

REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT  
NORTHERN SOLIDARITY RALLY

MANSION HOUSE, DUBLIN, NOVEMBER 1st, 1971.

ADDRESS BY MISS MARIA McGUIRE, DUBLIN

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First of all I would like to say that I am very pleased to be back here from my recent trip abroad ; there were times during the last few weeks when I thought I would not see Ireland again for quite a long time but the British Secret Service are not quite as efficient as they would like to think, and they can be outwitted as indeed the British Army who have declared war on our country can be defeated finally and completely with the united support of the people.

Since my return I have been astonished at the escalation of events in Northern Ireland and horrified at the brutal treatment that our people are receiving at the hands of, what for the want of a better word are called soldiers , although the word soldier when coupled with the word British has taken on new connotations.

I am amazed also at the situation here in the South when people seem to be involved in nothing except words and more words , when some of our politicians objectly apologise to the British Government for the present situation in our country. Why should the Irish apologise for anything , much less apologise for defending our people; and remember this , these are our people , people who 50 years ago helped us in our struggle for what we now call independence.

And now when they ask us for help are greeted by extravagant speeches or embarrassed silence. The time is past for words , for party politics , let us bypass the politicians , this is revolution , and the essence of revolution is action.

One point I would like to make. The Irish were the first to kick in the face of the British Empire, but are still struggling to achieve final freedom. Why is this ? I think the answer is obvious : it is no use if only one section of our people revolt; what is needed is a united concerted effort of all people , men and women in the 32 Counties.

Here in the South people are blinded by words , by propogand a, by nighly violence filling the television screens and dulling the mind, so that the whole situation has assumed an air of unreality.

One trip to Northern Ireland is enough to dispel that unreality and any person who is honest will know that they must face the stark reality and help in any way they can. Emotion now is not sufficient. What is needed now is conscious and deliberate action.

The struggle in Northern Ireland is not the struggle of label v label ; it is the struggle of the ordinary man and woman , and the role of woman is vitally important and indicative that this an all-embracing struggle , that it has reached down to the very roots of society. I can and would like to pay tribute to the people who helped me when I was on the run on the continent. I could not have survived without the help of these people , in particular the women risked everything to help both Mr. O' Connell and myself.

But it is to the women of the North that I would like to pay tribute, to the branches of Cumenn na mBan, to the various Womens' Action Committees especially the Clonards Women Action Committee, right down to the women who rattle dust bins to warn of the coming onslaught. Do you think that if this was a flash in the pan, if it was not the final chapter that wives and mothers would risk death and imprisonment.

To a mother her family is everything, for a woman prison life is more soul destroying , more demoralising than for a man. The eternal drabness, the eternal fear for her husband and her children and yet day after day more and more women in Northern Ireland are risking this.

Let me give you some facts. Take a girl called Susan Loughran , aged 22 , who has been given a 12- year sentence for carrying out operations. Take 12 years out of a young girl's life and what do you have left ? Mrs. O' Connor , a mother of a family who was given a nine years sentence even though the volunteer with her took full responsibility.

Mrs. Drumm, Mrs. McGuigan and others are serving prison sentences. And the most horrifying acts of all the brutal murder by the flower of British chivalry - of Moira Meehan and Dorothy McGuire. They were at a celebration and hearing of raiding they went to see what they could do to help. A tank blocked their path , they tried to get by and were shot dead. These were ordinary women who have risked everything. Can you in all conscience stand idly by ?

It has been said " Can't beat the old British you know " - ' damned persistent " .  
I fully agree they are persistent . We in Ireland , above all , should know that. But  
they have also an extraordinary blind spot, as their insane policy in this country bears  
out my statement.

The simple reality of the matter is that they have been defeated everywhere except  
in Ireland. Now we have the opportunity to defeat them and we must realise it and grasp  
it now. We have the lion by the throat and they know it , the British Army policy  
of keeping their cool seems to have changed to literally shooting at everything that  
moves and the British Liberal Press has become positively incoherent and hysterical.  
They are grasping at straws, it is up to us to make sure they have no more straws left to  
grasp.

That is why I ask you , the ordinary people , particularly the women to involve themselves  
I am asked why do I involve myself, why do I bother ? I said it before, I could not forgive  
myself. I could not call myself Irish if I did nothing to help.

I appeal to you now Irish history is in the making , you are the people who will decide  
its role in the future. Let the role of Ireland for once in her history be free of Britain.

Ends.