Fourthwrite

For a democratic socialist Irish republic

Editorial……2

Assessment……3

Paisley & Provos, by John McAnulty……..…5

In lieu of victory, by Patricia Campbell……..…..10

Lough Neagh fishermen……13

Blair & Berlusconi, by Siobhan O'Dwyer……...14

Defining Republicanism……16

Dublin Bus dispute, by Tommy McKearney……..19

De Valera's back, by Margaret McKearney…….23

War in Nepal, by Alec Robertson……..26

Chavezhas support, by Mags Glennon……..28

Martin O'Cadhain, by Liam O'Ruair……..30

Book review, by Anthony McIntyre…….32

Editorial

Policing the state

When Gerry Adams recently mentioned in an interview with the BBC that IRA disbanding would have to be considered in order to deny unionism any excuse for refusing to share the administration of Northern Ireland with Sinn Fein, most observers naturally concentrated on the momentous fact that the way was being paved for the Provos to depart the scene. Of perhaps greater significance, however, was Adams' comment about the need for acceptable policing. He reinforced his view a few days later, in an article for the Irish Times, when he said that policing might be the ‘spine’ of any talks aimed at a political settlement involving his party.

Agreeing to the dissolution of the IRA is one thing but asking for an opportunity to support policing is quite another. Some old republicans take an almost theological view of the IRA and see it as an end in itself. This is quite an irrational position that often tends to promote loyalty to personalities and organisations rather than to any underlying political cause. Armed insurrection is either necessary or it’s not, but no armed group is sacrosanct. So when Adams moves to sign-off on the Provos, he is merely recognising the reality of his party’s position - they don’t need or want an underground army.

Support for policing is altogether different since it indicates, above all else, support for the state. There may be good and bad policing and there may be unobtrusive or heavy-handed policing but there is never neutral policing. Policing within the law, after all, is how any state ultimately enforces its will and its policy and when a chief constable (or commissioner or chief of police) issues an edict, it is done so on behalf of the state. Nor is it possible in any part of Ireland to be selective about policing - traffic cops and Special Branch answer to the same authority.

When Sinn Fein endorses policing it means that the organisation not only accepts the boundaries of the state but also the economic and social nature of the state - in this case a private property, free-market winner take-all society. At such a point, the case for socialism has irrevocably been removed from the Sinn Fein party agenda and the campaign to break the connection with Britain becomes a meaningless piece of rhetoric.

Radical republicans should recognise this fact and even if it is still too early to challenge the electoral position of those republicans conforming within the Establishment, it should not discourage us from engaging in whatever form of economic and social struggle that best helps roll back the opposition. Engaging in struggle will assist in the emergence of a new radical movement.

Imperialism’s terrorists

Margaret Glennon, a regular contributor to this magazine, recently asked dryly whether Mark Thatcher and his ugly band of associates would be dressed in orange boiler suits and incarcerated for the next thirty years for their attempt to stage a coup in Equatorial Guinea and steal the country’s oil wealth. She knew, of course, that such punishment is reserved for those who are opposed to US and British imperialism and does not apply to promoters of untrammeled capitalism. The scale of the plot is staggering nevertheless and includes a list of Europe's powerful and wealthy including it appears, Gianfranco Cocogna, a grandson of Mussolini’s minister of finance. What is equally amazing is that this band of robber baron got caught. Surely they must have known that these types of operations are best left to the CIA. It’s not unusual for thieves to try and outdo each other and perhaps these Europeans thought that they could steal a little march on their competitors in the US. It hasn’t worked this time but they will probably try again. The only sure way to defeat them is to defeat Imperial Assessment

The Red Coats are coming

The redcoats were welcomed back to Mayo in July 2004, thanks to the Dublin government and its ineffable minister of Defence Michael Smith. Under the guise of reconciliation, a ceremony was held to 'honour' Sergeant Major Cornelius Coughlan of the British Army. A man who had helped enforce the barbarity of Victorian imperialism in the sub-continent of India was lauded for his so-called bravery by the Fianna Fail party and its army. Present too was the British ambassador to Ireland - although after this event it might be best to describe him as the current Viceroy.

Cornelius Coughlan of the British Army of occupation in India was decorated for his part in subduing an uprising in 1857 against the inhumanity of British rule in the sub-continent. He was a vital cog in a brutal machine that dominated a major part of the world including the very country and county in which he was born. Ten years prior to Coughlan's war against the people of India, his rmy had guaranteed the safe passage of food from his native County Mayo during the Great Hunger - the worst disaster ever to strike Ireland and Mayo suffered most of all. As food was exported from Ireland, the Redcoat garrisons ensured that the starving wretches were unable to expropriate the grain that could have saved them.

In every decade of the 18th Century, Redcoats protected the landlords' eviction parties as they cleared a hapless peasantry from their tiny holdings. And they did their worst in Mayo until Michael Davit and the Land League forced the British regime in Ireland to accept a different social order.

Nor of course was the pernicious influence of the Redcoats confined to Mayo. In his last major interview before he died, Dan Breen recalled how in his youth the British would send their troops route marching through the countryside in order to 'show the flag and subdue the natives by a demonstration of the Empire's armed might'.

Great Britain's imperial army brought nothing but misery and destruction wherever it went. There is no good reason to honour or excuse it. Many of its soldiers were poor men who joined in order to escape poverty and starvation but the same can be said of a lot of armies and it is never a justification for their deeds.

The fact remains, as this magazine has said before, that it is not possible to give state honours to a soldier without affording honour to his army, its cause and to those who controlled it. We do no service to those unfortunate people who through penury joined the imperial British Army, by elevating their actions to a heroic position.

Paisley and the Provos

Could it really work? John McAnulty takes a jaundiced view of the current talks

The nationalist festivals in Belfast and Derry have often been used by Sinn Fein to acclimatise their followers to new twists and turns of policy. This August in Derry the key event was the debate with Dennis Bradley off the policing board, a debate which moved forward Sinn Fein's slow progress towards full blooded support for the police. However the historic announcement was made by Gerry Adams during the West Belfast Festival, when he announced, as I predicted some time ago, that the next stage in the Republican capitulation to the British would be the disbandment of the IRA.

Almost more interesting than the announcement itself was the lack of opposition from within the Provisional Movement. Rank and file IRA members reacted with demoralised bewilderment, while the political cadre of new Sinn Fein responded with quiet but silent approval.

These responses can be explained. The rank and file, supporters above all of a military leadership, simply lack the political training that would enable them to resist. Their experience is of the discipline of a secret army rather than the different currents and debates of traditional working-class organisations. For the new middle class supporters the return of a Stormont assembly would mean grants and patronage - many of them are already on the payroll of the various community groups that have blossomed as tranche after tranche of 'peace funding' rolls in. Many full-time Sinn Fein officials are paid directly by the British government as research staff in the Stormont assembly and have a direct interest in the return of that assembly.

What is harder to explain was the quiet certainty among the Sinn Fein members that it would all work - that the unstable structures of the old Good Friday agreement, collapsed by the bigot Trimble with the support of the British, would be stable with a coalition of Sinn Fein and the even more bigoted DUP.

One major element is that the motor which is driving the process today is the unconditional surrender of the Republicans. Gerry Adams speaks of testing the DUP, of removing the excuse that the IRA presents to political unionism. Behind all this gobbledegook is the reality that the testing of Unionism requires nothing from them. All the action falls on the Republicans: decommissioning, disbandment, acceptance of the Northern state, support for the sectarian police force. This headlong surrender is of course widely welcomed by the London government, the Dublin government and by their Unionist enemies. Behind the scenes there are warm words of support and promises and guarantees of reward. Unfortunately for the Republican leadership unconditional surrender is now the price for entering negotiations, not the conclusion of them, and they seem blind to the fact that the cautious public welcome from the DUP leadership is accompanied by stern warnings that the period of negotiation following their surrender will last a long time.

One would expect that Sinn Fein, knowing the record of the DUP, would be highly suspicious that the time would indeed be very long before they would agree to Catholics, no matter how tame, in government. What the

Republicans appear to have done is to put their faith in the corruption of the DUP and in their own practice of corruption and sectarian horse trading in the local councils. In the councils the practice is wholly sectarian, with the two parties working amicably together to divide up the spoils of office and the patronage that flows from it. This sectarian partnership also flourishes in the community organisations, where very often grants have a cross community requirement - that is that the groups pretend they have some common practice to attract funds while in reality splitting them down the middle.

This belief in the corruption of the DUP - that the real DUP places power and the bribes of office above its sectarian programme - has been theorised as the "modernisation" of the DUP. In this theory the party leader, Ian Paisley, has only figurehead status and his rural base has faded into an insignificant rump. The urban leadership under deputy leader Peter Robinson is seen as paying only lip service to the uncompromising sectarianism of the party and to be essentially pragmatic, willing to take any step to guarantee their place in government.

In addition, Sinn Fein's confidence in their ability to regain ministerial seats in administering the Northern colony is firmly based on the changing nature of the party and the consciousness of its members. New Sinn Fein is beginning to be mocked as Ogra Fianna Fail. It is more and more seen as a party for defending Catholic privileges within the sectarian state, copying all the dishonesty and clientelist practice of the bigger nationalist party in the Southern state. As Ogra Fianna Fail, it now fully accepts the sectarian logic of the Northern state and has begun to assume that the sectarian division of society is both natural and stable.

Finally it should be argued that Sinn Fein believe a stable sectarian settlement can be achieved because the Dublin, London and Washington governments want it to be achieved. The broad coalition that Adams argued had been built against unionism has long ago proved to be an alliance to defend unionism and the partition of the island and long ago squeezed the life out of any democratic sentiments that might be held by the republican leadership.

On one element - the extent of their own surrender, the Republicans can be absolutely confident. The constant drift to the right in the terms for settlement and the ever increasing demands on the Republicans themselves was once wittily characterised by former deputy leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, Seamus Mallon, as "kicking the dog to see if it was dead". The dog is very definitely dead. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that some bewildered band of revolutionaries might not, in years to come, emerge from the corpse off the Provisional republican movement. What can be ruled out now is any mass revolt in defence of the traditional Republican programme of democratic revolution. This is ruled out by the completeness of the republican surrender, by the absence of any sizeable Republican political opposition and by the collapse of consciousness among Republican supporters. It is true that, as the new middle class support for Sinn Fein has become more fervent, so also their traditional base becomes more demoralised. However that demoralisation has led to demobilisation and withdrawal from politics rather than the construction of an opposition.

It is in their analysis of Unionism and Loyalism that the Republicans go badly wrong. They draw upon their experience in the councils and see a

pragmatic DUP willing to do deals. They forget that the councils are essentially powerless and were rendered powerless by the British because of the rabid nature of their sectarianism whenever allowed to exercise any influence. The constraints on council business are such that the only way to get anything done is by striking sectarian deals. The republicans ignore the fact that, even on the councils, whenever given the opportunity the DUP immediately revert to type and exercise the rawest form of sectarian privilege.

The very nature of the DUP in relation to the Official unionists is defined by a gradient of sectarian viciousness. The Official Unionists, as the bourgeois party, are under no direct threat from nationalists. They need sectarianism to keep control of the state and to discipline and divide the working class, but the fact that they operate at a distance from the frontline makes them slightly more dispassionate than the petty-bourgeois DUP who, scrambling for sectarian advantage over their Catholic counterparts and charged with the role of foreman over Protestant workers, need to enforce the harshest code of religious hatred and bring to bear the strictest discipline on Protestant 'Lundys' willing to live at peace with their neighbour.

It's the success of this strategy that has enabled the DUP to become the majority party of unionism and bring down the Good Friday agreement. Why then should they put their success at risk by constructing a new agreement that throws a lifeline to Sinn Fein that puts the republican bums back in ministerial seats? The DUP are able to justify pragmatism in the council on the grounds that there is no alternative. In their eyes, and the eyes of their supporters, there will always be an alternative to having Sinn Fein in Government.

That leaves the modernisation argument. It is true that the DUP has changed over the decades, but it would be a mistake to think that it has evolved. It began as a party of theural petty-bourgeois, supported by he lowest dregs of the urban underclass and as essentially a political voice for Paisley's Free Presbyterian church. The continued decay of Official Unionism has allowed it to expand into the professional middle class and win the support of sections of the working class. Membership of the party is now no longer co-incident with membership of the church.

The reason why these changes cannot be considered to be an evolution of the party is because there has been no change in policy. The party is united by its unbending defence of sectarian privilege, by Ian Paisley and by very little else. Without Paisley the most likely outcome would be a fragmentation of the network, the rural section moving away from the urban and the Free Presbyterians from the other churches.

It is not the case that a 'progressive' layer would emerge. Robinson and his followers are not a raucous as Paisley, but they are no less bigoted.

The leadership of Sinn Fein hasn't even thought to apply the Sherlock Holmes test - of the dog that didn't bark in the night. When Peter Robinson makes encouraging noises urging Ogra Fianna Fail to do more his comments are not followed by hysterical outbursts or threats of a split from the rural wing of the party - the 'singing pastor', William McCrea is famously even more bigoted than Paisley. Why is he silent? The answer is self-evident. No-one in the DUP believes for a moment that there is any chance of a coalition government with Sinn Fein.

The forlorn hope is that capitalism and imperialism might step in and make the DUP do the decent thing, but history is against us. Never in the history of Ireland or in the recent history of the Good Friday Agreement has capitalism and imperialism played any such progressive role. The fact is that London, Dublin and Washington are all united in supporting a settlement based around the partition of Ireland. The unionists are necessary to maintain that partition. Sinn Fein is not necessary. Imperialist pressure will be applied to Sinn Fein, to ensure they go further and do more. A place in Stormont – but subordinate

It's through this mechanism that a new deal might emerge. The DUP are bigots, but they are not stupid. They want stability. They want their place in government. They do not stand for holy war. Their state has a place for Catholics - the thing is - it's a subordinate position.

So, negotiations will start with the disbandment and support for the police, but they will not end there. The DUP will be demanding that their programme be the basis for a settlement and Tony Blair has already indicated that if a settlement is not reached he will support the Unionists, tear up the Good Friday agreement in its entirety and disband Stormont.

The DUP offer two alternatives. They can deal with Sinn Fein in the councils, so why not have a supercouncil? It won't be a government but there will be plenty of patronage and committees. If Sinn Fein aren't happy with this then why not a majority rule government? After all it brought stability to the old Stormont! Again the Shinners can have some committees.

If Sinn Fein buy such a deal then the Stormont assembly can live again with the prospect of stability held out as the golden justification for all the lies and betrayals. Unfortunately for the British and their allies neither scheme offers a stable solution. A supercouncil does not meet the needs of the British. Their chief requirement is that the colonial nature of the state be hidden behind the facade of a local democracy. The first plan would leave them as a very visible colonial administration, to blame for all the crises and convulsions that will take place.

On the other hand sectarian supremacy would not be stable the second time round because it was not stable the first time. What kept the first Stormont stable was not sectarian supremacy but a vicious state repression. The Unionist founders of Stormont pored over parish maps to draw up an artificial state with a Catholic minority small enough to be cowed by the repression. They rejected the legitimacy that a nine County state based on the ancient province of Ulster might have given the new structures because they reckoned that repressing a minority of over 40 per cent would lead to permanent instability. But this is the size of the Catholic minority today.

The calculation is that the new structures should be stable because the Catholics would have a share of sectarian privilege. In reality the situation would select for the most vicious defenders of sectarian privilege on each side. Given that there would not be enough resources to go round it would not take too long for the situation to spiral out of control.

Most telling of all, the economic realities of the North of Ireland have not changed. The economy remains a basket case. The present quietitude is obtained by bribing everyone in sight, hardly a long term strategy and, in the absence of revolt, workers in the North can add to the endemic poverty a

series of new attacks-regional pay for teachers and civil servants and massive bills to pay for the privatisation of public services.

The task of those opposing the sectarian settlement in the North from the left is not one of trying to chip away at a stable solution. It lies in constructing an alternative that meets the needs of working people and in constructing a working-class movement across the island as a whole strong enough to defeat the capitalist and imperialist sponsors of the current scheme.

In lieu of victory

Patricia Campbell examines the phenomenal interest in gaelic football in nationalist areas of the North

For the last ten years Ulster has dominated gaelic football, and football has dominated Ulster. Armagh defeated Kerry in 2002 and then Tyrone went on to win the Cup from Armagh in 2003 to ensure it stayed north of the border. This year Ulster teams did very well once again. Four of their teams reached the quarter-finals with Fermanagh being the biggest surprise of all. They have never won any title in football yet they made it to the semi-finals and they didn't go quietly. There was much talk in 2003 about the Ulster final that was also an All-Ireland final. This came at the end of a decade that had saw five of the nine Ulster counties win the championship. Kerry's former manager, Paidi O'Se drew the conclusion (that many others had chosen not to mention) that Ulster's success and an end to the years of conflict, was more than just a co-incidence. He talked of how men once played football while British helicopters hovered over their heads.

Elsewhere, pundits from the southern counties, unwilling to comprehend the new trend, stand guilty of prejudice against Ulster teams. Unable to accept the province's success, they described Northern football as 'ugly', a different kind of game. Few of them were willing to look as far as Paidi O'Se.

What is it about football anyhow that evokes such emotion in players and followers? There is such buzz and excitement as players fight like young warriors to seek possession of the ball or eventually gain their score. However, for many supporters and players it is about much more than that, it is about pride in ther local area, country, or even county.

The phenomena of sport-induced passion is not confined to Ireland. The spectacle is worldwide. Emotional scenes displayed by Chinese fans recently made world headlines after Japan defeated China. There were scenes of bloodied faces and riots after the game in Beijing. A young Chinese fan passionately told reporters, "Japan should not have won, they have never apologised for invading our country, our elderly generation was bullied and humiliated by them, we should be able to beat them". This was an amazing portrayal of political displacement. For Chinese fans this sporting defeat was about much more than football.

So to in England. The behaviour of English football fans was examined in a recent BBC radio programme. Studio guests in their analysis suggested that football could be viewed as a form of 'displaced politics'. They expressed the view that some fans felt a sense of solidarity and a sense of community when they come together, fervently supporting their team with loyalty and enthusiasm. A view was offered that football violence was how many working class young men expressed their powerlessness, thus a diversion from the real issues in their lives and therefore a displacement of politics.

Could it be therefore, that 'displaced politics' is responsible for Ulster's dominance in gaelic football? There are those who would portray this new phenomenon as a 'spin off' from the Peace Process and even go as far as to suggest it is part of peace dividends. The display of flags and bunting,

an expression of community support for the team is not a new thing for any County but the level it has reached in Ulster Counties is almost unprecedented in its intensity. This type of behaviour has a resonance that harks back to the days of political strife and struggle. Most people in Ireland are familiar with the Sam Maguire cup and the man it was named after. Born in County Cork in 1879, he was a prominent figure in the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and even swore a young Michael Collins into the movement. Croke Park too is also steeped in history. One of its stands was named after Micheal Hogan, a Tipperary footballer gunned down by the infamous 'Black and Tans' as they ran amok in the stadium in November 1920 during a football match, murdering players and spectators as dozens of others were injured. That atrocity became known as 'Bloody Sunday'. Steeped in such a history, the GAA is almost the perfect vehicle to express a form of extreme Irish Nationalism.

Undoubtedly something of this nature has emerged over the past decade in the north. After years of heartbreaking struggle, the British connection and partition remains. Psychologically republican people needed to believe that they could win something. They needed to seek consolation for political defeat and they found a substitute in gaelic football. Winning the Sam Maguire cup was a measure of solace, it eased the pain for those that had tasted the bitterness of political reversal. There was something Freudian in the parading of the Sam Maguire trophy around the corridors of Stormont – the very symbol of Britain's administration in Ireland.

Moreover, gaelic football has enabled the nationalist community and their political parties cover over internal divisions as republicans and SDLP supporters mingle in common purpose. This is not the first time that the GAA has covered over bitter political differences. In post civil war Kerry, football served as a mechanism for hiding the wounds of conflict. Free Staters and republicans played on the same football teams and eventually there developed a convenient fairytale that Kerry could be brought together on a football field and ignore the betrayals that had led to bloodshed in 1923.

There are echoes of this now in the north as thousands of Tyrone, Armagh, Derry, Fermanagh etc supporters unite in passionate support for a county football team. For 25 years these people were bitterly divided as republicans battled against fearful odds to break the British connection and end years of undemocratic government in the 6 counties. Throughout this period of conflict, the SDLP position did enormous damage to the republican cause and was used to excuse the shameful position of collaboration that was adopted in Dublin. Now, nationalist political parties find it necessary to promote pan nationalism and to pretend that the nationalist and republican communities have ever been as one.

The GAA and its membership are not part of any covert conspiracy to promote pan nationalism or the agenda of any political party in the North. However, the hysteria generated by the All-Ireland championship facilitates the expression of feelings that are almost subconscious and that most people are probably unaware of holding. It is perhaps a useful and necessary process and mechanism but one has to ask whether in the long run it is better to paper over the reality of political reversal and the actuality of class divisions than to acknowledge them openly.

Wellington claimed that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton but he still knew that sporting glory may assist victory but cannot be taken in lieu of it. A time to learn from the British?

Lough Neagh Fishermen's Association reasserts its position

Following the reactivation of the Lough Neagh Fishermen's Trade Union. (which was reported in Issue14 Fourthwrite). After a lengthy campaign, a Certificate of Independence was achieved by this union. The union had been disbanded in 1993 and was replaced by an employer's federation using the same name. A number of fishermen were discontented by the fact that their Union, which was established in 1963 to protect their rights, was disbanded without any consultations with them, furthermore they complained that there was a total lack of transparency regarding the financial holdings of the Union. The fishermen reclaimed their Union last year. Under the leadership of leading Trade Unionist,

Joe Bowers, (appointed as the groups secretary and regular Fourthwrite contributor, Patricia Campbell, appointed as Chairperson) the union applied for a Certificate of Independence in 2003. A complaint was also lodged with the Certification Officer regarding the Union's financial affairs.

The Lough Neigh Fishermen's Co-operative headed by the Reverend Oliver Kennedy, had been in charge of the fishermen's Union, strenuously opposed the granting of the Certificate of Independence to the Union. The union welcome the fact that a Government appointed Inspector is currently investigating the financial affairs of their Union, the state of which remain unknown to its members. They are ready for the battle and they view this new development as significant. Fishermen are optimistic that they can achieve their aims, protect the industry and that working conditions will improve.

The trains don't even run on time

Siobhan O'Dwyer looks at the hastening degeneration of the British Labour Party

The great friendship between Tony Blair and Silvio Berlusconi is not only a matter of personal choice for Mr Blair but it also says a lot about New Labour's lack of a political ideology.

The Labour Party in Britain came from a very different political tradition than New Labour and the elevation of business and capital as a political entity epitomised by Mr. Berluscoi's Italy. The mantra created by Margaret Thatcher that "There is No Alternative" has become the driving force in politics today illustrated by new Labour, new Sinn Fein and the new Republican Party in the USA. The importance of having real political idea's and debating and testing different ways of organising the world, the state and the community is one that is no longer respected or accepted. The debates that went on in the old Labour Party about privatisation, re-distribution of wealth, the importance of the welfare state etc., as opposed to the Conservative vision of supremacy of the needs of capital and business are no longer seen as valid or important. The fights on these issues even if they seemed old hat and never ending at times were at least a real debate and struggle about opposing views of how to organise the world to deliver a better system for the majority of people.

Today, New Labour base their politics on the need to please as many of the middle classes as much of the time while ensuring that the problems of organising society in this way are increasingly blamed on individual irresponsibility and community dysfunction. The draconian changes to the criminal justice system is just one example of the complete lack of a vision or belief that you can change society for the better and instead, depends on building more prison laces, imprisoning more people for longer periods of time, eroding civil liberties and human rights and then blaming offenders, including children, for their own situation. The creation of numerous moral panics also fits into the mould of blame and knee jerk reaction politics. New Labour send out dire warnings about everything from smoking, obesity, cot death and child abuse, then they tell us we are all culpable in these problems and the solution is more regulations, policing by health, social services and most importantly our own snooping on our neighbours and policing of ourselves.

The problem today is not that capital is operating from a position of strength but that there is no intellectual or organised opposition to the current system. The death of radical politics is as much about the death of real intellectual thought, debate and commitment to radical change by all in political life, including the disenchanted Left. Today's politicians all agree on the continuation of the current system of organisation while disagreeing on some aspects of the nitty gritty like whether there should be a zero tolerance policy after three alleged offences or two. Those who purport to be radical and left wing must refuse to accept these parameters for debate and put forward challenging, radical idea's and options. The demand must be for people who still believe that there are different ways of organising society and the world,

to begin again to formulate those idea's and make them relevant to today's situation.

In the meantime, Mr Blair and Mr Berlusconi continue to enjoy their time in the sun without any real challenge while the rest of us fade further and further into the shade.

A Defining of republicanism

Fourthwrite held its now annual meeting at the West Belfast Festival and drew a large crowd to hear former loyalist politician David Adams and historian and author Brian Hanley discusses the definitions of Irish republicanism.

Fourthwrite magazine sponsored its now annual meeting at the West Belfast Festival on 6th August in the Culturlan centre on the Falls Road. The theme of this year's discussion was, why are you calling them republican, and it sought to unravel many of the questions surrounding the definition of what is Irish republicanism. In order to broaden the scope of the investigation, the *Fourthwrite* team asked two well-known figures to attend and give their own opinions on the subject.

With a view to ascertaining the views of the unionist/loyalist community, David Adams - former loyalist politician and currently broadcaster and journalist, was invited as one of the speakers. And although the climate in West Belfast has changed dramatically over the past ten years, it was still quite remarkable to see one of those who had sat at the table with Gusty Spence and announced the Loyalist ceasefire of 1994, participate at a debate amongst a predominantly republican audience in the Irish language's head quarters in West Belfast. Whether Mr. Adams felt any apprehension about his location is impossible to say but he certainly did not show it if he did.

Joining him on the platform was university lecturer and published author Brian Hanley. Mr. Hanley lectures in history in NUI Maynooth and has written among other works, The IRA 1927-37. This book is by far the best account of the organisation in that period and details the Left/Right struggle within the movement at the time. Mr. Hanley contributed his academic expertise to the analysis and thus added a more dispassionate view of republicanism than is often the case in such debates.

A Limerick man with a grandparent who participated in the Black and Tan war and a native of Lisburn with impeccable unionist credentials provided an interesting pairing for the evening. *Fourthwrite's* Patricia Campbell chaired the event and the magazine editor Tommy McKearney joined the platform to give the view of a republican activist.

David Adams

Mr. Adams began by noting the disciplined nature of the IRA's cessation and saying that he appreciated the fact that Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness and the collective leadership of the mainstream republican movement have stuck to the task of maintaining the Peace Process.

Nevertheless, he did point to some difficulties he experienced in trying to come to terms with what republicanism stands for today.

"…for me, Irish republicanism often seems to be a mass of contradictions," he said. Yet, " I've met people from right across the spectrum who claim to be Irish republican - from right-wing nationalist and conservative bigots to liberal advocates of free speech and left-wing socialists - and people from all points in between."

For him this begs the question; ”just where on earth does the heart of Irish republicanism lie? With Wolfe Tone and Henry Joy McCracken, with Padraig Pearse or with James Connolly? Or, nowadays, is it beating in the breast of anyone that dons a Glasgow Celtic football shirt and knows the words of a few rebel songs? Asking if Irish republicanism is really only another name for Irish nationalism and really about nothing more than nailing six counties on to twenty-six and hoping for the best, he observed that a political title, on its own, means nothing - it’s the underlying ideology that matters.

He referred to the dissenting tradition within republicanism asking: “Is one of the cornerstones of Irish republicanism not supposed to be about the dissenting tradition? About people not only being free to say, I disagree, but, more importantly, for it to be safe for them to do that.

He then examined the physical force element within Irish republicanism. “ With republicanism meaning of the people both literally and supposedly in practical terms, does it follow then, that anyone opposing by violent means the democratically stated wish of the Irish people, automatically relinquishes the right to describe themselves as an Irish republican?”

In terms of Irish Unity Mr. Adams said that; “ I want to learn more about Irish republicanism. Do the principles espoused by Tone, McCracken, Munro and all the other United Irishmen and women, amount to nothing more than the annual cap-doffing pilgrimage to Bodenstown. Do they have no relevance to today’s world - just different people, in a different time, dealing with different circumstances? Disowned and quickly expunged from history by their co-religionists, are they now deemed irrelevant by the Irish republicans who have come after them? Or, if they aren’t irrelevant, and their notion of building an Ireland for everyone from the bottom up, and making sure the foundations for that new dispensation are planted firmly within all communities – is still as indispensable a requirement today as it was then: does that not make John Hume right all along?

With his mantra of – It’s uniting people, not territory that is the primary challenge. Was he not right on the mark, when saying that the primary concern of all republicans today, should not be to transport – lock, stock and barrel – Northern Ireland’s problems in to a unitary state in the belief, like Mr. McCawber, that something is bound to turn up. But rather, that the primary concern should be the uniting of people - and that the real task at hand for Irish republicans, is convincing their Protestant neighbours, their fellow Irish men and women, of the efficacy of the republican position.

David Adams concluded by saying that; ”These are just some of the things that excite my interest when thinking of Irish republicanism. I’m sure though, as the debate widens, more issues will arise.”

Brian Hanley

Brian Hanley opened his address saying: “ I want to begin by suggesting that we accept all the competing claims to republicanism as valid; or rather that we don’t engage in what is for me a rather sterile debate over what constitutes a ‘real republican.’ If we can accept that the spectrum of people using the term republican is diverse and essentially accept that they mean it, whether we all agree with them or not, we may avoid some unnecessary confusion.

Secondly I am going to emphasise what I think are positive contributions republicanism has made to Irish and international politics; not because I don't accept that there have been negatives; in fact there have been many; the almost overwhelming tendency to associate Irish nationalism as synonymous with republicanism; or the common mistake of assuming that we are the only type of republicans in existence. The tendency among many republicans to associate military proficiency with republican principle, leading inevitably to disillusion; linked to that the powerful cult of personality (the Michael Collins factor); finally and mindful of the location of our meeting an unspoken (maybe not so unspoken) suggestion that speaking the Irish language and supporting Gaelic games have some intrinsic link to republicanism; thereby implicitly excluding many Protestants.

I think the most important points are that at its best Irish republicanism has been an emancipatory doctrine; egalitarian and inclusive and profoundly international rather than nationalist, emancipatory not simply in terms of wanting independence from Britain but of wanting democracy. One of the many innovations that the influence of French and American republicanism had on the United Irishmen was that the desire for independence was linked to a republican form of government, not to a desire for an Irish royal dynasty or a fairer English monarch or the protection of the Spanish or French royals (as some popular Irish rebellions in the past had been). Probably most saliently the founders of Irish republicanism desired the unity of 'Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter' a cliché, much abused but true nonetheless. Tone's case was strengthen by the French Revolution's destruction of the link between the aristocracy and the French Catholic Church; 'has not the Pope been burned in effigy in France?' he asked.

The recent debate on citizenship in the south brought to mind another Protestant republican, Thomas Davis and his views on Irish nationality, again heavily influenced by contemporary European thought; his view of Irish nationality-not merely embracing 'Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter' or even 'Milesian and Cromwellian'not only the 'Irishman of a hundred generations' but the 'stranger who is within our gates.' Does Irish republicanism have anything relevant to say on questions of race, culture, economics? Historically of course republicans have often been involved in movements for economic justice; the IRB and the Land League, Connolly and the trade unions, the Republican Congress of the 1930s, although of course all of these examples are open to critique.

Michael Quill founded the New York Transport Union, a union that was not simply distinguished by its aggressive stance on economic matters but by its support for racial equality in an era when this was far from popular. What both Ford and Quill had in common was that they rooted their radicalism in Irish republicanism.

In discussion we may grapple with issues of class, gender or region in relation to republicanism. Despite the very real failings and problems with republicanism, (and is there any other ideology that can claim to be 100% successful?) it remains a potentially vibrant and emancipatory doctrine in the 21st century.

Dispute at Dublin Bus

Dublin Bus recently suspended three of its employees for distributing promotional material of the Independent Workers Union (IWU). As a result of these suspensions, IWU Assistant National Secretary, Ray O'Reilly, accused the company of employing McCarthyite tactics. Fourthwrite has interviewed Mr O'Reilly and his story can be read below.

Fourthwrite: Why are many employees of Dublin Bus unhappy with the situation at their work?

Ray O'Reilly: There are many reasons why these workers are so unhappy with their conditions. For a start there is a feeling among many drivers that the management style is heavy handed and overbearing. It is not unknown for workers to be shouted at, treated with little respect and on occasions men have been told to hurry up and were even physically pushed onto their buses. This type of behaviour was never acceptable and is certainly not tolerable in the 21st century.

Another area causing grave concern centres on the interpretation of what is known as the Assault Intervention Programme (AIP). In spite of the fact that there is no decrease in the number of violent attacks being carried out on bus drivers, the company has cut back on its provision of treatment to employees who have been victims of assault. Currently the company is attempting to introduce a policy whereby management will interpret the findings of a medical specialist as to whether a bus driver is fit to return to work or not. This practice will further reduce time out for treatment. Moreover, compensation for drivers out on sick leave due to assault has now been reduced in order to force the victim to return to work due to financial considerations. There is a feeling that much of this meanness is being carried out with a view to privatising the company. Bus drivers say that management wishes to crunch down on costs while simultaneously pretending that the assault issue is no longer a significant one.

A third area of contention is the seat in the drivers cab. Bus drivers insist on the need for a seat that rotates to accommodate collection of fares and that can also be adjusted to the height and weight of the individual etc. Several surveys have been carried out here and in Great Britain examining injuries sustained by bus drivers. It is widely recognised that in the absence of a suitable seat that spinal difficulties becomes an occupational hazard for people working in this field. Several years ago, a Yorkshire transport company found that two out of every three of its bus drivers suffered some form of spinal pain. There has been a long running campaign demanding an improvement to this vital piece of equipment. As far back as the early '90's, Bill McCamley of SIPTU was highlighting the need for improvement. Over a decade later Bus Eireann refuses to grant this vital piece of equipment to its employees.

Arising too from the company's cavalier attitude towards its most valuable asset – its hard working staff – is it's less than generous treatment of retired bus drivers. Dublin Bus staff received substantially less on retirement than other employees in the public sector.

In short, it is our opinion that the management of Dublin Bus is adopting this hard-nosed, macho style of Thatcherite management in order to prepare the company for a sell off to private investors. Working people are being badly treated in order to make financial gain for a handful of wealthy individuals.

Fourthwrite: Why has a number of Bus Eireann staff decided to fight these issues through the Independent Workers Union rather than through the larger trade union SIPTU or the NBRU?

Ray O'Reilly: There is a widely held belief among a number of workers within Bus Eireann that the larger, embedded unions are quite simply far too close to management. They share the same social milieu, often go socialising together and seem to be more a partnership than people representing different interests. There is a suspicion, unproven as yet I must admit, but real nevertheless, that some members of the embedded trade unions may welcome privatisation since it would almost certainly involve some form of employee share option that might very well benefit a small percentage of well placed workers. This has happened where other nationalised companies were privatised and it allowed for the sell-off to take place without major opposition from the workforce. We know, of course, that this type of 'sweetheart dealing' is usually followed by substantial lay-offs as the new management embarks on a vicious programme of 'rationalisation'. Bluntly speaking, many ordinary workers are very cynical about the cosy relationship that exists between some union officials and management. It is worth keeping in mind also that we are now into a second decade of social partnership and workers know very well that trade unions and management and government are very cozy, too cozy indeed.

Fourthwrite: What is the Independent Workers Union hoping to do about this situation?

Ray O'Reilly: The IWU has no intention of acting opportunistically in this situation. We are not attempting to poach members for the sake of building numbers. Our union is an independent body determined to offer working people the best service we possibly can. In this context we have been asked by workers within Dublin Bus to represent them and to provide what assistance we can. The IWU has not sought collective bargaining rights within this company nor has it sought to displace any other trade union but we are determined to afford every protection under the law to workers that ask us for this assistance. Workers are entitled to combine for their own protection and in their own self-interest and the IWU will concede no ground on this point. It is worth pointing out that all of these bus drivers are very responsible people. In the course of their day-to-day work they have the lives and well-being of up to eighty passengers in their hands. These people are well able to assess a situation and will not be misled by anyone.

Fourthwrite: Is it not the case that a union dispute within Dublin Bus might actually hasten privatisation?

Ray O'Reilly: This is an old chestnut that is promoted by friends of big business. Union activity does not lead to privatisation. The absence of an organised working class merely encourages capitalists to seize all the assets and use them to their own advantage. If you fight you might lose but if you don't fight you can't possibly win.

Fourthwrite: Are you trying to provoke industrial action in this dispute?

Ray O'Reilly: The IWU is, like the bus drivers, responsible. Our union may be Ireland's newest trade union but we are organised by some very experienced and knowledgeable trade union activists. An industrial dispute - a strike - would have to be viewed as a failure. Naturally no trade union of any value would ever rule out industrial action but that is far from saying that we want one. We are looking at a situation here where workers are asking for very reasonable demands. They carry a great deal of responsibility every minute that they take their vehicles out on the roads and are entitled to proper protection such as adequate equipment and also decent care if injured either accidentally or deliberately. they also are entitled to be treated with the dignity and respect that a hard working and reliable group of people deserve.

Fourthwrite: Some have said that if the IWU were to grow in size that it will be 'just as bad as the rest'?

Ray O'Reilly: This is just a cheap jibe. A union is as strong or as good as its members. We have excellent members and a dedicated national executive. I am very confident that the IWU will stay on the proper course.

Solidarity message

With the threat to the jobs of workers in Aer Lingus (in order to assist with the Management Buy Out of the national airline) Ray O'Reilly issued the statement carried below on behalf o his union.

A Message to all Aer Lingus and Aer Rianta Workers

Do not be intimidated out of your jobs. Think collectively and act as one. United you cannot be defeated by Willie Walsh, Seamus Brennan, Mary Harney, the Government or their masters and mistresses in IBEC.

You and those before you have built Aer Lingus and Aer Rianta into one of the best National Carriers and Airport Companies, not alone of Europe but of the World. You hold and protect these companies for the Irish people. Working people are depending on you to save a vital part of our national industrial heritage and to stem the tide of creeping privatisation. Be proud of what you have done and be brave in the coming struggle. Remember you are not alone. Workers everywhere are looking to you and are ready to support you. Your fight is our fight!

The need for redundancies is a myth and a villainous lie put about by the Government and their I.B.E.C. puppet masters and mistresses. Your job is not something bestowed on you as a gift by Walsh, Brennan, Harney or the Government. Your job is yours as a right. Fight and fight again for it!

Raymond O'Reilly,
Asst. National Secretary
Independent Workers Union

He hasn't altogether gone away you know

Margaret McKearney examines the drift away from militancy by the Provos

Four years after the order to dump weapons signalled the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923, an influential section of Republicans debated their political future. It was their considered opinion that public enthusiasm for the abstentionist policies of Sinn Féin was an ephemeral phase. Moreover, they determined that eventually the majority of their electorate would turn to politicians who were in position to enact legislation and to distribute political largess. They reasoned that it was time to get into power but that this had to be achieved without alienation of their Republican power base. The debate continued throughout 1925 as the Free State continued to stamp its authority on the twenty-six counties. Furthermore, as all government jobs required an oath of allegiance, the best (and indeed often the only jobs) were going to Treaty supporters. This directly led to many Republicans being forced to emigrate, thus further eroding the anti-Treaty base. To Republicans the major stumbling block was the oath of allegiance to the British Monarch that was required to take a seat in Leinster House. The only answer, thought this group, was to win enough seats to ensure power, get into the Free State Parliament and dismantle the Treaty.

To enter parliament, De Valera and his supporters argued that the oath was a meaningless jumble of words and that Republicans could indeed take a seat in Leinster House with their principles, honour and integrity intact. However the IRA's Army Council would not countenance such a departure and on March 11 1926 De Valera resigned as President of Sinn Féin and began organising what became Fianna Fáil. However, the new party still retained close links with their former comrades and it has been suggested that in 1926 when De Valera split with the IRA that the two organisations 'operated as much in tandem as in conflict'.

When iconic former IRA man Dan Breen took his seat and the oath in April 1927 it sent shockwaves throughout the Republican community. However this still did not cause a decisive parting of the ways between the two anti-Treaty groups. Repression by the Free State government ensured that the Republicans had a vested interest in seeing De Valera and his party break the influence of the Pro-Treaty forces. Throughout the remainder of the decade Republicans did little to stop the rise of Fianna Fáil and indeed great swathes of their supporters and members assisted and voted for the party. By March 1932 De Valera was in power, yet still dependant on the good will of his past comrades. He moved quickly throughout that year to eradicate this dependency and later he tried to force the IRA to disband.

Fuelled by republican gains, albeit in the guise of Fianna Fáil, the ranks of the IRA was filled to overflowing, so De Valera moved cautiously and pandered to them at first. Courts relaxed their previous harsh sentences and many prisoners were released. In July of that year, to the delight of the Republican ranks and the more militant in the Fianna Fáil party, he embarked on an Economic war against Britain. This and other gestures meant that the

IRA accepted the work of Fianna Fáil and continued to pledge their support to work and vote against the anti-Treatites. De Valera operated a duplicitous policy of free reign to the IRA while continuing to exonerate himself from charges of militancy by publicly disclaiming tolerance or any connection with the armed organisation. The result of these manoeuvrings meant that when he again went to the electorate the following year Fianna Fáil enjoyed a majority, albeit a slim one. With his party firmly in power he began his campaign to crush militant, armed republicanism.

Fast-forward almost forty years and relocate in the six counties. Northern nationalists are fighting for civil liberties, denial of which eventually resulted in a long and bitter war. In the beginning of the war, the Provo's, as the IRA became known colloquially, received help from many in the Fianna Fáil party. The party was left, in the late sixties and early seventies, with very little option but to support northern nationalists. They had convinced their electorate in the south only a few years earlier in an orgy of rose tinted reminiscence that they were the true heirs of the men of 1916 and as the North exploded and the war dragged on through the seventies attempts were made to bring about cessation. During this time there were two truces, the first in the summer of 1972 that lasted less than a fortnight but during which senior IRA leaders met members of the ruling Conservative party, some of these leaders were released from prison in order to negotiate. This truce broke down in July 1972.

Little over two years later in 1975 an attempt was again made to negotiate a cease-fire. This truce was a lengthier affair, though ultimately it also broke down in the closing months of that year. It has been argued though that these months were the real politicising of the Provos. During this truce the Northerners gained a prominence that has lasted to this day. At this time some northern republicans came to realise that power of sorts (if not "The Republic") could be attained if an accommodation with the British and the Unionists could be made. They believed that the portion of power attainable in the Northern Irish state should go not to the predominately conservative and middle class SDLP but the Provos. This shift from traditional republican policy was confirmed six years later when in the aftermath of the Hunger Strikes the "Armalite and the Ballot Box" strategy was unveiled. The Provo's leadership began the tortuous path that would finally end with former IRA men sitting as administrators in Stormont, mirroring the decisions of fifty years earlier by De Valera and his party when they decided to take their seats in Leinster House.

The Provo leadership knew that this process could take many years. The first big salvo fired by the new leadership was ending the abstentionist policy in the South. This move, backed by the IRA, led to a split in the movement and Republican Sinn Féin was founded, however the Provos were well able to take the hit, and indeed were probably content to see the 'Old Guard' exit.

By August 1994 the IRA called a ceasefire. They convinced their supporters that they had won and that "They hadn't gone away" but gradually the provisional IRA conceded more and more ground until it is now a shadow of its former self. As in the twenties, many. This is a very natural worry, everybody wants their children to get on, to get ahead, they want someone else's children to do it, it does not mean that they don't want it just that they

are not prepared to sacrifice anything for their beliefs. They would love to support the republican cause, but feel economically and physically restrained. If they are to prosper, to make a financially rewarding life then that does not involve lengthy prison spells or worse. Therefore, they choose not to support a republican party while the same party is conducting a military campaign. They vote with their heads and not their hearts.

However, many of these people feel guilty for betraying 'the cause'. They feel guilty for voting with their minds and not with their hearts and so at the first available moment when the guns look to be silenced for the foreseeable future, they unburden their guilt and rush to vote for Sinn Féin. They will vote for the republican candidate, regardless of whether their natural interests lie with that party. Some of the areas from which they pull a strong vote should probably be voting labour. This phenomenon was illustrated in Britain in the Eighties, when the well off working orders voted Conservative for promised tax breaks. Now, however, the great thing about Tony Blair is that they can now vote Labour and not loose their tax bonus and Sinn Féin benefit from the same trend.

The second question is, at the moment, to an extent hypothetical, so let us look back at the behaviour of the original constitutional republicans. In the first instance De Valera weakened the IRA by recruiting several hundred volunteers as a special branch of the Garda Síochána, the positions being both permanent and pensionable. He also stemmed the flood of recruits into the IRA by founding a part-time militia that had the plus of being paid and legal. The Dáil passed several bills compensating Republican supporters for property losses during the Civil War. In addition he provided pensions for the wounded and there was talk of a military pension for all retired IRA volunteers which eventually came. Gradually over the following years De Valera and Fianna Fáil lured away both recruits and supporters from the Republican cause and by the end of the decade felt secure enough to use military tribunals against his former comrades to effect internment and ultimately use the death penalty.

What then will the present day constitutional republicans do with their erstwhile ex-comrades? As we go to press Adams and his party are preparing to offer a final surrender to the DUP and place the modern day equivalent of 'Broy's Harriers' at the disposal of Hugh Orde. One-time militants have once again been tamed by the prospect of a job in parliament.

Peoples War in Nepal

by Alec Robertson

Since the first salvoes of the Nepalese People's War were fired in 1996, the drive towards final victory continues. The US has been adamant in its attempt to label the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as a 'terrorist' organisation. At a time when the fictitious 'war on terror', pursued by the US has brought world-wide resistance, the People's War in Nepal stands out as a beacon of secular resistance. Since its inception, pro-imperialist analysts have consistently proved themselves unable to explain how it is that a small force of revolutionaries with only a small number of arms, in seven years have succeeded in "terrorising" the whole of Nepal's rural population.

The Maoist strategy of Prolonged Protracted People's War is greatly suited to semi-colonial countries such as Nepal, the revolutionary fighters surrounding the cities from the countryside by establishing rural base areas. This strategy involves three stages, that of Strategic Defensive, Strategic Equilibrium and finally Strategic Offensive. Stressing the interrelation between political and military struggle, the CPN (M) has extended its influence to all 75 districts of Nepal, eighty percent of the country now being in the hands of the revolutionaries. The country has now been divided into three zones, those of main, guerrilla and propaganda zones. Using the principle of fighting on interior lines to encircle the enemy, the Maoists utilise the strategy of luring the reactionaries into red bases, encircling their forces and delivering death blows at their weakest points.

With the Monarchy and its supporters largely holed-up in Kathmandu, a state of "strategic equilibrium" now exists between the old and dying state represented by the king and the new emerging state under the leadership of the Maoists. During this phase in the struggle, the two states are relatively equal in strength. Increasingly society recognises that there now exists two states in the one country, each retaining its own army and institutions. By its nature, this phase is transitory and unlikely to last long, the People's Liberation Army preparing to resolve the question of revolution by defeating the opposing camp in the final phase, that of strategic offensive. Under the two-states, two armies situation; the monarchists and the parliamentarians have grouped themselves around the Royal Nepalese Army.

Since Gyanendra took power in the aftermath of the infamous Nepali palace massacre, the central goal of the king, his foreign advisors and the Nepalese ruling classes has been to crush the rebellion by force. In October 2002, the king dismissed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and the government, centralising all power in his own hands. In recent months however, the king has re-appointed Deuba to his post, a move believed to be the result of pressure from the US, Europe and India. The collapse of the ceasefire that had lasted for much of 2003, at the end of August, heralded a fierce new wave of fighting across the country.

As the People's War advances the US continues to "co-ordinate" the arming of the monarchy with the UK, Belgium and India, itself playing the main role. Within Nepal, the regime's failure to defeat the PLA on the battlefield appears to have caused it to recognise that it cannot win through

military means alone. This is a view shared (or possibly dictated by) the regime's foreign backers, who recognise that the king is dangerously weak and isolated. The propositions of the Western imperialists however, which would essentially preserve the monarchy, cannot lead to a 'third-way' solution but only to a great political step backward

Events in Nepal have also caused much nervousness in India, frequent articles in the Indian Press expressing the fear that revolution may spread across the border, further inflaming such areas of Jarkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Dandakaranya, where revolutionary war has been growing. On the 20th June 2004, the Indian periodical Kantipur published an article entitled "Possibilities of Indian Intervention in Nepal" by a journalist related to Time magazine's Asian edition. He was to suggest that New Delhi has been asking itself if this is the right time to intervene in Nepal as it did in Bangladesh in 1971 and 1987, and in Sri Lanka during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi.

Chavez retains support of majority for his reforms

by Mags Glennon

In August a massive 94.9% of the electorate of Venezuela voted in the presidential recall referendum, some queuing for up to nine hours to cast their votes. 58% of the people registered their approval of the President, Hugo Chavez, which was higher than his vote when first elected in 1998. The 'recall referendum', allowing citizens to hold their President up for popular approval, was inserted in the 1999 constitution by Mr Chavez himself and Venezuela is the only Western democracy to have such a provision.

Chavez had democratically defeated, for the fourth time, the rich elites who had previously tried to oust him by a CIA backed coup in 2002 and several right wing general strikes which attempted to cripple the country's vital oil industry. They then collected signatures from 20% of the electorate to trigger the referendum, in which they were roundly defeated.

But both George Bush and John Kerry have demonised Chavez as an "anti-democratic" leader. They disapprove of his close relationship with Castro in Cuba and his criticism of US imperialism. Before the referendum Colin Powell called for an "attitude of openness, fairness and transparency", a sermon that could be more usefully applied to the adventures of the US administration abroad and it's elections at home. He also generously conceded that "the United States leaves it up to the Venezuelan people to decide how it will be governed and by whom". Venezuela is one of richest countries in Latin America, it has the world's 5th largest oil reserves and huge deposits of iron, bauxite and gold. Of the 27 million population, 80% live in desperate poverty, many in shanty towns. The dependency of capitalism on cheap, uneducated and disorganised labour lies at the root of the elite's opposition to Chavez. The business elite, known as the 'oligarchs', had ruled Venezuela in their own interests from 1958 to 1998, when the poor rejected official corruption and bureaucracy by electing Hugo Chavez.

In Venezuela Chavez is trying to create a socially radical democracy which empowers the lowest economic classes. The opposition business class regard him as a dangerous revolutionary, as he has forced them to pay taxes and has used the country's oil wealth to educate a million children in the shanty towns and to teach 1.2million illiterate adults to read and write. 250,000 children have been provided with free secondary education and 10,000 Cuban doctors staff local clinics, while the health budget has been tripled. Improved housing is being built and agrarian law is being reformed, with land distributed to the people.

The poor are mostly of Indian or slave ancestry and are dark skinned, as is Hugo Chavez. The wealthy establishment regard themselves as 'white' and openly refer to the President as "the monkey", a racist stereotype they even used at a US Embassy event attended by Colin Powell.

The massive political influence of the oligarchs and their privately owned media, while diminished in Venezuela itself, has (with US backing)

been reflected across the world's media. The 'Financial Times' and 'The Economist' both printed strongly anti-Chavez articles prior to the referendum. Here in Ireland the 'Irish Independent' ran true to form, parroting the opposition prediction that Chavez would be roundly defeated. After the vote the 'The Economist' magazine commented darkly on the "blatant diversion of public funds for electoral purposes" and speculated, in a morally neutral manner, on the likelihood of guerrilla warfare in opposition to Chavez, saying that it "may garner more support" for the opposition. We are unlikely to have heard the last of Venezuela and Hugo Chavez.

"I don't believe in the dogmatic postulates of Marxist revolution. I don't accept that we are living in a period of proletarian revolutions. All that must be revised. Reality is telling us that every day. Are we aiming in Venezuela today for the abolition of private property or a classless society? I don't think so. But if I am told that because of that reality you can't do anything to help the poor, the people who have made this country rich through their labour and never forget that some of it was slave labour, then I say "We part company". I will never accept that there can be no redistribution of wealth in society. Our upper classes don't even like paying taxes. That's one reason they hate me. We said "You must pay your taxes". I believe it's better to die in battle, rather than hold aloft a very revolutionary and very pure banner, and do nothing...That position often strikes me as very convenient, a good excuse...Try and make your revolution, go into combat, advance a little, even if it is only a millimetre, in the right direction, instead of dreaming about utopias."

(Hugo Chavez, in interview with Tariq Ali, 'counterpunch.org', August 2004)

Irish speaker, socialist and IRA leader,

Mairtin O'Cadhain was the major Republican Socialist theorist of the language and culture question.

Liam O'Ruairc reviews his contribution to republican Ireland

Mairtin O Cadhain (1906-1970) has been called by Declan Kiberd the greatest 20th century prose writer in Irish, and his work has been compared to that of Joyce and Beckett. He is also the major Republican Socialist theorist of the language and culture question. However very few would be familiar with his name and work. A search on Google will bring only 124 hits for his name, and one on Cre na Cille, his masterpiece, will bring up a scandalous 306 hits – most relating to a restaurant of the same name! It is time that his importance and contributions be recognised.

Mairtin O Cadhain was born in 1906 in the Conemara Gaeltacht. He studied to become a teacher, and joined the IRA in 1927. In 1937, he got sacked from the school he was teaching in for his Republican sympathies. A 1980 RTE documentary revealed that in revenge, the local IRA carried out a 'punishment beating' on his successor. In April 1938, he was elected to the Army Council of the IRA. He was arrested in 1940 following his oration at the burial of Tony D'Arcy who had died on hunger strike. Subsequently, he was interned in the Curragh until 1944. Disagreeing with the IRA over its lack of political and economic programme, he drifted out of the organisation. After his release, he worked in the translation department of the Dail, before integrating the department of Irish at Trinity College Dublin. Over the years, O Cadhain was involved in a number of organisations defending the rights of the Irish speakers, such as Muintir na Gaeltachta, Misneach, and the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement, as well as the Gaelic socialist newspaper An tEireannach. A fellow traveller of the CPI, O Cadhain is reputed to have first translated the Communist Manifesto and the International into Irish. He died in 1970.

The greatest prose writer in Irish, O Cadhain uses his native language with skills not found among many writers. He was a great stylistic innovator, enriching his colloquial speech Irish with constructed neologisms and words from other languages and dialects. His masterpiece is the novel Cre na Cille ("The Graveyard Clay"1949). As Eoghan O Tuairisc noted, he shaped a vitriolic style, using the most shattering idioms of the living Irish speech laced with phrases from the 17th century literature and new coinages from the thinking of Darwin, Einstein, Marx and Freud. His writings attack the dehumanising of life and the castration of culture with a blistering invective and scurrility unsurpassed since Swift. This is the sort of literature Republicans should aim to produce.

O Cadhain developed a Marxist analysis (with strong Gramscian elements) on the language question and the depopulation of the Gaeltacht. The cultural hegemony of English was the outcome of socio-economic interests inherent in the power structure; the breaking of this cultural hegemony therefore would require a revolution in the power structure. He

summed his position as: “Irish is the Reconquest of Ireland and the Reconquest of Ireland is the salvation of Irish. The people’s own language is what will save them.” The revival of the Irish language depends on the revival of those who speak it. He saw Irish as the means of expression and cultural medium of the most downtrodden
social group in Ireland. It is through the revolutionary Reconquest of Ireland that the Irish speaking community could be revived.

When he writes that the people’s own language is what will save them, he expresses his belief that revolution should be a development immanent to the life and culture of the community and vice-versa. The revival of the Irish culture depends on the revival of the Irish people, the revival of the Irish people depends on the revival of the Irish culture. The struggle for the Irish language should be part of the Reconquest of Ireland, if the Irish language movement fails to be active leaders in that struggle, then the whole Irish revival will fail: “It is the duty of the Irish speaking people to be socialists. The Irish speaking community of the Gaeltacht is the poorest and most beaten down class of our people in Ireland. For me, to revive that class, the Irish speaking community, is the same as to revive the Irish language.

This revival can only be achieved through the Reconquest of Ireland –the reacquisition by the people of Ireland of the ownership of Ireland and all its wealth. So for me the revival of Irish is the same as the revolution that is needed for that Reconquest. So any act which will increase the spirit of the Irish speaking community is a part, and an important part, of the Reconquest.” His message to the Irish language supporters is that they must become involved in the struggle for national liberation and socialism: “Not only should Irish speakers be participant in this war for the Reconquest of Ireland – it is the only thing worth being part of in Ireland- but it is our duty to be its leaders and its guides. If Irish is the steering force of the revolution, in this way, Irish will be one of the most progressive forces in Ireland: that is the same as reviving Irish.”

Mairtin O Cadhain is one of the few revolutionaries who really understood the value and importance of culture and language in the fight for freedom (or “national liberation as a factor of culture” as Amilcar Cabral would have put it). He illustrates at its best the socialist position on the revival of Irish. That his work has been neglected for so long is simply scandalous.

Review by Anthony McIntyre

Left Nationalism In Euskal Herria
Matxinada. By Eoin O'Broin.
Publisher – Left Republican Books.
Price £10.

Perhaps I should have asked the author of Matxinada - a loose meaning of which in Basque is 'revolution' or 'revolt' - how to pronounce it. But Eoin O'Broin is less likely to be preoccupied with grammatical pronunciation than he is with its political equivalent. In his book on the formative influences and maturation of Basque politics, he aims to correctly pronounce the essence of Basque resistance to Spanish rule.

The North Belfast Sinn Fein councillor is regarded by many, opponents and supporters alike, as a highly competent and diligent local politician. His demanding schedule would not have made a book of this quality something that could be easily churned out between meetings, solidarity activity or bouts of constituency work. It took time, energy and commitment. The research is extensive - it puzzles me why the author did not compose a doctoral thesis on the topic. He persuasively flags up the gaps in the existing literature. Whatever intellectual requirements exist for a doctoral foray, they are not beyond O'Broin.

A dearth of empathy has characterised my view on ETA since, with fascistic fervour, it murdered one of its former leading members, Yoyez, as she crossed a square hand in hand with her young child eighteen years ago. Her crime – dissenting from the armed struggle. These days my sympathies lie more with those who protest against 'obligatory nationalism' than the inflictors of it. Self-ordained high priests of intellectual nihilism who offer freedom subject to one important proviso – it does not mean the right to be free from them. While appreciating that O'Broin wishes to illuminate the positives of left nationalism, Eric Hobsbawm's alarm bell warning against the dangers of ethnic particularisms is never far away.

Nevertheless, unlike many who share his political stable, O'Broin is so at ease with ideas wholly at odds with his own perspective, that he is always worth listening to or reading. Throughout the book we find fidelity to dissent; it protests against strategies of instilling fear into young people, of forcing them into silence and compliance; it praises those who dare to 'think and act differently'; Mikel Garainondo is approvingly quoted when he criticises 'mental policing, which teaches us to be afraid of the consequence of dissenting, of disagreeing, of being different.'

For those unfamiliar with the Basque history a few days set aside reading this book, coupled with Paddy Woodworth's fine work on GAL, will reward the mind with a tapestry that is anything but bland. One purpose of the book is to identify the resurgent youth politics in Euskal Herria. O'Broin contrasts this with its virtual absence in Ireland, 'where there are in fact no youth movements to speak of at all.' Matxinada draws particular attention to Kale Borroka, which it depicts as a spontaneous response to Spanish state repression. Others, such as Woodworth, feel it is much more organised and controlled than is admitted in O'Broin's work. Elsewhere, commentators have

drawn attention to the totalitarian urges that manifest themselves through Kale Borroka. For a left nationalist movement, much of the energy of Kale Borroka seems directed at suppressing the Left.

Perhaps the most irritable aspect of Matxinada is its author's liberal usage of the 'securocrat' label. Its employment in an Irish context invariably means someone else is to be blamed for one's own shortcomings. Analytically dubious, it would be sad if it were to blemish an otherwise fine work.