

The CAPTIVE VOICE

An Glór Gafa

The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa is a quarterly magazine written in its entirety by Irish Republican POWs currently being held in Ireland, England, Europe and the US. It is published by Sinn Féin's POW Department.

Irish republicans have always recognised that resistance to British misrule does not end upon their arrest. The battles to be fought and the tactics to be employed may change but the enemy remains the same. In the words of our comrade Bobby Sands:

"The jails are engineered to crush the political identity of the captured republican prisoner; to crush his/her resistance and transform him/her into a systemised answering-machine with a large criminal tag stamped by oppression upon his/her back, to be duly released on to the street, politically cured — politically barren — and permanently broken in spirit."

The establishment of this jail journal is a tribute not only to our families, friends and comrades, whose strength and support have been inspirational to us all, but also is a

clear recognition that we are what we are — political prisoners, unbroken in our deep-rooted desire for freedom.

The Captive Voice affords us a platform and an opportunity to present in print our views on those topics and issues which affect daily life both inside and outside of the jails. The magazine contains political analyses of current national and international affairs, culture, short stories, poetry and the latest updates on prison-related campaigns and issues. Satire and humour can also be found within the special features, cartoons and artwork illustrations.

We have been pleased and greatly encouraged by the response to the magazine. It is hoped that the sharing of our feelings and experiences through the pages of *An Glór Gafa* will be both beneficial and enjoyable for all our readers.

We are determined that our message and our captive voice shall be heard by many.

— The Irish Republican Prisoners of War. ■

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Cover illustration



■ By Noel McHugh
(Long Kesh)

We welcome correspondence with ideas, suggestions or comments on the contents of *The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa* or on any subject of concern to prisoners.

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The

CAPTIVE VOICE



An Glór Gafa

THIS SUMMER, as we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Great Hunger, it is worth remembering that the basic nature of British rule in Ireland remains unchanged. The vicious cycle of injustice, misery and resistance has not yet been broken. One hundred and fifty years ago, colonial tyranny and right-wing economic interests had driven the Irish people into abject poverty and to the edge of mass starvation. In the 1990s many nationalists in the Six Counties are still forced into poverty through discrimination and misgovernment. The soup kitchens have merely been replaced with the dole queues, the landlord with the NIO. It is still clear that Britain is incapable of governing any part of Ireland in a just and humane way. And there is still a great hunger for justice, for self-determination, for peace.

And such oppression still generates resistance. The IRA have fought the military might of Britain to a standstill; and by their historic decision of 31 August '94, have thrown British government policy and strategy into disarray. Sinn Féin are bringing immense political pressure to bear on Britain, making their intransigence increasingly untenable. Community groups have always fought back, demanding their social and economic rights, and consolidating the talents and self-help resources of the people. Even Féile an Phobail, (the West Belfast Festival) celebrates, through culture, the high morale and unbroken spirit of the community.

And yet Britain still tries in vain to hold back the rhythm of time. Their minimalist and begrudging attitude to the peace process has been exposed time and again. Even on the question of compassionate parole for prisoners (a subject highlighted in the last issue of *An Glór Gafa*), when the opportunity arose to display a little generosity and goodwill, the British government refused to abolish restrictions on POWs who have served less than six years (as if their grief and the needs of their families were less important). Indeed, they still refuse to recognise the existence of political prisoners despite all the evidence: from the reference to "political offences" in legislation setting up the Diplock courts, to the sacrifices of the Blanket protest and hunger strikers, to popular opinion, to this very publication. Michael Ancram's comments in June that the issue of prisoners might be dealt with after the surrender of IRA arms, proves that POWs are being held captive solely to strengthen Britain's negotiating position. In effect we are political hostages. It is a tactic which will not work, as we refuse to be used as pawns or have our freedom bartered. Our release must be unconditional. But Ancram's comments expose yet again, the crude and self-seeking tactics of Britain.

Britain's capacity to govern Ireland justly has not improved since the Penal days. The British government will not act honourably to advance the peace process or exercise their moral responsibilities in resolving this conflict. Therefore, it is up to everyone who espouses the cause of peace and justice to drag Britain to the negotiating table. Nationalists must support the various campaigns associated with the peace process with all the courage and commitment that has seen them through 70 years of partition. The many groups who have proclaimed themselves peace makers over the last 25 years, must now turn their rhetoric into reality; the churches; trade unions, reconciliation groups, politicians and media personalities all have a responsibility to use their considerable resources to pressurise Britain to engage proactively in the peace process. Otherwise history will judge them harshly.

Britain's options in Ireland are gradually being eroded. But they remain irrational and intransigent to the end. It is up to all of us to break the cycle of conflict. We have it in our power to move Britain. Let us use that power as never before.

TV fictions vs real life

ANYONE who watched the television drama *Life after Life* a few months back would be forgiven for thinking that it really was based on the "work-out" scheme for life-sentence prisoners. For those of us who have been through the process of "working out", it was laughable.

I am not going to write about that programme. What I would like to do is give my personal experience of the working out scheme. I am presently in the last of the three phases which a life/SOSP prisoner must go through before he/she are finally given their "licence". (Phase 1 — waiting on the endorsement by the British Secretary of State of the Life Sentence Review Board's recommendation for release — this can take up to six months; Phase 2 — three months on a work-out scheme in Maghaberry; Phase 3 — signing on at Crumlin Road Jail every fortnight for three months.) This whole procedure could take between one year and 15 months from the day the prison governor informs you that the Life Sentence Review Board (LSRB) has recommended your release.

I was lucky in that I had four other republican comrades going to this work-out scheme with me, comrades I could depend on if there were any situations within the system which needed to be challenged — there were plenty. We were also lucky enough to get to speak to another of our comrades who had recently been through the system. He had told us of some of the problems we would face, especially the transport arrangements to and from the prison each day while we would be working out. Throughout our years in prison we had all experienced regular confrontation with the prison administration over both major issues and petty rules, and we had no intention of bending the knee now just because we were "near the gate". There would be others coming behind us and we had to improve the situation to make things easier for them.

Our first morning was spent settling in, which took all of ten

minutes. There were 15 cells in the unit, some already occupied by "sentenced" prisoners from Maghaberry, who volunteered to on this scheme. Some were rapists, another was a child-sex offender. There were also three loyalists from Long Kesh. The screw in charge of the unit spoke to us individually to get certain details, (ie, home address, marital status, any possible job lined up, etc). He told us that we would be allowed out on Wednesday for six hours to look for a job. We challenged this time limit and

■ BY HARRY MURRAY

were subsequently informed that we could come back at a later time with the bus. Any job that we got would have to be cleared with the NIO.

The governor met us as a group later that day. He started off by saying that we could look upon him, not as the governor but as Davy, "our friend". He told us that we would be in the unit for two weeks, home at the weekends of course, how nice the unit was, and any problems we saw, we could tell him and he would do whatever he could for us. He really built the unit up to be something special, something needed for people like us who had been in prison for a long time. He added that

some of the previous prisoners in the unit, republican as well as others, thanked him when they left and said that they felt the unit really helped them get accustomed to outside.

We were sceptical about all this. He was questioned on why the unit existed in the first place, why if it was voluntary for ordinary sentenced prisoners, could it not be voluntary for lifers/SOSPs. His answer was that they couldn't just let us loose on the streets, public opinion was against it and our own communities would not accept us. He was challenged on all these comments. We pointed out that we had already been "let loose on the streets" during Christmas paroles after we had served eleven years, that there had been no problems with public opinion or our communities, and that those paroles had accustomed us to life beyond prison. In addition, long-term determinate sentence prisoners often spent just as long as lifers in jail, but were released immediately their sentences were finished. And as for our communities not accepting us, this was ridiculous.

We also broached the subject of transport to and from the prison (which Ulsterbus supplied with one of their drivers). He said that the bus left the prison at 7am and would drop us off in the city centre (no stops in between). It would then be at Glengall Street (beside Sandy Row, a loyalist area) at 6pm to bring us back to the prison. We objected to this arrangement both for reasons of personal security and of inconvenience. We further objected to spending two weeks unnecessarily in the unit before beginning the work-out scheme and asked about the possibility of staying out overnight for any special family occasions. He told us that it was very unlikely, but if any members of our families took ill he would arrange for that prisoner to stay out. We were restricted as to what type of work we would be allowed to do; no building site work, no bars, etc, despite the fact that some of us



● Phase 2 — three months on a work-out scheme in Maghaberry



● Phase 3 — signing on at Crumlin Road Jail every fortnight for three months

we were experienced builders and barmen, so we were more or less left with ACE scheme jobs. It was emphasised that we were on our way out and that it would be best if we just got through our time as easily as possible.

When we did begin the work-out scheme, after two weeks in the unit, we had already agreed among ourselves (the five republicans from the Blocks) that we would approach the driver of the bus in the mornings to drop us off either at Kennedy Way or at the bottom of the Donegall Road at Saint James'. The first week we had no problems, the driver dropped us off at St James'. The second week was a different matter. There was a different driver and he refused. We explained to him that he was driving past our places of work, making us travel an extra five-six miles. He still wouldn't budge, saying he was told to drop us off in the city centre. He got his orders from his inspector in Lisburn. Our approach to the driver was reported back to the unit and we were told that we were not allowed to approach the drivers.

This warning was followed by a letter from the NIO that action would be taken against anyone approaching the drivers. We had asked earlier about using our own means of transport and were told that if you owned your own car you could use it only for yourself, you could not give anyone else a lift, even if they worked with you. We regarded this as typical of the petty-mindedness we had encountered so often during our years in jail. In addition, from leaving the prison in the morning we had to go to our place of work and when we finished work we had return to Glengall Street bus depot. According to their rules we were not supposed to go to our homes at anytime.

On a number of occasions, in and around the bus depot, we felt that we were being watched. We reported this and on one occasion in particular this was backed up by a loyalist prisoner on the work-out scheme. It was ignored.

On our third week on the work-out scheme we were in Glengall Street waiting for the bus. It did not arrive until 6.20pm. The driver informed us

that the M1 was blocked because of an accident and there was no movement whatsoever. We got this confirmed with the bus inspector, then got in touch with the prison (as we were supposed to do) and told them about the situation. They told us that we had to stay with the bus. They gave the Ulsterbus driver an alternative route which we refused to go on, as it meant going through loyalist areas. In the end we told them that we did not feel safe or comfortable hanging around the depot and that all of us were going home. That night the RUC raided our homes and some of us were taken to the local RUC barracks that night while others reported to the barracks the next day. In short, we were all rounded up by the RUC, apart from one or two sex offenders whom the RUC allowed to make their own way to the prison that night or the next day. (On this same day the wife of one of the loyalist prisoner's had fallen down stairs and broken her neck — she was paralysed. He phoned the prison for permission to stay out and was refused. So much

for the governor saying that he would make exceptions for people staying out if one of their family was sick).

When they brought us back to the prison we were put onto the boards (the punishment cells). We lost all privileges even though we were not charged until three days later. The two sex offenders were not charged and were allowed back into the unit. The other determinate-sentenced prisoners were taken off the work-out scheme and we were kept on the boards for ten days before being sent back to the Blocks. This was around Christmas time and we were refused Christmas parole as they said there was a chance we would abscond, yet five days after Christmas they let us out for the weekend and put us back on the work-out scheme with three extra weeks to do on it.

At the time we were on the boards there were rumours flying that they were going to close the unit down, either because of the financial cost or because it was causing too much trouble (republicans were). They tightened up a lot when we went

back. The threat of us talking to the driver would lead to us being sent back to the Blocks etc. This did not stop us. On one occasion when we approached the driver he drove straight to Lisburn depot. We had it out with the inspector, who said that the unit governor told him the bus was not to stop. The governor denied this, saying it was an NIO decision.

One of the lads took very seriously ill and had a transfusion of seven pints of blood. The hospital said he needed rest and recuperation. The prison ordered him back the day he left the hospital. Yet a loyalist who also took sick was excused from the work-out scheme completely. It took almost four weeks for the republican prisoner to be allowed out again, but only to work.

Another one of the lads was held for two days after he was accused of approaching a driver. He was allowed back on the work-out scheme as they had no proof it was him.

According to the prison administration the work-outs scheme is designed to allow prisoners time to adapt to outside life, return to family life, handle money etc. But the truth is that it is the system's way of looking for its pound of flesh, having failed to break our spirit or free will after, in most cases, over 15 years in jail. It is there to tell every lifer/SOSP that we control you, you can't do anything or go anywhere unless we give you the okay. At no time did I see anything positive in its existence. I have left out a few things which could be seen as minor, the wages (cheques) for which you need a bank account to cash, the strip searches (random) on the way back into the prison, cell searches when you're not there, the atmosphere when you mix with child-sex offenders. The NIO/administration expect us all to fall into line, threatening us with punishment for minor matters in order to isolate us.

When we finished the scheme, there were two republicans left on their own to carry on where we left off, trying to improve conditions for those coming behind. One of those left behind was a lad who came on the scheme with us, the one who took ill. He couldn't work as a result of his condition and they

made him do extra time because of this.

The last phase which I'm now on means that I must go to Crumlin Road Jail once every two weeks and the governor signs a card which I must carry until I get my licence, which should be around September.

The scheme should be abolished altogether, but while it remains there should be major changes. For example, the removal of personal property and the random strip-searching depersonalises those who have to endure such attacks on their dignity — this should cease.

The need to return to the jail every night is an unnecessary hardship which is both confusing and frustrating for the prisoners and their families and does not allow them to settle into a normal existence. Having to return from work to a prison cell is punitive and not rehabilitative.

The restrictions on transport should be lifted completely — not only are they inconvenient, but they are extremely dangerous also.

Finally, in times of such high unemployment, the need to find a job before release is difficult in itself without there being restrictions on the type of work allowed. Many of those who have to go through this procedure will have experience working in the building trade and should not be restricted from returning to such work. The recommendation of low-paid ACE scheme work is a hardship to those who could use their skills in which which is more suited to them and which would be more of a benefit to them financially.

While the work-out scheme remains in existence, we must continue to push for it to be made voluntary, as it is for determinate sentenced prisoners. Lifers have no need to go through that system for adjustment. Their paroles help them in that way. So the programme *Life after Life* is only fiction.

The truth is that the work-out scheme is not only costly and unnecessary but it adds to the hardships faced by prisoners and their families. It does not serve any purpose other than to put the prison working-out through a restrictive procedure which includes petty inconveniences, financial hardship and personal dangers. ■

Directing Thought

■ By Tarlac ó Conghalaigh (Long Kesh)

It was Wednesday night
eight months into the case-fire
ending twenty-five years of war.
Headlines celebrated
fifty years of peace

if I scream...

A helicopter?
Lorry on the motorway?
Plane
climbing out of Aldergrove.

Too late
the wall cracks
horizontally.
the poem dies
nostalgically,
in the chasm
between reality
and escape.

Then there was silence.

After midnight silence.
Dog barking miles away silence.
Cell silence.
Full moon ambience

Of a round-mouthed exclamation

catching time
snatching back
the markers
that had metamorphosed children
into adults,
friends into families,
partners into strangers
we never knew so well.

I lay myself down
by the sweet green banks
of the Callan
on a May morning.
Water running with the sun
over shingle.

Pull the bell-wire
through the water,
through the grass.
Watch a lump of road
doesn't land on you.

Empire builders
printing papers,
filling holes in roads.
Non-readers,
unbelievers,
through-seers
blowing holes in roads.

'Jailtacht' na Ceise Fada

Dé Luain, 29ú Meitheamh, tharla eachtra thábhachtach stairiúil i saol na Ceise Fada anseo, b'fhéidir gurb í an eachtra is mó tábhacht maidir le cúrsaí Gaeilge ó bhí thréimhse agóid na pluide ann. An lá sin, tugadh an chéad chéim le Gaeltacht na Ceise Fada a chur ar bun. Bogadh seachtar Gaeilgeoir isteach i Sciathán 'C', Bloc 6; lean seisear eile dhá lá ina ndiaidh, agus tá tuilleadh le teacht roimh i bhfad.

Is é an cuspóir atá ag lucht na Gaeilge sa champa ná sciathán buan lán-Ghaeilge a chur ar bun sa dóigh is go mbeidh fáil ag 'achan díograiseoir agus fhoghlaiméir feabhas a chur ar a chuid Gaeilge labhartha. Le blianta beaga anuas d'aithin lucht na Gaeilge sa champa nach leor ranganna gan timpeallacht Ghaeilge, agus sa Ghaeltacht úr beidh an-bhéim ar an teanga labhartha.

Ach ní hamháin go bhfuil sciathán ina labhraítear an Ghaelge á thógáil againn, ach lean chois sin, tá sé i gceist againn 'achan ghné dár saol a reáchtáil ar bhonn Ghaelach — an teanga, an ceol, an spórt, an timpeallacht, agus eachtraí Gaeilge agus Gealacha ar na meáin cumarsáide. (Tá fiú cluiche "Monoplachta" Gaeilge againn ina gceannaítear conatethe na hÉireann in áit Pall Mall agus a leithéid!)

Chéana féin, tá ábhar ceoltóirí traidisiúnta agus ábhar peileadóirí Gaelacha againn agus cuideoidh sé sin le cultúr lán-Ghaelach a chruthú. San am atá caite bhí lucht na teanga agus an chultúir sciapthe ar fud na chmpa, ach anois thig leo teacht le chéile san áit amháin agus timpeallacht lán-Ghaelach a chruthú a dtig le foghlaiméoirí teacht isteach ann.

Cárb as a dtáinig an spreagadh don Ghaeltacht úr? Ar an chéad dul síos tá stair fhada suime sa Ghaeilge sa champa agus i measc cimití cogaidh. Bhí Gaeltacht ar bun sna Cásanna

le linn an '70idí, agus tá beirt fhear anseo a bhí ann ag anam, Ricky Sadlier agus Séanna Breatnach (agus cuma óg air go fóill!). Tá Caoimhín Mac Mathúna anseo, a chaith seal i nGaeltacht Phort Laoise. Lena chois seo, labhraíodh an Ghaeilge amháin ar 'achan sciathán le linn thréimhse agóid na pluide, agus tá scaifte anseo a bhí ann ag an am úd, ina measc Peadar Ó Cuinneagáin, Daithí Mac Adaim agus Séanna Breatnach. Beidh muid in ann foghlaim óna gcuid taithí. Ian theannta seo, bhíodh cuid mhór daoine ar fud an champa ag síor-fhoghlaim na teanga agus ag cur mion-Ghaeltachtaí ar bun ó ham go chéile.

Le linn thréimhse agóid na pluide spreag dea-shampla na gcimití athbheochán na Gaeilge sna Sé Chontae, agus anois tá cuid mhór cimití anseo a bhfuil a gcuid páistí ag freastal ar na naíoscoileanna, bunscoileanna agus meánscoileanna, agus tá brú orthu féin anois Gaeilge a fhoghlaim toisc na páistí a bheith ag síorchaint sa Ghaeilge ar an cuairteanna.

Caitheann a rá fosta nárbh fhéidir Gaeltacht a chruthú agus a fhorbairt ach ab í an streachailt a rinne na mílte cimití sa champa ar an agóid pluide, tríd an stailc ocrais, agus an troid fhada in éadan an riaracháin bheagintínigh dhíoltasaigh.

Dá mbeadh a dtóil féin ag an sean-riarachán sin bheimis faoi ghlas ar chúl na ndoirse go fóill.

Ach bhuaigh muid ar sciatháin féin, chuir muid críoch leis na "fao-ghlasanna", agus chum muid ár gcultúr féin, céim ar chéim. Is céim eile chun tosaigh i stair an champa seo an Gaeltacht úr.

Cé nach bhfuil 'achan Ghaeilgeoir in ann bheith ina chónaí sa Ghaeltacht ag aon am amháin (níl ach 24 chillín ar sciathán), tá cuid mhór acu an-tógtha fán fhiontar agus tá monabhar cainte ag gabháil thart ar fud na háite maidir leis an Ghaeltacht agus líon mór daoine ar mhian leo teacht chuici amach anseo. Tá cuid acu ag gabháil go dian-dícheall dá gcuid Gaeilge arís, le snas a chur uirthi agus le bheith réidh don Ghaeltacht. Fiú cúpla fear de na fir anseo i mBloc 6 ag fanacht ar thrial nó a daoradh ar na mallaihbh, ghluais siad isteach sa Ghaeltacht le hiarracht a dhéanamh an teanga a fhoghlaim, agus tá cúpla seanfhondúir ann, mar atá Daithí Mac Adaim, nár labhair an teanga ó ham na pluide agus ar mhian leo sórt athbheochána pearsanta a dhéanamh ar a gcuid Gaeilge labhartha.

Caitheann a rá fosta gur chuidigh lucht an athchuir go mór le lucht na Gaeilge. B'éigean do chuid acu bogadh amach chuig sciathán eile agus bhí ar an chuid eile fanacht ar feadh tamaill ar an sciathán ag éisteach le teanga nár thuig siad i gceart. Ach thuig siad tábhacht na Gaeltachta agus rinne siad a seacht ndícheall cibé cuidiú a thiocfadh leo a thabhairt dúinn. Ár mbuíochas leo go deo!!

Bhí mórchlaochlú sóisialta ar fud an champa de thairbhe chur ar bunna Gaeltachta. B'éigean do Ghaeilgeoirí slán a fhágáil ag a gcuid cairde ins na bloic eile, ach bhí "ghlaoch na Gaeilge" chomh

■ LE SEAN O DAIMHIN (Bloc 6, An Cheis Fhada)

láidir sin nárbh fhéidir é dhiúltú.

Croitheadh lámha, fágadh slán agus malartaíodh ide béil chairdiúil ar an bhealach amach. Tá ráfla ag gabháil thart go raibh dearthair Phóil Uí Dhufaigh ag caoineadh uisce a chinn agus Pól ag fágáil slán aige i mBloc 4.

Reáchtáil na boic cluiche peile Gaelaí dom féin ar imeacht ó Bhloc 8 dom d'imir An Srath Bán in aghaidh "An Chuid Eile d'Éirinn", agus ar ndóigh bhí an bua sármhaith ag lucht an tSratha Bháin.

Nuair a tháinig Tó O Néill chuig H6 chonaic sé go raibh 30 buidéal "Peanut Butter" curtha ina chuid malaí ag a chairde i mBloc 4. Ar theacht do Cholmán Mac Chrosáin chuig an Ghaeltacht ní raibh a fhios aige cé aige a raibh Gaeilge agus cé aige nach raibh... bhí sé ag caint as Gaeilge ar feadh deich noiméid le fear bocht nach raibh focal Gaeilge aige.

Cé go bhfuil Gaeltacht againn anois caitheann a rá nach bhfuilimid sásta ar chor ar bith leis an coscanna eile sa champa maidir le cúrsaí cultúir: cosc ar pheil Gaelach, cosc ar an Ghaeilge ar na cuairteanna, an moill fada ar litreacha Gaeilge ag teacht isteach agus ag imeacht ón phríosún agus mar sin de.

Dúshlán mór dúinn uilig anseo atá sa Ghaeltacht. An chuid is mó againn ní dhearna muid a leithéid de seo lenár mbeo, bheith báite go dtí na súile i saol lán-Ghaeilge. Is cinnte go mbeidh deacrachtaí romhainn, ach mar a deir an seanfhocal:

"Nuair a shroictear mullach an tsléibhe, is fiú an drepadh an radharc". ■

Two wheels from Amsterdam

■ By Paddy O'Dowd (Long Kesh)

Most summer mornings I waited at the top of the lane for the arrival of Stigsy. He was our postman and had a push bike. I never saw him ride it though. He would come over the brow of the hill leaning on the broad saddle and when going down the other side he would do the same, holding the brake to stop his legs carrying him down too fast. He explained that the bike was a gift from a Dutchman who had warned that it wasn't built for hills. He told me many stories and I didn't understand half of them. But he in turn would listen to mine while resting with his bike against the wall. Every so often, he would take the pipe from between his teeth, look at me with widened eyes and exclaim, "you don't say!" spurring me on with further imaginary tales. After a while he would tap his pipe against the wall, the black ash streaking down the grey stone. "Well, young un, I have to be going," he would say, "for Stigsy's like the sun... he has to go down that hill so that he can come back up the other side in the morning." Then he would hand me the *Irish News* and whatever mail for our address.

I don't remember when I first met Stigsy, or when I got to know him, it just seemed like he had always been there — like he always would be. But that was a year for change, what seemed permanent one day may be gone the next, what stood solid in the evening could be dust by morning. My first realisation of this came about that summer when I was eight years old and it began with the arrival of the neighbour's tractor and baler.

"Here he comes!" I shouted, jumping down off the wall. Before long the tractor came over the hill into view, the smell of diesel already hanging heavy in the warm evening air.

"Right, the lot of you, stand well out of the road 'til he gets into the field," my father was counting us making sure that we were all in sight.

"And stay behind the baler," my mother assisted in the policing, "I don't want any of you going under the wheels."

They were barely audible above the sound of the engine. Suddenly there was a grating crunch and everything stopped dead. My father stared at the scene. We all looked to my father. He took off his cap, he wiped it across his face. We remained silent. The cap hit the ground... he kicked it. He picked it up then flung it again... we knew he would. He swore loudly — each curse ending in a defined "ing"... we knew their sequence. He retrieved the abused article and with exaggerated tugs he pulled it tightly onto his head. We waited...

We were standing at the top of our lane — 150 yards of stony path which sloped to our home at the bottom. At the top, a pair of red pillars adjoined by two heavy stone walls formed the gateway which led onto a narrow country road. The walls and pillars had stood from a time when all in those fields was harvested by hand



— the people not having the benefit of mowers, combine harvesters or balers. When building such helpful machinery, Massey Ferguson had not, it would seem, measured many of our rural gaps. So on this particular evening, with the family standing in readiness to help with the hay and the neighbour looking perplexed at his baler stuck fast between the two pillars, my father was forced to rectify Massey Ferguson's oversight.

The cap now firmly replaced signalled the conclusion of his anger — a decision made. We stepped back as the splintering brick rang out loudly under the sledge hammer blows.

"Will you be building it again tomorrow?" I asked a few hours later, as we walked through the fields on the way to the house.

"No, sure we'd only have to knock it down again next time. I might put up a bit of a fence, but the main thing is to get the rest of the hay done before the weekend."



■ Illustration by Artie Forbes (Long Kesh)

"Stop it!" He scowled, shaking me by the collar before releasing his grip, "Or I 'clare to Jasus I'll take my cap off to you both!"

In later years I learnt that to have someone take their cap off to you was a form of compliment. However, I knew enough of life that night to know that if my father carried out his threat I would feel the tweedy sting of cloth across my lug. We stood in silence for a few moments, I glared at my brother, he, a year old than myself, grinned back. In the still dusk was the distant sound of a tractor.

"That's Jim going up the hill now, he's safely home," my father observed. Then he ruffled his hands through our hair, drawing us to each side of him. "Aye, you've both been great wee workers this evening. The rest of them will be finished their supper, so we'll go before your mother sends out a search party."

The sound of Jim's tractor had now stopped and our footfalls on the bristle of the recently cut hay crunched like a walk in dry snow. "It'll be another grand day tomorrow, thank God," my father said, looking up to the sky and breathing in deeply. I threw back my head to do the same, finding with a shock that I had landed flat on my back.

"Jasus, son, you'll have more than scrapes on your wrists if you can't even walk across a field without falling on you arse."

"I didn't fall," I said jumping up quickly, "I tripped... backwards."

He took my hand and held Martin's in the other. "Come on and we'll see can the pair of you keep up with your ould da." We walked taking long strides to keep up with his, laughing at the sound of our military timed steps on the stubble. "Left right, left right..." Martin began and then stopped breathless.

Night had now fallen and through the open door we could see my mother moving about the lighted kitchen. She was resetting the table, the rest of the family having already finished their supper.

"Brush that hay off your clothes before coming in," she called out on hearing us step onto the concrete of the small yard. My father took off his cap and made a great noise beating it against his thigh. "That's me all clean, Bridie," he announced stepping through the doorway. Martin and I brushed each other's backs and rushed for the table.

"Nothing like the hay field to make the appetite", my mother commented, leaning across the table to pour the tea. I noticed her own arms all scraped from the bales. "Where's Jim, didn't you tell him to come in for a bite to eat?"

"I did surely, but he had no lights on the tractor so he wanted to get on home," my father explained.

"Maybe it's just as well for these are no times to be on the roads late at night," she said, returning the teapot to the stove.

"Well Jim is all right, for we heard the tractor going up the hill to his house. Was there anything on the news?" he enquired looking up at the clock.

"Yeah, there's rioting in the city and reports of all sorts of trouble in towns across the country. No doubt with the Twelfth near upon us it'll get worse before it gets better." She already sounded resigned to it all.

My father looked at each one of us nodding his head wisely and chewing rapidly. He swallowed and began, "What have I always said?" He paused. "Haven't I always maintained that every square yard of road between that front door," he jerked his thumb toward the backdoor, "and any town, village or city is worth a million pounds? Haven't I always said that?" He wasn't expecting an answer, he didn't get one. He said the same thing every time an incident — should it be big or small — took place inside an urban area — should it be Belfast or Scarva. He continued, "You two don't know how lucky you are to be reared in the country, but you should never forget it." He took a long sup of tea, eyeing us both over the rim of the cup waiting on a response. He got it.

"Our Gerry says it's boring," Martin challenged.

There was a splutter, tea splashed onto my father's face. He sat the cup down quickly, swallowed hard and wiped a large hand over his wet face.

"And what the fuck would he know?" He stopped and glanced

We stopped by a stook which had fallen. "The stookers must have been in a big hurry." He straightened up two bales while my brother and I leaned the other two into them. "Don't tell me your ould da," he continued in mock weariness, "is going to have to check them all before they fall into a pile by morning?"

"No, the rest of them are all right," my brother began and then pointing at me, "it's his fault this one fell, 'cos he left me to do it on my own."

"He's a liar," I shouted, pointing straight back at him. "Our Gerry and him said they'd stook if I rolled the bales and I did, and my wrists are all cuts and he hasn't even got a scrape..."

"Yes I have, you cry ba," Martin retorted.

"You'll be crying when I kick the dung out of you." I attempted to run at him, but felt myself momentarily swing through the air and then I was at my father's side.

at my mother. She looked up from cutting the bread but made no comment, yet he knew his choice of language had been noted. He continued more cautiously. "It's so bloody boring that he can't spend an evening helping with the hay that he has to ffu..ff. clear off early. Now that he's the age for gallivanting, he's suddenly a smart-arse who thinks he knows it fff.. friggng all."

"Ach now," my mother interceded, "he's just at that age, but he's a good steady worker."

"Steady worker nothing! He might do steady work in that factory, but he thinks the fortnight holiday is for him to lie in bed half the day scratching himself." He sat back content with this point.

"But his holidays only started yesterday and the reason he lay in this morning was because you had him up half the night with the sow." My mother clearly wasn't giving in.

"Well it's not my fault the sow chose two o'clock in the morning to start pigging." He lifted the cup to his mouth again.

"Nor Gerry's either," came the quick retort, as she raised her own cup to her broadly smiling lips.

"No, nor Gerry's either," he conceded and then rapidly retreated to his original point. "So, never you mind what our Gerry says, my boy, I'm telling you to be grateful you're living in the country. Aren't I right, Bridie?" He was confident of her alliance.

She looked at Martin. "Your daddy's right."

"Of course I'm right, when I was..."

But she continued, "The only time there are bricks flying about here is when you daddy's on the warpath with the sledgehammer." The three of us laughed.

"Aye, I'll have to fix that up some day," he mumbled.

My mother gathered a ball of wheaten crumbs between her fingers, wiped a buttery knife on it and popped the mixture into her mouth. She pointed a finger at me — I waited while she chewed — she swallowed, her finger began wagging. "Oh I'm not worried about the pillar and wall being rebuilt, I'm worried about this rascal here throwing them bricks up and down that road."

I looked suitably shocked, "Me!?"

"Yes you. For I clare to God I never saw the likes of you for always throwing things."

Having no defence I chomped down on my wheaten and cheese.

"Aye," Martin chirped up, "I bet it was him broke the window in the byre."

I glanced at my father, my mouth too full to shout a denial, his too full to interrogate. My mother rescued me.

"Never you mind butting in, sneaky-arse. I've reared nine children and I'm well able to chastise one without the others helping, thank you very much. Go and get the teapot and never mind trying to stir trouble."

She took out a packet of cigarettes from her apron pocket and handed me one. "Pass that up to your daddy." I did so. The table was long, usually it sat eleven of us, but even when there were only a few we still sat in our own places. My father's seat was at one end beside the door, my mother sat at the other end beside the stove. Martin and I sat together along one side. After filling the cups he slid into his seat. "Sneaky-arse," I whispered, elbowing his ribs.

He retaliated with a sharp thump to my thigh. "Mammy's we suck."

"Stop it, you two!"

My father inhaled the smoke loudly, only faint clouds emerged again as he spoke. In contrast, my mother shut her mouth tight after each drag, as if she were swallowing the smoke before exhaling long swirls of it through her nose. This was their ritual after meals and was usually the only chance they got to relax and talk together. Recently the conversations were taken up more and more with the daily reports about riots, shootings and bombings. Every evening after dinner we would watch the news, the only period of the day when my father insisted on us children giving him "some peace and quiet". Now as we sat at the supper table the talk about the existing strife in the world somehow made me feel so much safer in my own.

I looked out the open door and beyond the light of the backyard

into the darkness of the fields. It was a clear summer night which promised to get no darker. I could still make out the solid shape of the stooks spaced like wigwams across a clearing. A warm current of excitement flooded through me as I thought of the games to be played among those bales in the coming days. We would build huts with them, play hide and seek in them and use them for hurdles in races...

"Come on you, time for bed, you're sitting there nearly asleep."

I looked around me, Martin had already left and my mother was clearing the table.

"The hay tires wee men out, so go and get a good night's sleep." My father lifted me off the chair and stood me on my feet.

"Can we play army around the stooks, daddy?"

My mother turned from the sink. "Honest to God, Patrick, I never saw the likes of you. If you aren't throwing a stick you're using it to shoot with."

"Ahh, that's wee boys for you." My father pushed my fringe out of my sleepy eyes. "Isn't it better them running about the fields than being in here under your feet all day? You wouldn't want them like thon oul ginny down the road never leaving his mother's side from one hour to the next." I took that as a compliment and grinned broadly.

"Never you mind the smirking, my boy. Don't ever let me catch you mocking — thon's a delicate wee fella and he's not to blame because he can't run about so much. Your daddy has no business saying that about him and it's not funny."

My father pulled his cap on, "Aye, your mammy's right, he is a sickly one right enough, so don't be making fun of him. Now, it's time for your bed so 'night and sleep tight."

"Night," I answered as he stepped outside. I could hear the two dogs racing through the hedge in response to his whistle, their claws clippitying on the concrete as they bounded excitedly round his legs.

"Goodnight, Patrick, and don't forget your prayers," my mother reminded me as she filled the sink with soapy water.

"Right. Will you get me up in time to see Stigsy?"

"I'll have you up in plenty of time to see Stigsy. Now go to bed or you'll never get a night's sleep."

"Night." I went through the quiet house — everyone else was in bed except for the two oldest brothers who had dates on Thursday nights.

"Martin, are you asleep yet?"

"Fuck up, I'm saying my payers!"

I climbed into bed. "Well, if you're praying what are you cursing for?"

"Cos you made me lose my place and I'll have to say some of



them over again, so just shut up."

I started to say my own. "God bless mammy, God bless daddy..." and fell asleep.

"And did it damage the baler?" Stigsy asked taking the pipe out of his mouth to spit onto the pile of brick and stone.

"No, the paint was all scraped, but they couldn't get it in 'til my daddy knocked down the pillar and wall," I recounted proudly.

"Ahh, your da's a daft man right enough," he said glancing at me from the corner of his eye. "Stigsy could have got the baler in without even touching that wall and pillar."

"No you couldn't. Could you?" I managed to sound sceptical.

"How?"

"Easy," he said, then paused a moment, as though hesitant about imparting such information. "By knocking down this one." He tapped his pipe against the wall and took hold of the bike. "Well, must go, for Stigsy's like the sun — he has to go down that hill so he can come up the other side in the morning." As always I nodded my head in agreement to such logic. Before leaving he pulled a packet of assorted mints from his satchel.

"Now then, these are special sweets," he explained, his big red face looking serious for once. "If you eat them before breakfast they'll turn to stones in your belly and you'll need operated on. And, if you

eat them all yourself you'll grow hens' teeth." He held the packet just out of my reach while he continued. "So be sure to give them to your mother to be shared out after you've been fed." I took the packet, giving polite thanks, but wishing that he'd bring some normal confectionary for a change.

I had this in mind one morning when playing on the pile of rubble which was once the pillar and wall. It was now a couple of weeks since they were brought to this condition by my father. He had returned to his job after the fortnight holidays in which time he made the hay, cut the hedges, dug drainage and painted the outside of the house. "A holiday well spent," he claimed. Before returning to the building site he also piled the dislodged brick and stone behind the remnants, upon which they had once stood. In this state they still served to keep the cattle in the field. To a young mind they served as any battleground pinpointed by the latest news report. I thought of stories to tell Stigsy as I lay on top of the rubble with a stick to my shoulder 'shooting' at the hedges. Then from where he should have appeared with his trusty bike, a red van breached the brow of the hill and came to a halt beside me. A booming voice enquired if I lived down the lane. I nodded, stepping down from the stone and bricks. The driver had turned to the seat beside him to search for our newspaper and mail amongst

the others, for he was a postman — evidently in place of Stigsy. When he turned to hand me the items I jumped with shock, instinctively raising the stick in front of me like a club. He had the largest head I had ever seen on any two-legged — or for that matter any four-legged — form! Whilst the flesh on the face was fat and puffed, it hung in neat sacks along the jaw lines as though deflated. The colour of this oversized mass went from the lightest hue of pink around the cheeks to the deepest purple on the large pitted nose. However, the most striking feature of all was the thick-rimmed glasses. So perfectly into the face were the black rims moulded that it almost appeared that they were the original life form and the grotesque head an afterthought. I started agape at the mass of flesh behind which the spectacles all but disappeared each time the mouth functioned.

"Are you deaf?" the voice boomed. I jumped again.

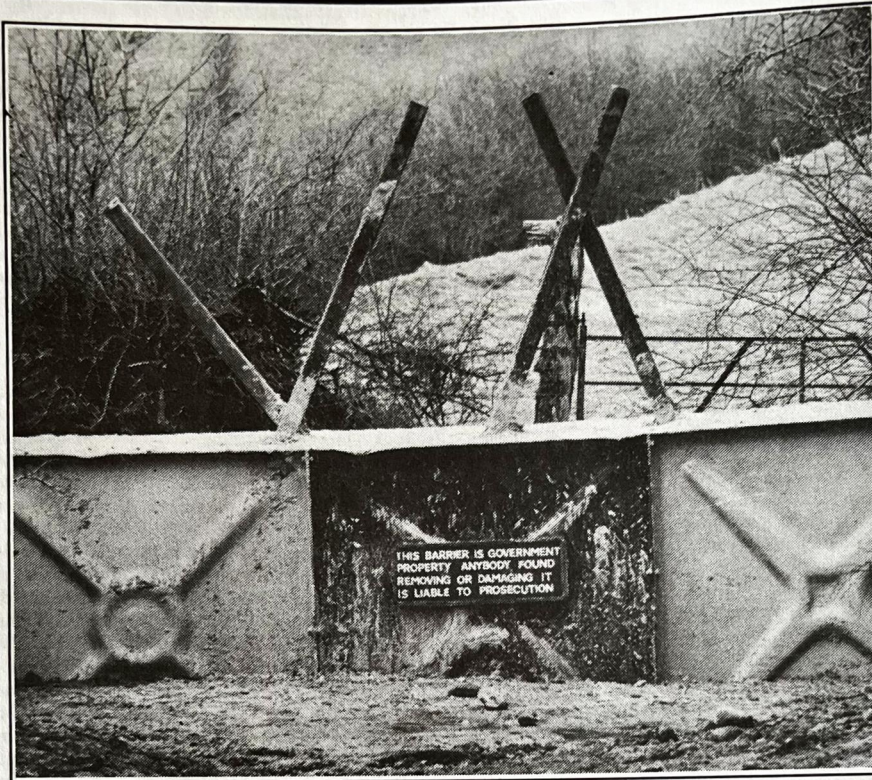
"W-what?"

"I asked, are you out hunting rebels?" The large jowls quivered as he nodded at the stick — a piece of wood made into a poor shape for a rifle. That reminded me of the story I was going to tell Stigsy and forgetting my fear of this new audience I began to relate it all to him. The account was graphic as I rattled on as to how I was fighting the British army, sparing no part of detail or description. He looked from me to the rubble, from me to my 'rifle', from the rifle to the rubble, from the rubble to me and all this time his head shook more and more rapidly. I took this as a sign of admiration until his face began to turn an alarming shade of red. Just in time to stop large veins on his forehead from bursting, the terrible spasm found relief through his mouth as he exploded forth a ghastly tirade. I jumped for the third time. Too shocked to comprehend what he was saying, I knew from hearing such words as 'Fenian bastard' and 'filthy taigs' that evidently my story had failed to impress. The shaking jowls and the large head framed in the window reminded of 'that man Paisley' on television. I tried to think of some of the comments my father would shout at the screen, but the van was moving off leaving the newspaper and mail strewn on the road. At last I regained my voice and managed a whisper "Go home you bum" as the van rounded the corner at the bottom of the hill and disappeared. There I stood in silence looking down the road not quite believing, or understanding, the previous few minutes. Then recalling what Stigsy had said about having to go down the hill in order to come up the other side I glanced nervously behind me in fear of seeing the red van burst onto the horizon like an Armageddon sunrise. Snatching the newspaper and mail off the road I ran down the lane home as fast as my skinny legs could carry me. With relief I handed the items to my mother in the kitchen where she stopped all preparations for breakfast on seeing the emblazoned headline: "Internment".

The red van continued to make its regular stops. I never knew who drove it, as I watched from the bottom of the lane and then ran up to collect the delivery left by the postman on the wall. Habitually I would check the grey stones for signs that Stigsy had been there to tap out his pipe. There was nothing. I never did see him again. It was said that in the six months from his release until his death he didn't once leave the house. When I learnt more about internment, I tried to imagine Stigsy in such a camp, but I couldn't think of him as separate from his bike walking up and down hills, and I heard that Long Kesh had neither.

I haven't seen the laneway in a while, but I hear it has been further widened, small fancy pillars creating what the new residents term 'the entrance'. A label which no doubt has sent my father — being now devoid of his cap to abuse — spinning in his grave. Too late for him, the modern machines became smaller, retained their names and improved in their functions. I heard no more of the large-headed postman whom I met on that August morning, but in the many years since, I have encountered him many times... in many forms. I sometimes think of Stigsy telling his yarns and listening to a youngster telling his, tapping his pipe on the wall and laughing easily. I still try to imagine how he must have been when interned — but it's not easy as there are no bikes in Long Kesh and I see no hills either. ■

■ Illustration by Artie Forbes (Long Kesh)



When border roads were closed by the British, they didn't just shut one county off from another, they split communities

Bordering on the sectarian

WE ARE ALL familiar with the adage, regurgitated by establishment politicians and right-wing academics, that the border in Ireland is fast becoming irrelevant as we move towards European economic integration, and indeed the integration of a global society. They assert that the only border that remains is the one in people's minds. In other words, our problems consist of people's attitudes, not the structures of power. Apart from the obvious attempt to shift the responsibility for the divisions in Ireland solely onto the shoulders of ordinary people, this analysis ignores the reality of military repression, social deprivation and economic underdevelopment, all of which can be linked, at least in part, to the artificial partition of Ireland.

Nationally the partition of our country has been a living nightmare. The basic right of national self-determination has been denied to the Irish

people; not just over the last 70 years, but since the British first came here. With partition, the British made sure that they still have a foothold in Ireland and can do whatever they please with the six northeastern counties, no matter what the Irish people say.

The main play utilised by the British is sectarianism — and indeed partition represents the institutionalisation of this policy. They have always sought to divide our people, and they have succeeded in driving a wedge between one fifth of the population in the northeast and the remain-

■ By Dermot McFarland (Portlaoise)

der south of the border. In addition, they have kept the people of the Six Counties divided along sectarian lines by discriminatory social and economic structures and a repressive state apparatus. All of this has led directly to 25 years of war in the recent past.

A visitor to the Six Counties may be forgiven for thinking that there wasn't such a thing as nationalism or Irishness. The discrimination practiced by those who hold the reins of power has ensured that nationalists are kept out of official sight. Nationalist flags or emblems are not displayed, have been banned in the past, and are still removed by the crown forces. The nationalist culture has been swept under the carpet and hidden out of sight, for fear it taints any visitor's view of this part of "Britain".

But sectarianism isn't just practiced by one section of the Irish people or by one part of our divided country. Sectarianism in the Six Counties tends to start at the top and works its way down, right to the bottom. However, sectarianism in the 26 Counties tends merely to be more subtle. It would seem to a visitor that everyone is a Catholic, or at the very least a Christian. Prayers in Leinster House before parliamentary sittings, the Angelus at six o'clock on the TV and laws which would appear to come from Rome. It doesn't matter what way you turn in society, there always seems to be someone with a dog collar pulling the strings. Not very inviting for any self-respectful Orangeman, or republican for that matter.

Economically, partition has been a total disaster. Not only are the Six Counties at the bottom of the scale in the British economy, but the 26 Counties seem to be lower still. It is estimated that Britain pumps over £3 billion into the Six-County statelet each year, making it one of the most economically unviable areas in Europe. The 26-County government pays one million punts per day to bolster Britain's artificial border, which

is a huge sum to take from such a small country's coffers. Both sums of money are paid by people who don't agree with partition, ie, the British people and the Irish people. It is ironic that after so many years of partition that the British and 26-County governments are only now beginning to accept the fact that it would make economic sense to promote Ireland as a single unit.

In the border areas, the adverse effects of partition have been most keenly felt. Almost one million Irish people live straddling Britain's border in Ireland: that is, 20% of the island's population. Partition has imposed many social failures on the whole country, but this 20% of the population has had to suffer many extra burdens.

When border roads were closed by the British, they didn't just shut one county off from another, they split communities; communities that didn't know the boundaries of counties. Not only wee communities split, but in many cases families. No longer were people free to associate with friends, neighbours or family members. They were isolated from their local churches, schools and even their own property. Because of road closures, many journeys that would have been considered local in the past now amounted to a detour of many miles and in some cases became impracticable. These border roads are now being reopened, in large part due to the constant and courageous campaigning of local people. But it will take many years to undo the social and economic damage caused by Britain's version of the Berlin Wall.

In the areas on both sides of the border there has been a drastic economic decline. Businesses are losing out to their counterparts on the other side of the border because of the existence of a different economic framework there and because they are cut off from their natural hinterland. This has a knock-on effect on the rest of the community. In particular these areas suffer disproportionately higher unemployment than other areas. This has led to high levels of emigration, which in turn disrupts the morale of the community and

its ability to organise itself. And as usual the emigrants are the young and educated — the future lifeblood of the areas. Not a new problem for Ireland.

It seems that the border counties have been forgotten about or ignored by successive governments both in Dublin and in London. There hasn't been any real investment in these areas, nor has there been any proper structures set up to help these counties cope with their special needs. Even the European Union INTEREG grants, which are specifically targeted at initiatives in border areas, have been blunted by excessive central government control and a lack of local input.

With all the hype that surrounds the few new investments in these areas, it is very easy to believe that the local communities are benefiting from it. Yet behind each government minister and local clientelist TD/MP patting each other on the back for a job well done, there is an even happier multinational. These investments, which aren't and never were meant to be rock solid, can be terminated at any time by these "good weather" foreign companies. They take full advantage of grants, tax benefits and cheap local labour, then shift their capital investment elsewhere to reap extra benefits and new profits.

It is clear therefore that the disastrous effects of partition, North and South, continue to cause hardship and suffering. The border is not a figment of a narrow-minded backward imagination, as those in power (and who benefit from its existence) would have us believe. The social, economic and personal difficulties caused by the border, along with the reality of military occupation and human-rights abuses in the Six Counties, present major obstacles to progress on a number of fronts. If we are to address these problems, we need to recognise that the border exists in a very real way, that it must be removed if we are to make substantial progress, and that regeneration will require both a transfer of power to a 32-county national democracy and to local democratic structures in the border counties. ■

Letter

A Chairde,

I'd like to bring to people's attention the hypocrisy of the British government's inquest system. This system is specially designed to answer the one and only question required of it by the state, ie how did the person or persons die? Where state forces are involved the main questions as to why the person or persons were killed and not arrested is not raised as an issue. This is part of the overall conspiracy to hide the truth of the shoot-to-kill policy, to stop any convictions of the state paid terrorists and to hide the dirty-tricks department which has been in operation from the early 1970s.

My brother Declan (RIP), seven of his comrades and a civilian, Oliver Hughes, were the latest statistics of the inquest system. Our families or legal representative, Philip Magee, weren't given any statements of witnesses until the opening day of the inquest. After two days of getting nowhere Magee protested to coroner Rodgers for an adjournment. Without proper access to witness evidence prior to the hearing, Magee argued, he couldn't properly represent his clients. Rodgers overruled his request, leaving all our families and legal representatives no other choice but to pull out of the proceedings. Mr Justice Kerr in the Belfast High Court granted leave to apply for a judicial review of the ruling.

Meanwhile, the faceless men with names from A to Z who weren't obliged to attend, had their statements read out to the court. In these they gave graphic details of how they lay in wait with an array of weapons for 24 hours beforehand, then opened fire without warning and continued to fire into the bodies of their victims until they were motionless — presumed dead. The two questions which remain unanswered are: Why weren't they arrested beforehand and why were they all shot dead?

For 25 years the British have hidden behind all manner of legislation in order to disguise their role in this war, it is time to put an end to these double standards. If they view the deaths of the Volunteers as an act of war, then say so. If not, then bring their paid terrorists in so that they can be made accountable for their comrades.

Is mise

Brian Arthurs

H-Block 4, Long Kesh.



FOR THE RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS

FOLLOWING the historic IRA cease-fire of August last, a campaign group, Saoirse, was established by the relatives and friends of prisoners to lobby for the release of all Irish political prisoners, loyalist and republican as an essential step in the ongoing peace process. Many people, including prisoners and their relatives, recognised that a logical next step in advancing the peace process would be for the British government to move speedily in releasing political prisoners — a quite reasonable expectation. Indeed the 26-County government acted on this expectation.

However, almost a year after the cease-fire announcement, the British have not moved at all. To date not a single prisoner in the Six Counties or in Britain has been released early as a result of the peace process. Indeed the conditions for some POWs have deteriorated since the cease-fire, particularly for those held in jails in Britain and Europe. The imagination and flexibility once promised by Peter Brooke has so far proven illusory.

The failure of the British government to address this issue in a positive and constructive way suggests that they intend to manipulate the issue of prisoners, including the hopes and fears of our families, in a clumsy attempt to weaken nationalist demands in negotiations. We refuse to be used as pawns in this cynical game. The republican leadership has our full support in resisting any attempts by the British to barter our release in return for a dilution of core nationalist demands. The release of all political prisoners must be unconditional.

Of course the imagination and flexibility once promised has not just been absent in relation to the issue of prisoners — the British government's response to the peace process in general has been miserly and

brudging. This intransigence is the single most important reason why Saoirse, and those who genuinely wish to build on

the peace process, must intensify their efforts in the coming months. In this way we can pressurise Britain to change their intransigent attitude on this issue — thereby breaking the present logjam on political progress. It is for this reason that the Saoirse campaign is vital to the whole peace process. Recent campaigns such as the demands for the reopening of border roads, and the removal of British soldiers from our streets have shown that, given the courage and commitment of the nationalist community, we have the capacity to effect major change — the community is becoming empowered and nothing can stop us from achieving our rights.

It is essential at this critical stage in negotiations with the British government that our representatives are able to present them with proven popular support for the peace process and all the issues it involves, including the unconditional release of political prisoners. This is why it is important that

everyone plays their part in the Saoirse and other campaigns — as Bobby Sands said:

"Everyone, republican or otherwise, has his or her own particular part to play. No part is too great or too small, no one is too old or too young to do something."

The only guarantee of success is for our supporters, at home and abroad, to become involved in building the campaign. It is critical therefore at this early stage for republican activists, prisoners' relatives, friends and ex-POWs to play central and active roles. It is a fact that the campaign will not work unless this is the case.

The progress of the campaign to date has been heartening. Saoirse committees have been established throughout the country, thousands have taken to the streets in colourful and imaginative demonstrations, there have been protests and sit-ins on a weekly basis, green ribbons have become a familiar sight, lobbying and letter-writing have won widespread support for the campaign. Much remains to be done and the campaign is only in its infancy, but given this fantastic start we are confident that Saoirse will go from strength to strength.

As the success of the campaign grows, undoubtedly Britain will come under immense pressure to make a move on the issue of POWs. It is possible that initially they may respond, not in a meaningful way, but in their usual minimalist fashion — tinkering with, rather than resolving the issue. It is important that Saoirse supporters do not allow themselves to become confused or disheartened by such tactics. We should remember that our central demand is for the jails to be emptied of all political prisoners and nothing less will suffice. This may entail a lengthy campaign, but we will continue the struggle for peace with justice for as long as it takes. We look forward to the future, confident in our leadership, our strength and the commitment of those working on our behalf. We look forward to Saoirse! ■

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Individuals or groups who wish to help the Saoirse campaign should:

1. Contact their MP, MEP, TD or local councillor and ask them to call on the British and Irish governments to release all political prisoners;
2. Propose that their trade union, sports body, tenants' association etc pass a motion for the release of all POWs and contact either the British or Irish governments with the result;
3. Write to the British prime minister and/or Taoiseach calling for the release of all political prisoners;
4. Attend Saoirse events and/or join the Saoirse campaign.

If you wish to join the Saoirse campaign, or would like further information, please contact;

Saoirse, Basement, 29 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 or Sinn Féin POW Department, 51/55 Falls Road, Belfast 12,

or James McVeigh, H4, Long Kesh, or you local Saoirse committee.

A diet of Chestnuts, cowboy hats and tutus

WHEREVER a group of republican POWs are gathered, you are sure to find a high proportion of health freaks and fitness fanatics. Maybe it's because there's a mirror in every cell, or maybe they want to regain the same youthful body they were arrested in — ten years before. Personally I think the Sunday supplements have a lot to answer for — all those photos of tanned, washboard stomachs accompanied by articles on exercises to tighten flabby buttocks and suggestions for new improved calorie-controlled diets. It's enough to give anyone a complex, never mind a vain and vulnerable POW.

Of course some are less vulnerable than others. Tucker for example proudly flaunts his chubbiness, and as for exercise, he makes do with a couple of football matches a week. In particular he likes his grub — usually a few pounds of spuds, heaps of cabbage and a jumbo sausage precariously balanced on an over-flowing plate. And most of all, he loves red sauce — lots of it. In fact you can see nothing but a mountain of red

on his plate — he sups the stuff like soup.

But sadly these Sunday mags can brainwash the best of us. After a particularly pernicious article on the high-fat content of sauces and condiments, Tucker was sitting in the canteen with his usual mountain of food, but this time you could see the white of his spuds. Davy Glennon was stunned.

"Have we run out of red sauce, Tucker?"

"No, Davy," replied Tucker with great earnestness. "I've started a diet."

And he duly reached for the brown sauce.

AFTER YEARS of battling with the jail administration to be allowed hats and scarfs for inclement weather, republican logic finally prevailed last year. Among the vast array of Celtic hats and scarfs, monkey hats and hats with pom-poms that your granny used to knit, Gerard Hodgins' ten-gallon cowboy hat was surely among the most impressive. It has become a taking point in the camp, not only because it is unusual but because he hardly ever takes it off. He can be seen

wearing it in the cell, the canteen, the yard and even on the visits.

So it was on this scorcher of a day he was walking the yard with Pat Sheehan — the number one sun-worshipper in the camp. Noel McHugh, Harry McCartney, Sean Corry and Bosco McCreedy were discussing the phenomenon of Hodgies' hat from a distance when Sean remarked: "Maybe he thinks he's Butch Cassidy?" To which big Noel promptly replied: "Aye, and Sheehy is the Sun-Kissed Kid!"

REGULAR READERS of the Red Spider will be aware that quiz shows can perplex the most knowledgeable of POWs — especially those from the lower Ormeau/Markets/Short Strand district. (Remember Terry Clinton's faux pas in the last issue, when he claimed Christopher Columbus hailed from somewhere near Miami?)

This time Pod Devenney does the honours. All the lads are out sunning themselves in the yard on the first (and as yet only) day of summer. As usual the radio is blaring away,

drowning out the Sun-Kissed Kid's complaints about the shadow cast by Hodgies' hat. Then the daily quiz begins and all ears pick up. By the way, did you know that Pod has a passing interest in South Africa and the victorious struggle against apartheid? Anyway fingers on buzzers and the DJ asks:

"For one point, who might were a 'tutu'?"

Pod jumps up and blurts out: "An archbishop!"

Another scandal rocks the clergy?

WHATS in a nickname? Tony Doc and Frankie are walking around the yard (but this day it looks like rain) when Frankie shouts across to Conker:

"Here, Chestnut, what time is it?"

"Half past two," replies Conker.

Tony is quiet for a moment, obviously thinking deeply. Finally he speaks:

"Here Conker, why do they call you Chestnut?"

NUAIR a thagann beirt Gaeilgeoir le chéile bhíonn mithuisicint ann corruair. An chéad lá sa Ghaeltacht úr i mBloc 6, agus tá Tó O Néill ag péinteáil na gcilíní. Seo chuige an seanfhondúir Daithí Mac Adaim, a chaitheann súil isteach sa chillín agus a fhiafraíonn:

"An bhfuil tú criochnaithe leis an chillín?"

Stadann Tó den obair, leagann anuas an scuab péinte agus cuma bhgrach air.

"Cad é sin faoi mo chailín?"

Téann Daithí bocht chun scaoil agus léimeann sé siar ón doras.

"Do chillín, do chillín!!!" a scairteann sé go himpíoch.

"Do chillín a dúirt mé, a chara, chan do chailín." ■

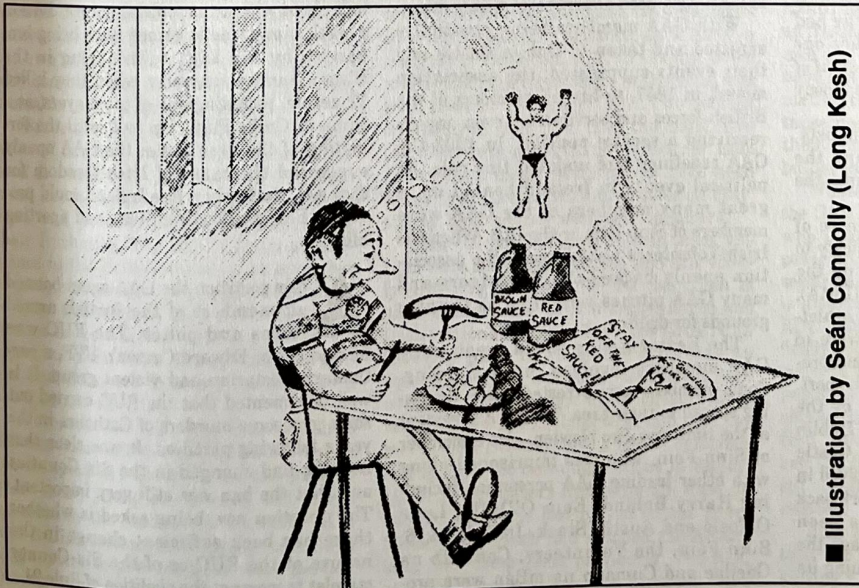
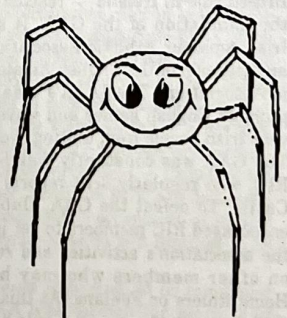


Illustration by Seán Connolly (Long Kesh)



By Red Spider

■ By Vivian McDonald
(Long Kesh)

THE Gaelic Athletic Association is a national organisation which has as its basic aim the strengthening of the national identity in a 32-county Ireland, through the preservation and promotion of Gaelic games and pastimes. Over the past number of years, however, the GAA has come under increasing pressure to remove the rule that proscribes members of the British crown forces from participating in Gaelic games and pastimes organised by the GAA — Rule 21. So why is this rule so important?

For many years before the GAA's foundation many people in Ireland had suffered severely under British law because they tried to keep alive the Gaelic tradition in Ireland. Indeed, in the 1800s the British authorities in Ireland attempted to kill off all Gaelic traditions and at the same time implant their own foreign games. At this stage the RIC were the main body involved; enforcing these games and discouraging locals from playing the native pastime. When Michael Cusack, Maurice Davin and Dr TW Croke, Archbishop of Cashel got together to form the GAA in 1884 they immediately set about organising and educating members of the association in Gaelic ways. These men believed the association should do more than revitalise Irish sport, but promote her language and dance as well. They wanted to establish a movement for the betterment of the whole Irish nation. In Dr Croke's first address he said:

"If we continue travelling for the next score years... as we have for the past, we had better at once, and publicly, adjure our nationality, clap hands for joy at the sight of the union jack, and place 'England's bloody red' exultantly above the green!"

With the support of Irish nationalists, some of Parnell's Home Rulers and the Fenians, the GAA eventually grew into the largest sporting body in Ireland.

Dublin Castle — the nerve centre of British rule in Ireland — reacted quickly to the foundation of the GAA. It set up the Irish Amateur Athletic Association (IAAA), an extension of the English Amateur Athletic Association. The IAAA's ideals were to promote English games and ways, and prevent Irish people from uniting even in sport. The GAA was constantly watched by the RIC, who regularly sent reports to Dublin Castle. To defeat the GAA, Dublin Castle encouraged RIC members to get involved in the association's activities and report back on other members who may have been Home Rulers or Fenians. At this stage the GAA had already passed a rule banning its

More than k



● The RUC's Oath of Allegiance to the British crown — to serve her majesty's sovereign government

members from participating in IAAA activities, and IAAA members from participating in GAA-organised activities or membership.

With GAA members being constantly arrested and taken to Dublin Castle and their events suppressed, the association moved, in 1887, to ban all members of the British forces and servicemen, even anyone receiving a service pension. In 1903 the GAA redefined and updated this rule. As political events in Ireland heated up, a great many members of the GAA were members of Sinn Féin or the IRB. When the Irish Volunteers were formed, the association openly backed the Volunteers and many GAA pitches were used as training grounds for drilling.

The Easter Rising saw a great many GAA members involved in the fighting. Some members were arrested before the rising spread to their area. The GAA president at the time was Jim Nowlen, also a member of Sinn Féin, who was imprisoned along with other leading GAA personnel, including Harry Boland, Eoin O'Duffy, Luke O'Toole and Austin Stack. In July 1916, Sinn Féin, the Volunteers, Conradh na Gaeilge and Cumann na mBán were pro-

scribed. The following day Dublin Castle prohibited the holding of any public meeting in Ireland without an official permit. Within a week many Gaelic games were being broken up by the RIC, culminating in the Bloody Sunday massacre when they killed 12 people, including one of the players, at a game in Croke Park. Up and until the formation of the Free State, the GAA openly supported the cause of Irish freedom for they saw that only a free Ireland could provide a healthy Gaelic culture and sporting life.

After partition the GAA again banned all members of the British armed forces and police. The RUC was formed out of Edward Carson's UVF, a particularly sectarian and violent group. It is well documented that the RUC carried out some gruesome murders of Catholics in the years following partition. It was clear that nothing had changed in the Six Counties and that the ban was still very important. The question now being asked is whether there has been sufficient change in the nature of the RUC or of the Six-County statelet to warrant the abolition of Rule 21.

icking a ball



faithfully — is an indication of their aims

Today the native game takes on a new significance when it is realised that they have been a part and still are a part of the nation's desire to live her own life, to govern her own affairs. The GAA sees itself as a body consolidating our Irish identity, as the preamble to the constitution states:

"Since she has not control over all the national territory, Ireland's claim to nationhood is impaired." The RUC on the other hand are here to keep British traditions alive and prevent people from asserting their Irishness. The RUC's Oath of Allegiance to the British crown — to serve her majesty's sovereign government faithfully — is an indication of their aims. This oath cannot be reconciled with the aims and objectives of the GAA. Thus it would be cynical and dishonest to be a member of both the GAA and the RUC.

Moreover, the RUC put this oath into practice in a violent and vindictive way. In the occupied Six Counties, for the past 25 years many young hurlers and footballers have sat by the road-side while RUC, UDR and British soldiers deliberately held them at gunpoint to prevent them from participating in a game or training session. To

these people it was work well done for the crown. Worse, they have killed and tortured many nationalists, including GAA members in recent years. For instance, Jack Kiely, a member of Dundrum GAC in County Down and a leading businessman in the area, was shot dead in February 1987. Two serving members of what was then the UDR (now the RIR) were convicted of his murder. Like Jack Kiely, many nationalists have been killed by British crown forces, on or off duty, simply because they were GAA members.

Some of the RUC and British army victims were active republicans, and this vividly and tragically highlights the clash of aims between the British crown forces and Irish nationalism, of which the GAA is an integral part. Seán McDermott was an Oglach and GAA footballer, shot in the back while on active service by an off-duty RUC man in April 1976. Along with him that day was Kieran Doherty, also a Gaelic footballer and later to die on hunger strike in August 1981. A day later, Kevin Lynch died on hunger strike; he had played on the Derry Minor team which had reached the All-Ireland final some years previously. The RUC at both Seán and Kieran's funerals were

provocative and were heard shouting sectarian slogans, showing yet again to the nationalist people of Ireland their fascist sectarian nature. After Aidan McAnespie's brutal murder at Aughnacloy in February 1988, while he walked across the border to watch a football match, Martin McCaughey from Cappagh gave an interview to the RTE programme *Today Tonight* about the effects of and threats from the RUC, UDR and British army on people in his area playing Gaelic games. Martin (who had played for Tyrone Minors) lost his life at the hands of British soldiers on 9 October 1990 while on active service. Eyewitnesses at the scene of the killing say no warning was given by the British soldiers lying in hiding.

Martin was carrying an unloaded assault rifle. Is there going to be no recognition of these and many more like them who have actually promoted the GAA? (Unlike the RUC and British army who have tried to stifle it.)

Certain people with an anti-Irish political agenda are now demanding that the GAA rescind Rule 21 — on the spurious grounds that we are in the midst of a peace process. Yet the RUC have not participated in this peace process — there has been no cessation of RUC hostilities against the nationalist community, as many GAA members can testify. Unfortunately a minority within the GAA have allowed themselves to be intimidated by elements of the pro-British media and loyalist politicians, and have voiced support for calls to end Rule 21. However, most GAA members understand that it is not Rule 21 which is sectarian, but the RUC. The GAA are a non-sectarian movement, open to Catholic, Protestant and dissenter. This is in stark contrast to the RUC, who are for example, actively colluding with loyalist murder squads. Their present-day activities in handing over thousands of names and addresses of Irish nationalists in the occupied Six Counties and the great many who have lost their lives as a result of this information truly reflects the sectarian aims of these people. Are the GAA to compromise their non-sectarianism by allowing bigoted bullies into their association?

Whatever people may feel is wrong with the GAA it is not its aims or Rule 21. Anyone who is genuinely interested in promoting peace and reconciliation, and in eradicating sectarianism should support Rule 21 — which is about isolating the sectarian and violent RUC, and making it known that the GAA is firmly opposed to such activities. We look forward to the day when we have a normal, impartial police service who are fully acceptable to the whole community — including the GAA. However, until the RUC are disbanded and the British army's occupation of part of our country ends, Rule 21 will continue to be relevant.

Rule 21 must stay! And let us remember that the GAA was formed for more than kicking a ball. ■

IT'S A SHOPMAN'S STRIFE

■ By John Trainor
(Long Kesh)

In Long Kesh we organise many aspects of our life on a communal basis. One of these aspects is the prison shop, from which a limited range of toiletries, sweets and handicraft material can be purchased. Each wing appoints a "shopman", who is brought to the shop once a week to purchase goods and negotiate on behalf of his comrades. Here John Trainor takes a light-hearted look at the trial and tribulations of the shopman.

Few things have caused me more heartache in jail than my recent spell as the wing shopman. Once a week it was my responsibility to purchase the wing's supply of tobacco, tinned foods and sweets — lots and lots of sweets! "It's a painless process," my predecessor had said — I think even a masochist would agree that the contrary is true!

Tuesdays are shop day in H8 and after an early morning jog and quick shower, the dreaded call comes up the wing: "Big John that's you for the shop." I rush out to the circle, dropping cards, returned teddy bears and shop print-outs, where I'm met by the ever-prompt Jamesy 'The Kite' Morgan (C & D wing's shopman) who greets me with an ironic "maidin mhaith", which loosely translated: "Jaesus look at the state of you, just up out of your scratcher".

With a merciless stare I retort, "What's good about Tuesday mornings, hate-the-world?" We proceed silently to the front gate, through two outer gates and into a waiting prison van.

A short van journey later (all of two hundred yards!) and we arrive at the tuckshop — or to be more precise a rat-infested 'Nissen hut', where we are greeted by three highly-trained customer-friendly screws. I smile a response, while mentally going over the complaints and queries given to me the night before, because I know that what starts as a friendly atmosphere must change if Frankie Lowry is to get his long awaited Boyzone Greatest Hits tape! Will Fra Mahers ever get his musical chime, Liverpool's "You'll never walk alone" anthem? Or will Barry — the ever patient — Murray finally get his piano hinges? (The type that can

be hidden — yet seen, have three nail holes — not two, be thicker than the normal, consist of gold-plated tungsten metal, and cost no more than 20 pence each!)

These are some examples of the type of unattainable, outlandish and probably non-existent requests I have to argue for each week. (Even more incredible are the highly descriptive excuses the screws seem to conjure up in reply!) After much shouting and bawling, things settle down and the long list of sweets, tobacco, toiletries and modest groceries are itemised and compiled. This takes approximately 25 minutes. The individual shop totals are then processed

very carefully — POWs are very sensitive to being overcharged even if only by a few pennies! This rigmarole is repeated by my faithful friend and comrade Jamesy. Our weekly shop lists completed, we proceed to load the trolleys onto the trailer and prepare for the return journey to the Block.

Getting into the Block is quite an event. The number of airlocks, gates and electric grilles is more than you could possibly imagine over such a small area. As we drive through one gate, we are then sandwiched in an airlock until another gate is opened. When we eventually get out of the van it's a Grand Prix chicane manoeuvre with the shop trolley as we negotiate three sets of grilles to reach the circle. A few deep breaths and then another three grilles are opened, one at a time, before we reach the wing. Exhausted and drained, I call on my reluctant assistant, Curly Craven, to lend a hand. An expert at disappearing acts he arrives yawning, clad only in a blue towel, carrying a chamber pot and muttering: "Is that the shop up already?"

As Curley does his vanishing act, a thin, rather sickly looking character called 'Ants' comes to my aid, before my other official assistant Gary 'Gurney' Kearney arrives in his dirty yellow socks. We begin to unload the trolley and arrange all items for convenient packaging and as we are doing so, a thick scrum of men gather with myriad requests adding to my already aching head. In an anxious and increasingly

aggravated state I scream all sorts of obscenities which clears the area. Then, as I close the cell door behind me, I begin to relate to my assistants the arguments I had with the shop screws, exaggerating for good effect. As I'm vividly describing the scenes of blood, guts and fixed-wagons, a cup of tea along with a damaged ruffle bar, which was trodden on accidentally on purpose, is pushed into my hand.

Normality sets in as Curly materialises and a fight begins as he and gurney-Kearney argue over who is not gathering the biggest shop list. Curly, astute as ever, wrestles free Marty Parker's usual list of two tins of Coke and a second-class stamp (Martin is not renowned for his spending sprees). Eventually all items are individually wrapped and listed and piled in small brown bags — large bags in the case of Dee Delaney who, since arriving on our block, has blown up farther than a Ford Escort air-bag.

Finally, Seány Adams arrives on cue with his weekly complaints.

"Ech, ech, excuse me big lad. I'll tell you what it is, I ordered dark blue paint and you got navy blue..."

• An see these crisps? They aren't very crispy...

• Also, I specifically ordered a tin of brown-mahogany stain — not varnish!"

With looks of bewilderment we turn to each other in disbelief. (As all you handicrafters know, all tins say "Varnish", but tins of stain have a colour code attached to the bottom.)

"But Seán that is brown mahogany stain," I reply in a reasonable voice.

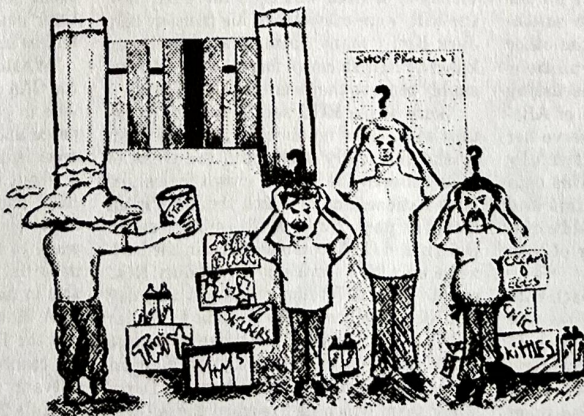
"No, no, no, excuse me. If you will let me speak a minute. That clearly says 'enhanced quick-drying varnish'," replies Seán, with tin shaking and finger pointing.

"Yes I understand that, but if you look at the bottom, it shows what is inside the tin. Brown mahogany, OK cara?"

Still not realising his mistake, he looks aggressively towards us before looking at the tin again. Then, shaking his head in despair he says:

"Does that mean you're not gonna change it for me?"

Help!!!



■ Illustration by Fra Maher (Long Kesh)

'IF TOMORROW NEVER COMES...'

Sunday, 26 of February 1995 started out a lovely day, warmer than it had been for a while and I was about to go to the yard for a walk. As always I had written to my girlfriend Brenda and our young son Shéa, to thank them for the visit and a few presents they had left in the day before. It was also a special day in that it was the sixth anniversary of our relationship.

I never reached the yard. I saw the chaplain coming down the wing and when I heard him ask for me by name I knew immediately that something was wrong. He asked if I'd like anyone to come with me so I asked for Seán Lynch, a friend of mine. I knew then it was going to be bad news. When we went into the cell he asked me if I had a girlfriend called Brenda Curran. I replied, "Yes I have."

He said, "I'm sorry to have to tell you this but she was killed last night in a road accident in County Monaghan." Of all the things going through my mind this was the worst imaginable. Since coming to jail my biggest fear was always that something would happen to Brenda or Shéa.

At the time I wasn't sure if I was dreaming or not, it was so hard to take in. It was only when I heard my mother tell me on the phone that Brenda had been killed that I knew it was not just a dream. As I tried to come to terms with the reality of what had happened, my thoughts turned to whether I'd get out for Brenda's funeral. Because Brenda and I hadn't been married I fell outside the stated NIO criteria, so I had the added worry of possibly being refused compassionate parole. This thought was too much to bear thinking about. I couldn't sleep and hardly ate with the worry. I was eventually granted 24-hours parole.

Outside, I was met by my family and a friend from jail, Danny Pettigrew, with whom I had once shared a cell when I was on remand. On the long

journey down the motorway I was thinking of our weekly visits and what Brenda had gone through in the last two years, visiting every week without fail. It was 10 am when we entered Lisnaskea, and our youth together came flashing back to me. One particular place focused on my mind as I passed

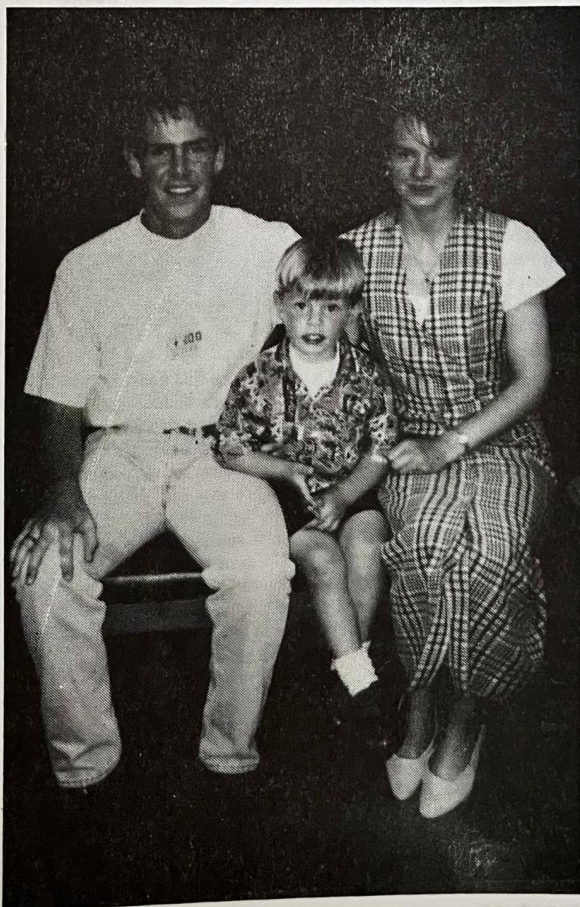
■ By Francie McGoldrick (Long Kesh)

it. Sylvan Hill brought me back to the times when Brenda and I were in the same year at St Ronan's primary school in Lisnaskea. I first captured her attention by knocking her over with my bike on the way home! Despite this inauspicious introduction we became sweethearts, but didn't really start going out seriously until Brenda was 15. In the summer months we would go cycling together or do a spot of fishing and in the evenings we would sit in the town chatting with friends. As

the car continued up the town we passed the small sweet shop where Brenda had her first job; a few doors up was Hughie McBrien's, where we had our first kiss. We had both looked forward to the day I'd return to Lisnaskea, yet now the town had nothing but sad memories for me.

As we headed up to the chapel to see Brenda for the last time, I recalled the proud day we both brought Shéa up to the same place to be baptised. Entering the chapel, I didn't know what to expect. The reality of what had happened was starting to dawn on me, especially when I saw her name engraved on a brass plaque on the lid of the coffin. Brenda looked lovely. She wore a ring of mine around her neck which had been taken off me when I was arrested, and Brenda had worn it on a chain ever since. In every photo and every visit it was there, reminding me of our feelings and commitment to each other. A photo of the three of us had been placed beside her. Even though it was very difficult to see Brenda lying in the coffin, it nevertheless helped me to come to terms with the reality of her death. It meant a lot that I was able to say goodbye, though I found it very hard to bring myself to leave.

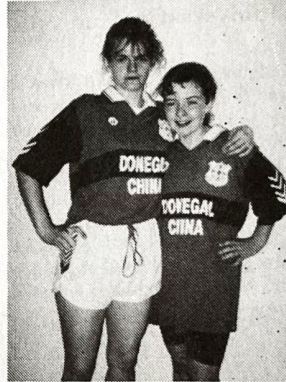
The funeral mass was difficult because as I entered the chapel I was thinking of the day I had dreamed of since coming to jail — the day I would walk down the aisle to marry Brenda. Walking down towards the coffin was the saddest moment of my life. I stared at the coffin the whole way through the mass and felt like breaking down, but I thought I should try to remain strong for both families' sake, for they were as heartbroken as I was. At the burial I threw in a red rose and stayed there until everybody else had gone.



After the funeral I spent some time in Brenda's room looking at her clothes, photos, the little things that reminded me of different events in our life together. I took Brenda's engagement ring and a Claddagh ring, both of which were important to me because we had planned to get married. We had put it off because of the peace process, but in the end we decided we had waited long enough and were to be married on 15 February 1996. On 1 September last, we were overjoyed at the IRA initiative to push forward the political situation. Neither of us had witnessed peace in our young lives and we both continually discussed the political situation, often speaking of how wonderful it would be to live together in a peaceful Ireland, where our children could live without fearing for their safety or their future.

I sat on the bed thinking to myself what it was like for Brenda to be a devoted mother and partner. I was so proud of how strong Brenda had been after my arrest. While sitting there, all aspects of her life revealed themselves. On her table were all Brenda's study materials — she had always wanted to be a PE teacher and had returned to full-time study. Our separation was one of the factors in her making this decision, which I fully supported and encouraged, and likewise Brenda always encouraged myself to keep at the study and better myself as an imprisoned republican. Brenda combined this with full-time work in a local factory, and her role as a committed partner and a perfect mother to a young son. Brenda was also active in her community as a youth club leader, working with local children and as a member of the Lisnaskea Emmet's ladies' football team. Despite coming from a strong GAA background I was the first one to bring her to Croke Park for the 1989 All-Ireland Hurling Final, and this was something we both treasured. Though grieving, I could only feel pride at her achievements.

The week Brenda died she had planned to leave her job in a local factory. We both looked forward to visits during weekdays as a result. Brenda also wanted more time to get



involved in Saoirse and Sinn Féin locally. When the local Saoirse committee was launched Brenda immediately involved herself and was keen to attend all the local events. She also attended the annual Sinn Féin dinner for the first time and told me about Martin McGuinness attending and making a great speech. It had a really positive effect on Brenda and she planned to attend this year's Ard Fheis in Dublin as a result. Given her character, talents and values, she would have made a very effective political activist.

It was a confusing time for Shéa. He wanted to know if I was home for the wedding and wanted me to take him to heaven to see his mammy. However, one moment that I did treasure with him during those few hours was to bring him up to town and buy him some toys and sweets. These precious moments were marvellous, he felt proud to have his daddy with him for the first time in two years and showed this by telling everyone in the shop that his daddy was

home. In this short period I saw how much he had changed since I was taken away from him. He had been only a small child then, now he was showing me where to go in the shop to find the toys. That night I had my own son sleeping beside me for the first time, and waking up beside him next morning was a brilliant feeling.

I rose at 6 am and visited Brenda's grave. It was distressing to think that it will be over seven years before I can visit it again. I visited Brenda's parents before leaving for the prison. My thoughts were with Shéa that morning. How he would cope without his mother, whom he was very close to? I was worried about his future and whether the bond between

the two of us would remain strong. The 24 hours compassionate parole was insufficient time to deal with all these concerns.

It is now several months since Brenda's death and at times it is still hard to believe she is gone. It's hard to come to terms with the thought that I won't be able to spend my life with her and fulfil our dreams. The men on the wing, especially Seán Lynch, have been a great help over these past few months and their support has been vital in bringing me through such a difficult period. I have tried to keep busy at some reading and learning Irish but it's very difficult to keep my mind on anything for too long as the thought of Brenda is still uppermost in my mind. The main thing that keeps me going is our son Shéa. I see him every week and we have developed a very close relationship. Both Brenda's and my own parents have been very good about this, understanding how important it is to me. Over these months Brenda, in her own way, has still been with me. I know Brenda wouldn't have wanted me to fall in jail and I know she would have wanted me to continue to contribute positively to my own needs and the needs of the republican community in the jail. All I can do is stay strong for both families and especially for Shéa, who now is the most important person in my life.

One of Brenda's favourite songs was by Garth Brooks: "If tomorrow never comes", the chorus of which goes:

If tomorrow never comes,
Will she know how much I loved her?

Did I try in every way, to show her every day

That she's my only one?

And if my time on earth is through,

And she must face the world without me,

Is the love I gave her in the past Gonna be enough to last,
If tomorrow never comes?

Brenda always used to say these few words about "the love I give her in the past" which would be enough to keep her alive until I'd be home. But now it's the other way about, the love Brenda gave me will keep me going for her sake and Shéa's. ■

Tar Anall

FOR DECADES, imprisonment has been a way of life for many nationalist families because of their political beliefs. It is estimated that 5,000 people in Belfast alone have been or are now in jail and up to 50,000 relatives have been affected by imprisonment.

Now a new body, Tar Anall, has been set up to provide support for POWs, ex-POWs and their families. They intend to establish an advice and drop-in centre, where people can relax and chat, get information and advice on a range of issues and participate in self-help discussion groups.

A spokesperson for Tar Anall explained: "Our role is primarily one of support and advice. At present, the families

of political prisoners have no one to turn to if they face problems caused by the imprisonment of a loved one. They are reluctant to deal with the prison administration or with the probation service because they don't accept the badge of criminal or offender. We would be able to offer a more understanding and sympathetic ear to a family which is experiencing difficulties over benefits or behavioural problems with a child, or even try-

ing to negotiate compassionate parole with the authorities."

In addition, Tar Anall believe that they can address the special needs of recently-released POWs. Over the last ten years early 300 life-sentence prisoners along with hundreds of other long-term prisoners have been released. Their experiences have highlighted these special needs, as they attempt to settle back into life with their families and the local community.

"We want to provide a reference point during the prerelease period and after their release, as well as linking ex-political prisoners and prisoners' families with existing support agencies."

To that end, the centre will offer advice and information on jobs, training and education opportunities, help released prisoners make use of existing support services and facilitate the sharing of

experiences between former POWs.

Already premises on the Falls Road have been found for the drop-in centre, which will have an office, a coffee bar, TV and newspapers, and hopefully a crèche. However, furniture and equipment are urgently needed — a sofa and armchairs, toys for the crèche, office and kitchen equipment and books for a library. So far no funding has been obtained, but the Rowntree Trust has promised to make some finance available in the future. Tar Anall is registered as a charity, and more information can be obtained from Maura McCrory (Tel: 01232 327672).

The spokesperson concluded: "Now that we have a chance to give concrete support to our prisoners I'm confident the community will rally round in the same way as they did during the prison campaigns." ■

To See

■ By Gerard Hodgins (Long Kesh)

I look and I see
what is there to see,
bars on the windows and wire on the trees;
The sun is cloaked behind a screen;
I have the knowledge of its presence,
like the cherry-blossom I will never see;
The moon is constrained
by a wall of steel and shrunken imagery,
robbed of soft light, I pass the lonely night.

Across the fields of verdant grass
I leap through waves of happy living
and all the time my voice is singing;
The darkest dungeon and prison cell
is but a Hell to those
with weakened mind and malnourished soul;
Who live in stultifying sterility
in the name of a fake morality
ignorant of their own mortality.

The soft chasm of the wifing blue void
welcomes us like fruit from the gods,
to glide within its soothing embrace;
Bars melt and the wire vapourises
and on the horizon I see the sun rises,
casting warmth and comfort and life to the incarnate;
Float and be free above the shadow of the tree
send your soul to heaven,
stretch out and touch the essence of life.

Monkey's Anguish

■ By Tony Doherty (Long Kesh)

Thrust deep
Like hook in soul,
Eyes water with pain of sadness,
Throat burns,
Lamentation lingers
Longer than eyes can see
Or endure.
Mind questions
Why? How?

Only to fade with head bowed,
A sigh of cruel reality.
Haunting memories
Dim life
Of those who understand
The reckless causes
Of visible and invisible anguish.

A spirit born free,
Trapped in an unnatural world.
Two terminal shadows hereafter:
Mankind, Ebola.
Mother nature has no control.
Eyes of inflicted sin
Cause no empathy, compassion.
Seven days of unjustified
Unjustifiable
Purgatory.
Heartbeat is stilled...

Life-support system in danger

■ By Jimmy McAllister
(Long Kesh)

If media coverage is indicative, the environment is one of the key issues of our time. Since the 1980s, phrases like the greenhouse effect, global warming, claiming change and the ozone layer have become common in the vocabulary of many who are concerned with the survival of our planet. Now in the 1990s, we find that bio-diversity is a new word in this vocabulary. Bio-diversity is the diversity of life, but not just physical. It refers to the millions of life forms found on Earth, their genetic variation and the complex ecological interrelations between them. As such, it is the primary life-support system of our planet and a precondition for human survival, determining whether or not the air we breathe and the water we drink will sustain us.

No-one knows how many different life forms, or species, share this planet with us. Scientists have so far only been able to identify a total of some 1.5 million species of animals and 300,000 species of plants out of an estimated low of 10 million to a high of 80 million. Most put the figure around 30 million species, which means that despite all scientific efforts, we have identified probably less than 10% of all plants and animals that cohabit the Earth with us.

It is in the Developing World that the vast majority of all biological diversity is located. Proliferation of lifeforms in the tropics and subtropics has resulted in a wealth of species and varieties, while in the upper regions of the northern hemisphere, recurrent ice ages hindered similar evolution. Virtually none of the 'biological


booty' resides anywhere near Europe or the USA. There is more diversity on a tiny island off the coast of Panama, for example, than in the whole of Britain. Costa Rica, a country less than a tenth the size of France, has almost three times as many vertebrate species, and a single hectare of land near Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia has half as many plant species as the whole of Denmark.

Our planet's tremendous biological diversity is disappearing at an alarming rate. More species are now becoming extinct than ever before. It is estimated that early this century, the Earth may have lost one species a year; these days it is probably one a day. Scientists predict that if current 'development' practices continue, we may be losing more than 100 species a day by the end of the century — with a quarter of all

our biological wealth lost by the middle of the next century.

The forces behind this erosion are many, with the destruction of the rain forests being partly responsible, along with the large-scale projects to dam rivers and flood areas of rich genetic diversity. Other culpable causes include the immigration of farmers from overpopulated areas to areas with fragile ecosystems, the pollution of wetlands and the over-exploitation of plants and animals. In particular, the drama of extinction and erosion is especially violent in the southern hemisphere. It was there that people first started domesticating the wild plants and animals around them, creating an impressive genetic mosaic of local crop varieties and animal breeds ideally suited to their needs.

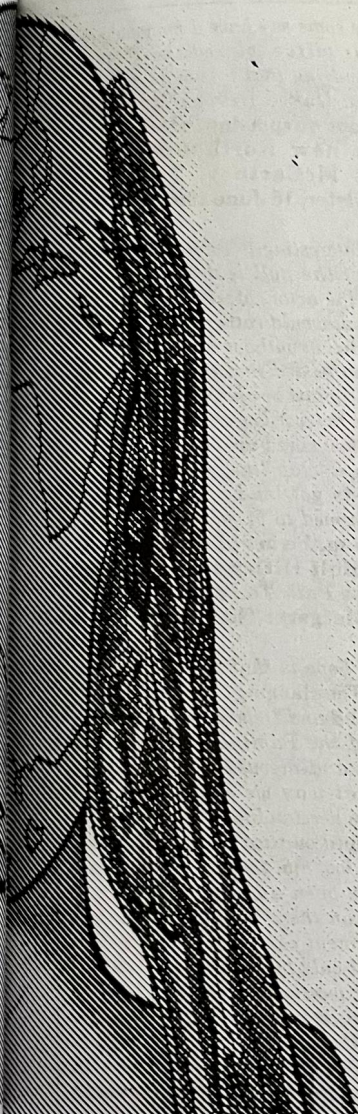
When today's agricultural modernisation schemes introduce new and uniform crop varieties into southern farmers' fields, displacing numerous local varieties, much of this invaluable diversity is lost forever. Scientists predict that by the year 2000, Indian farmers will be growing twelve 'high-yielding' varieties of rice in place of the 30,000 distinct varieties traditionally cultivated. Huge afforestation programmes all over the developing world promote the genetic erosion of innumerable local trees through the



introduction of vast tracts of uniform varieties, such as eucalyptus trees.

You may well ask, that if there are so many millions of life forms, it hardly matters if some of them become extinct. Surely extinction is part of the evolution process and if modern technologies can produce higher yielding varieties than the traditional types to alleviate food shortages then this is progress, is it not? The answer lies in the fact that humankind, both rich and poor, still depends heavily on the availability of biological diversity.

For the poor it is a matter of survival. Local farming systems, especially in developing countries provide the founda-



materials, fuel and so on. This same variety or diversity is equally crucial for us in the northern hemisphere, for despite modern technology we are still dependent on biological diversity for food and health systems. Without regular collecting expeditions into the forests, fields, markets and gardens of developing world communities to gather samples of that diversity, farmers would struggle to provide the food they do and doctors would have less of a range of medicines available to them. For example, in the 1960s, sufferers of leukaemia, Hodgkins' disease and a number of other cancers had a one-in-five chance of long-term survival. Today, thanks to two drugs developed from the 'Rosy periwinkle' of tropical Madagascar, they have a four-in-five chance. The list of examples from the common aspirin to cocaine (as the basis for modern anaesthesia) is long and relevant the world over. The destruction of biological diversity eliminates possibilities of finding cures for diseases, old and new. The cure for AIDS may very well lie in the Amazon rainforest in the form of a still to be discovered plant.

If the contribution of biodiversity to our modern health system is impressive, its importance for our capacity to feed ourselves is overwhelming. Virtually all the food in our shops can be traced back to the hands of southern farming families. The potato originates from the Andes of South America, wheat is from Turkey, coffee is from Ethiopia and soya beans, cucumber and oranges are from China. Yet many of the crops now grown in the north could not be produced commercially without regular genetic infusions from these regions of origin, where the wealth of peasant-originated varieties provide plant breeders the world over with precious tools to adapt crops to new, ever-changing pressures and needs. For example, one gene from a single Ethiopian barley plant now protects California's 160 million dollar barley crop from the deadly 'yellow dwarf virus'.

The vast sums of money involved in the production of agri-business and

pharmaceutical industries globally, give an indication of the economic wealth and power involved in controlling biodiversity. Such wealth is secured by state and government alliances and is transferred across the globe, generally from the south to the north, driven by the forces of capitalism. The main feature of this transfer is the unequal relations between the First and the Third World countries who, struggling against the legacy of colonialism, find themselves trading under laws and agreements which favour the developed world.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is a case in point. In effect, this puts untold strain on the lands of these Third World farmers such as those in Africa, Asia and Latin America which are, in reality, the gardens of the USA and Western Europe. The unequal economic relations whereby developed countries can dictate the crops grown in a country from year to year is demonstrated by the example of Brazil. Once a major supplier of sugar to the USA, sending 750 million dollars' worth of trade to the US in 1975, Brazil's economic policy was left shattered the following year when the USA, for political reasons, opted to buy their sugar from the Philippines, leaving Brazil with vast sugar mountains and no buyers.

Such market control and dominance which inflicts a system whereby food production and distribution are not adequate to reach the poorest of the poor, has grave consequences for the biodiversity of southern countries such as Brazil, Malaysia and Taiwan. Perhaps the most infamous example of all is the Amazon rainforests where acres of forests are being burned down each day to provide, amongst other things, pasture for huge cattle ranches in the pursuit of a fast buck on the world beef market.

Global economic issues are the single greatest threat to our biological diversity today. The lack of equity between the Irish farmer and the Ethiopian peasant for example, leads to solid degradation, erosion, pollution by chemicals and salinisation, all of which contribute to burdening already over-burdened lands. Our continued long-term

survival depends on finding a balance between conservation and sustainable development which eliminates the social and economic causes of poverty in the "gardens of the world".

In conclusion, recognition of the dangers of eroding our global-resource base requires an acknowledgement of the contribution of developing countries to agriculture and industry (including the pharmaceutical industry), something which rarely happens. Yet today's global food supply depends precisely on that biological diversity in the fields, savannas and forests of the south and on the people who nurture it. It further requires an understanding of the concept of biological diversity, that everything is interconnected and interdependent — conservation of diversity is a total approach towards conserving the Earth's rich but depleting variety of life forms and ecosystems. The activities of modern cultures, particularly in the north, are reducing the planets biodiversity, hence its life-supporting capacity.

This concept translates on a local level to campaigns from Save The Otter to Keep Your Countryside Tidy. Saving the otter is a complex matter, for diversity is essential to them. It comprises a food web: insects feed frogs and toads which in turn feed otters especially in spring. Insects and swans feed on vegetation and otters fed on the insects and swans. Riverside rats feed on young birds, and again otters eat these same river rats. Everything feeds everything else, everything depends on everything else. To save the otters we must save...well everything!

The same dynamic of development and 'progress' which pollutes our rivers, which poisons the ecosystems of invertebrates and fish, ultimately killing the otter, is mirrored on a global scale. Biodiversity, being the central issue of all studies of life from dinosaurs to micro-plankton, if not grasped as a concept and acted upon will mean the system, all systems of the one Great system will totter and possibly fall... Remember the plight of the dinosaurs? ■

tion stone for a sustainable form of agriculture. By maximising the long-term use of locally available natural resources and minimising the need for external chemical inputs they provide a reasonably stable output of food and plants for medicine and shelter.

While we in the north rely on rigid staple diets, villages at the foot of Mount Elgon in the west of Kenya eat at least a hundred or more different fruit and vegetable species in their diets. Some are cultivated, others are gathered from the wild. In a typical village garden in West Java it is not difficult to find a hundred or more different plant species, all used for specific needs: food, medicine, building

Quotes

"Our enemies have demanded our arms. Our answer is: We took up arms to free our country and we will keep them until we seen an honourable way of reaching our objective without arms." **Frank Aiken, Former Chief of Staff of the IRA** quoted in the *Irish News* 'On this day' column from 29 May 1923.

"I am a 70 year-old-man and well remember the RUC from the early '30s, and in all this time this discredited force have murdered Catholic men, women and children, and have set numerous people up for assassination by loyalist death squads... This collusion indicates quite clearly the RUC are a Protestant force for a Protestant state. I, and thousands like me, would not feel safe in their beds at night if the IRA handed over their weapons." **John McCool, Letter page, Derry Journal, 26 May 1995.**

"Since its creation 72 years ago, the governance of the Six-County statelet has been a matter of crisis management. This has always been dependent on the existence and exercise of repressive legislation, coercion and discrimination. This lies at the heart of conflict and divisions, both in Ireland and between Britain and Ireland. These are the human realities, the real politik, which have been understood and accepted in other conflict situations. There is no international precedent, and certainly no historical precedent in Ireland, for the handing over of weapons." **Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams, Belfast Telegraph, 14 June 1995.**

"Even if they surrender their arms we will not be sitting down with Sinn Féin — get that absolutely clear!" **Ian Paisley, UTV's Six Live News 19 June 1995.**

"When we made a statement suspending armed struggle, we totally rejected the demand from the then South African government that we should hand in our arms, and we said that is a decision that we ourselves will take at an appropriate times." **Nelson Mandela, speaking after his meeting with Gerry Adams, Irish Times, 20 June, 1995.**

"I think I have witnessed the diminution of the Palestinian case. When we started, we had a vision of a genuine peace, which addressed the real causes of injustice and laid the foundations of a lasting peace through self-determination and statehood... Unfortunately,

there has been a grand deception, that a Palestinian state is being formed and that this is really peace. So no, my dreams are not realised at all. On the contrary, I think we have been sold short and it is very painful. But I don't give up." **Hanan Ashrawi, Palestinian spokeswoman to the Middle East peace talks, whose vision of genuine peace has yet to be realised, Guardian interview, 1 June 1995.**

She is mirror mirror
she is too much eye liner
she is lipstick redder than blood
she is Jon Bon Jovi
she is high heels
she is the salt.

she was wild
she was free
she was Bon Jovi

With the bullet in her back
she was Clegged.

Extracts from a poem by **Rita Ann Higgins, An Phoblacht/ Republican News, 8 June 1995.**

"If Clegg is freed early it will send the wrong signal while Irish prisoners languish in jail in Northern Ireland... It would create a sense of one law for members of the security forces and another law for everybody else. It would be bad for the peace process." **An Taoiseach, John Bruton, in a warning to John Major, Belfast Newsletter, 10 June 1995.**

"I believe that if Democratic Left wishes to rediscover its radical mission, it must go right back to the drawing board, to tackle the errors on which its entire philosophy was founded... This means reappraising its traditional line on the national question. To do so now would take courage, but, because of the party's — and its predecessors' — singular role in leading the field in the anti-republican, anti-nationalist backlash, such a reappraisal would have a profound effect." **Concluding extract from John Waters 'Opinion' column, entitled 'Democratic Left is a party founded on a lie', Irish Times, 13 June 1995.**

"The important point is that Alliance,

the party some say have a monopoly on righteous virtue, played the 'Orange card' in saying that a vote for me is a vote for a United Ireland." **Interesting, if not surprising, observation by the new North Down MP, Robert McCartney, Talkback, Radio Ulster, 16 June 1995.**

"It was interesting to compare the techniques of the political speaker with those of the actor. Most stage actors, I discovered, would rather hear the audience's reaction without seeing them. But I always insisted that from any public platform I must be able to see as well as hear how my words were being received. I could then speed up, or slow down, or throw in a 'clap line' (one which had previously got loud applause) if the speech seemed to be going over badly." **Lessons in the art of method oratory — Adolf Hitler style! Extract from The Path To Power, the memoirs of Margaret Thatcher.**

"What I hope is that by watching the story of The Hanging Gale, more people in England and Ireland might be made aware of the Famine and its consequences, and discuss it openly... Perhaps that way we could come to a greater understanding of the forces that have shaped our two nations... We must all hope, too, that the forthcoming peace talks are open and fruitful. Only by talking can there be agreement... Only by agreement can there be reconciliation. And only by reconciliation can we heal the wound of the past." **Steve McGann, a member of the Liverpool acting family who appeared, alongside his three brothers, in The Hanging Gale — a drama set in Ireland during the Famine, Daily Mirror TV Weekly, 13-19 May 1995.**

"The crowd sang the ANC's beautiful anthem Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika and Mr Adams, clenched his fist aloft, proved that he had mastered the words better than anybody on the Springbok rugby team, which he had watched playing France the day before... You have Joe Slovo and Oliver Tambo and we have Comrade Máire Drumm and comrade Bobby Sands, he told them. And then somebody noticed that tall of the clean-cut young Afrikaners from Mr Adams VIP protection unit bodyguard were wearing little green ribbons, to bring the IRA prisoners home." **Coverage of Gerry Adams' historic visit to South Africa, Irish Times, 19 June 1995.**

Determining the future

■ By Gerry Magee
(Long Kesh)

without external foreign interference."

"FORGET Irish freedom — we're all Europeans now!" So goes the claim that the republican struggle is long past its sell-by date. Of course, the people who make this claim have always been virulently anti-republican, but now some academics are promoting the theory that national self-determination is no longer relevant to the New World Order. They point to processes such as globalisation and internationalisation which have created a more interconnected world. In Europe, this theory is being further advanced with the embryonic single market which, in economic terms, is making national frontiers appear obsolete. The expanding European Union increasingly classifies territory in terms of regions rather than nation states and on occasions, bypasses national government. As republicans striving to achieve national self-determination for Ireland as a whole, it is important that we analyse and debate the relevance of this objective in the light of these changes.

Republicans have traditionally held to the analysis of James Connolly who spelt out in detail the benefits of national self-determination for Ireland and linked it to a socialist modal of international relations. He contended that:

"The most perfect world is that in which the separate existence of nations is held most sacred." (*Workers' Republic*, 12 February 1916)

He believed that a national democracy was the essential basis from which all other freedoms in a nation could be developed:

"The first requisite for the free development of the national powers needed for our class." (*Workers' Republic*, 8 April 1916)

In other words, governmental structures in Ireland would be more representative and more accountable to Irish people than similar structures governing Ireland from Britain — or elsewhere. They would act as *"the natural depository of popular power"* (*L'Irlande Libre*,

Parish 1897). For this reason the establishment of national self-determination in Ireland was an important component in the overall struggle for social justice. But is this view of the world still relevant to the needs and aspirations of the Irish people as we approach the 21st Century?

In theory it is still a widely held view. Self-determination is universally accepted to mean a

nation's right to political freedom; to determine its own social, economic and cultural development without external impediment and without partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity. This right is underpinned in the principles of international law.

Article One of the United Nations' Covenants of 1966 states:

"All peoples have the right to national self-determination. By virtue of that right they determine their economic, social and cultural development."

Resolution of the United Nations' Organisations on 12 December 1970 states:

"All people have the right to self-determination and independence, subjection of the peoples to foreign domination constitutes a grave obstacle to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the development to the peaceful relations between peoples."

In the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples, Algeria, 4 July 1976, it is stated:

"Every nation has the fundamental and inalienable right to self-determination. It defines its political status in all freedom

Based on these internationally agreed principles, Sinn Féin has consistently asserted that the Irish people as a whole have the right to national self-determination and that the exercise of this right is a matter of agreement between the people of Ireland. This right to nationhood, independence and sovereignty has been asserted by Irish people in every generation since 1798. Ireland has also been universally regarded as a single unit, one people and one nation throughout history, before and after partition. British jurisdiction in the northern Six Counties is clearly in violation of international principles. Therefore, the British government should not be allowed to dictate how we exercise our right to self-determination.

When it comes to the actual exercising of this fundamental principle of self-determination, it is important to recognise that a variety of options are available and that full independence may not be feasible, practicable or the preferred option of the people living within each nation. Other options include various levels of autonomy within a multinational state and a federation of states within a union. An example of such a federation exists in Belgium, made up of French-speaking Wallonia and Flemish-speaking Flanders. Independence, however, is not a major issue with either the Flemish people who



have been involved in a long struggle for parity of esteem, nor with the Walloons who have benefited with the greater economic dominance since the formation of the Belgian state in 1830. Whatever option is exercised it is crucially important that the people of each nation have the free and democratic right to choose how best they can determine their political, social, cultural and economic development. A nation must be able to do this without repression, domination, partition or any artificial obstacles being placed in the way, such as the unionist veto in Ireland, or the Spanish Constitution, which lays claims to sovereignty over Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country.

Some unionists in Ireland have made the analogy with the Basque Country and claim that Articles Two and Three of the 1937 26-County Constitution is likewise undemocratic with its claim to sovereignty over the whole island of Ireland. This point immediately calls into question the definition of a nation. Each nation is defined as a distinct and homogeneous people who belong to a particular geographic locality and have deep historical roots in the area. Nationalism, which is a territorial ideology, links historically and culturally-defined communities to political statehood, either as a reality or as an aspiration regardless of class or other social divisions. A nation must have at least some of the important elements such as a distinct language, religion, ethnicity, social customs, sporting traditions and other forms of cultural identity.

The Basque Country, like Ireland, historically has always had a separate and distinct identity, with a unique language that bears no resemblance to any other European tongue. The six northeastern counties of Ireland on the other hand, have no historically separate identity of their own, and have always been regarded as an integral part of the Irish nation — making any comparison with the Basque Country a flawed analysis. These northern counties were partitioned from the rest of Ireland by an Act of the British Parliament in 1920. This act, a mere lottery based



● British jurisdiction in the northern Six Counties is clearly in violation of international principles

on a sectarian headcount, did not receive a single Irish vote either North or South. It was only during the 20th Century following partition, when unionists adopted the features of a British identity in order to sustain an elitist power at Stormont.

However, with the growing

prominence of the theory that we are now living in a post-nationalist world, could it be argued that the case for national independence is becoming redundant? It is important to recognise that the status of a nation needs to be defined, not in any predated idealistic fashion, but with reference to the

global realities of the 21st Century. Humankind has moved on from the basic needs of food and shelter which could be provided within a single geographical locality, to the essential requirements of modern times such as cars, oil, gas, electricity, high-tech engineering, computers, fax machines and so on, which

require trade through international cooperation. Territorial boundaries are becoming more diluted with the accelerating pace of global integration in political, economic and social terms.

This globalisation process can be clearly illustrated by the significant expansion of telecommunications and international mass consumerism during the past three decades. Fashion trends in clothing, pop music, videos, fast-food chains, indoor-shopping centres and so on, create images which are promoted by the advertising industry and these reflect a drive by transnational corporations to achieve ever greater marketing of diversity. National identities are being sidetracked as a new Western culture sweeps the globe.

Sovereignty — a nation's capacity to control its economic and political development — is gradually being reshaped by globalisation. National governments are limited in their ability to formulate policies on behalf of their citizens due to the constraints of the interconnected global economy. Transnational coalitions of bureaucrats are exercising greater control over national economies than elected politicians in many countries. Mili-

tary power to enforce state demands has also been weakened or made irrelevant by the shift to multilateral diplomacy under the UN umbrella. In addition, many political, social, economic, environmental and other issues often must be addressed through international corporations nowadays — hence the pre-eminence of international structures such as the EU, the International Monetary Fund, GATT and so on.

However, while we must recognise that world conditions are changing rapidly due to globalisation and the relevancy of the nation state is being challenged, it would be wrong to argue that self-determination is becoming an outdated concept. The maintenance of international peace for example is largely dependent on the order and security provided by nation-states. When the right to national self-determination is denied to a people, whether through the partial or complete occupation and domination of one nation over another, or through some form of outside interference, the maintenance of international peace is seriously undermined. In the Balkans, as in the northeast of Ireland, an undercurrent of friction existed below the surface for decades due to certain conditions created by injustice before

armed conflict erupted. Other European-based conflicts have occurred over the political status of the Basque Country, Kurdistan and most recently (January 1995) in Chechnya. Yet in a developed Europe approaching the 21st Century, armed struggle should not be required, or left as the only effective method for each nation to bring its case for self-determination to the fore.

Moreover, the idea that increasing international trade cooperation will diminish sovereignty completely is misleading. States have always operated under constraints of all kinds, none has ever been free to act completely independently from external pressures. In addition, international economic decisions are in the main implemented through the structures of the nation state. The post-nationalist theory is also challenged by the sweeping changes in Eastern Europe during the past five years. Many nations grasped their right to self-determination following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the break up of the former Yugoslavia and the separation of the Czech Republic from Slovakia. In part, this desire for nation statehood is driven by the realisation that only nation-states can negotiate in a global economy — to protect and

advance their people's interests. Many are now seeking to form alliances with the EU or a new economic realignment of Eastern European states, both of which strategies require as a prerequisite the status of nation statehood. Therefore, for many people in Eastern Europe, national self-determination is essential for economic progress as much as for social or cultural development.

Even within the constraints of the global economy, national self-determination enables a government to decide on what basis international relationships should be formed, the terms of cooperation and to bargain for what they determine to be in the best interests of the nation. This is essential as each nation, in accordance with its climate and geographic location, will have traditional locally-based industries which are the backbone of national economies. The fishing industry for example, is significant for countries along the Atlantic coast, the same with the production of wine in France and timber in Scandinavia. These industries need to be nurtured and protected, and this requires the correct management of international trade by government.

National governments are



● In the Balkans, as in the northeast of Ireland, an undercurrent of friction existed below the surface for decades due to certain conditions created by injustice before armed conflict erupted

also essentially responsible for policing, the administration of justice, education and health. Proving that self-determination is properly exercised, the national government is the main institution to which the people will generally give their allegiance. This is important for several reasons. Confidence and public accountability is vital for the functioning of a police service and the maintenance of civil law and order. Education should be tailored to suit the particularities of local employment and especially to accommodate national languages which are among the most important symbols of nationhood. In countries like Ireland, where the first language is in minority status due to a history of suppression, positive discrimination is required to the education system and national media to ensure its survival and recovery. As these public services require the greatest public expenditure, they can only be properly supported by government through the control of the national budget and public spending, although this should occur in a context of decentralised and fully accountable local government structures.

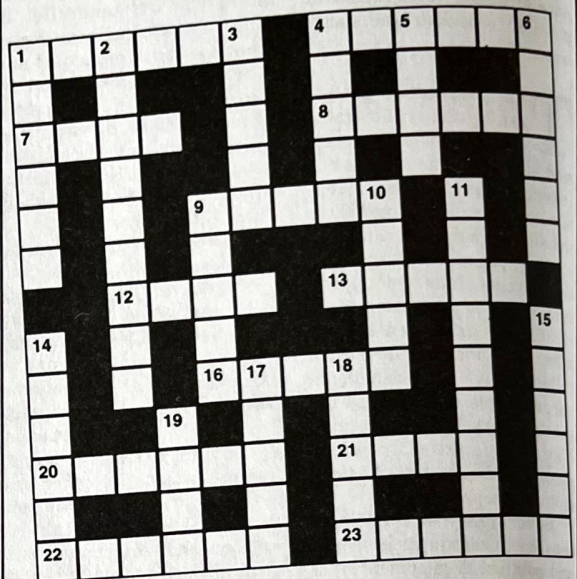
Another argument used to undermine nationalism generally is the growing rise of semi-fascist parties and movements in France, Austria, Belgium and Germany, already attracting several million voters. There has also been a huge increase in the number of attacks on Arab, African, Turkish and Kurd immigrants in these countries. Nationalism is categorised in two very different ways: "Progressive" in nations suffering a legacy of colonialism (such as Ireland and many Third World countries); and "xenophobic/racist" (opposed to an "enemy" within) in countries with an imperial past. Those who are opposed to our progressive type of nationalism often, for political reasons, make the false analogy of linking it with images of racist parties such as the National Front. The two aspects are clearly distinct, although in the most extreme circumstances nationalism can evolve into racism by trying to ground national supremacy on pseudo-biological criteria.

It is therefore important we acknowledge that people living within each nation must be recognised in inclusive terms, not exclusively. In the modern world, no nation exists where all its members are gathered within its geographic territory. Irish people, for example, are scattered to every corner of the globe. Likewise Indian, Chinese and Italian people are settled in this country. The rights of all citizens, both indigenous and immigrant, and all minorities such as Travellers must be accommodated without oppression or discrimination. This can be best achieved within a progressive society in which the right to national self-determination has been properly exercised.

However, the most important aspect of the nation today, and in every generation since the Middle Ages, is the focus it provides for personal and communal identity. As republicans, we only have to examine the commitment and sacrifice of the many thousands of men and women from a wide range of backgrounds who have taken part in the struggle for national liberation in Ireland. In broader terms, almost every citizen can have some sense of national identification through sporting affiliation, language, music and so on, especially among immigrants overseas. The potency and symbolism of nationalism was clearly evident during the 1994 soccer World Cup, particularly among the Irish, Swiss and Swedish peoples.

As our struggle progresses ever closer to the achievement of Irish national self-determination, we can be assured the status of the nation will remain of the utmost relevance. Politically it provides the most effective and democratic framework for addressing the contemporary problems of our society and its future needs. Culturally and psychologically, it remains of critical significance in structuring the political and social organisation of people. Far from being secondary or obsolete, the nation, nationalism and the idea of the national interests will remain central elements in contemporary European and world politics. ■

Crossword



Across

1. At rest (6)
4. A popular holiday place (6)
7. Irish sod used for fuel (4)
8. To annoy with frequent requests (6)
9. An angel to fish with hook and bait? (5)
12. Sodium Chloride, or used to preserve and flavour food (4)
13. Italian city (5)
16. Frightening (5)
20. Small African antelope (6)
21. Makes or becomes one (6)
22. Unit of force (6)
23. Heavy circular item thrown in sporting competitions (6)

Down

1. Irish county for Martin? (6)
2. Song writers (9)
3. Not elaborate or intricate (5)
4. Drive away (5)
5. The frame of a window, often seen in July? (4)
6. Country which becomes nominally very popular at Christmas? (6)
9. Book of maps (5)
10. The Bronte sister who wrote *Wuthering Heights* (5)
11. Treating things from a practical point of view (9)
14. Common name for member of IRB (6)
15. US state popularly known as the Sunflower state (6)
17. The word for tree in Irish (5)
18. A slice of bread (5)
19. Abbreviation of group formed to oppose the visit of Charles Windsor to Ireland (4)

ANSWERS:

ACROSS: 1. Asleep; 4. Resort; 7. Turf; 8. Pester; 9. Angle; 12. Salt; 13. Milan; 16. Scary; 20. Impala; 21. Unites; 22. Newton; 23. Discus
 DOWN: 1. Antrim; 2. Lyricists; 3. Plain; 4. Repel; 5. Sash; 6. Turkey; 9. Atlas; 10. Emily; 11. Pragmatic; 14. Fenian; 15. Kansas; 17. Crann; 18. Round; 19. DART (Dublin Against Royal Tour)

On the Back of the Swallow



Danny Morrison

On The Back Of The Swallow, Danny Morrison, Price £7.99 (Mercier Press)

DANNY MORRISON'S latest novel *On The Back Of The Swallow* deals with the rather sad life of Nickey Smith, whose best friend Robin dies tragically at the age of 15. Nickey carries this grief with him into early manhood when he meets Gareth, a young teenager who has much in common with his lost friend Robin. Though Nickey is shown to have had a relationship, however brief, with Madeline, a young woman from his neighbourhood, he and his new friend Gareth quickly fall in love. However delightful the initial stages of their relationship, sadness and distress arise as Nickey is ultimately accused of sexually abusing the boy and sent to prison.

On reading this novel, a number of points occurred to me. For instance, it struck me that the early pages of the novel are so chock-a-block with ideas, descriptions and 'clevernesses' as to indicate the early steps of authorship, a type of narrative boyhood in the case of this male writer. Boys often run about with great collections of comments, observations and 'good ones', like the marbles, twine and conkers in a bulging pocket. Growth into puberty in this novel marks the emergence of strong emotion with the terrible sadness of the boy's death. That

development is sensitively coated with early-warning signals preparing us for impending grief. Robin's near fatal slip on the rocks as early as page 19 and Madeline's reference to him shortly later in relation to cancer alert us, however subliminally, to the possibility of some such unpalatable outcome. In this, the first part of the novel, Danny Morrison demonstrates a powerful ability to touch and move emotions in this treatment of Robin's death and in the illustration of Nickey's consequent pain and loneliness. While the opening of the story does choke a bit on an overpresence of clever sayings and ideas, that same unruly excess expresses something of the unshackled indulgence of childhood, though less self-consciousness in the writing might have helped along the sense of trouble-free and unbridled boyhood.

The growth into early manhood however, is accompanied by a contrastingly unsympathetic treatment of women's sexuality. Though the position of the gay person might be said to have been well-enough presented, it could unfortunately also be argued that this is done "on the back of the swallow" of womanhood. An intimate scene between Madeline and Nickey pointedly abases sexuality in relation to women. While there may have been an attempt here to demonstrate Nickey's distaste for heterosexuality, the outcome incorporates a harsh presentation of the female role. Though heterosexuality often perpetuates itself on the back of the gay community, it is unlikely that homosexuals would simply wish to reverse that process by ridiculing 'other' types of relationship in order to elevate the position of the gay person. Again a rather conservative approach to womanhood is portrayed in that unfortunate comment on page 91:

"Indeed, she had lost all the invisible characteristics that gave her subtle attraction, including that most essential component of true mystique — humility —." Oh dear!

Whether or not these representations of the female role reflect the author's own perspective, or are simply the representations of one type of characteristic male attitude is

not entirely clear. If it is the writer's own outlook, there is nothing to say that those views are written in stone. They may well broaden substantially in the future.

The early sections of this novel demonstrate the emergence of the authorial fledgling to a position somewhat representative of the more practiced writer. That development is a very pleasing aspect of the work in the sense that the sheer traffic of ideas and subtales in the early pages promises much potential and implies a mind full of stories. Those tales need to be unleashed in order to allow for a maturation of narrative style and skill. The latter part of the novel meets the early part again in its juggling of different tales and 'endings' and 'after endings'. Danny Morrison's last novel experimented with the same type of 'open-endedness'. The fanciful is tossed in with the tragic and everything becomes part of everything else, even as the gay person's experience of love is shown not to be so 'other' than that between any two people. In fact, his very early treatment of readership can be ruthlessly abrupt. In the early days, we are moved from tears of grief to waves of joy and appreciation at the illustration of Nickey's and Gareth's newfound love. Much sadness does accompany most sections of the novel, not least in the depiction of Nickey's time in jail. We are usefully informed of the light of so-called 'bullroots' or sex offenders who can be so easily stigmatised without due consideration for the possibility of his/her innocence. You 'feel' for Nickey. This same hero and these same readers are exposed then to a somewhat unfeasible escape event, one which seems to lead to the sort of 'unending' which never really allows one to 'get away'. The sad and 'gay' ground of earlier emotions are pulled from under us. When Nickey lands hard on the ground, so also do the readers and our re-emergence in the local for a pint afterwards only disorients us more.

This is where Morrison seems to pull the collar up over his scribal shirt and grin like a good one at the readers' expense. Again, like the bulging beginnings of this story between

so many others, the final break-out of endings to his text needs more practice. Our author's and Robin's delight in the many 'ands' of the narrative world can tend to disjoint the reader too. All the ensuing departures in the text combine to form an unfortunately alignment of the themes of homosexuality and child abuse, alongside a very disenchanting illustration of female sexuality. Any juxtaposition of such emotionally charged issues needs to be handled with 'practiced' care. This derangement of the reader's world could usefully be brought to open the reader through such sudden and unabated exposure to the unfamiliar. When the author needs to consider are the kinds of emotional and learning experiences to which he opens his readership.

To summarise, Danny Morrison, like a pocket of narratively, would himself appear to bulge with ideas, choice linguistic descriptions, erupting stories and 'good ones'. Only continued writing and practice will relieve the sheer congestion of ideas and witticisms which indicate a learning and possible writer. It is to be seriously hoped that future ripening on the narrative level will be accompanied by a vastly broader and more considered approach to the roles of his women characters. Only a further novel can tell us that and Danny Morrison should keep writing.

■ By Ella O'Dwyer (Maghaberry)

The Great Irish Famine, The Thomas Davis Lecture Series. Edited by Cathal Póirtéir. Published by RTE/Mercier, price £8.99

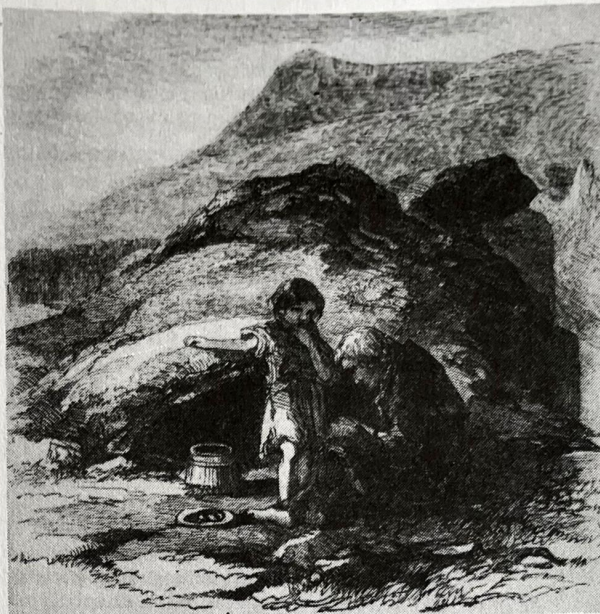
IN THIS SERIES of lectures by leading historians, economists and geographers there exists the material to answer many questions in relation to the Great Hunger (famine) that devastated our country 150 years ago. From the outset, the tragedy and shame of the famine is recounted and recorded, covering the broad range of factors which led to and perpetuated the mass starvation and emigration of that time. The essays vary in empha-

sis, incorporating areas such as colonialism, economic policy, ideology, cultural and folklore. This book will cause pain for those who wish to forget and enlightenment for those who wish to remember.

One hundred and fifty years ago, in the summer of 1845, the fungus *phytophthora infestans* struck Ireland for the first time, causing potato blight. Repeated failures of the potato crop led to the deaths of an estimated one and a half million people over the next five years and the beginning of an exodus of up to two million people over a ten-year period. At least the same number again suffered and survived on the bare edge of starvation. Britain's response to this disaster needs to be examined in the light of the dominant political, economic and imperial policies of that time.

Although the famine of 1845 was the worst, it wasn't the first. There were famines in Ireland from the 1720s with unprecedented civilian emigration. During the 1740s it was a sequence of climatic conditions, in conjunction with the outbreak of war between Spain and England, which reduced tens of thousands to begging and wandering the highways collecting what they could to sustain life, such as docks, cresses, nettles, seaweed and the blood drawn from live cattle. The combination of indigestible and unsustainable foods only added to the serious bouts of epidemics: typhus, relapsing fever, dysentery, that claimed many lives in what became known as "*Bladhain an Air*" — The Year of the Slaughter. It is estimated that during this famine there were between three to four hundred thousand victims. In relative terms it would suggest that this famine was at least as severe as the Great Famine of the 1840s. And the underlying cause was the same; the oppression and injustice of colonialism that drove people into abject poverty and to the edge of starvation.

From 1845-52 political incidents and confrontations were common. The famine affected Irish politics and contributed substantially to the growth of Irish nationalist sentiment. By the second half of 1847 James Fintan Lalor began to outline a radically different strategy



which had as its principle the belief that absolute ownership of Irish land was vested in the people of Ireland, and that the rights of landlords were subordinate to the common good.

The armed insurrection of 1848 came about when young, assertive and self-confident people began to resent and object to O'Connell's autocratic leadership and British intransigence in the face of massive popular support for change. Politics had failed them. The English ruling class had long before the famine betrayed vehement racist prejudices, but in the wake of the 1848 rebellion the deep hostility for the Catholic Irish was exacerbated. Wood, the minister in charge of the purse strings at the height of the famine, wrote:

"Except through a purgatory of misery and starvation, I cannot see how Ireland is to emerge into a state of anything approaching to quiet or prosperity."

The British government's perception of the potato as the root cause of all Irish evils dominated their response. The prevalent stereotyping that the potato was a "lazy root", grown in "lazy beds", by a "lazy people" greatly assisted the argument put forward by the British political élite for a policy of nonintervention.

The reorganisation of land holdings to a system of large-scale capitalist farming similar to the English model, was the

economic priority for the British ruling class. The *laissez-faire* (or complete nonintervention) doctrine of those like the economist Nassau Senior, prioritised economic development over relief of suffering; even in a condition of social catastrophe. Trevelyan, the assistant secretary of the treasury, declared the famine was: "*The sharp but effectual remedy by which the cure is likely to be effected... God grant that the generation to which this opportunity has been offered may rightly perform its part...*" Clearly the British government's paramount objective was not that of saving life, but of upholding their economic doctrine.

The British establishment pressurised and lobbied against the merest wavering from this doctrine. Poor Laws' relief, although temporary, were criticised by some of the British press. For example, *The Times* declares that "*there are times when something like harshness was the greatest humanity*". Again Nassau Senior concurred with these opinions: that after two years of coming to the assistance of Ireland, British generosity had been exhausted.

Towards the end of 1847 the English administration did bring in Indian meal. This was the cheapest food available. It in itself turned out to be a major killer, because people were unaccustomed to it and it was often not cooked properly. It

caused the death of many thousands through dysentery and diarrhoea. So strong was the feeling against this foreign food that it was refused by paupers in the workhouses who believed they were being poisoned.

Even with the importing of this Indian meal, the spectacle of huge quantities of livestock and cart loads of wheat, barley and oats being exported, under guard, from Ireland while the peasantry starved became ingrained in the minds of the people. Associated with this potent image is the belief that prohibition of grain export would have averted famine. Although exports fell during the famine and Ireland, after a fatal delay, became a net importer of grain, the fact remains that people could not afford to purchase the grain. This was compounded by the refusal of the authorities to sell relief supplies at less than market prices.

The corruption and greed of those entrusted to distribute food relief led to many deaths. In Glenville, County Cork, one such person's name was still remembered 100 years later.

"Den Dunlea of Ballyourisheen, Carrignavar was the distributor of the meal. When the poor went to him for meal he had none for them. He kept it to fatten pigs and sold more of it dearly."

There was wasteful expenditure of large sums of relief funds on "unproductive" public works such as road building and land draining schemes, but these were unable to cope with the enormous numbers of distressed people. Workhouses became grossly overcrowded. Soup kitchens provided watery soup that did more harm than good to starved and bloated bodies. Nettles and weeds did little to combat nutritional-deficiency diseases! One such deficiency described was scurvy (Vitamin C deficiency) — red, spongy, swollen and bleeding gums; swollen, painful and discoloured joints; purple discolouration of the skin.

In the dense shacks — that were called houses — disease had a field day. Of the seven thousand registered people who died in West Cork in 1847 — note this is two years after the start of the Hunger — 44% died of fever, 34% of starvation and

22% of dysentery. This is not too diminish the effects of hunger, because the research mentioned in this book points out that even though people did die terrible deaths of hunger, a greater number succumbed to diseases that were famine related; typhus, typhoid, relapsing fever, dysentery, diarrhoea, severe measles and smallpox. The following account of John Doyle who was born at Craffle, Ballyteigue, Aghrim, County Wicklow will give you some idea of the physical conditions associated with death at that time.

"There were so many deaths that they opened big trenches through the graveyard and when they were full of dead they filled them in. His father worked at the opening of these trenches and he was paid by the government.

"No one was allowed into the graveyards except the men hired to cover the graves. Two guards were always on to keep the people out and there were many rows with people trying to get in. They dug graves 12-foot deep and put seven or eight bodies into each grave. They never put coffins on them at all. Some of the bodies used to swell up and when they would be dropped into the grave they would burst and the gravediggers would have to run until the smell would ease. Often they would get the disease."

It is almost impossible to be certain about how many people were evicted during the famine years. The police only began to keep official records in 1849; they recorded a total of nearly 250,000 persons as formally and permanently evicted between 1849 and 1854. Behind these clearances stood the widespread and long-standing landlords' desire to harness greater profits through a modernisation of Irish agriculture, in line with the capitalist model already implemented in England.

Some like Joseph Kincaid induced tenants to leave for England or Scotland with payments of £3 to £5 per family. Others, like the Earl of Lucan cleared some 2,000 people and destroyed 300 'houses' in Ballinrobe parish alone between 1846 and 1849. He publicly boasted that he "would not breed paupers to pay priests".

Many ultra-Protestants pre-



dictably saw the blight as divine vengeance against Irish Catholicism and the British state, that had recently committed such "national sins" as endowing the Catholic seminary at Maynooth. This providentialism blended with the Manchester School of Economics to produce a very moralistic reading of the Irish crisis, putting the blame for the condition of Irish society squarely on the moral failings of the Irish people of all classes.

Some evangelists attempted to use the soup kitchens and the hunger of the people as a means to convert them to the Protestant faith. One such group

which seems to typify this trend was the Protestant Colonisation Society. This proselytism was obviously challenged by the Catholic Church through groups such as the Catholic Defence Association. Basically, it came down to a purely sectarian conflict between — as the book says — the forces of light and the anti-Christ of popery. The following will give you some idea of how much more practical the people were to these exploiters.

In a Protestant church at Drankeen, County Tipperary, a Bishop Robert Daly of Cashel confirmed a church full of converts who had come to the occa-

sion after being promised new clothing in return. When they got the clothing and went through the ceremony as agreed, come the following Sunday they went back to Mass at the Catholic church — sporting the new clothes, naturally. Legal moves by the Reverend Darby to get this clothing returned failed as the converts had fulfilled their part of the bargain and were entitled to their rewards.

Controversy over the Great Hunger and the question of responsibility have led numerous historians to question the orthodox view that the government of the day did all they reasonably could. Revisionist historians, writing since the 1950s, are accused of adopting a tone of "generosity and restraint" in considering the British response to this question. There are many ways in which you can explore these questions and this book goes a fair distance in directing the reader to these answers.

John Mitchel, the Young Irelander leader, had no illusions as to where this responsibility lay. In his book *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)* he wrote:

"[a] million and a half of men, women, and children were carefully, prudently, and peacefully slain by the English government. They died of hunger in the midst of abundance, which their own hands created... The Almighty indeed sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine."

■ By Michael Hillen
(Lone Kesh)

A Past Love

By Artie Forbes (Long Kesh)

I could never have asked you
to love me
knowing that I
had to give unselfishly
in return.
I did love you
but
it wasn't like the movies
where the hero dies in his lover's arms.
I chose a different type of love
for you:
Your freedom.
To live without fear.
But the years haven't eased the pain
of the choice I had to make.

It's as hard to live with now
as it was to make then.

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