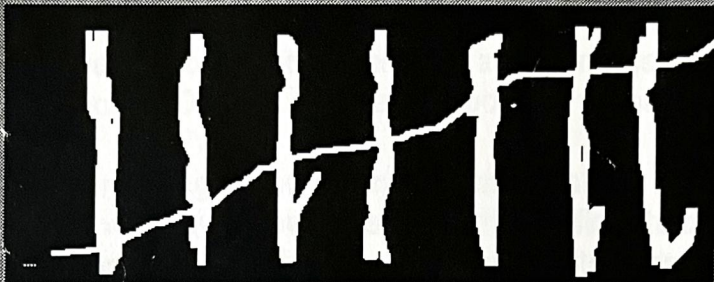
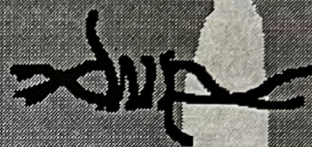


Saoirse



Free the Political Prisoners



At this point in the peace process it is important that the continuing imprisonment of our relatives and friends be put on the agenda. There cannot be a permanent and durable peace without the release of prisoners. They must be released as part of the process of attacking peace.

These men and women find themselves locked in prisons for no other reason than the continued conflict in our country. They are simply products or victims of the conflict. With the unravelling and resolution of this conflict must come the unravelling and resolution of their plight.

If there was no war there would be no political prisoners.

Those involved in human rights issues must also involve themselves in campaigns for their release. They cannot escape the fact that the prisons are bulging with people because of the political laws, special interrogation techniques, sometimes torture, and one judge special trials designed not so much with delivering justice but rather removing people off the streets. The issues cannot be divorced.

"THE TIME IS UP".

LAUNCH OF SAOIRSE---FREE THE PRISONERS MOVEMENT.

At a meeting in Conway Mill on Wednesday 30th November the movement of prisoners relatives and friends is being formally launched. Our role is to see the political prisoners freed immediately.

We are being supported in our demand at this point in time by Sinn Fein who have allowed us to use their offices to organise a "Free the Prisoners" march in Belfast on Sunday 4th December.

It is in this context that we welcome the support of Gerry Adams on our platform today.

However as our campaign grows we hope to attain more widespread political party support and the backing of all human rights and peace groups .

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WORKING PAPER FOR SAOIRSE PRESS CONFERENCE

No-one can blame the victims of this conflict for the conflict. It is not because we have prisoners that we have conflict but because we have conflict that we have our prisoners.

The time is up now. Particularly for the governments who because of their ineptness and disinterest failed to resolve the real issues of conflict and face up to their responsibilities. War happened because the political process has been overridden. If we are to resolve our differences politically then we must remove the legacies of war.

Saoirse is being formed in an effort to have our relatives and friend's freedom placed firmly on the agenda of the peace process. Already local groups affiliating to Saoirse have been formed in Belfast, Derry, SouthDerry, Tyrone, Newry, Armagh, Fermanagh, Louth, Monaghan, Dublin, Kerry, Limerick, Galway, and Sligo. It will be our intention to cover every part of Ireland as the H. Blocks/Armagh committees did in 1981, and of course to seek international support.

We call on all political parties, human rights and peace groups to state clearly where they stand on the issue of release.

QUESTION 4. WHAT ABOUT RELEASED PRISONERS?

WE ARE NOT AT THAT STAGE YET. OUR ROLE AT THIS POINT IN TIME IS TO PUT THE WHOLE ISSUE ON THE AGENDA. THE NOTES AND BILLS CAN BE WORKED OUT BY THOSE INVOLVED IN DIRECT NEGOTIATION.

QUESTION 5. DO THE PRISONERS SUPPORT YOU?

WE HAVE BEEN TALKING TO THEM ABOUT IT. THEY SUPPORT WHAT WE ARE DOING PROVIDED THAT IT IS SEEN AS PART OF THE WIDER RECOGNITION AND SETTLEMENT. THEY KNOW AS WE DO THAT THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS BY ITS OWN IS NOT THE AS ALL AND END ALL OF CONFLICT.

QUESTION 6. WHAT OTHER ISSUES WILL YOU BE APPROACHING FOR SUPPORT?

BRIEFING PAPER FOR SAOIRSE PRESS CONFERENCE.

QUESTION 1. WHY SHOULD PRISONERS BE RELEASED?

SEE PRESS STATEMENT.....THERE CANNOT BE PERMANENT AND DURABLE PEACE WITHOUT THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

QUESTION 2. WHAT ABOUT THE 'CRIMES' THEY HAVE COMMITTED?

ALL ARE IN PRISON ONLY BECAUSE OF THE POLITICAL CONFLICT, THE WAR. AS THE WAR MOVES TOWARDS AN END THE PROBLEMS THAT ARE THE LEGACY OF CONFLICT MUST BE RESOLVED.

IT IS ALSO WORTHWHILE MAKING THE POINT THAT BRITISH SOLDIERS AND RUC MEN HAVE NEVER SPENT A DAY IN PRISON DESPITE BEING INVOLVED IN ACTS OF WAR WHERE PEOPLE WERE KILLED. EG, BLOODY SUNDAY, SHOOT TO KILL, PLASTIC BULLETS AND COLLUSION. AND WHERE THEY HAVE ENDED UP IN PRISON THEY HAVE SERVED ONLY SHORT PERIODS, EG PRIVATE THAIN.

QUESTION 3. WHAT ABOUT LOYALIST PRISONERS?

YES THEY TOO WILL BE RELEASED BUT THEIR BATTLE IS ONE FOR THEIR COMMUNITY. AT THIS POINT WE DO NOT SEE THIS AS A JOINT PROJECT.

QUESTION 4. WHAT ABOUT PHASED RELEASES?

WE ARE NOT AT THAT STAGE YET. OUR ROLE AT THIS POINT IN TIME IS TO PUT THE WHOLE ISSUE ON THE AGENDA. THE NOTES AND BOLTS CAN BE WORKED OUT BY THOSE INVOLVED IN DIRECT NEGOTIATION.

QUESTION 5. DO THE PRISONERS SUPPORT YOU?

YES WE HAVE TALKED TO THEM ABOUT IT. THEY SUPPORT WHAT WE ARE DOING PROVIDING THAT IT IS SEEN AS PART OF THE WIDER RESOLUTION AND SETTLEMENT. THEY KNOW AS WE DO THAT THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS ON ITS OWN IS NOT THE BE ALL AND END ALL OF CONFLICT.

QUESTION 6. WHAT OTHER GROUPS WILL YOU BE APPROACHING FOR SUPPORT?

WE WILL BE SEEKING MEETINGS WITH POLITICAL PARTIES, THE CHURCHES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND JUSTICE GROUPS. WE WILL BE ASKING THEM TO SUPPORT THE BASIC DEMAND THAT PRISONERS BE FREED AS PART OF THE PROCESS OF FINDING A PATH TO LASTING PEACE.

QUESTION 7. WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY TO THE RELATIVES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN KILLED?

WE APPRECIATE THEIR GRIEF BECAUSE MANY OF US HAVE ALSO SUFFERED IN BREAVEMENT. WE ALSO, AND OUR CHILDREN ALSO SUFFER THE PAINS OF SEPERATION. IN OTHER WORDS WE UNDERSTAND YOUR ANGUISH AND ANGER. WE HAVE THAT TOO, OURS IS DIRECTED AT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

BUT YOU CANNOT HOLD OUR RELATIVES IN PRISON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONFLICT HERE. IT BEGAN BEFORE MANY OF THEM WERE BORN.

THERE IS ALOT OF ANGER PAIN AND HURT THAT WE ALL MUST DEAL WITH AS PART OF A PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION. THERE IS NO EASY WAY FORWARD.

QUESTION 8. WOULD THE PROCESS EMBARKED ON IN THE 26 COS IE, RELEASING SOME NOT ALL BE A WAY FORWARD?

WE HAVE ALREADY SAID THAT MUST BE DEALT WITH AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE BY THOSE DELEGATED ON THE PRISONERS BEHALF TO STATE THEIR CASE. OUR ROLE IS TO GET IT ON THE AGENDA.

QUESTION 9. BUT IF ANOTHER NEWRY INCIDENT HAPPENED WOULDN'T IT DAMAGE YOUR CAMPAIGN.?

IT COULD ALTHOUGH IT IS OUR OPINION THAT IT SHOULDN'T AS OUR PRISONERS SHOULD NOT BE HELD HOSTAGE FOR THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS.

WE BELIEVE THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT WHEN THEY SAY THAT THEY WILL WORK TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE ARE NO MORE NEWRY INCIDENTS.

QUESTION 10. HOW SOON DO YOU WANT YOUR PRISONERS OUT?

NOW. BECAUSE IF IT IS ACCEPTED THAT THE PROCESS OF BUILDING LASTING PEACE HAS BEGUN THEN THEIR RELEASES AND THEY AS INDIVIDUALS HAVE A BIG ROLE TO PLAY IN THAT BUILDING.

OTHER POINTS AND INFO.

QUESTION 11. JOHN MAJOR HAS ALREADY SAID THERE WILL BE NO AMNESTY AND THAT THERE ARE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?

BRITISH POLITICIANS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN BUILDING PEACE. IT STRIKES US THAT HE MAY NOT BE TOTALLY SERIOUS AT THIS POINT IF HE WANTS TO GO BACK AND FIGHT THE BATTLES OF 1981 ALL OVER AGAIN. AS FOR HIS VIEW ON RELEASES WE KNOW AND HE KNOWS THEY WILL HAPPEN. JUST AS THE WORLD KNOWS THAT THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN IRELAND.

IT HAS A LOBBYING AND PROTEST ROLE AS WELL AS PUBLICITY.

THERE WILL BE MARCHES IN BELFAST, SUNDAY 4TH AND DERRY, FRIDAY 9TH, AS WELL AS OTHER ACTIVITIES NORTH AND SOUTH.

1. THERE ARE OVER 500 REPUBLICAN PRISONERS, MEN AND WOMEN, IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH, BRITAIN, GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES.

THE LONGEST SERVING REPUBLICAN PRISONER, RONNIE MC CARTNEY HAS BEEN IN PRISON FOR 20 YEARS.

3. THERE ARE STILL MANY PRISONERS IN THERE AS A RESULT OF TORTURE IN INTERROGATION CENTRES BY THE RUC AND BRITISH. THE FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN TORTURE IS UNDENIABLE, READ THE AMNESTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS AMONGST OTHERS. OR READ THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S OWN REPORTS, EG 'BENNETT'.

OTHER POINTS AND INFO.

1. SAOIRSE IS AN INITIATIVE SET UP BY RELATIVES, FRIENDS AND EX-PRISONERS. IT IS OPEN TO ANYONE WHO SUPPORTS ITS POLICY STATEMENT IE. RELEASE THE POLITICAL PRISONERS.

ITS PURPOSE IS TO ATTRACT WIDESPREAD SUPPORT.

IT HAS A LOBBYING AND PROTEST ROLE AS WELL AS PUBLICITY.

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Paper on Amnesty Movement. (Saoirse/Saor).

This is a short paper laying out the basic proposal, ie, to organise an amnesty movement built primarily around the families and friends of Republican prisoners. Also, obviously with an input from Republican activists. Initial plans and some potential issues are laid out below for discussion. This discussion and indeed the project is not simply the property or work of a POW department. It should be dealt with at all levels of mainstream party organisation.

Title. Amnesty Movement.

While the most identifiable title would be Amnesty, there has been some debate about the name. Some of the criticisms are as follows: (a). The word 'amnesty' denotes 'pardon'. (Not sure of this).----- (b). Amnesty is identified with Amnesty International. (good or bad?)----- (c). An Irish as Gaelic title is preferable. Saor or Saoirse.----- (d). The issue of amnesty for anti-social elements as pioneered by FIAT would be thrown up.

Balanced against these: (a). the word/term amnesty is already a clear Republican demand. Also it is internationally understood. It is a matter of opinion if good or bad. (c). Good point. Generally, as long as a single word title is used it makes publicity and logo easier. (d). There are political calculations to be made on this and actually the Irish title argument may be a way of getting around it. Politics;

The demand of this movement should be clear and unambiguous----'an immediate and general amnesty for political prisoners'. The British or Dublin may want to throw out all sorts of 'interim measures' ie, phased release etc. But it is important to keep our demand singular and clear. Also undiluted. This political will of course have as much a Dublin resonance as London demand.

Potentially, with Dublin already having accepted the validity of the peace process there should be a more fertile ground there. However our task is to put into place an all-Ireland and international movement demanding the immediate release of Irish political prisoners. Organisation plan and structure;

At the core of this movement will be relatives in the same way as at the core of the Relative's Action Committees of H Block days. However such organisations do not rise on their own. They require the organisational skills and abilities of mainstream Republican organisers.

What is needed is for Comhairle Ceantair to play the organiser role. Each one should designate a person, preferably with experience to deal with this project. It needs to be someone politically clued in. The importance of the project cannot be over-stated. It has the potential for a genuine and vibrant mass movement in a way that few other issues have.

The timetable for organisation is as follows:

- October.-----meet with Comhairle Ceantair to localise plans.
- November.---Broaden to to Republican family. In particular prisoners families. Work out coordinated local structures.
- December.----Pull together into centralised coordinating body and launch to outside through media and activities.

SECOND PAPER ON 'SAOIRSE'. [AMNESTY MOV'T.]. 17\10\94.

INTRO.

MOST BY NOW SHOULD HAVE READ THE INITIATING PAPER ON THE SUBJECT OF AN AMNESTY MOVEMENT FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS. THIS PAPER IS A FOLLOW ON IN WHICH A NUMBER OF CLEAR DIRECTIONS ARE GIVEN.

TITLE.

IN THE INTRODUCTORY PAPER THE QUESTION OF NAME FOR THIS MOVEMENT CAME UP. AFTER CONSULTATION IT SEEMS THAT THE PREFERRED VERSION OF SAOIRSE IS BEST. THIS AVOIDS ALL THE NEGATIVE TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH AMNESTY.

DEMAND.

THE DEMAND AS STATED IS; RELEASE THE POLITICAL PRISONERS.

THE ABOVE SHOULD BE RIGIDLY STUCK TO, AS A SINGULAR AND CLEAR DEMAND. ALL OTHER QUESTIONS EG, PHASED RELEASES ETC. ARE NOT UP FOR CONSIDERATION.

HOW TO ORGANISE.

TO INSURE ALL ARE CLEAR ON MODE OF ORGANISATION AT THIS TIME;

A. COMHAIRLE CEANTAIR APPOINT AN ORGANISER FOR THIS PROJECT.

B. THAT ORGANISER SHOULD TIE IN DIRECTLY WITH BELFAST OFFICE POW DEPT.

C. THE FIRST OBJECTIVE OF THE ORGANISER SHOULD BE TARGET OF PERSONNEL, IE. FORMERLY INACTIVE REPUBLICANS, PARTICULARLY FORMER POWS, FAMILIES AND OTHERS INTERESTED IN PRISONERS ISSUE.

D. A CORE GROUP WORKING WITH THE SF ORGANISER IS FIRST TASK. IT SHOULD BE 5-7 STRONG. ONCE THAT IS IN PLACE AND HAS MET WITH US.

E. THEN THAT GROUP SHOULD ORGANISE A BIG AREA MEETING OF RELATIVES ETC. AT THIS WE WILL ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE A NATIONAL PLATFORM SPEAKER.

F. ONCE THE SERIES OF MEETINGS HAS BEEN GONE THROUGH WE SHOULD BE IN A POSITION TO LAUNCH THE EQUIVALENT OF NATIONAL H BLOCKS\ARMAGH COMMITTEE.

PROGRESS ON WORK SO FAR;

1. ALL COMHAIRLE CEANTAIR NOTIFIED THROUGH COMHAIRLI 6+26.

2. PROCESS OF MEETINGS AT THAT LEVEL;

BELFAST HAS BEEN COMPLETED. DERRY IS IN THE PIPELINE FOR INITIAL MEETINGS. TYRONE IS TO BE ORGANISED AND SOUTH DERRY AND NEWRY\ARMAGH ALSO. FERMANAGH IS SKETCHY.

IN 26 COS, A SESSION IS BEING ARRANGED WITH COMHAIRLI AND WILL BE FOLLOWED UP AFTER WITH LOCAL MEETINGS WHERE APPROPRIATE.

CONCLUSION;

IT IS MY OPINION THAT TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE IN THIS. ALTHOUGH THE PLAN IS TO LAUNCH FORMERLY ON A NATIONAL LEVEL IN DECEMBER THE PREPARATORY WORK NEEDS TO BE TAKEN ON BY COMHAIRLI CEANTAIR AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.