

Irish Republican Information Service.

Vol. 3

No. 63

February 10th 1979

Kevin Barry House, 44 Parnell Sq. Dublin 1. Ireland

CONTENTS

1. DISCOVERIES
 2. BRITISH PAMPHLET ON H BLOCK IS PROPAGANDA
 3. PRESS CAUSE UPROAR AT SHAM TRIAL
 4. NEWS FROM THE NORTH
 5. INTERNATIONAL ANTI-E.E.C. OFFENSIVE
 6. EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY GROUP MEET
 7. SINN FEIN PRESIDENT IN EUSKADI
- (Enclosure: SMASH H BLOCK)
8. INTERNATIONAL ANTI-E.E.C OFFENSIVE

1. DISCOVERIES

Had there been a find of oil, uranium and gold in one rich strike in the 6 Counties, it would not have matched the marvels of discovery made there last week on the political scene. Beneath their layers of antiquity, centenarian rhetoric and old sterile politics which he had so disparaged five weeks ago, Mason suddenly discovered in the Official Unionists a moderate and progressive group of politicians going from strength to strength. Likewise with the Alliance Party he found a growing electoral strength and with a Catholic at its head, Alliance bridged the sectarian gulf. He discovered an undercurrent of feeling in the community towards these groups of moderation and a crossing of the sectarian divide. He found the Social, Labour and Democratic Party growing ever greener, demanding a United Ireland and losing ground along with the Protestant extremist Paisley and his party.

Mason's discoveries were matched by Harry West (leader of the Official Unionists) who found that the S.D.L.P. were the only political group in Northern Ireland seeking a "rigged administration"—that is really good but surpassed by West's sudden discovery that the Unionists had a lot in common with the Republican Clubs and were prepared to seek the latter's acceptance of the type of government the Unionists desired. Besides, such a government, Harry West pointed out, "must have an opposition".

The Republican Clubs, for their part, discovered that, yes indeed, they had a lot in common with the Unionists—"basic and fundamental" at that. They welcomed West's invitation to join in talks and were anxious to press ahead with their plans for "development of progressive class politics in the community". (A nod of recognition from the Ascendancy class should be a step in the right direction).

The S.D.L.P. discovered confirmation of their growing suspicions and distrust and gradual isolation. If they resented Mason's bracketing them with Paisley and party as extremists it is ironic to recall that during Paisley's attempted "strike" in 1977 Austin Currie was claiming that "if the isolation of Paisley works, partnership (in a devolved government) is less remote" and when Paisley's strike was aborted Gerry Fitt exulted, "The extremists are isolated—the R.U.C. have emerged with honour and he withdrew completely his initial criticisms of Mason." Fitt continued to serve faithfully "his friends in the British Labour Movement". This week in the British House of Commons When Fitt asked for (and was refused) time "to debate Mason's recent policy, his attack on the S.D.L.P. and gross misrepresentation of the party", Mason sat silent and impassive, arms folded and legs stretched resting on the dispatch box.

But then, as John Hume has just discovered—"it seems that you have to be some sort of a Unionist before you can partake in Northern Ireland politics". Paisley shed his illusions quite a while back—"I never had much standing at Westminster—I was always disliked, always unpopular". It is not that he described the Westminster politicians as "a lewd, indecent and drunken lot" or that his overweening personal ambition made him an unpredictable servant of the British government, but they would never forgive him his blunt, loud-mouthed portrayal—a caricature exposure—of the very means by which successive British governments ruled the 6 Counties. Paisley inherited nothing. He did his own building. A Loyalist who gets above himself has to be cut down to size.

"It should be remembered that advance or failure of a political party in Northern Ireland depends on the backing of the British government. Just as the decision of the government has made them, the decision of the government can unmake them."

So said Prof. Paul Rose some years back during a radio broadcast discussion on the likely futures of the various political groups. He was referring to the S.D.L.P. in particular and the rest of the parties in general.

So it should be remembered just as it should be remembered that the purpose of those parties is to prop up the Union, Props that were picked, tested, used or discarded as needs demanded while the once safe old Unionist base crumbled under attack. If this week saw the official unveiling of the Alliance Party as the latest prop, it has been long and patiently prepared for its future purpose. Not hurriedly thrown together as were the S.D.L.P., there was careful choice of "moderate" Unionists from the old bloc and the grafting on of a "Catholic" head—a necessary precaution and a hopeful enticement to the rebellious "minority". Though constitutionally committed to maintaining the link with Britain, Alliance does not reject a non-Unionist label from certain quarters. It helps. So do the figures produced from time to time to show their "growing strength" which started twelve months ago from Sydney Elliott's Political Science Department in Belfast University. Followed up by bland interviews and suitable profiles", the scene was set for "the very interesting discovery" which Mason made just this week.

But shifting and replacing the props is a less quiet business and Mason, a man in a hurry, just boots them in and out of place. There will be more pushing and heaving, tirades of abuse, shouts of betrayal and displays of contempt. The recent spat was just another week's work in the propping-up operations necessary to maintain Unionism.

2. BRITISH PAMPHLET ON H BLOCK IS PROPAGANDA

The well known civil rights priest, Fr. Denis Faul of Dungannon, County Tyrone, in an R.T.E. Radio interview this week said that British Government pamphlet issued recently on conditions in H-Block contained propaganda. It suggested for example, that prisoners could go to the library. There was a notice in the prison saying they could go naked, in prison underwear or prison uniform. "They will not leave their cells naked and they will not wear prison underwear or uniforms."

The pamphlet, said Fr. Faul, talked of "convictions obtained in open

court". But, he said, the prisoners' relatives would contest that, citing Castlereagh (torture centre), the Amnesty report (finding Britain guilty of torture in Ireland) and the findings of the European Commission and Court of Human Rights. He pointed out that no British soldier or RUC detective had served a day in jail in the past ten years for killing or injury in Northern Ireland so there was a grave imbalance of justice.

Fr. Faul explained the time scale of the H Block protest to date: It began with Ciaran Nugent, a Republican prisoner. Since then, for two years and nine months Republicans have refused to wear clothes or wash. For these trivial offences there was excessive punishments—twenty four hour lock-up, deprivation of physical exercise, games, weekly visits and they had to go completely naked to the canteen—something that was offensive to their dignity. They were treated to petty routines of vindictiveness like being subjected to capricious body searches.

Then in April '78 the men started the present form of protest, said Fr. Faul. When asked by the interviewer was this not of their own making, Fr. Faul replied:

"What other form of protest is left to them. Its a form of strike. You yourselves had to go on strike in R.T.E. (radio) last December. If a man is locked up for twenty four hours a day, deprived of everything, there is very little means left except to protest with your own dirt.

He agreed that the walls of the cells were covered with excrement and food. It might be a regrettable and unworthy protest, but what other form of protest was left, he asked, to a prisoner who was ill-treated?

Fr. Faul said that the prisoners should have some form of status both North and South. He said:

"Almost all the things the prisoners are asking are allowed in maximum security prisons in England. They are not conceded to Irish Prisoners in England. There are two standards here. This is about standards—standards of decency".

Asked what are the basis to provide claim for political status, he said:

They have some grounds. For example, take the Emergency laws, the detention for three to seven days interrogation. Amnesty International established that there was great brutality here. Men are convicted on their own statements during these interrogations—or even on the verbal evidence of the R.U.C. All this is political methods. All sentences they receive are prolonged beyond comparison in the rest of Europe. Everything about them is political except their status. The terrorist is Britain, said Fr. Faul. The prisoners are victims of terror inflicted for political purpose by Britain.

"I met a 16-year-old boy in there last week. He was arrested at 15½, ill-treated and made to sign a statement. He was given an unsatisfactory trial and sentenced to four years. His father and mother tell him that he is not a criminal and he will not wear criminal clothes".

There was, he suggested, very little prospect of compromise while Mr. Mason remained Secretary of State. "With his Molotov approach, he says: 'no, no, no'", Fr. Faul said.

He said that a solution on conditions in H Blocks could easily be reached—not while Mr. Mason remained 'Secretary of State' but "with the help of God he will not be Secretary of State for very long more".

3. PRESS CAUSE UPROAR AT SHAM TRIAL

Journalists and pressmen shouted "Sham", "Travesty of Justice" and "Disgusting" as they stormed out of an extraordinary court case this week in Ballymena, County Antrim. The scenes took place after the hearing in Ballymena Magistrates' Court of a murder charge against two British S.A.S. men who, throughout the entire hearing, were not identified, nor was any indication given as to their physical identity. The two soldiers of the infamous British Special Air Services were being charged with the murder of sixteen year old John Boyle, who was shot dead in Dunloy, Co. Antrim last July.

Although the two soldiers were referred to on the charge sheet as Alan Michael Bohan and Ronald Joseph Tempedley, the two defendants could not be identified physically because seven men sat together crammn ghte small dock in front of the resident magistrate, Mr. Arthur Jack. The men, three of whom were known to local journalists as being policemen, were all in civilian attire. None of them were asked a direct question and sat, some yawning impassively throughout. At no time was it made clear either by question or gesture, who the actual defendants were.

When the Magistrate finished the court proceedings, all seven rose, turned, and quickly made their exit through a side-door, under police escort.

It was this action which angered members of the large press corps. When a member of the journalists asked court officials and detectives the exact identity of Bohan and Temperley, the information was refused.

A heated argument ensued, pressmen pointing out that in the circumstances, the hearing lacked all credibility and that there was no evidence that the defendants were even in court.

After some minutes the Court-

room was cleared with a number of journalists shouting "sham", "travesty of justice" and "disgusting" as they stormed out.

Bail Fixed

Richard Murphy, solicitor, on behalf of the two soldiers, asked for bail. The court was given an assurance by an army officer, Lt. Col. John Barclay, that both men would remain in military custody until March 7.

Personal bail of £2,000 per man was fixed by R. N. Jack, after the R.U.C., said they had no objections.

After the hearing, Lt. Col. John Barclay said he did not know which of the men were the defendants. He had earlier guaranteed to ensure that they would return before the court on March 7. Senior police officers, a senior SAS officer and two solicitors in the case either declined to identify the defendants or said they did not know. A police officer, asked if the defendants had actually been in court, refused to comment.

The hearing lacked all credibility even in the circumstances of court and legal procedure in Ireland today. Many solicitors hold that what happened was a contravention of law procedure. One solicitor asked "If they were members of the I.R.A. would the same thing have happened?" Of course the answer clearly is no.

Arrests After Disclosures

The arrests of the two S.A.S. men came only after newspaper disclosures of details from an official file on the case. Though the R.U.C. denied any suggestions that police were acting under pressure of publicity, a statement from them about the arrests came only a few hours after the Press Association newsagency reported that it had received a report which showed that John Boyle had been shot from behind. It said he was an innocent victim when he went to inspect an arms cache in the graveyard on July 11 last which had been reported to the RUC by his father the previous night.

The file on the shooting had been with the British Attorney General, Mr Sam Silkin, for the past five months, and pressure, notably from the Rev. Ian Paisley, M.P. was being applied for some time to act on the report.

The British administration was forced into charging the two S.A.S. members with the murder. John Boyle was just one of twelve people assassinated by the British Army last year. The background to this court case shows how corrupt is the British administration whose original cover-up was blown by a press leak. It is another example of how British rule in Ireland relies on murder and terror.

4. NEWS FROM THE NORTH

In supplied statements the Irish Republican Army claimed responsibility for the following operations:

Tuesday January 30th

BELFAST

A building housing 'air call' Telecommunications Centre and the French Consulate in Wellington Park was devastated in a bombing operation. Accepting responsibility for the attack, and specifying their target as the 'Telecommunications Centre' the I.R.A. said in their statement: "The serious damage caused to the French Consulate was incidental to the bombing operation."

Friday February 2nd

STRABANE (County Tyrone)

A mobile active service unit opened fire on a Brit checkpoint in the town centre. One Brit was shot in the leg.

The Brits returned fire but all volunteers returned safely to base.

Saturday February 3rd

CROSSMAGLEN (Co. Armagh)

A member of a Brit footpatrol walking along Castleblayney Road was seriously injured, when the I.R.A. detonated a remote control car bomb, as the Brits passed by.

The injured Brit is a member of The Grenadier Guards, the same regiment, which lost three of its members when the Crossmaglen I.R.A. unleashed a machine-gun on a Brit patrol passing through the village just before Christmas. The Grenadier Guards are paying a heavy price for patrolling this part of the occupied Six-Counties.

LISNASKEA (Co. Fermanagh)

Two RUC men were injured when a remote control bomb was detonated in the Banks Brae area of the village. The attack took place after the RUC were lured to the spot by a hoax bomb telephone call.

BELFAST

The recently retired head of training for Screws throughout the Six Counties was executed by the I.R.A. The dead man retired only eight weeks ago and was the key figure in the training of screws for the barbarous H-Blocks of Long Kesh. Accepting responsibility for the shooting the I.R.A. stated: "We wish to make it clear that Mrs. Mackin was not a target and was only shot after she grappled with the volunteer. We would also point out to members of the British Administration working in the prisons that if they resign and make their resignation known to the Irish Republican Army then it would be considered whether to remove their names from the target list or not."

Sunday February 4th

COUNTY TYRONE

Six separate bombing attacks were carried out throughout Tyrone between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. The targets

bombed were as follows:

DUNGANNON

Eight bombs were planted in the town's main Ulsterbus depot. The bombs exploded causing widespread damage to numerous buses.

TAMNAMORE

Several lorries belonging to a hauliers firm were badly damaged after bombs exploded in their depot.

Several buses were destroyed in fire bomb attacks in the villages of CALEDON, BENBURB and AUGHNA-CLOY.

COALISLAND

Incendiary devices exploded in the town's timber-yard setting the premises alight.

MONDAY February 5th

BELFAST

An off-licence in Tates Avenue was destroyed in a bomb attack in mid-afternoon.

France Bombings

In a statement issued last Saturday from the Irish Republican Publicity Bureau the I.R.A. said: "We deny any involvement in the recent spate of bombings in France. Such actions are unhelpful to our struggle: They play into the hands of the Imperialist Governments. We dissociate ourselves from these bombings."

5. INTERNATIONAL ANTI-E.E.C. OFFENSIVE

6. EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY GROUP MEET

Over the last weekend of January a conference was held in Frankfurt, West Germany, which was attended by many of the Irish solidarity groups in Western Europe. Delegates from Norway, France, Holland and Germany were present at the conference which was organised by the West German Ireland Solidarity Committee (W.I.S.K.).

It was the first time these groups had got together and they took the opportunity particularly to discuss coordinating the protest activities in support of Irish prisoners in British Gaols. Also present were delegates of European groups interested in political prisoners throughout Western Europe.

The conference was attended by members of Sinn Fein including Richard Behal. He stressed that the reason for conflict in Ireland, and for so many men being in prison is that the Irish people are asserting their right to national self-determination. Other Sinn Fein speakers outlined the political situation in Ireland,

North and South, and detailed the plight of the H-Block prisoners.

A resolution was passed condemning the treatment of Irish political prisoners and supporting their demand for political status, whilst noting that the various states of Western Europe are co-operating in the suppression of those struggling for freedom.

The conference ended with the resolve to have an annual conference of the various Irish solidarity committees, the next one to be in France.

The gain of such a conference is that Western European countries will hear more clearly the message of British torture, inhumanity and murder in Ireland and particularly of the brutality meted out to prisoners in the H-Blocks.

7. SINN FEIN PRESIDENT IN EUSKADI

The following address was given to a recent Public Meeting in Ormaiztegi, Guipuzcoa Province, EUSKADI by Ruairi O Bradaigh, President of Sinn Fein.

The Sinn Fein representatives from Ireland are very pleased to be here together with our Portuguese comrades of O.U.T. and our revolutionary comrades of E.I.A. We also salute our comrades in struggle for Eritrean national survival.

Sinn Fein wishes to congratulate the people of Euskadi on their action in defeating the constitution proposed by Madrid. You have declared in the most striking fashion and the whole world knows now that the Spanish government has no mandate to govern you.

But you must now demonstrate your capability and your responsibility in governing yourselves. The world is watching your struggle and is waiting for you to show that you are well able to organise the self-government of the Basque people.

We in Ireland also admire your efforts to restore your historic Basque national language and culture and respect and support the objectives of E.I.A. in seeking control of the wealth of Euskadi by its people and for the benefit of its people and not by the international imperialists and pirates of the E.E.C. and N.A.T.O. Power to the working people!

Sinn Fein in Ireland has similar aims. The struggle of the Irish people against English and international imperialism has gone on for many hundreds of years. The present phase of the fight is now ten years old and there has been much suffering in the effort to compel the English to leave Ireland and to establish a decentralised Socialist Republic with popular power in all of Ireland—north and south.

Three years ago in 1976, the imperialist government in London withdrew prisoner-of-war status from

the Irish political prisoners. Since then—for almost three years now—Irish prisoners to the number of 350 have been refusing to wear prison clothes and to do penal labour. They have been totally naked except for a single blanket and in solitary confinement in the cells of the notorious H-Blocks of Long Kesh concentration camp near Belfast, refusing to cooperate with their jailers in their ceaseless demand to be treated as prisoners captured in the Irish war of liberation.

Many international bodies have supported their struggle and the spokesman of the English Liberal Party on the North of Ireland admitted recently on radio in Belfast that the prisoners on protest were embarrassing the English government totally on the international scene. Irish exiles in the U.S.A. have assisted greatly in this work as well as gallant comrades in Europe.

Amnesty International has condemned the English occupation forces for hideous torture of Irishmen and women in their interrogation centres. Our comrade of Euskadiko Ezkerra on this platform, Juan Marie Bandres, travelled to Ireland last May to sit on an international tribunal which condemned English imperialist barbarities towards Irish political prisoners. We have close on 2,000 such prisoners, including 100 women, in England and Ireland.

For our prisoners in England who have bravely carried the war to the heart of enemy territory, we demand repatriation to Ireland, pending a general amnesty. For their true comrades, the Basque prisoners in Soria prison, we make a similar demand—repatriation to Euskadi pending an amnesty with the Statute of Autonomy.

You are facing a new test of your determination in the coming elections. Sinn Fein in Ireland calls for unity of the revolutionary forces on the concrete political basis of autonomous self-government now with the right to self-determination. We support the action of E.I.A. in putting forward candidates in Madrid and Barcelona and wish to remind them that an Irish Home Rule M.P., named T. P. O'Connor, was elected for many years up to 1922 by Irish exiles living in the English city of Liverpool.

At home in Ireland this day is called Bloody Sunday—the anniversary of the sheeting dead of 13 people marching in demonstration in the Irish city of Derry. Today there is a great annual demonstration at the scene of their deaths. You have known similar atrocities—the deaths of German and Yoseba last July come to mind. The blood of Irish and Basque patriots mingles in the common struggle for liberation.

Such sacrifices act as milestones for the struggling peoples.

Long live the struggles of the Irish

and Basque People!

Gora Euskade eta Irlanda eskatuta!

8. INTERNATIONAL ANTI-EEC OFFENSIVE

Sinn Fein's fight against the EEC is on! And where better to launch the campaign than in the heart of the Common Market in Brussels? The following report is by Christine Ni Elias, director of Education, Sinn Fein.

As a result of several international meetings over the past year and following a four-day conference held near Brussels last weekend, Sinn Fein, along with 22 other political organisations from all over Europe, made public their plans for a united and co-ordinated offensive against the EEC.

Readers may remember the visit of Prof. Jean-Pierre Vigier of France to Ireland last August when he addressed the Ard-Chomhairle of Sinn Fein and took the opportunity to join the Coalisland-Dungannon march. Since then, more and more European groups who are convinced that the EEC is against the interests of the ordinary working people of Europe, have joined the original committee to fight together to rid their countries of the threat posed by the EEC.

Platform endorsed

At the conclusion of last weekend's Brussels meeting, an agreed campaign platform was endorsed by groups from all nine EEC member states as well as delegations from Portugal and Spain and representatives of Basque, Breton, Flemish and Frisian national movements.

Most of the groups represented in the joint campaign have actively supported the Republican Movement in the past and have, in their publications, featured articles about our struggle and about the H Blocks. But, several of the delegates met members of the Republican Movement for the first time and showed an enthusiastic interest in the war of liberation taking place in Ireland.

All those present at the international conference in Brussels have one thing in common and that is their total opposition to the EEC machine and the manipulation by international monopoly capitalism of the economic development of all the countries of western Europe. It is on the basis of this mutual opposition to the EEC and all its consultant effects on the lives of the ordinary working people of Europe that agreement was reached for a joint anti-imperialist resistance campaign.

Direction elections

Each group associated with the anti-EEC offensive will participate in a wide variety of co-ordinated

activities; but each will be free to use whatever tactics they choose in their own national campaigns against the EEC during the direct elections to the "European Parliament". Some of the participant groups have decided to state active boycott campaigns against the elections, similar to the proposed plan of Sinn Fein in Ireland. Other organisations who already have members in their national Parliaments, like Italy and Denmark, and stand a very good chance of getting members elected to the "European Parliament", will put up candidates on an anti-EEC platform and, if elected, intend to work to publicise the grievances and repression imposed by Brussels.

The International anti-imperialist campaign aims to replace the present Europe which is characterised by economic manipulation, the denial of democratic and national rights and massive exploitation of the workers with a new kind of Europe, that will ensure the free development of a democratic socialist system that guarantees the national independence of all the peoples of Europe, supports the freedom struggle of the Third World peoples against European imperialism.

Sinn Fein delegates at the Brussels conference were Sean O Bradaigh and Christene Ni Elias. They were joined by Sean Halpenny of Chomhairle Chuige Laighean and Richard Behal who travelled from Frankfurt after the international conference hosted by Germany of all European Irish Solidarity Committees had ended.

**Irish Republican
Information Service**

**Kevin Barry House,
44 Parnell Square,
Dublin 1, Ireland**