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1. "A DAMNED GOOD BARGAIN"

Anyone who offers realistic proposals for a just solution to the partition of Ireland is deserving of recommendation. Anyone, and particularly any Irish person, who would seek to perpetuate that division, under whatever guise, must stand condemned.

The recently published document by Fine Gael, the Dublin government opposition party, outlining a Confederal solution for a future Ireland was described on B.B.C. by its author Garret Fitzgerald, as "a genuine effort to show an ultimate way forward". The proposed solution is claimed as a new model, the novelty of which would secure tolerant acceptance from other states.

It is, in fact, based on the old mould, the ironically titled "Better Government of Ireland Act" of 1920 by which the Westminster Parliament imposed partition, establishing separate legislatures and Governments in the six-county area and the twenty-six county area, with equal status, equal powers and a joint council with equal representation from the two purposely divided areas to facilitate co-operation on common interests—within the Act of Union.

Updating the Act and topping it off with novelties, the Fine Gael document proposes the setting up of two sovereign States in the six-county and the twenty-six county areas, with separate heads of state, strong government in each state weighted, if necessary, in favour of the smaller area to give equal status and equal powers and a confederal administration with equal representation from the divided areas to facilitate co-operation on matters of common domestic interests and foreign affairs—within the E.E.C.

The "minority" within the six-counties, excluded from proper representation, is recognised in the "solution" as a problem—but a problem for local politicians that could be settled with a little goodwill. That should reassure the "minority", but then the obvious aim of this document is to re-assure the Unionists. Under the guise of reassurance and relieving the "fears" of the Unionists, Fine Gael have met the demands of the Unionists, the long established demands for legal and factual recognition as a separate state.

It is a demand which Fine Gael previously tried to meet in their attempts to manipulate changes in the Twenty-six county Constitution. Not alone is recognition proffered, but strengthening support is added with particular emphasis on the areas of economy and security.

Their well-proven ability in the 'security' field as a British-Unionist ally during Fine Gael's term of office in the recent Coalition government must make that particular offer most appealing to the Unionists, just as the shared economy benefits would appeal to the hard-pressed Brits.

Not that Westminster didn't always seek, either by force or political cunning, to make Irish people meet the costs of British rule in Ireland but it is a factor of increasing necessity to them these latter days.

Even the slow wits of Unionist leader, Harry West, after the initial reflex jerk of rejection, decided he "would like to talk it over with Dr. Fitzgerald", and those Loyalists who are promoting "an independent Ulster" saw merit for their cause. There should be more (and surely someone among them) to say "a damned good bargain".

In essence, this Fine Gael document

follows the guide-lines laid down in Whitelaw's 1972 paper on the future of Northern Ireland and reflects the aims and aspirations of most of the Unionist type political parties and the New Ulster Movement. The plausible wording, the searching for a sympathetic solution, the claims to novelty, that's all mere thimble-rigging. Basically it seeks to confirm and perpetuate the division of our country and its people for the purposes that are certainly not in the interests of Ireland.

This Fine Gael document, this model II of the "Better Government of Ireland Act", is as infamous and as distorted as the original. And perhaps worse, in that it expects Irish people to contribute to their own undoing.

In a statement this week Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Republican Movement, condemned the Fine Gael document as follows:

"Sinn Fein rejects outright the Fine Gael proposals for a confederal set-up in Ireland. The Fine Gael policy is based on the totally discredited Partition Act of 1920. This act of the British parliament has been responsible for almost 60 years of repression, turmoil and strife. To base any policy on the 1920 Partition Act is a recipe for further conflict.

"Sinn Fein vehemently rejects any acceptance of two sovereign states in Ireland. The sovereignty of the Irish people is non divisible. The denial of that sovereignty by a foreign government is the root cause of the present conflict.

"The establishment of the sovereignty of the whole Irish people is the basic requirement for a lasting peace in Ireland."

2. CONFEDERATION SPELLS DISUNITY

The proposals for a Six-County/ Twenty-six County federation for Ireland has been condemned by the Republican Movement. In a letter to the press Christene Ni Elias, director of Education, Sinn Fein (the political wing of the Republican Movement) says that the document by the leader of the Fine Gael party spells not unity, but disunity:

"Trust the floundering Dr. Fitz-

Gerald to come up with a suggestion as impractical as a two-unit federation for Ireland (Irish Times, February 19th). Although showing a growing political maturity in realising the positive potential and essential merit of the federal idea, which has been propagated by Sinn Fein since 1971, FitzGerald and his party still have a long way to go.

"The experiences of other countries serve to illustrate the inherent instability and ineffectiveness of two-unit federal combinations. Recently, the Syrians and Egyptians tried such a union and found it unworkable. In order to ensure the continuing survival of their so-called "federation" the Czechs and Slovaks have been forced to jettison most of the basic principles of the federal concept. Most recently, the Belgians have set their sights on a federation of at least three units because they understand that the problems between the Walloons and Flemish would be aggravated rather than soothed by a two-part confederation.

"In a federation of two units, especially when the two units have a long history of antagonism, as is the case in Ireland, every major or minor disagreement weakens the very structures of the union and endangers the very existence of the federation. Every problem, every quarrel, every difference of opinion between the two becomes a constitutional crisis. Dr. FitzGerald's proposals for a Six County/Twenty-six County federation for Ireland spell not unity, but disunity.

"The Republican Movement firmly believes that peace and harmony can be achieved in Ireland by the creation of a federal system, but we know that a successful federation must be composed of more than two units, whether it have 50 states like the USA, or 22 cantons like Switzerland, or six sovereign republics like Yugoslavia, or, indeed, four strong provincial parliaments based on self-governing communities, as proposed for Ireland by the Republican Movement.

Four provinces—one nation."

3. POLITICAL COURTS IN IRELAND

Irish Lawyers, both North and South, have long been concerned and regularly express their concern, at the way in which convictions are frequently made both in the non-jury Diplock Courts in the British occupied six counties and in the Southern government's non-jury 'Special Criminal' Court. Such convictions are generally obtained on the basis of 'confessions' extracted during intensive interrogation and without any objective evidence whatsoever.

A Belfast barrister recently told the family of his client that in a jury court the young man, sentenced to three years, would 'most certainly' have been acquitted.

In the counterpart political court in Dublin, the most lengthy and most costly trial in Ireland's history concluded some weeks ago giving long sentences to three men whose evidence included medical findings of torture and ill-treatment while in custody. The case was singularly lacking in positive evidence, and relied almost exclusively on statements signed under conditions of police brutality. Significantly one man who did not sign such a 'confession' was acquitted.

4. BRITISH TROOPS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Whatever legal standards apply in the British occupied north-east of Ireland—and these are now notoriously low—a subject for further concern is the degree to which the rule of law operates where the behaviour of the British troops is concerned. In this regard a whole series of incidence surrounding the conduct of British troops in Ireland leave many questions that Britain should be forced by international opinion to answer. These are questions which the International Tribunal on British Presence in Ireland, to be held next Summer, will aim to answer.

Perhaps the most infamous incident was the killing Derry City in January 1972 of 14 civil rights demonstrators—so called 'Bloody Sunday'. A British Government sponsored inquiry, conducted by Lord Chief Justice Widgery agreed that the fourteen dead had been killed by bullets fired by British troops. The inquiry suggested that three of those who died may have been in contact with firearms, although Lord Widgery agreed there was no conclusive evidence to prove this allegation. The fact that not one soldier was injured during the incidents cast further doubt on the allegation. Ane yet Lord Widgery concluded 'there was no general breakdown in discipline' of the troops.

One of the most experienced journalists who has covered Northern Ireland, the Gaurdian's Simon Winchester was an eye witness to Bloody Sunday. Indeed he was shot at himself by the Army on the day. He disagreed violently with Lord Widgery's conclusions complaining 'Bloody Sunday, thanks to the propaganda merchants and a half dozen lazy hacks, was now a closed book with the Irish fully to blame'.

The British Government eventually acknowledged the innocence of the demonstrators when it awarded compensation to the relatives of the dead.

But not one soldier who participated in these events was ever charged with any crime in connection with them. The same can be said for other incidents which have accompanied the active presence of the British Army in Ireland since 1969.

For instance in September 1975 Leo Norney was shot dead by soldiers of the Black Watch. The soldiers claimed at the time that Norney was carrying a gun. But in April 1977 the army finally agreed that Norney was a 'totally innocent party', yet again no soldier was ever prosecuted in connection with Norney's death.

A similar death was that of 16 year old John Boyle who was shot dead by the army in County Antrim on 11 July 1978. Originally the army was to claim that Boyle was pointing a rifle in the direction of the soldiers when he was shot, but this allegation was later withdrawn, and Boyle's innocence—he was shot in the back—was later confirmed.

Three months later a 23 year old Co. Tyrone man was shot dead by British soldiers. The man—James Taylor—was on a wildfowling expedition and again the Army was later to agree that there was no justification for his shooting.

Such incidents have a number of disturbing implications for the free world, in that the British Army showed a definite willingness to justify soldiers' actions without proper consideration of the events relating to their behaviour and of course the fact that in none of these cases were the soldiers concerned brought before a court of law.

The following is but one of many cases that illustrate the standards which are operated by the British rule in Ireland. It is a typical example of what happens to Irish people day after day under interrogation.

On 10 May 1978, Briam Maguire, a 27 year old shop steward at Strathern Audio works in Belfast's Andersonstown district, was found dead in his cell in the Castlereagh RUC interrogation Centre on the outskirts of Belfast. He had been arrested only 24 hours before and interrogated about the shooting of an RUC detective Millar McAllister—himself formerly attached to Castlereagh—the week before.

The RUC explained the death by saying Maguire had torn up the sheet on his cell bed, strapped it around the grill of an air ventilator and hung himself. The RUC also immediately stated that Maguire had made a full confession implicating himself in the murder, and that the matter would be investigated by a senior British police officer. An inquest into his death was scheduled for June but at once adjourned indefinitely until after the internal police report had been made.

Several facts have subsequently emerged to throw doubt upon the sui-

cide theory: sheets are rare in Castle-reagh, and those they have are difficult to tear up; cells are closely monitored, and any attempts to prepare for suicide, especially by the means the police suggest, should have attracted attention; the ventilator grills are of fine metal mesh about 9 by 6 inches, unlikely to be strong enough to take a person's weight; and no publicity has been given to the fact that RUC detective Wesley Johnston went home from Castlereagh the day after Maguire's funeral and gassed himself.

The allegation is being made that an RUC interrogation technique—'fake throttling'—was the true cause of Maguire's death. It's use was testified to by the Amnesty International mission, and it was described by school-teacher Bernard O'Connor speaking on the BBC Panorama programme about his own experience in Castlereagh.

5. CIRCUS TRICKS

Two years ago, Mr. Jack Hassard, a Dungannon, County Tyrone Councillor, resigned from the Police Authority Board in the North in protest against the undue delay in investigating the case of James J. Rafferty. The latter had been brutally assaulted in Omagh R.U.C. barracks and had been removed to hospital in an unconscious condition. That event took place in November 1976. Five months ago Mr. Hassard rejoined the police Authority Board having received a promise that Mr. Rafferty's case would be investigated by a legal tribunal.

Nothing has happened in regard to this over the five months. Last week Mr. Hassard announced his resignation from the authority for a second time—"The promise I received was a pure political ploy", he said; "They will try all the tricks to get out of the investigation. I never want to be part of a jamboree or a circus and that's what I call it—I wouldn't be part of the police Authority ever again, not for £1,000 a day. Nothing sickens me as much as hypocrisy".

6. THE NATIONAL RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

Many an Irishman knows what he marched for in Derry on October 5th. 1968. Civil rights—votes, jobs, houses . . . 'concessions' that Britain was prepared to give, financially and politically, if and when she could afford it and for the purpose of placating, defusing a dangerous situation. That fateful day thousands marched up Duke Street in the city centre and into the boots, batons and water cannon of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Ten years later—what good are votes? Anf for the few with jobs—what good when a man can be taken from his work and jailed for years without evidence of wrongdoing? Even tortured in the chambers of Castlereagh. What security of employment has one when factories shut down overnight in our shaky satellite economy? What comfort in one's home of house when the armed forces of the state can legally enter it, wrecking it, seizing its content at will?

Aim is a New Nation

H-Block is the most urgent focus of our times. It is both symbol and reality of our struggle today. But prisoners are only one aspect of the fight. We cannot ignore the fact that 1,000's are imprisoned because Britain denies not only them, but ALL Irish people the right to determine their own destiny.

From the outset, ours was a revolutionary struggle. We do not aim simply to abolish the Emergency Provisions Act; not only to dismantle the farcical judicial system; certainly not merely to smash H-Block or even open all the prison gates. We aim to establish a new nation, raise up a free people, in strength and security, their rights inalienably rooted in the actual possession and control of Ireland and everything within it.

Inevitably, this struggle met with resistance from all those with vested interest in maintaining the British presence in Ireland. We came to know intimately the many weapons of repression: torture, coercive legislation, deliberate sectarian division of workers; complete control of the political and economic processes; a massive, well-equipped, well-paid R.U.C.; the British Army; a vast dehumanising prison system—upheld by complete establishment backing and full control of the media.

Yet today despite all this utter confusing prevails amongst the so-called Nationalist parties. Many are trying to jump on the Republican bandwagon: the John Humes come out in support of Federalism (his kind); The 'Daily Mirror' calls for a British withdrawal which Gerry Fitt condemned out of hand. Even Jack Lynch leader of the Dublin government, politely asks the Brits to go—opportunist flaunting his political bankruptcy.

Above the din and babble, the voice of the Republican Movement is heard clearly, consistently leading by accurate assessment and prediction. And not only concerning the full situation of our non-existent political, legal and economic freedom today. From the very start, the Republican Movement predicted the continuation of the struggle for full national freedom until it becomes reality:

"We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and the unfettered control of her

destinies. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished that right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people." (Proclamation of 1916)

Will Not Fail

The Republican Movement was there to make the start, remains there today, and will be there at the end in final victory. The Irish people will not fail; they are far from being destroyed. They are able to supply what is necessary to win freedom: the numbers, the physical strength, the courage, the intelligence, the spirit, endurance and policies.

We cannot aim or stop at anything less than full democracy; full economic, cultural, and political freedom: a 32 County socialist republic. Mere separation from Britain is worthless unless it puts the actual people of Ireland in effective ownership and control of all the wealth and wealth-producing processes of this island. 800 years of foreign domination taught us this at least: those who own the country make the laws and control the lives and liberty of the Irish people. Anything less, and we have nothing but the empty symbols and trappings of freedom, without the substance.

Republicans have clearly spelt out the means of restoring the ownership of Ireland and all her resources to the Irish people after Britain leaves, through our policy documents and the Republican press.

Republican Proposals

In our new social and economic system, we seek not only the right to work but worker control and ownership of the units of production in farm, factory, workshop, etc. We seek worker-ownership on a large scale in agriculture, fishing, industry, and the distributive trade. We must gain full control of our natural resources. We intend to nationalise monopolised areas of the economy, particularly key sectors such as banking, insurance, mining, energy, and all other natural resources. We seek to diversify our economy and to negotiate new trade agreements, particularly with non-aligned and third world nations.

Our proposed governmental structures will replace the existing bureaucracies, North and South, with an intelligent and creative federalism. This concentrates power at the grass-roots community level, through district councils, regional administrations, organised into four self-governing provinces federated in a national government with powers limited to foreign affairs, defence, and over-all finance. These bodies will be democratically elected. The Federal Parliament would be a single chamber, 50% directly elected; 50% in equal numbers from each Provincial Parliament.

This is the only real alternative: an

all-Ireland socialist republic. This is the only lasting way to achieve those civil rights we sought ten years ago in Duke Street: to firmly establish the foundation of every civil right—our national right of self-determination.

7. NEWS FROM THE NORTH

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

Thursday 15th February

DERRY CITY

An I.R.A. sniper fired a single shot and killed a Brit Lieutenant at a checkpoint at the junction of Abercorn Road and Wapping Lane, overlooking Craigavon Bridge.

Sunday 18th February

TYRONE

A mobile active service unit shot and seriously wounded an RUC man. The carefully planned ambush took place off the main Ballygawley-Dungannon Road in the townland of Tullyvallen.

Monday 19th February

NEWRY

A Brit 'Military Police' foot patrol came under heavy fire in Bridge Street at lunchtime. At least twenty shots were fired at the patrol. No Brit injuries were reported.

All I.R.A. Volunteers involved returned safely to base.

The I.R.A. issued the following statement shortly after three assistant governors tendered their resignation to them in response to their statement of 'possible immunity' if screws resigned. "Following our execution of H-Block commandant Albert Miles in December, and our statement two weeks ago that prison administrators who resign may be taken off the execution list, we have been informed that three H-Block assistant governors, Ian Richardson, David Dawson and a Mr. Murphy have resigned. The first two names have been removed from our list of targets and the third person needs to qualify his position."

8. COMITE IRLANDE (PARIS) REPORT

British Troops Out of Ireland

In Derry, Northern Ireland, on the 30th January, 1972, the British Army under orders from the British State, opened fire on a peaceful civil rights demonstration of over 30,000 people. 14 people were killed and hundreds wounded.

The policy of the British State was to terrorize the nationalist, catholic population into submission and

continued acceptance of the worst social, economic and political conditions in Europe. It did not work.

Since the division of Ireland and the artificial creation of Northern Ireland in 1922, the catholic population alone have suffered the barbaric domination of the British bourgeoisie and its imperialist partners. A wedge of monstrous privilege and fanatical sectarianism was developed by the English state and its class supporters amongst the protestant population to deeply divide the two communities. This is the main reason for the war. A war for basic human rights and national liberation and it is the only solution to the situation in Northern Ireland.

Against the so-called might of the British Army the Irish Resistance, lead by the IRA Provisionals, has maintained and advanced a popular war for now over 10 years and it will continue to until its aims are reached. There are actually 3000 Irish political prisoners in jails in the North and South of Ireland and in England, the highest number of any country in Europe. Political status has been denied them despite a long and extremely bitter strike still being carried on by the prisoners and numerous demands made by international campaigns on their behalf. This blind arrogance and pitiless brutality of the English state has only forged forever the determination of the Irish people to struggle until victory, at whatever cost.

Ireland has become the laboratory of repression for not only the European but also the international bourgeoisie.

Ireland has become a vital pawn in the imperialist schemes of the European Common Market, N.A.T.O. and the future European Parliament.

Just because it is a key factor for imperialism it is subsequently the most significant popular class war currently being waged in Europe and therefore demands the fullest support.

Solidarity for the struggle in Ireland is also solidarity for the struggles of all the popular masses in Europe.

For these reasons we ask unconditional support for the Irish Resistance in its demands for:

WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH TROOPS.

POLITICAL STATUS FOR IRISH POLITICAL PRISONERS.

SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE.

THE BUILDING OF A RE-UNIFIED AND DEMOCRATIC IRISH SOCIALIST REPUBLIC.

TO IMPROVE THE SERVICE

We ask our overseas readers to write and let us know how long this weekly bulletin takes to arrive at its destination, if the news is sufficiently

interesting and of practical use and any suggestions that might help to improve the service.

We thank those who have already written to us and sent cuttings, posters, photographs and evidence of public support abroad for the Irish cause.

LATE NEWS

According to press reports the IRA claimed responsibility for bomb attacks on Friday 23rd February on Yeovil, in the South-west of England.

"In claiming responsibility for today's bombings in England once again, we emphasise that our intention is to force the English people to question the British Government's occupation of our country."