be decommissioned and not the rusting guns of the IRA.

There is more to being a democrat than simply calling yourself one and David Trimble has yet to bridge the gap between his own rhetoric and the Orange reality. Trimble's recent promise to resign is little more than an election stunt to ensure his continued leadership of the UUP. A position he won by marching hand in hand with Ian Paisley down the nationalist Garvaghy road in his home constituency of Portadown in a carnival of sectarian triumphalism after Orangemen had laid siege to Garvaghy for 3 days. His political juggling act of appeasing the bigots in the UUP while pretending to be pluralist is wearing thin. Trimble should resign now.

Reproduced below is a leaflet that was distributed by the INC in 1996. It is both prescriptive and prophetic, given the failure of the IICD to deal with all the guns in Irish politics



PRO-UNION

150,000 Legally held weapons

11,500 British Army

8,500 Royal Irish Regiment

13,000 R.U.C.

500 U.D.A.

200 U.V.F.

NATIONALIST

300 active IRA members

Demilitarisation through negotiation

The peace process could fail because the British Government is insisting on an immediate surrender of IRA arms. In no other similar conflict from South Africa to Palestine, to Bosnia have arms been handed in prior to peace negotiations. Disarming needs to be part of the peace negotiations and not a precondition.

- An international commission is required to look at ALL weapons -not solely those held by the IRA.
- Over 150,00 firearms are held, (overwhelmingly by unionists), under permits from the RUC. These must be withdrawn.
- The British Army is not being asked to disarm, but the 10,000 British soldiers in the North of Ireland should be withdrawn to Britain.
- The 13,000 strong RUC must be replaced by an unarmed and acceptable police service.
- The 8,500 strong Royal Irish Regiment, (formally UDR), has such a reputation for sectarianism and indeed 'losing' their weapons to loyalists that they must be disbanded.
- The huge number of British military bases, many of them strengthened since the ceasefire, must be dismantled.

If the proposed International Commission on Arms is to succeed it must discuss and make proposals on all the guns in Irish politics. A one-sided approach of ignoring the weapons held or licensed by the British authorities will not work.

Your Letters

Dear editor – I received the INC NEWS by post for the first time from an acquaintance in Ireland. I have been living in France for about 23 years. I did go back to Ireland but found that I didn't fit in. I was too imbued by the French Republican spirit that I have absorbed here in France. From what I did observe in the early '90's, Dublin is still an outpost of London, only a little worse. There are "Tribunals" now to examine this aspect. What goes on in London or Dublin that is against good politics is termed sleaze, where as in a poor African country it would be called corruption.

But that is not why I am writing to you and yet there may well be a connection since Irish politics is notorious for its secrecy. I have said to people here in France that there would still be a Soviet Union if only the Russians had studied Irish political practices.

I am coming to the reason that inspired me to write to you. The unveiling of the plaque commemorating the Orange Order, by the so-called Lady Mayor of Dublin, Mary Freehill. I would like to point out that she had absolutely no mandate to perform such an act. And do you know why? Because she was not elected to that office by the citizens, (*not subjects*) of Dublin.

The Mayor of Paris, an ancient Royal City, who is not titled Lord because France is a Republic, is elected as Mayor by the Citizens of Paris. So then the Mayor represents the VOICE of the majority of Parisians.

Not so in Dublin, which still conducts its political business as if it was still a British City. Have a study of Irish Law. One will discover that it is Irish in title only, still the Statute of the former occupants.

I do hope I haven't said too much. It might upset somebody who can't see a REPUBLICAN point of view, or the TRUTH for that matter.

Yours sincerely,

Terence J. Joyce
Cotes D'Armor
France.

A Chara – At our monthly city council meeting on Jan. 8th in City Hall, I proposed the following motion. *"Dublin City Council deplores all recent sectarian attacks in the North of Ireland: calls on the Lord Mayors of Dublin and Belfast to come together on this issue; calls on all councillors throughout the island of Ireland to actively campaign against sectarianism."*

This to me was a straightforward motion and it was passed. However during the debate the two-nationists in the Labour Party (mostly ex-Democratic Left) and elements of the Fine Gael Party attacked me for bringing forward the motion. It was unbelievable and mostly hysterical. Most objective people there that night could not believe their ears. I thought I was in Drumcree. Councillors told me afterwards that it was an ambush for my direct support for the I.N.C. protest at the unveiling of

the plaque to commemorate the Orange Order at Dawson Street in Dublin on the 28th May 2000.

At our February meeting I once again proposed a non-controversial motion on the use of the royal gowns on civic occasions. I called on the council to investigate more inclusive and democratic clothes. Once again the unionist wings of the Labour Party and Fine Gael attacked me. They were joined by a rump from Fianna Fáil. Once again they were hysterical, abusive and above all a shame to our council. The Deputy Lord Mayor had to warn them about their behaviour in the chamber. I was called "sexist" by the ex-Mayor who honoured that great "Women's Rights" group, the Orange Order. I got a detailed lecture from one Fine Gael Senator on Daniel O'Connell. I was told not to be showing disrespect to O'Connell. Is this the same Daniel O'Connell that was a member of the Lawyers Yeomanry Corps of Dublin, who turned out to serve against the rebels on the night of Robert Emmet's Insurrection? Is this the same Daniel O'Connell that searched for "Croppies" in James' Street Dublin? And they wanted me to "withdraw" my motion and tip my cap to the gown wearing O'Connell. There were times during the debate that I had to laugh. However, deep down in my heart I felt sad that we had a group of Irishmen and women who seemed so insecure in their own identity. Sadly the Labour Party, Fine Gael and sections of Fianna Fáil seem to be hell bent on pushing their two-nationist view of Ireland. We have to challenge them. The Irish National Congress has an important role to play in that challenge. Keep up the good work.

Is Mise,

Cllr. Finian McGrath
Griffith Avenue
Dublin

Sir – The Good Friday Agreement is a flawed document and will never be implemented in the way that republicans believed it would be when they voted for it. Aside from being vague on key issues such as policing, demilitarisation and equality, it required Irish nationalism and republicanism to believe that Irish unionism and the British state were capable of "*good faith*". For the Irish, this meant turning a blind eye to all the past misdeeds of the British and hoping that a better future could be built in partnership and mutual respect. In other words, "*forget the fact that we have been trying to subjugate the Irish people for over 800 years, you can trust us now*". I am English and I wouldn't trust them! And I'll tell you why; the British state still views the island of Ireland as part of its national territory, part of the home nations of the British empire: England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The British state asserts a territorial claim over the entire Island of Ireland through her flag – the Union Jack.

The Union Jack is the invention of English imperialism and has 3 component parts, which are as follows: St. George's Cross, a red cross on a white field, representing England; St. Andrew's Cross, a white diagonal cross on a blue field, representing Scotland and St. Patrick's Cross, a red diagonal cross on a white field, representing Ireland. The St Patrick Cross was added to the Union Jack in 1801 following the Act of Union and there it has remained despite the fact that most of Ireland

achieved independence in 1921. The Irish government should object in the strongest terms to the flying of this insult to Irish sovereignty anywhere in the world. By the by, the Welsh are not included in the Union Jack because English imperialism sees Wales as part of a *Greater England*. This is reflected in the lesser powers devolved to Wales by Westminster, compared to those devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

A clear indication that the British state saw the Treaty of 1921 as an interim arrangement can be seen in the now repealed Government of Ireland Act 1920 which, while partitioning Ireland, allowed for two future possibilities: 1- A United Ireland (no doubt included to appease Irish nationalism) and 2- The re-integration of the South into the United Kingdom. It doesn't take much of an imagination to guess which of the 2 that the British would prefer. And remember, while the British government repealed the Government of Ireland Act 1920 as part of the GFA and in exchange for the Irish changing their constitutional factual statement of nationhood, they can always make new laws. Unhindered by a written constitution, the British Parliament can pass any law it wants and the possibility that we might see the Government of Ireland Act 2020 is not unreal, to my mind it is the re-establishment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland that is at the core of the British agenda in Ireland. The, for now harmless, Council of the Isles is the first step of this agenda.

Still not convinced? Then recall what should have been an historic occasion, when the President of Ireland Mary Robinson met Queen Elizabeth II of England, and the occasion was spoiled by English imperialism (I would have preferred it if she were meeting with the President of England). If the visit were categorised as a State visit by a Head of State it would have required that Mrs. Robinson be addressed by her proper title – President of Ireland. But her title is not recognised here, instead the visit was categorised as an official visit and President Robinson was addressed as Her Excellency, so much for mutual respect and a good example of the attitude of the British State towards the sovereignty of the Irish people. Another more recent example was when Peter Mandelson suspended the institutions established by the Irish people under the GFA. When the Irish people voted for the GFA, the British Government hailed it as an act of self-determination by the Irish people. Yet despite this, the will of the Irish people was suspended with the stroke of a pen. As I have said already, Westminster can make any law it wants.

British contempt for Irish sovereignty isn't just confined to symbolic insults or the flouting of political power – it's much worse than that. The British government has at its disposal two intelligence "services", MI5 and MI6. MI6 is used for international espionage and spying on foreign governments. MI5 is used for domestic espionage, spying on trade unions and any other organisations or individuals they consider to be an internal threat to the British state. It was MI5 who armed the loyalists and let them loose on the nationalist population. It is MI5 who recently bugged Gerry Adams' car. It was MI5, not MI6, who were responsible for the Dublin and Monaghan bombings. You see, MI5 is

responsible for domestic espionage and therefore operates within the confines of the "British Isles". It is safe to assume that MI5 has probably infiltrated the Irish Police, Army, Civil Service, Judiciary and Parliament, that is, after all, their job. Need I mention the British Army's regular incursions into the South? Only recently an RAF helicopter was spotted hovering over Dundalk!

If you are still unconvinced then spend an evening watching British television. You will hear regular use of the term "British Isles" and you will hear Irish people, who aren't unionist, described as British. An Irish pop band was used by the Royal British Legion to launch their poppy day appeal and soon Irish media mogul, Tony O'Reilly will kneel before the Queen of England in subjugation and receive a knighthood for services rendered, something which I, as a self-respecting English republican, could never contemplate doing.

The peace process is beginning to look more and more like a pacification process and while we could well see a united Ireland by 2016 it might only be the necessary prelude to the re-conquest of the Irish people through political means. A united Irish Republic would not be in the interest of English imperialism. An all-Ireland Republic would give example and inspiration to the people of Scotland, Wales and England. The devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland does not represent the break up of the United Kingdom but it's re-structuring. The continued existence of English imperialism and the British monarchy demands the re-integration of Ireland into the U.K. Irish republicanism must be vigilant if such a future is to be averted. Irish republicans must work together to ensure that any future united Ireland does not mean rejoining the commonwealth and eventually sending representatives to Westminster.

I applaud the Irish National Congress' recent call for republican unity. Remember, united you stand, divided you fall.

Yours Sincerely,

William Jackson
by e-mail
London
England

P.S. is it possible for an Englishman to join or affiliate to the Irish National Congress.

(Yes, it is possible for an Englishman to join the INC. The INC is a lobby group and is open to anyone who wants to work for Freedom, Unity, Justice and Peace through peaceful and constitutional means, regardless of race, colour, religion, nationality, or party political affiliation A United 32 county Irish Republic is the ultimate aim of our organisation)

If you have anything you would like to say or if the newspapers have refused to publish your letters, then send them to us and we will, space permitting, print them. Send your letters to:

Irish National Congress, P.O. Box 2814, Dublin 7

or e-mail us at:

inc32cne@eircom.net

How Does She Stand?

The Belfast Agreement 3 years On

In order to fully understand the Irish National Congress' present attitude to the 1998 Belfast agreement it is necessary to examine the role the INC played in the run up to the signing of that agreement and the referendum which ratified it.

In the Irish Times of the 7th March 1998 the Irish government leaked a draft of the proposed amended articles 2 & 3. This draft was by far much worse than anything we had expected, or had been led to expect to result from the multi party talks in Stormont. The INC had long expected that any referendum urging such amendment would be framed in Lloyd George's parameters of a simple choice between peace and war intended to stifle rational debate and marginalise and demonise any dissenting viewpoint.

The national executive realised that regardless of the amount of resources and effort the INC threw into such a referendum campaign we were unlikely to be successful; therefore our most effective strategy lay in seeking to influence the wording of the new articles 2 & 3 before they were presented to the electorate. It was also acknowledged that there would be a need for the

INC to provide an objective and rational analysis in whatever the post agreement and referendum situation, which may emerge.

We immediately launched a political and media awareness campaign highlighting the dangers inherent in such a change. Producing two new leaflets for the purpose one highlighting the strengths on the existing articles two and three and the second pointing out the aggressive claim contained in the British government of Ireland act. We succeeded in gaining widespread coverage of our point of view ranging from the very positive in the Sunday Business Post to the predictably negative in the Sunday Independent in late march. We also sought to lobby the Irish government as to our position and received a promise from the Taoiseach's special advisor Martin Mansergh that any changes in the constitution would also be accompanied by 5 of the Taoiseach's 11 appointed Senators being elected by people in the six counties and emigrants abroad (three years later this promise remains unsurprisingly undelivered).

This meeting revealed that the Irish government was set on surrendering the Irish state's *de jure* claim to Northern Ireland and to leave the national territory undefined. In return the government were looking for a north-south body with less power than in 1973 and the symbolic repeal of section 75 of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. We decided to form a

broadly based committee opposed to such proposed change and initial preparations were made to fight a referendum including the production of thousands of leaflets, public meetings and a petition.

This campaign received a setback with the publication of the Belfast agreement on the 10 April 1998. The INC sought and received clarification from the Irish government on a number of points in the agreement some of which were reassuring most of which were not. The INC also consulted two senior lawyers for their legal opinion of the agreement and the consequences of changing articles 2 & 3 however their reports were inconclusive.

The INC was divided on the agreement with some supporting it and others opposing it. It soon became obvious that a unanimous position would not be achieved before a referendum so it was agreed that individual INC members were free to join either the pro or anti agreement referendum campaigns. The INC itself would adopt an agnostic sceptical but not hostile approach to the agreement and produce its own objective critique of the agreement to provide balance to the one sided nature of the debate. Although many of these points were taken up by the referendum commission our critique was completely ignored by the media.

In it we pointed out that the north south referendums were



- July 1999: A mural on the Ormeau Road, Belfast, expresses the frustration of nationalists at the slow pace of change under the Belfast Agreement. 2 years later and we're still waiting!

not an act of national self-determination as the north were voting on the agreement while the south were voting to change articles 2, 3 & 29. The new articles 2 & 3 we believe bestow a veto over national unification upon an artificial majority of the 6 county electorate and consequently retrospectively legitimise partition.

We also criticised the weakness and non-evolutionary nature of the north-south bodies by comparison with those of 1921 and 1973. We feared that this council would be brought down by unionist obstructionism, as no alternative existed to encourage unionist participation. This scepticism we believe was well placed as evidenced by the suspension of the institutions, which occurred on the 12 February 2000, and the exclusion of Sinn Féin ministers from cross border bodies in 2001.

We criticised the proposed council of the isles as an unnecessary erosion of Irish sovereignty and prestige as part of a wider British agenda to reincorporate Ireland into a reinvented federal British isles.

While the British – Irish council merely perpetuates Ireland's right to be ignored on northern issues as the failure of the Irish government to have any of its nominees appointed to the Patten commission proves.

The INC criticised the appointment of former Tory, Chris Patten, as chair of the commission into policing as well as the time it took to issue its report. We also issued our own critique of the Patten report calling for changes so radical they would result in the forces virtual abolition. While acknowledging the desirability of multilateral paramilitary decommissioning we stressed that this could not be viewed in isolation from demilitarisation of state forces and 150,000 legally held arms as well as repressive legislation and juryless courts north and south.

The INC criticised the agreement's portrayal of human and civil rights as some exotic privilege or luxury rather than a basic minimum requirement. We were sceptical about the ability of a state, which has consistently abused human rights to appoint a human rights commission. And

we remain dismayed that three years on a bill of rights still has not been drafted.

The INC also criticised the indecent haste which the amendments were railroaded through the Oireachtas in 48 hours as well as the confusion and lack of debate caused by holding such an important referendum on the same day as the Amsterdam referendum which could only have contributed to the low turn out of 56% and over 17,000 spoiled votes in the south.

The INC believe that the success of the agreement relies too heavily upon the bona fides of the British state and unionist politicians, good faith which has been as noticeably absent in the past as it is in the present as the flying of the union jack on government buildings and failure to implement Patten demonstrate. We believe that the Belfast agreement failed to fulfil the expectations of the nationalist population in its ability to deliver radical change and in order for it to do so it must be transformed through the addition of fail-safe contingency measures to make its institutions and reforms immune from unionist intransigence and British duplicity. However, even this does not fulfil all nationalist aspirations and it may be necessary in the near future to transcend the existing agreement with a new one, which adequately addresses the sovereignty issue, which is so fundamental to the solution of the conflict.

– Paul McGuill

(Paul McGuill is a library assistant and has been an INC activist since 1994. he was INC Cathaoirleach from 1998 – 2000 and is currently Secretary of the INC)

Bloody Sunday Remembered

January 28th, the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, commemorating the massacre of both innocent and innocence began for me at Store Street station, accompanied by Tony Beaufort, Siobhan Crudden and Michael Cummins.

The express bus leaves at 9:15am and most of the travellers are recognisable. Some are members of the Irish National Congress making the annual trek to Derry to show our respect and support for the victims, their relatives, friends and the broad community in Derry. We stop in Monaghan and stretch our legs and have a cup of tea. Soon we cross the border and we arrive in Derry at 1:15pm. Accompanied by Siobhan and Tony we make our way to the Creggan Heights where the bands are warming up. The community centre is very welcoming. Soup, tea, sandwiches. The girls serving us are warm and friendly in contrast to the cold weather outside.

We take our place in the huge crowd and the march starts at 2:30pm. Many different accents and many different languages can be heard. The march has an international flavour about it. As we wind our way from the Creggan Heights to the Brandywell crowds line the streets lending their support to the marchers, and the only hostile movement is the Eye in the Sky monitoring the march. Huge pictures of those who were murdered on Bloody Sunday are visible along the route. When we reach Free Derry Corner, the speeches are well under way. With several thousand people converging around Rossville Street we distribute INC newsletters and leaflets and we get a positive response. Bus leaves at 5:30pm so we head for the station. Bus almost full when we get there. Many of the marchers arrived on Friday or Saturday and all going back to Dublin on Sunday. As we cross the Foyle, we remember the premeditated attack on the civil rights marchers 29 years ago, followed by a premeditated cover-up in the form of Widgery. Will the Saville inquiry expose the truth of what happened that day, or will be treated to another cover-up to add further pain and trauma? If so, then we will continue with our journeys to Derry to demonstrate our abhorrence at the killings and our insistence that justice be done.

— Tom Cooper.

(Tom Cooper is a truck driver from Dublin and has been an INC activist since 1993. He has been a member of the National Executive since 1994.)

IMAGES OF BLOODY SUNDAY

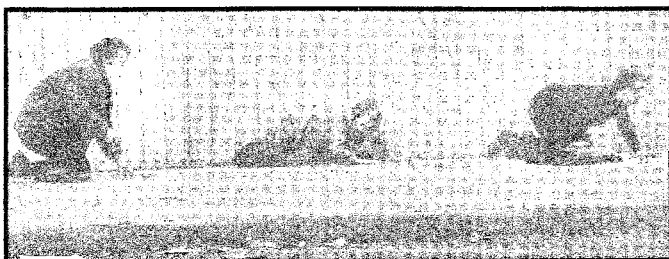
The pictures below are taken from the book edited by Don Mullan: "Eyewitness Bloody Sunday – The Truth"



On Sunday 30 Jan 1972 an estimated 20,000 men women and children took part in a Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association march in Derry. The Stormont Government had banned the march.



At 4.10pm the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment advanced, causing widespread panic at the rear of Rossville Flats. After the shooting had stopped 13 civilians were dead, a 14th died later in hospital. 13 other people were wounded by gunfire and many others were assaulted and beaten up.



Caught in the open 3 unarmed men try to crawl to safety. The one kneeling on the left and wearing a handkerchief for protection against the CS gas is Paddy Doherty. Moments later he was shot dead.



31-year-old father, Paddy Doherty, lies dead on the Rossville Flats forecourt. A brave man crawls towards him in an effort to render assistance.

The Blanket Years

Those imprisoned as a result of the many conflicts throughout Ireland's troubled history, have earned a significant place in the popular imagination. John Mitchell, O'Donovan Rossa, Tom Clarke have left their stamp on Irish republican folklore almost as much by the years they spent in prison as by their subsequent deeds. There is a tragic aspect to a life wasting away in a prison cell and this is all the more poignant when the prisoner's motivation is political idealism and Irish people have almost always had a measure of respect for political prisoners.

The most recent conflict in Ireland has left an equally significant prison lore. In some ways the story of the H-Blocks and the blanket protest and the great hunger strikes of 1980/81 is for many people the real story of the Northern Irish war of the late 20th Century. When pompous British secretaries of state and puffed up British general officers in command have long been forgotten, the legend of Bobby Sands and his comrades will live on.

In spite of the fact that the great hunger strikes and the blanket protest are so vivid in the memory of the time, it must always be remembered that these events were part of a much wider struggle. The heroism and courage of the hunger strikers and their comrades on the blanket protest is almost beyond dispute.



• The H-Blocks of Long Kesh, where Britain's attempts to criminalise Republican prisoners met with protest and Hunger Strike.

Nevertheless, this gallantry epitomised the spirit of a defiant and brave people rather than isolated acts of individual uniqueness of those who died and their comrades who survived the prison regime.

What led to the prison protest and the hunger-strikes was a decision taken by the British Government some time in the early 1970's to deem the Northern Irish conflict a criminal conspiracy and deny that there was any just cause for resistance to British rule and policy in Ireland.

It was a typically British response to one of their oldest colonial problems. Britain refused to accept that it had created a dangerous and antidemocratic situation that had provoked a very understandable and warranted reaction from the oppressed republican people. Instead Britain attempted to gain the moral high ground by trying to categorise their Irish opponents as criminal. It was, in ways, a 20th Century version of the old stratagem of having ones enemies excommunicated and thereafter placed beyond the concern or protection of Christendom. Moreover it allowed London the

option of doing little or nothing to redress the damage its Irish policy had caused over centuries.

Under the circumstances, it was inevitable that the sharpest clash arising out of Britain's policy of criminalisation, would take place in the prisons. Having first rejected and then fought for years against a brutal political system in the North of Ireland, Irish Republicanism would have conceded the legitimacy of their cause had it accepted the status of criminal.

The extent and depth of the blanket struggle that followed is sometimes, understandably perhaps, overlooked because of the heroism and even drama of the hunger strikes. It is important nevertheless to remind a younger generation of the extent of the courage and commitment of the hundreds of (usually very young) republican prisoners through extremely difficult conditions. Refusal to wear a prison uniform led to confinement to cell with nothing for clothing but a blanket and to a loss of all privileges such as exercise, newspapers, and tobacco.

Not only did this not deter the imprisoned republicans but so



• **Armagh Gaol 1980:**

Pictured above is Mairead Farrell. The walls of her cell are smeared with faeces and menstrual fluid. The women began their no-wash/no-slop-out protest after an incident when male warders raided their wing and beat up some of the women prisoners. Along with Mairead Nugent and Mary Doyle, Mairead took part in the first hunger strike of 1980. The women ended their Hunger Strike one day after H-Block hunger strikers on December 19th when they received confirmation that the strike was over. The no-wash protest ended in all the gaols on March 1st 1981 when Bobby Sands started his hunger strike. Mairead Farrell was murdered by the SAS in Gibraltar. 1988.

spirited was their determination not to give ground that it caused them to escalate their protest. The best remembered aspect of course was when excreta was smeared on cell walls after prison warders refused prisoners access to normal toilet facilities. This was only a part of their battle with the authorities. They smashed cell furniture, broke cell windows, refused to give prison numbers or acknowledge prisons governors. And while many blanket-men studied Irish for the love of the language, quite a few learned it also to spite the sectarian prison

warders doing guard. The Blanket-men were probably the most obdurate and defiant collective that any British prison system has ever had to deal with.

And they paid a price for their defiance. Not only were all privileges denied and food rationed (unofficially of course) but the warders frequently employed brutality. Locked naked and never more than two to a cell, the Blanket-men were easy prey for the frequently violent prison staff. Using the pretext of cell searching, prison officers would beat and humiliate the Blanket-men. It happened regularly and no Blanket-man finished his time without a beating. An air of tension and violence hung permanently over the H-Blocks containing the "non-conforming-Prisoners" - as the authorities officially described their difficult opponents.

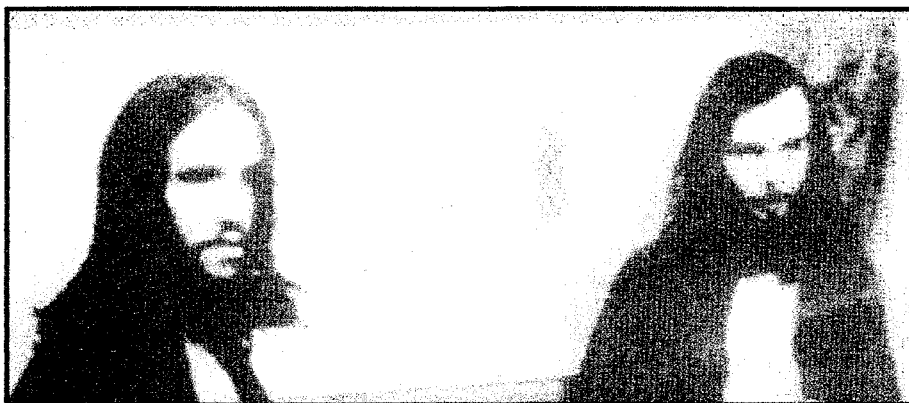
In spite of these indescribable conditions, the majority of imprisoned republican prisoners in Long Kesh remained on the Blanket protest. That alone was a testimony the determination and fortitude of a generation of Northern Irish republicans. It was also a tribute to the courage of ordinary people in conflict with a major power.

When the decision was eventually taken to embark on the hunger strikes there may have been some on the outside that doubted the Blanket men's determination. There were few on either side within the prison that felt this way. In the aftermath of the hunger-strikes and the ending of the Blanket protest this realisation was shared by all who cared to look.

Bobby Sands liked to quote a line from the memoirs of Tom Clarke to the effect that there is no weapon in the Empire's arsenal capable of breaking one man if he refuses to be broken. Well over four hundred Blanket-men refused to be broken and they can surely smile contentedly now if reminded of the old Fenian's caution.

— **Tommy McKearney**

(Tommy McKearney is a former H-Block Blanket man and Hunger Striker. He is a regular contributor to *Fourthwrite* magazine, journal of the Irish Republican Writers Group of which he is a founding member. Anyone wishing to subscribe to *Fourthwrite* can do so by writing to: Fourthwrite, P.O. Box 31, Belfast BT12 7EE.)



- **On the blanket:** It was commonplace for prisoners to wake up in the morning with their eyes, ears, mouths and anuses filled with tiny white maggots. Those who took part in the "dirty" protest endured these conditions for over 5 years.

Delusions of Grandeur

Later this year, in a ceremony to be held in London, Doctor A.J.F. (Tony) O'Reilly, Irish billionaire and businessman extraordinaire, will prostrate himself before "Her Most Gracious Majesty", Queen Elizabeth II of England, to receive a Knighthood and acceptance into the ranks of the British Establishment.

Amongst ordinary citizens here in Ireland, the reaction to the pretensions of "Sir Anthony" is either blind indifference or the utmost contempt. Given our history, there is something truly pathetic about any Irish person being seen to grovel before Her Majesty. Nevertheless, There are important issues of political principles at stake here; the apparent position being taken by the Irish Government with regard to this matter is unsatisfactory to say the least; at worst it constitutes a political scandal.

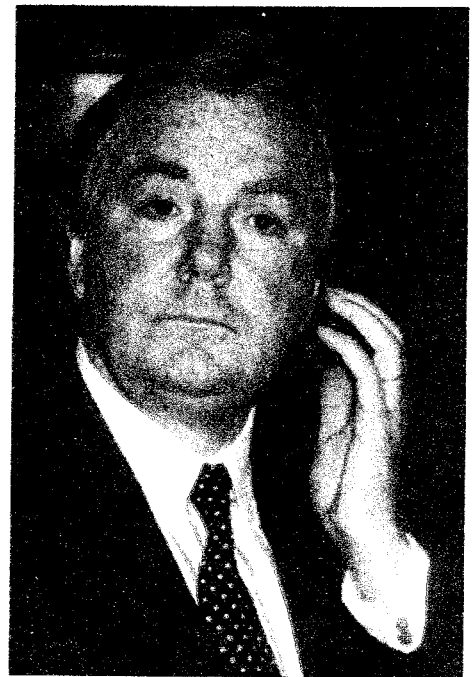
According to Irish Journalistic sources, O'Reilly is being knighted as an Irish Citizen rather than as a British subject; this has been confirmed by the British embassy in Dublin. O'Reilly himself claims dual UK-Irish Nationality (whatever that is supposed to mean). As an Irish citizen, he was compelled by article 40.2 of Bunreacht na Éireann to seek Irish Government consent before he could accept a British "title of nobility". It would appear that the government made no attempt to place any restrictions on O'Reilly's use of his British title. And now, in an act of incredible insolence, O'Reilly is insisting that all who have dealings with him – Irish citizens within the twenty-six counties included – must deferentially address him by his Britannic nobleman's title!

What we are dealing with here is a direct assault on the ethos of the 1937 Irish constitution, made worse by the apparent reluctance of the government to make a stand for the basic republican values of citizenship and equality of all before the law. Attempts by journalists to discover how the government came to its decision regarding O'Reilly's Knighthood have met with a wall of silence.

There are also National Sovereignty implications. It will be very difficult from now on, for any Irish government to refuse future applications from citizens who are to be "honoured" by the British state with Knighthoods, life peerages, OBE's and MBE's, particularly where there is no bottom line being drawn as regards use of these titles. The O'Reilly case now sets a powerful precedent. The British state through its monarchy may well choose bestow more feudal titles and honours on persons in the Irish state whom it sees as promoting Britain's interest in Ireland.

When article 40.2 was inserted into Bunreacht na Éireann, the objective was to sweep away the vestiges of British colonialism. In place of monarchy, feudalism, subservience, caste, social deference and all the rest of it, a modern post-colonial democracy would come into being. Is article 40.2 to be swept away just like articles 2 & 3?

What the government should have done is what any self-respecting state would have done. At the very least, "Doctor" O'Reilly should have been politely, but firmly told that he must not use his Britannic title when he is on the territory of the Irish state. He should also have been told, that failure to comply with this instruction could involve the loss of



Arise Sir Phony

Soon to be acknowledged for serving British interests in Ireland, Tony O'Reilly's knighthood is well deserved. O'Reilly has had a long association with the British Royal Family and recently gave Fergie, the down in her luck Duchess of York, a job in the US promoting *Heinz Weightwatchers* and *Waterford Wedgwood*. But his services extend much further than doing favours for the Queen of England. For years his Irish based newspapers have promoted an anti-Republican and pro-British view of the Northern conflict. Before you make up your mind, you can warp it with the *Irish Independent* and his many other publications. Attacking all shades of Irish nationalism, including moderates such as John Hume and presenting the British role in the North as that of arbitrator and not protagonist has taken its toll on southern Irish opinion. It has promoted complacency in the South towards the treatment of our fellow Irish citizens by the British state. What would cause an Irish citizen to act so treacherously towards his own people? Could it be that the Bean Baron has been eating too much of his own produce, after all "*Heinz builds brits*" remember.

his Irish citizenship and revoking of his passport, until such time as his compliance was forthcoming.

PROPOSED BY-LAWS BY-PASS OUR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

It seems to be that the further our democracy "progresses", the more our sovereignty and rights are being eroded. Not enough that we are sheepishly ceding most of our sovereignty to Brussels, now Dublin Corporation are getting in on the act.

On the very street where Patrick Pearse proclaimed the Irish Republic and declared to the world the right of the Irish people to ownership of Ireland, Dublin Corporation attempted to introduce a series of draconian by-laws that would have effectively banned all rallies and protests in O'Connell Street. If the proposals went ahead it would have meant that a group no larger than 6 people could parade in O'Connell Street without the Corporation's permission; protests could only last for two hours; speakers would have to be approved in advance and all demonstrations of 6+ people would be illegal unless the Corporation received an application 31 days in advance (thereby banning all spontaneous protests or assemblies of any kind). A deposit of £2,000 would have to be paid for a rally of 50+ people. The maximum number of demonstrators would be 300; if the number exceeded this then the organisers must have indemnity insurance cover of £3 million. Noise levels would be fixed and anyone who breaches the regulations could be fined up to £1,000. Protest organisers could also be billed for extra costs incurred by the Corporation, such as cleaning.

Dublin Corporation said it was introducing the by-laws because demonstrations are "*detrimental to the business life of the city*". However, their proposals were detrimental to our civil liberties and completely ignored the Constitution of Ireland, which guarantees our right to protest peaceably and without arms. The proposals also conflicted with the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Constitution of Ireland states:

Article 40:6.1° The State guarantees liberty for the exercise of the following rights, subject to public order and morality: —

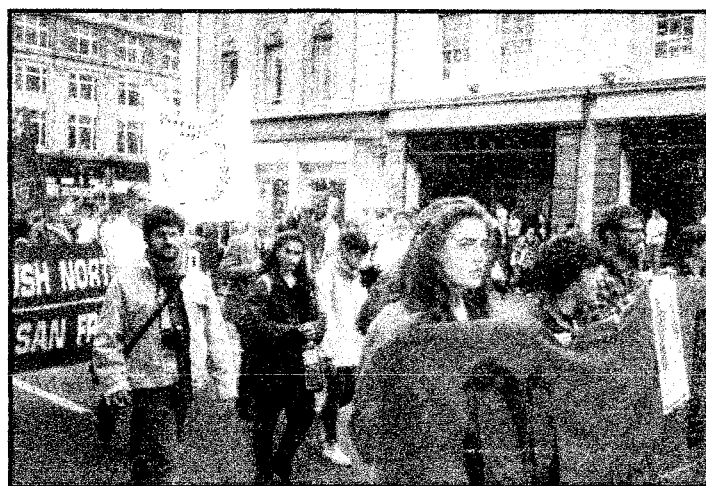
- (ii) The right of the citizens to assemble peaceably and without arms.

Provision may be made by law to prevent or control meetings which are determined in accordance with the law to be calculated to cause a breach of the peace or to be a danger



TIME FOR PEACE – TIME TO GO

August 20th 1994 and the INC bring 25,000 people onto the streets of Dublin in a parade for peace and British withdrawal. The parade ended outside the GPO on O'Connell Street where speakers addressed the crowd. In the future such events would never happen, if Dublin City Corporation had succeeded in introducing its proposed regulations.



or nuisance to the general public and to prevent or control meetings in the vicinity of either Houses of the Oireachtas.

The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Ireland is a signatory, states:

Article 21. The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

The Irish Constitution (which was ratified by the electorate and can only be changed by referendum) and the UN Covenant (which was signed on our behalf by the Irish government) takes a different view to Dublin Corporation and does not equate the commercial interests of a tiny minority with issues concerning national security, public morality or the safety of the general public. O'Connell St. belongs to

the people. It is not the sole property of Ann Summers, McDonalds, Burger King or the Dublin City Centre Business Association, who were delighted with the proposed regulations.

The Freedom of Assembly Coalition was formed to campaign against the proposed regulations. The coalition is supported by a wide range of politicians, academics and human rights activists. Speaking at the launch of the coalition Green MEP Patricia McKenna said that the regulations were a *"major threat to democracy"* and *"a gross insult to the strong historic legacy and memory of those who fought and died for independence and democracy in Ireland"*. Donncha O'Connell, Director of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, said that the regulations would represent *"the triumph of commercial interests over people's democratic rights"* and added that there was *"no evidence that the right to protest had been abused in the past"*.

Many city councillors spoke out against the proposals, including Dublin's Lord Mayor, Maurice Ahern (Fianna Fáil), who described some of the measures as draconian. Sinn Féin councillors vowed to fight the proposals as a gross infringement of people's civil rights. Fine Gael claimed that it was a government conspiracy to prevent people from protesting against government policies.

An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, refused to be drawn into the debate, saying that it was a matter for Dublin Corporation. Nor did he believe it to be a constituency issue because none of his constituents had approached him on the matter. Our Taoiseach was half right, the matter being not so much a constituency issue as a constitutional one, which would have effected every Irish citizen and not just those he represents as a TD.

INC members took part in a protest outside City Hall organised by the Freedom of Assembly Coalition to coincide with motions debating the proposed regulations. The protest was well attended, with nearly 600 people turning out. The same, however, could not be said of the attendance inside City Hall. Of the 52 sitting councillors only 26 bothered to turn up, most of those absent being members of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. At their meeting, councillors told the corporation management that they were disappointed by the controversial proposals. Two emergency motions by Labour councillors and by Independent councillor, Finian McGrath, called for the by-laws as proposed to be withdrawn. The motions were passed by 21 votes to 4 with Lord Mayor, Maurice Ahern (Fianna Fáil), abstaining. Those who voted against were members of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

Following the decision to reject the proposals, Labour councillor Eric Byrne said his colleagues had decided that spontaneous demonstrations should be allowed on O'Connell Street. He called on the city manager John Fitzgerald to halt the public consultation process. Independent councillor Finian McGrath said that the vote was a victory for civil liberties, but added that it wasn't the place of city councillors or Dublin Corporation to make decisions concerned with people's freedom saying that such decisions could only be made by the people of Ireland. He went on to warn that Dublin City Corporation might attempt to introduce similar by-laws at a later date.

The INC supports the Freedom of Assembly Coalition and calls on An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to defend the Constitution of Ireland against the business interests of a tiny handful should the matter arise again. The INC also calls on the Irish government to censure Dublin City Corporation for exceeding its powers by attempting to by-pass the Constitution of Ireland. Dublin City Corporation is supposed to manage the city on behalf of the people not manage the people on behalf of the business community

The Irish National Congress believes that by attempting to place financial obligations and the requirement of one months notice on Irish citizens who might wish to freely express themselves, Dublin Corporation sought to trample on one of our most fundamental constitutional rights. Fundamental rights are fundamental rights and should not be bought, sold or bartered for!

— Cathal Óg McCarthy

(Cathal Óg McCarthy is a sign painter / decorator and has been an INC activist for the past 7 years. He has been a member of the National Executive since 1993 and was National Organiser from 1998 – 2000. He is currently acting Cathaioirleach of the INC)

Donations Needed

We have no big financial backer to pay our bills. We only survive on the voluntary contributions of our supporters.

Please send what you can to:

**Irish National Congress,
P.O. Box 2814, Dublin 7.**

All contributions will be acknowledged.

VOTE NO TO NICE

Those who recommend voters to agree to the changes in the Nice Treaty, which mean more union and less democracy, always call themselves Europeans. Those who want to keep as much democracy as possible and who want a Europe for all European countries are called "anti-Europeans."

What is European about wanting to reduce the influence of voters in favour of civil servants, Ministers and the Multinational companies in the global marketplace, which are all given a greater say through the Treaty of Nice? Why is it anti-European to support the idea that the voters should have the last word on European issues too?

Critics of the European Union (EU) are just as much Europeans as the supporters of the Union. We do not support the USA, China or Japan. We are not Americans or Asians. Being critical of the display of force and over-intrusive government from Brussels does not have to mean you are xenophobic. It simply means you are an ordinary democrat, who does not see diversity as a problem. Most Europeans see diversity as the richness of Europe. We should defend our right to be different, particularly when it does not interfere with other Europeans' right to choose for themselves.

Freedom also entails responsibility for those who cannot look after themselves, and a duty to help those who are worse off than we are. Freedom presupposes a certain degree of equality; otherwise it becomes freedom for the few and lack of freedom for the many. Its supporters in Ireland as are

portraying the Treaty of Nice as a simple vote on European expansion, an opportunity for the Irish people to include our poorer European neighbours so that they may benefit from the EU as we have. But is it really necessary to hold a referendum, are such matters not dealt with by the European parliament? Voting NO does not mean that we will be barring these countries from the EU because that is not what we are really voting on. Fianna Fáil promised us a referendum on neutrality and here it is.

The Treaty of Nice means that the EU is, for the first time, taking on responsibility for military affairs. The Treaty establishes a new political and security committee that will control and direct EU military operations. The EU is also creating a Rapid Reaction Force - 60,000 soldiers that can be deployed up to 2,500 miles from the EU borders. This is, in effect, a European army - it is not intended for the defence of Europe but rather for the protection of EU strategic interests outside the EU.

The Rapid Reaction Force will operate in tandem with NATO - a nuclear-armed military alliance. NATO in recent years, in the former Yugoslavia, has been responsible for cluster bombing civilians, destroying civilian infrastructure, and poisoning even its own troops with cancer-causing depleted uranium. NATO's reckless expansion eastwards is antagonising Russia and heightening the risk of a new Cold War. NATO does not promote security - it promotes insecurity. By binding itself to NATO, the EU is also contributing to insecurity.

The Irish government has pledged 850 soldiers to the new

EU army. To prepare for participation in this Rapid Reaction Force our government is also purchasing up to 80 armoured personnel carriers, 80 'light tactical' vehicles, at least 2 'battle-standard' helicopters, and other hi-tech war making equipment. These soldiers and this equipment will be at the service of the new and highly dangerous EU-NATO alliance.

By voting No to the Treaty of Nice, you can say that you do not support the militarisation of the EU. The Danish government has already made clear, through a Treaty protocol that it will not participate in the new military arrangements. The Irish government could easily add a similar protocol on our behalf. By standing aside from these dangerous new initiatives, Ireland would be free to maintain its tradition of genuine peacekeeping and support for non-violent conflict resolution.

In the Nice referendum we should do what the Danes did when they said NO to the euro last September, rejecting thereby the threats and promises of their Government and many of their elite groups. The Danes said NO and are still full members of the EU. They were threatened with dire penalties if they voted NO in that referendum, but in fact things have gone on much as before. But the Danes exercised their freedom of rejecting something they did not like, and which they decided did not suit them.

Will the Irish emulate the courage, intelligence and sense of self-respect of the Danes, and vote NO for a better Europe, a better Ireland and a better deal for the EU Applicants?

Abolish the Special Criminal Court!

Trial by jury has, since the Magna Carta of 1215, been universally regarded as a fundamental civil and human right. Yet in the Republic of Ireland in the 21st century, five years after the first IRA cease-fire, three judge, juryless courts still operate.

The court was reactivated by then Minister for Justice, Des O'Malley, in May 1972. His reason for doing so was alleged jury intimidation but when challenged in the Dáil to cite one example he was unable to do so. A more likely explanation was that the government believed that juries were not returning the 'right' verdicts the most famous example of this being the 1970 arms trial.

This court was introduced in 1972 without a vote in the Dáil or a debate, all that was required was the minister's signature. The Offences Against the State Bill 1939 only became constitutional after the first two amendments to the constitution in 1939. These amended article 28.3.3 and article 38.3.1, which allow for the declaration of a state of emergency and the creation of special juryless courts.

Interestingly enough these two amendments are the only two articles of the Irish constitution, which have never won a democratic mandate from the Irish people. As they were not part of the original 1937 constitution, which allowed a three-year tidy up period, where the Dáil could pass amendments to the constitution without the need to hold a referendum.

Trial by jury is your essential civil right not an extravagant luxury. Demand it.

ARMS TRIAL REVISITED

Documentation released from the National Archives under the thirty year rule have yielded some very interesting material related to the controversial arms trial of 1970.

Material uncovered by Captain James Kelly, a central figure in the original arms trial has revealed that the statement of Captain Kelly's superior, Colonel Michael Heffernon, head of Irish Military intelligence, in 1969, was heavily edited before it was included in the book of evidence. Captain Kelly's investigations and RTE's Prime Time programme also show that Colonel Heffernon's statement to Gardaí carried an official department of Justice stamp and was seen by the secretary of the department, Mr Peter Berry and the then minister of Justice, Des O'Malley.

O'Malley, in a documentary commissioned by RTE on his political life, denied remembering having ever seen the edited statement, saying that the file was now very bulky and had no list of contents. However, O'Malley justified himself by stating that Ireland then stood on the brink of civil war which he stated would have left the civil war of 1922-3 in the shade, seemingly in defence of his having cut some legal corners to save the minister for Defence, Jim Gibbons, from being implicated in the attempt to import arms. Gibbons role was crucial as under the Constitution only the minister for Defence could legally import arms into the country. The deletions to Heffernon's statement limited Gibbons' knowledge of

events. However, evidence has emerged from British state papers to indicate that the then Taoiseach, Jack Lynch considered sacking Gibbons for his involvement in the attempt to import arms.

Denis Coughlan writing for the Irish Times has stated that at the time: 'The stakes were nothing less than the control of Fianna Fáil, survival of the government and, perhaps, the rule of law. Changing one man's statement by deleting certain sections that damaged the prime government witness in the Arms Trial might have seemed justified in terms of *Realpolitik*. But the law was broken. It had the smell of a stitch-up. And it happened in the Department of Justice'.

Although the case against all the accused in the arms trial, Captain Kelly, John Kelly, a republican from Belfast, Albert Luykx, a Belgian businessman, Charles Haughey, the minister for Finance and Neil Blaney, the minister for agriculture, collapsed and all were acquitted, the ramifications were immense. Captain Kelly's career in the army was ruined and Neil Blaney's career in government never recovered. Perhaps more importantly the nationalist population of Northern Ireland was abandoned to their fate with no more efforts by the Irish government

— **Darren McGettigan**

(Darren McGettigan has been an INC activist since 1997. He has been a member of the National Executive since 1999.)

Letter To The Minister

The following letter was sent by the INC to Brian Cowen T.D., the Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the 20th January 2001. His secretary replied some weeks later to inform us that Minister had received our letter. It is doubtful that any of our suggestions will be taken on board. That would require a constitutional courage that has not been seen in Ireland since Parnell.

A Aire,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Irish National Congress to express our full support for the strong and principled stand being taken by the Irish government in relation to the case of Peter McBride, the young Belfast man murdered by the British army in September 1992.

As you are aware, we once again have the scandalous situation whereby British soldiers, convicted of murder, have been given early release from prison and reinstated in their regiments. In the past, we had the high profile Thain and Clegg cases; in this instance it is private's Fisher and Wright.

The courts could find no extenuating circumstances concerning this pair, despite repeated attempts to get their convictions overturned. Therefore the decision taken by the British army to reinstate these two (with full back pay!) can only be seen as a studied insult, not only to the McBride family, but also to the Irish government. Peter McBride was, after all, an Irish citizen.

One of the more disturbing factors arising from this case, has been the cynical and indeed despicable public campaign waged in Britain on behalf of the two soldiers by sections of the British military, media and political establishment. It involved character slurs and threats against the McBride family. In one instance, a British newspaper gratuitously published the family's Belfast address, presumably to provoke a barrage of hate mail and harassment.

Given this type of background, we believe that it is important that the Irish government and ordinary citizens of this state show public solidarity with the McBride family and continue to demand, as a matter of principle, that these two convicted murderers should be dismissed from the British army. We welcome your recent statement to the Oireachtas concerning your intention to keep in contact with the McBride family.

In conclusion, might we suggest one very obvious way that the government could make its displeasure known to the British authorities; there should be an immediate cessation of all so-called courtesy visits to the Republic by the British army, the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. These visits are regarded as a source of resentment, embarrassment and shame by many citizens of this state, given the role of British armed forces in the conflict of the last 30 years and their continued harassment of Irish citizens in the North of Ireland today.

Is mise le meas,

Cathal Óg McCarthy
Cathaoirleach

Christmas Raffle Winners

The Inc would like to thank its many supporters for their continuous generosity through the sale of raffle tickets, which raised a total of £1,257, one of most successful raffles to date. As you may have noticed there was no Easter raffle this year as it was decided that it would be unfair to ask our members sell tickets so soon after the Christmas draw.

The first prize of a Christmas hamper went to Muriel McGowan of Glasnevin. The second prize, a Christmas cake, was won by Seamus O'Meacham from Kilkenny and the third prize, a bottle of spirits, went to Timmy Ryan from Dublin.

Once again the INC would like to thank all its supporters who raised £1,257 in this latest raffle.

VOTE NO TO NICE
NO TO MILITARISATION
NO TO INSECURITY
A VOTE AGAINST THE TREATY OF NICE
IS A VOTE FOR GENUINE PEACE & SECURITY

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MEMBERSHIP FEE £10 WAGED / £5 UNWAGED



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