



# THE BIRMINGHAM SIX COMMITTEE

Hugh Callaghan    Richard McIlkenny  
Paddy Joe Hill    Billy Power  
Gerry Hunter      John Walker

Newsletter May No. 1

## Letter from the Committee

In August 1975 six Irish men - Hugh Callaghan, Paddy Joe Hill, Gerry Hunter, Dick McIlkenny, Bill Power and John Walker were convicted of planting bombs in Birmingham in November 1974. They protested their innocence and instituted appeal proceedings. On 28 January 1988 the Court of Appeal announced that the convictions would be upheld.

This verdict came after a 28 day hearing in which an overwhelming body of evidence which pointed towards the innocence of the Birmingham Six had been presented to the Court. During their hearing, it was conclusively shown that the forensic tests used on the men were completely invalid. A series of police and prison service witnesses came forward to confirm the men's accounts of beatings, humiliation and deprivation of food and sleep while in police custody and that they were forced to sign statements in conditions that amounted to torture.

The men now hope to bring their case before the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg.

Meanwhile, the campaign to release and exonerate the Birmingham Six continues. The B6 Committee, which was set up in 86, is seeking to raise the case in Ireland and internationally and put pressure on the British government.

We aim to publish this newsletter on a monthly basis. Please read it carefully and pass it on. The campaign needs your help.

## CJ Haughey refuses to back Euro case for B6

THE IRISH government has rejected a request by one of the Birmingham Six, Richard McIlkenny, to back the prisoners' efforts to bring their case before the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg.

Despite this setback the men are still hopeful that the Irish Government will change its mind. The Birmingham Six Committee will also be lobbying the government on the issue.

In a letter sent to Mr McIlkenny in prison on March 29th, the Taoiseach's office claimed that it "would not be feasible for the government to formally support the petition." The news came a full three months after Mr. McIlkenny had personally written to Charles J. Haughey, urging him to put "the full power of the government behind the petition." Mr. McIlkenny's letter, sent on January 15th, included a copy of the prisoners' petition to the European Commission.

Mr. Haughey's decision can only weaken the men's case at what is now a critical point. The Birmingham Six decided to bring their case to Strasbourg after the Court of Appeal upheld their life sentences in January 1988. The European Court of Justice now represents the only legal forum where their case can be examined, but they first have to convince the European Commission that their case is valid.

The Irish government, for its part, refused its support on the flimsiest of grounds.

As explained by a spokesman for the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Taoiseach's Office "drew a distinction between the right of an individual to bring a petition against a State before the Commission on Human

Rights under Article 25 of the Convention and the separate procedure for an inter-State action." In a letter sent to the B6 Committee, the spokesman added that "it was not the practice for a State to support a petition by an individual against another State."

But legal opinion in the UK has criticised Mr. Haughey's failure to support the men. "It is generally recognised that there are no avenues in England for undoing wrongful conviction," the source told the Birmingham Six Committee. Moreover, the source argues that there is nothing to stop the Irish government from bringing its own petition to the European Commission, thereby supporting the six men.

"The failure now of the Irish government to bring in its own right the same point to the attention of Europe may now guarantee that the Guilford defendants fail in their forthcoming appeal. In turn, it may guarantee that the Birmingham defendants stay in prison for the rest of their natural lives," the source adds.

Adds Kate McIlkenny, wife of Richard; "Charlie Haughey was very vocal on the case when in opposition. He was even talking about stopping extradition. I really believe that when Mr. Haughey got in that he would really take an interest in the case. We are all really disappointed."

"If they (the Irish government) doesn't support them, what chance have they got?"

## British support news

The campaign is gathering strength in the UK. Birmingham Six Groups are now established in eight areas in England and Wales:

London  
Northwest England  
Birmingham  
Sheffield and South Yorkshire  
Cardiff and South Wales  
Southampton, Luton and Oxford

It is hoped to establish a campaign in Leeds shortly. Some 30,000 signatures have already been collected in the UK for a petition which will be presented as part of a lobby on the Houses of Parliament on 12 June. Groups are also collecting outside churches.

Finally, Kate McIlkenny tells us that a picket of 10 Downing Street is

planned for 30 May and 1 June, to mark the visit of US president George Bush to London.

NOTE: The campaign in the UK maintains a strict non-political position, though its members hold a wide variety of interests and viewpoints. This non-political line is seen in both the Irish and British campaigns as being of crucial importance

# Russian manoeuvres

The Soviet authorities seem to be taking a more consistent interest in the case of the Birmingham Six than either the Irish or British governments at present.

On April 6, during Mr. Gorbachev's recent trip to England, members of the Soviet delegation met campaign members and relatives in London. The meeting was filmed for Soviet TV news and Mr. Andrei Grachov, deputy head of International Relations for the CPSU gave an undertaking that the Soviet government would raise the case at forthcoming human rights conferences, starting with a forthcoming conference in Paris this May.

Mr. Gorbachev had been briefed and personally approved of the meeting with the campaign. Not surprising then that it was Gorbachev, not Charles Haughey, who raised the case of the Birmingham Six during the Soviet leaders' recent stop-over in Shannon.

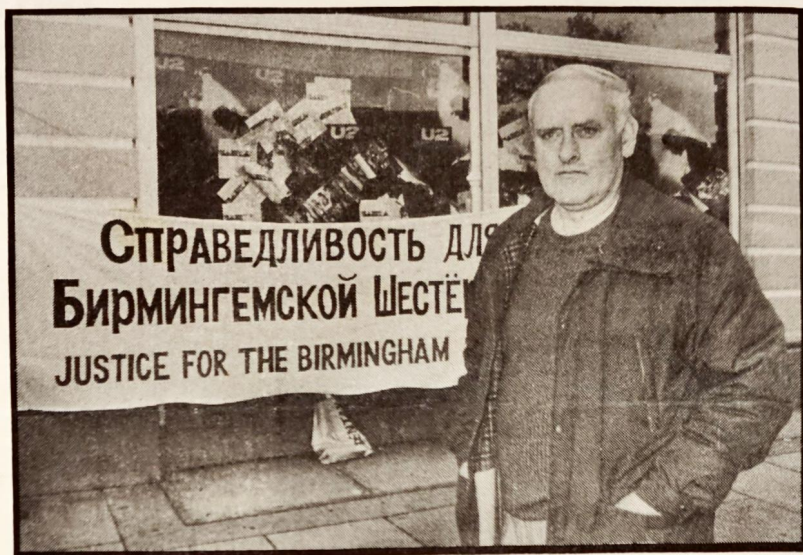


Photo: Eamonn Farrell

Paddy McKenny on his way to a campaign trip to Moscow, Oct., '88

## Stop press.....

### Mass:

The Most Rev. Dr James Kavanagh, auxiliary Bishop of Dublin, will celebrate the second annual Mass for the Birmingham Six at the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin. It will be held at 7pm, on Thursday 25 May, the feast of Corpus Christi.

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### Poker Classic:

Thursday 18th May, 8pm at Buswells Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2. Tickets cost £25. There's a guaranteed prize of £1,000 which, split between a table of five, means a good return of £200 per head. Numbers are limited to 85, so hurry!

Tel. 775212 for tickets.

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### Volunteers:

Helpers wanted at the Birmingham Six Committee offices, Tel. 775212 (German Typist wanted).

### Picket:

Free on Saturday? Join in the weekly picket at the British Embassy, 31 Merriam Road, Dublin 4 organised by the Booterstown Support Group. Tel: 887299

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### Advertisement:

We received an overwhelming contribution for our ad appeal, which enabled us to run a large newspaper ad during Gorbachev's visit. We have now decided to take an ad in a national daily at the end of the year, to mark Ireland's presidency of the European Council.

We will need 1,000 signatures per page. Please keep sending in your names and £10s.

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## Get Involved

The Birmingham Six Committee

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The Birmingham Six Committee is one of several groups working in Ireland, Britain and the US for the release and exoneration of the six men who were wrongly convicted in August 1975 of the Birmingham pub bombings.

The group has no aims or agenda beyond securing justice for the six men. You can help, either by sending a donation or getting involved. Write to your local representatives, TD, and Euro candidate who will be looking for your support in the June 15th elections to the European Parliament.

**Write to the six men in jail, and express your support.**

**Paddy Joe Hill**, 509496, HM Prison Gartree, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, England.

**Gerry Hunter**, 509495, HM Prison Long Lorton, Evesham, Worcs, England.

**John Walker**, 509494, HM Prison Long Lorton, Evesham, Worcs, England.

**Hugh Callaghan**, 509499, HM Prison Long Lorton, Evesham, Worcs, England.

**Richard McKenny**, 509498, HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs, DuCane Road, London W12.

**Billy Power**, 509497, HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs, DuCane Road, London W12.

We plan to publish this newsletter on a monthly basis. Please fill in your name and address if you would like to receive it. A donation towards printing costs would be gratefully accepted.

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### Bank Account

You can also send donations directly into our bank account at:

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52 Upper Baggot Street  
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