

# Irish Republican Information Service.

Vol. 3. No. 70 MARCH 31st, 1979. KEVIN BARRY HOUSE,

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- 1 - END GAME

Not since the endeavours of a British Government in 1800 to effect the Act of Union can there have been such an open buying and selling of notes and desperate trading in bills of promises as that which took place in the past few weeks at Westminster. The Scottish and Welsh Nationalists had been expressing their bitterness and disappointment, feeling cheated on the devolution issue. The Liberals had been voicing their criticism of "a lame-duck government, at the mercy of Welsh miners and the wiles of Enoch Powell, playing with devolutionary bills and engaged in disreputable deals with Unionists."

The Unionists were grubbing around to see which side of British politics had most to offer in helping them back to their old perch. Mrs Thatcher was tingling with "the feel of power already within her grasp," and even Gerry Fitt, the faithful little lapdog of many years, was declaring non-support for the British Labour government.

The despicable dealings of a Labour party desperately holding onto power, and a Conservative party grasping for power, became quite a game as observers watched to see which way the Unionists would jump as demands increased and the price of support went up. The deal on extra seats for Unionists from the Labour party was met by a promise of increased local government power from the Conservatives. A hastily written agreement from Roy Hattersley was pushed into the hand of Unionist Harold McCusker, promising reduced prices on commodity goods. It was countered by "a firm commitment" from the Conservatives towards a fully devolved government in Northern Ireland.

There were more cautious efforts to buy the Scottish Nationalists -

neither side could afford "a firm commitment" on devolution there.

Callaghan rushed through a bill outlining compensation for Welsh miners suffering from industrial disease. It had nothing to do with principle or policy, just arithmetic - three extra votes. So too Callaghan's offer of increased pensions and appeals to Gerry Fitt "to change his mind" in the interests of British "Socialism" as some of his friends were unlikely to be returned to Westminster at the next election. That appeal ignored the fact that Gerry Fitt couldn't vote for the British government in the present circumstances if he hoped to be returned at the next election himself. The only policy adhered to was in regard to the treatment of H-Block prisoners, refusing Frank Maguire's support in return for alleviation of H-Block conditions.

In the event the British Labour government was defeated this week in a vote of confidence and the end of the game was the end of the present British Parliament, an ironical defeat by one vote.

In the theatricality and dishonesty of the debate which led up to that vote, it is difficult to say which was the most hypocritical utterance. It might be that of Prime Minister Callaghan stating that "devolution for Scotland should not be the by-product of a grab for office." It might be that of Mrs Thatcher accusing Labour politicians of lacking "honesty, credibility and dignity," despite a noticeable lack on both sides unless she confuses dignity with a stilted manner that is meant to make dishonesty credible.

It could be the statement from Gerry Fitt who "could not vote for this government in view of the revelations of the Bennett report and the reactions of Mason and Newman to that report." There was nothing in the Bennett report that Gerry Fitt wasn't well aware of, over and over, for the past seven years and the reactions of Mason and Newman were as predictable to Gerry Fitt now as they have been at any time since either gentlemen took up their positions in the six counties.

But even that was surpassed by the crocodile tears shed by Michael Foot over the same Gerry Fitt whom he had used, knifed and rejected. He was, he said, "deeply moved by Mr Fitt's speech and the house should listen to what he had to say - this man of cour-

age whom he respected and who was his oldest friend in the House of Commons. There was a goodly number present at that moment who booed and jeered the display. However, it is "service before self" for Mr Fitt - he wishes for a speedy return of the Labour government he now effects to despise.

## 2 - TORTURE FILES NAME POLICE OFFICERS

The existence of files containing the names of Garda officers alleged to have been involved in the ill-treatment of persons in political custody in the twenty-six counties was disclosed by former Judge Barra O Briain this week in Dublin. Judge O Briain headed the Southern government's inquiry into safeguards for persons in garda custody, the final report of which was for the most part rejected by the government. Judge O Briain has now revealed that files submitted by a Dublin priest, Fr Piaras O Duill, give the names and details both of the people ill-treated and of the garda officers said to have been responsible. There is some confusion as to whether a dossier of evidence of garda brutality supplied by Amnesty International to the O Briain committee did or did not contain the names of the garda officers involved.

Judge O Briain earlier said that Amnesty International had supplied his committee with the names of people who claimed to have been beaten up, and the names of the officers, in several cases, alleged to have "indulged in the actual beating-up."

The Minister for Justice, Mr Gerry Collins, who described the disclosure by Judge O Briain as "potentially dangerous," admitted in a press statement that the information concerning the committee's files had been sought by the government but that the committee did not make any of this information available to them. "Normally," he said, "no enquiry whatsoever would be made as to evidence supplied to a committee such as this, as it would be for the committee alone to decide what, if anything, should be revealed about evidence given to them." He said that the files had been

sought as an exceptional measure because of the allegations made by the person who was chairman.

Fr Piaras O Duill said that the government had no right whatsoever to seek to probe the committees' files. The O Briain committee, although set up by the Minister to examine safeguards for detained persons was held by the same Minister at the time to be independent, said Fr O Duill who issued the following press statement on the controversy:

"The Safeguards Committee, under the chairmanship of Judge Barra O Briain had no authority under its terms of reference to initiate proceedings of any sort on foot of the allegations made against certain members of the Gardai in the file of statements and affidavits submitted by me to the Committee.

"It was not the tribunal or inquiry that Amnesty International had asked for, which would adjudicate on the allegations of ill-treatment over the past couple of years. Reluctantly therefore, I decided to submit the dossier of statements in the hope that they might help in the formulation of future safeguards for people in Garda custody.

"Because of the very serious nature of some of the allegations made by identified persons against named members of the Gardai, and in view of the fact that a number of statements were volunteered on the understanding that they should be examined by a sworn independent and public inquiry, I did request, as Mr Collins said, that the dossier be treated as confidential. However, if the Minister had requested to see the file, some at least of the statements could have been made available to him.

"The notion of Gardai investigating complaints against themselves would seem totally unrealistic and unacceptable to the complaints. For this reason I would urge that an independent and public inquiry be set up with terms of reference that would include investigation of specific past complaints and to which all allegations could be submitted. It is my belief, as it is the belief of Amnesty International, that sufficient evidence exists for such an inquiry."

The O Briain Committee was set up in October, 1977, following allegations against members of the gardai of having ill-treated suspects in custody. It was intended that it should put forward recommendations for future safeguards, not only of suspects, but of the gardai themselves, against false allegations. The Committee reported the following April and its report was published last September.

It put forward more than 20 recommendations, of which eight were rejected, nine were accepted and a number of others were put off for further consideration. Nothing has been heard of the report since, or of

the recommendations which were to be further considered. Among these was a recommendation for a Complaints Tribunal, with a strong independent element.

In the course of an RTE radio interview this week Judge Barra O Briain explained that, at the time his committee was carrying out its own inquiry, statements by members of the Government had left him with the impression that, simultaneously, an inquiry was being held by senior garda officers into the conduct of certain named gardai.

He said, however, that he was later surprised to learn that the garda inquiry had not even begun.

He added that the garda inquiry never took place and that the Minister for Justice, Mr. Collins, had explained this by saying that they had not been supplied with names.

Justice O Briain acknowledged that the British Government had been more forthcoming in its reaction to the Bennett Report on police brutality in the North than the Government here in relation to his committee's report. He said that an official bound copy of his committee's report had not even been sent to him by the Government when it was finally published and he had to go and buy one himself. He had heard nothing from the Government after his committee submitted its report, he added.

### 3 - PLIGHT OF H-BLOCK TEENAGERS

About half of those 'on the blanket' in H Blocks are teenagers, says an article in Irish Post (London). It is the story of Ciaran McGillicuddy, 16 years, from Strabane, County Tyrone, a typical example of the many innocent prisoners in the concentration camp. The following is from the article which was published on 3rd February:-

On March 14 last (he was then 15), he was arrested in Strabane and eventually taken to Strand Road Police Station in Belfast. There the process of interrogation is carried out. As always happens, the boy eventually signed a statement.

From March until October 26, he was held on remand in Crumlin Road Jail. Then he was tried - charged with acting' as a look-out during a bomb incident and also with membership of Fianna Eireann. It was, of course, a no-jury trial - simply a formality. He already had signed the statement. Next stop H Blocks. Long Kesh. Since then he has been naked and alone in a small cell. Like all those 'on the blanket', he has no reading matter, no radio or television, or recreation and is allowed only one visit a month. He is serving four years.

#### Own Fault

Roy Mason says that it's all their

own fault; that Long Kesh is now one of the best equipped prisons in these islands; that the best in educational and recreational facilities are available to those not protesting; and, furthermore, that the prisoners can earn 50% remission of sentence - compared with one-third elsewhere. The mess is of their own making, he stresses.

The facts are that Willie Whitelaw, then Northern Ireland Secretary, introduced 'special category' status for political prisoners in 1972. They were allowed to wear their own clothes, to receive food parcels and to organise their own activities.

Merlyn Rees decided to change this. He ordained that 'special category' would not apply to anybody convicted of a political offence after March 1976.

The situation then is that all those convicted before March 1976 - Republicans and Loyalists - are still enjoying special status in Long Kesh. Those convicted after March 1976 are treated as common criminals and required to wear prison garb. The Republicans are refusing to do so.

The first Republican to arrive at H Blocks after the change was Ciaran Nugent. He refused to wear the prison uniform or participate in prison work. The authorities confined him to his cell and left him naked. He had but a blanket to cover him - hence 'on the blanket'.

#### Geneva Convention

My purpose here is to view the situation calmly and dis-passionately. Roy Mason is right when he says that, instead of being 'on the blanket', these young prioners could be enjoying excellent facilities and, if they behave themselves, would be releases on serving half their sentences. "They have committed serious criminal offences - in some instances have killed people - and are common criminals", he insists.

What he does not state, however, is that whatever they have done has been politically motivated. The Geneva Convention was up-dated a few years ago and extends prisoner of war status to guerrillas, rebels and all such who are operating as a coherent body under a command structure - irrespective of the fact that their opponents may not deem them a legitimate army.

My recollection is that Britain hasn't signed this extension of the Geneva Convention. This is something which speaks for itself.

#### Political Situation

The whole apparatus created under the Emergency Provisions Act to convict IRA and Loyalist militants admits contending with a political situation. The special no-injury courts are for dealing with cases deemed "to have political ends". But, once a conviction is acquired, the defendant

ceases to be political. This is neither logical nor just.

But even more alarming is the interrogation system — described at length by Amnesty International which found that beatings and torture are commonplace.

It is safe to assume that quite a number of the more than 300 'on the blanket' are innocent. But even those who aren't have still finished up in Long Kesh as a result of an interrogation and judicial system designed so that it can bring in a speedy verdict and without any of the balances or checks which apply in an ordinary criminal case.

If these men and boys had been convicted in an ordinary court, then Roy Mason would have some justification for describing them as

"common criminals". But they weren't convicted in an ordinary court but by a system designed to deal ruthlessly with a political situation. If these prisoners were political on entering a no-jury court, they must still have been political on leaving it to be transported to Long Kesh.

But leaving all of that aside and concentrating simply on the Long Kesh situation itself, Roy Mason's submission doesn't stand up. The prisoners are asked to wear prison clothes and do prison work. Their refusal, however, doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be naked, denied all recreational facilities, reading matter, tobacco and all of the other basic facilities.

#### Break the Prisoners

The reaction sets out to break the prisoner — to humiliate him with body-searches; to disorientate him with the isolation of not even having something to read; to frustrate him with acts like sometimes turning up the heat in summer and turning it off in winter.

It is against this treatment that the prisoners some time ago embarked on their campaign of refusal to slop out. And so the cells are now a mess and Roy Mason can say that it's the prisoners' own doing. But as Archbishop O Fiaich said last August, this protest was the only one (other than hunger strike) available to the prisoners.

Even Clement Freud, the Liberal MP, expressed some degree of admiration for the prisoners after visiting Long Kesh last month. "One couldn't help admiring their resolution, admiring the consistency of the way they bear their discomfort . . ." he said.

And so it continues. Sixteen-year-old Ciaran McGillicuddy sits naked and alone in his cell for 24 hours each day. Certainly, he is a most unusual "common criminal" and his plight cries out for justice.

#### 4 — SINN FEIN AT SARDINIA CONFERENCE

As part of the action programme of the European signatories of the joint anti-E.E.C. platform, a conference was hosted in Cagliari, Sardinia, by Democrazia Proletaria of Italy on the national question and the class struggle in Europe. The meeting took place over the weekend of February 23rd, 24th and 25th.

National liberation movements attending held a meeting apart from the conference proper which was attended by Sinn Fein, E.I.A. (Basque country), Front Nacional de Catalunya and P.S.A.N. (Catalan countries) and Movimento de Su Populu Sardu (Sardinia). The address of Ruairi O Bradaigh, President of Sinn Fein, to the conference on the Sunday morning included several of the points agreed upon at the meeting of the national movements.

The location of the conference was the Sala dei Congressi and simultaneous translation of the proceedings was available. Risteard Behal, Director of the Sinn Fein Foreign Affairs Bureau, spoke to a packed conference hall on the Friday night. He explained that the Irish struggle is the Zimbabwe of Europe and has been the most intense national liberation confrontation since the second World War. He stated that it is blatant hypocrisy to speak of the need for liberation in distant parts of the world while nations and minorities are ground down within Europe.

Mr Behal outlined briefly Ireland's 800-year struggle against England and highlighted such aspects of that struggle as the outright genocide of the Irish nation, the suppression of Irish culture, the effects of colonialism and the forced division of our people on religious grounds. He emphasised that Britain and the western powers are guilty of liberal use of black propaganda in regard to the Irish situation and stressed that we are not involved in a religious war, but a war of national liberation. He explained to the audience that the military occupation in the north of our country is aided by colonial Fascist forces and that the neo-colonialist south has introduced oppressive legislation which has been the envy of the rulers of South Africa. The people of Europe must realise that the downfall of the dictatorships of Franco and Salazar did not end such repressive tools as Special Courts, torture, military detention and Fascist laws — they still flourish today in both parts of Ireland.

Mr Behal dwelt in some depth on the problem of prisoners-of-war in Ireland and appealed to the conference for support and assistance for these prisoners.

He spoke of the sufferings and the determination of the prisoners in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh and urged support, in particular, for the political prisoners in Armagh Women's Prison

from the Italian women's movements who had sent delegates to the Sardinia conference.

In addition, the Sinn Fein speaker invited all the movements represented and all our partners in the anti-E.E.C. initiative to send delegates to a conference, organised by Sinn Fein, on "European Political Prisoners" which is to be held in Dublin and Belfast on April 20th to April 22nd.

In conclusion, Risteard Behal pointed out that the imperialism of the E.E.C. is effecting every sphere of our lives in Europe and in our own countries. The powers of Europe are financially and politically oppressing Third World countries in our name. Naked military aggression can be seen in Africa as the E.E.C. powers seek to protect their economic exploitation of that continent. He urged the people of Europe to counteract these policies by dismantling the present E.E.C. structure and replacing it with a Europe of socialism and co-operation based on self-determination for the oppressed nations of Europe itself.

#### 5 — PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO CONFERENCE

Mr Ruairi O Bradai, President of Sinn Fein and well-known Republican leader, addressed the Conference in Cagliari, Sardinia, on February 25th last as follows: "I bring greetings to you from the revolutionary people in struggle in Ireland for 10 years now.

"The occasion of the E.E.C. elections gives this unique opportunity to us all to work together for national independence and socialism — against the Europe of big business and the multi-national companies. In particular, Sinn Fein welcomes this meeting of what to us are not national minorities but the oppressed nations within Europe with reference to the class struggle.

"Because Sinn Fein believes, with the great Irish socialist, James Connolly, whom Sergio Salvi quoted with approval yesterday, that socialism and national independence are complementary — and not contradictory — Sinn Fein has sent the highest possible ranking delegation to this conference.

"The resistance to British imperialism in Ireland wishes to underline once more its position. National self-determination is demanded in the joint platform to which we subscribed in Brussels last January. For us and for others attending this conference, this re-affirm our right — and the right of all oppressed nations and peoples — to national independence, to complete control of our own destinies in every respect.

"It is for this that so many of our comrades, both men and women, have died battling against the forces of

imperialism and oppression in Ireland. Autonomy within the State structure — for us and for others — does not resolve this conflict.

"Ireland has suffered foreign invasion and occupation, together with colonisation and oppression for over 800 years. In the 19th century alone, in forced famine conditions, one and a half million of our people died from starvation and disease in three years, while millions more were driven out in mass emigration to America and other countries in the years that followed, all victims of imperialism and capitalism.

"But sustained resistance was maintained right into the 20th century when the English government countered with the Partition Settlement of 1921 which divided our country and people into a British-occupied colonial North and a neo-colonial South. The counter-revolution carried through in this manner has been proved to the world since 1969 to be neither just nor permanent.

"Imperialism divided our people using religion as a cover in the same manner as race, region or tribe is used in other parts of the world. Since the descendants of the English and Scottish settlers in Ireland were mainly Protestants and the native population generally Catholic, it was relatively easy to give the working class Protestants a marginal advantage over the working class Catholics in employment, housing and political patronage generally; to use an analogy from elsewhere — the Poor Whites and the Blacks were thus alienated from each other while both were exploited in masterly fashion by the landed aristocracy and in particular by the commercial interests.

"In the South, a classic neo-colonial situation was imposed. Here the multinationals reign supreme supported by the E.E.C. Ireland is treated within Europe just as the imperialist states of Western Europe treat the Third World. Great mineral wealth has been discovered in our country in recent years and we have the richest lead and zinc mine in Europe. But the multinationals take out the raw ore and export it. There is no smelter and no consequent fabrication in Ireland. Our fishing zone of 310 km. into the Atlantic has been taken over by the E.E.C. while rights to oil and gas under the seabed were sold by the Dublin government to a multi-national company for £500 sterling in 1958.

"Total collaboration with the English forces in the Forth of our country has been the policies of successive Dublin governments since 1921. This continued during the mass Civil Rights movement of 1968 and 1969, during the repression which was brought to bear on it, right through to the period of armed struggle. The three demands put forward by the Republican Movement regarding the war are: (1) a complete British withdrawal, (2) a New Ireland negotiated

by the Irish people themselves, (3) a general amnesty for all political prisoners in Ireland and England; in effect, unqualified national independence.

"The political programme of the Irish Republican Movement is as follows: (1) the dismantling of both status erected in the counter-revolution of 1922 and the building of an entirely New Ireland; (2) the complete separation of Church and State; (3) the erection of a Socialist Republic in all of Ireland with a federation of the four provinces, political power exercised at the lowest possible level and control by the workers of the names of production, distribution and exchange.

"Under the pressure of the popular struggle, English rule in Ireland is changing. The tenth anniversary demonstrations over the months since last August have brought even greater numbers of people onto the streets. Faced with this situation, English policy towards Ireland is changing and is coming more and more under international imperialism. A definite English option is to withdraw physically from Ireland but to leave behind structures which enable exploitation and domination of the people to continue. The E.E.C. would, of course, be used as a framework to create an all-Ireland neo-colonial state.

"Sinn Fein is opposed to the whole philosophy of the E.E.C. which we view as a retrogressive force for the peoples of Europe and for all humanity, especially for the Third World. The Irish Republican Movement regards it as an imperialist, capitalist and neo-colonialist manifestation and we are determined not to reform it but, acting in co-operation with kindred organisations in Europe, to dismantle the E.E.C. totally. Our alternative is a Europe of peoples, not of the States and the E.E.C. We wish, of course, to form a special relationship with the other Celtic countries of Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, Cornwall and Brittany as these become independent and socialist.

"We are totally opposed to the power blocs, East and West, whether military, political or socio-economic. We regard the Non-Aligned Nations Movement as a progressive force in the world and see the New Ireland as neutral and non-aligned; anti-E.E.C. and anti-NATO is our position.

"I now wish to list the effects of E.E.C. membership on the War of National Liberation against British imperialism in Ireland:

- 1) NATO support for British occupation forces in Ireland.
- 2) Pressure from Bonn and the E.E.C. generally on Britain not to yield to the liberation forces' demand that the British withdraw from Ireland.
- 3) Extra-territorial courts, north and south, which provide a model for the "European Convention on Repression".

4) Unification of monetary system will be followed by unification of police and military forces.

5) It has become much more difficult to expose the British torture of Irish prisoners-of-war and the appalling and degrading prison conditions (400 prisoners in third year naked and in solitary confinement in H-Blocks, Long Kesh Concentration Camp).

"To conclude, I wish once more to quote from James Connolly, executed by the English following the Easter Rising of 1916: 'National and social liberation are two sides of the same coin'.

## Late News

### NEAVE ASSASSINATION

As we go to press a major security alert was under way in Britain following the assassination of Mr Airey Neave, the Conservative Party spokesman on Northern Ireland. Mr Neave was killed by a bomb which wrecked his car as he drove from an underground car park at the House of Commons just before 3 p.m. yesterday. He had been expected to become the next Northern Ireland Secretary if the Tories won the May 3rd general election.

Mr Neave was a firm opponent of the IRA.

### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR IRELAND

As a signatory to the "United European Opposition to the Imperialistic EEC" Sinn Fein have been given the task of holding the European meeting in Ireland on the question of "Solidarity with the Political Prisoners." The problem and treatment of political prisoners in this New Europe deserve very special and careful attention. Unfortunately, Ireland is best suited to this meeting as there are over 2,000 political prisoners — men and women — here as a result of the struggle for national liberation and self determination.

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READERS are reminded that due to the continuing postal strike we are not receiving correspondence. We will inform you when the strike ends.

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