



BIRMINGHAM SIX

COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

October 1989 No. 6

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

British academics to investigate disgraced West Midlands squad

Researchers at two UK universities are jointly working on a special investigation that may substantiate links between the now disbanded West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad and the Birmingham Six. The men have spent almost 15 years in British jails, on the strength of convictions obtained by members of the Serious Crimes Squad.

The Serious Crimes Squad was disbanded earlier this summer and over 50 officers were either dismissed or reassigned to administrative posts in a "purge" carried out by the West Midlands' Chief Constable Geoffrey Dear. This followed a series of retrials in which prisoners convicted in the past two years successfully claimed that their statements had been tampered by officers from the squad.

A team from the West Yorkshire police force is now investigating cases in which the force has been involved, but has limited its scope from 1986 to 1988. The university study, which is being carried out by the law faculties at the Universities of Birmingham and Warwick, will extend the study to suspect convictions obtained pre-1986.

The study is being funded by an anonymous £15,000 donation which was sent to British Labour MP Clare Short. She hopes the findings will be published at the same time as the West Yorkshire investigation.

This study will collate evidence from solicitors, prisoners and their families who are alleging that these prisoners are victims of a miscarriage of justice. Ms. Short, who is MP for Birmingham (Ladywood), has received approximately 30-40 letters from prisoners who insist that they are victims of a miscarriage of justice.

If the university study reveals a systematic pattern of fabrication of evidence over the last two years, pressure will grow for the scope of the official inquiry to be extended, possibly to include the case of the Birmingham Six. Chief Constable Dear has already said he might agree to this. Ms Short and her fellow Labour MP Chris

Mullin also hope to identify the recently suspended officers, in order to establish how many were involved in the Birmingham interrogations.

"The inquiry into the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad is already an enormous breakthrough for the Birmingham Six and other people," said Ms. Short. "The number of people who believe the Birmingham Six were wrongfully convicted is growing, and growing, and growing."

She said the Irish government could take a stronger line on the Birmingham Six case. "They protest regularly, and that's as far as it goes, but they haven't done anything else," she said.



British Labour MP, Clare Short

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O Fiaich seeks reopening of Birmingham Six case

Cardinal Tomas O Fiaich has called for the reopening of the case of the Birmingham Six, on the eve of the prisoners' fifteenth anniversary in jail.

The request came in a frank statement issued by O Fiaich on September 12th, the day before Ireland's Minister for Foreign

Affairs, Gerry Collins, met the British Home Secretary Douglas Hurd to discuss the men's case (see page two).

Irish government puts its concern "on the record"

"Comprehensive and frank" was how Irish Foreign Minister, Gerry Collins, viewed his recent meeting with the British Home Secretary Douglas Hurd.

The talks were held in London on September 13, shortly after the Irish government received the Irish Embassy report into the unfolding saga of of misdemeanours in the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad.

Collins urged that any information unearthed on the Birmingham Six by the inquiry into the West Midland squad be brought to Hurd's attention. Beyond that, media reports suggest that Collins focussed chiefly on the prisoners' welfare. Government sources indicated that Collins had urged that the six men be transferred to open prisons for Christmas, according to the Irish Times.

Collins seemed to extract few promises from his British counterpart. It is also apparent that he stopped short of demanding a reopening of the men's case.

However, he did put the Irish government's concern about the case back on the record, simply by visiting Hurd and creating a diplomatic momentum.

"My presence here is the most positive indication possible of the Government's concern about the Birmingham Six case," Collins told journalists after the meeting. "At our meeting today I conveyed the Government's views on the case. We had a comprehensive and frank dis-

cussion which lasted the best part of an hour. The Home Secretary took careful note of what I had to say to him. He, of course, outlined his own position."

The meeting had been part of "an on-going" series of discussions, which Irish Ministers have had with the Home Secretary, Collins added. Here's hoping for another one soon.



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"The recent disbandment of the Serious Crimes Squad of the West Midlands police, and the announcement by the Chief Constable of an inquiry into very serious allegations surrounding its work make the reopening of the case of the Birmingham Six imperative," Cardinal O Fiaich said.

"The six prisoners have now suffered nearly 15 years in jail for a crime of which they have never ceased to proclaim their innocence. More and more Irish people are convinced that the 1975 verdict was "not beyond reasonable doubt". Many British people now agree. How long will the six prisoners continue to be punished? Justice demands their release without delay."

O Fiaich pointed out that almost a year had passed since the Irish Catholic Bishops declared that the Birmingham Six had been "victims of a miscarriage of justice. Last year's statement was issued after a hierarchy meeting in Maynooth where Church members discussed both the Birmingham and Guildford Four cases.

"During the appeal of the Birmingham Six last year, four members of the bishop's conference attended the court in order to show their concern that justice should be done," last year's statement said. "The Bishops had hoped that in view of the verdict in the appeal court clemency would have been shown to men now in the fourteenth year of their imprisonment."



Cardinal Tomas O Fiaich

'Release the Birmingham Six' - says Soviet Ambassador

The Soviet Ambassador to Ireland has urged the British government to release the Birmingham Six, warning that the men's case is now tarnishing the name of British justice.

Ambassador Genadi Uranov was speaking at the September 5th launch of a poster specially designed by the Irish modern artist, Robert Ballagh. Three hundred signed issues of the poster will be sold for £30 each to raise funds for the men's case. The poster shows a scales of justice, with the Birmingham Six being weighted down by a red, white and blue crown.

The Soviet Ambassador spoke plainly of his backing for the men's case.

"Our country supports the call for the release of these prisoners," he said. "International opinion is very much behind this case but it depends on the British government, on British justice to make the first move. In this new era of European security and economic cooperation, it is very

important that there is a just solution to the case," he added.

The launch was also attended by journalist and author Michael Farrell, a long-time advocate of the men's case.

The Ballagh posters, which are part of a limited and signed edition, are available from the new offices of the Birmingham Six. Proceeds will go towards the campaign. Mr Ballagh, who has supported the Birmingham Six case for some time, is trying to enlist support of other members of Ireland's "creative community" in a campaign for both the six men and other groups, such as the Guildford Four.

Ambassador Uranov was presented with two framed copies of the poster. He accepted his own personal copy and a second

for the Soviet premier Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, who discussed the Birmingham case with An Taoiseach Charles Haughey during the Russian leader's brief visit to Ireland earlier this year.

Poster Competition

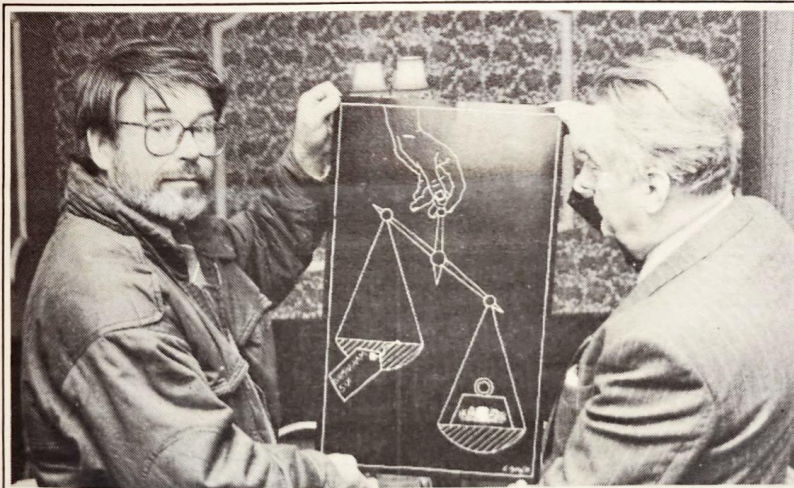
Attention all Secondary and Vocational schools!

The Committee is offering a £500 prize fund for a poster competition in aid of the Birmingham Six. The competition will be judged by the Irish artist Roger Ballagh.

Please send a stamped addressed envelope for full details to:

The
Birmingham Six
Committee,
Usher House,
40/41 Usher Quay,
Dublin 1.

★★★★



Soviet Ambassador to Ireland, Genadi Uranov accepts a copy of the Birmingham Six poster by Irish artist Robert Ballagh.

name John 714711
E X 2846

Solidarity vigil at British Embassy

A four-hour candle-lit procession, relieved by cups of tea and hourly readings, was held at a special vigil for the Birmingham Six at the British Embassy on September 23rd. The vigil lasted four hours, from 8pm to 12 midnight.

An estimated 100 people participated, and a spokeswoman for the Booterstown Support Group, which organised the vigil, said the group was "very pleased" with the turnout.

The vigil was one of a series of events planned over the coming months by a coordinating group which is highlighting cases of Irish victims of British legal injustice.

Four readings were made during the vigil, which included two extracts from an April 1988 letter by Richard McIlkenny, one of the six men now in prison. Participants included former Fianna Fail TD, Kevin Boland and the newly-elected Green Party TD, Roger Garland.

Stop press..... Stop press..... Stop press.....

Marathon:

Will you run for the Birmingham Six? If so, get on the phone now to the Secretary at 40/41 Ushers Quay, Dublin 1. Tel: 793288. The race is on 30th October 1989. Each runner will get:

- a) A tee-shirt marked "Justice for the Birmingham Six."
- b) Access to changing facilities in a Dublin City hotel.
- c) Sponsorship cards.
- d) Refreshments after the race

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Christmas Cards

This year's solidarity Christmas cards will soon be available at a knock-down price of four for £1. Send them to your friends and your local TD. Contact our new address for further details.

National Ad:

Funds are still needed for a full-page advertisement in an Irish daily newspaper planned for early 1990 when Ireland takes the six-month presidency of the European communities. 900 signatures are needed to fill the page, at a cost of £10 per name. Please send a cheque, stating if you wish your name to appear in print.

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Vigil:

Join the weekly Saturday vigil at the British Embassy, 31 Merrion Road, Dublin 4, from 11.30 to 2.00pm. Contact the Booterstown Support Group. Tel. 887299, for details.

Attention readers

We publish this newsletter on a monthly basis. Due to printing costs we can no longer afford to mail it free of charge to our readers. If you would like to continue to receive your copy each month please send an annual subscription fee of £10. Please fill in the form below. Thank you for your support.

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

Allied Irish Banks,
52 Upper Baggot Street
Dublin 2.

A/C number 36220028

Thank you

A Collectors' Item

A limited edition of 300 Birmingham Six posters, each signed by the artist Robert Ballagh, are now on sale.

Cost: £30 each (unframed)
Post and packaging (£5)

Contact:

The Birmingham Six
Committee,
Usher House,
40/41 Usher Quay,
Dublin 1.

Or ring Joe Colgan,
Tel. 793288

Amended 088-557422

We have moved!

Please note our new address. We are now at:

The Birmingham Six
Committee
Usher House
40/41 Usher Quay
Dublin 1
Ireland.

Tel. 01-793288 Fax. 01-793639

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 MP.

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

Paddy Joe Hill, 509496, HM Prison Gartree, Market Harborough, Leicester, 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 McIlkenny, 509498, HM Prison Full Sutton, Stamford Bridge, Nr. York, England.

Billy Power, 509497, HM Prison Full Sutton, Stamford Bridge, Nr. York, England.