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Liam Mc Millen

SEPARATIST SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN

REPSOL PAMPHLET No.21.

Liam McMillen

SEPARATIST SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN

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Bás; Fas: Blás. Dominic Behan.

This Pamphlet of the life and ideals of Liam McMillen is dedicated to his memory and that of all our comrades who have died because they stood as Liam McMillen said "with the people to educate, agitate, organise and fight so that the people may go forward in dignity and consciousness to the final success — ownership of their resources, control of their own destinies.



Liam McMillen. Born 13th April 1928.
Murdered 28th April 1975.

An Appreciation: Deasún Ó h-Agáin.

Liam (Billy) McMillen was murdered on April 28th, 1975, by members of the I.R.S.P., an ultra left sectarian group. His death was a brutal blow to the cause for which he had laboured so long and so well. And yet I have no doubt that Liam knew that the organisation, the ideas, the revolutionary Republican principles to which he had contributed so much could not be extinguished by the cowardly bullets which took his life.

It would be easy to depict Liam McMillen in the language of the heroic, to suggest the super-human, to build a myth. This has long been the practise of the enemies of revolution who take away from the revolutionaries their greatest capacity – their humanity. But whatever has happened to the image of other great socialist revolutionaries in other countries, the enemy will not be able to rob Liam McMillen of his truly human character.

The victory of his life and his death was that he stood as a human being for all things human.

How else could it be? He lived, fought, laughed, drank and loved in the streets of the Lower Falls, Belfast. Those streets which to the outsider are narrow and mean, filled with cramped little workers' sweat boxes have produced men and women like Liam McMillen. Workers whose minds are filled with the age old wrong of English exploitation.

Liam was a life long, natural Republican. He used to talk of how his mother worked as a girl for Connolly in the days when the Nationalists stoned him and the Countess Markievicz on the Falls Road.

His own work experience was hard, the mills and the building sites of Belfast and for a brief period after his release from Crumlin Road Prison in 1961, in England.

Yet the hardship, the years of imprisonment both sentenced and interned did not embitter him. His vision was clean and sharp. He saw the real road and understood that the Republican Movement was the only guarantee that the Irish working class had of creating their own future. Imprisonment for Liam was an opportunity to learn, to study history, socialism and the Irish language. Like so many others his primary schooling was rudimentary, yet he never gave in to the distrust and hate which the education system bred in the sons and daughters of the working class.

He was an intellectual. He loved books, not in any abstract dilettante fashion but as tools to understanding life, as weapons with which to combat the enemy. An enemy which thrived on its power to keep the masses in ignorance. And in the years before his death, as organisation matters made it harder to find time for reading, he felt increasingly that there was so much to read and so little time available.

Liam wrote well and easily in both English and Irish, yet he was more at home in conversation. He loved debate and even more a long rambling story with a truly shaggy dog ending. I often thought had he been born in the Gaeltacht he would have been an outstanding seanachai, for his memory for detail was phenomenal and his love of the structure of the Irish language typical of the native Irish speaker.

Irish culture was a living vibrant part of Liam's life from the ceili on a Sunday night in the Gaelic League hall in Divis Street in the '50's to Oireachtas na nGael in Connemara in the '70's. His concern was for Irish as the language of the people, a language which the English had sought to destroy as a basic step in their conquest of the Irish people. Naturally therefore for Liam to engage the enemy totally meant to be able to speak and develop through Irish. His commitment to Irish culture was never in doubt, never a matter of lip-service. It was a real part of his overall struggle against English imperialism in Ireland.

In that struggle possibly Liam's greatest victory was over the narrow rut into which Republicanism in the North had fallen following on the '40's and '50's. As he himself was first to admit, bombs and bullets had become the entire Republican philosophy;

military elitism had ousted mass and class struggle. Liam played the key role in Belfast in winning and holding the newest generation of Republicans to the Republicanism of Tone, Lalor, Connolly, Mellows and Frank Ryan.

Yet he was no fireside Republican or Socialist. Many will remember the days of July 1970 when a handful of volunteers and auxiliaries withstood almost 3,000 British Troops in the Lower Falls for some nine hours. Liam commanded the men herded into the ghetto by the British curfew on that night in the first mass engagement with the British Army since 1916. Yet it would be wrong to single out this action, for as O.C. of the Belfast IRA Liam had stood against not only the British but those who had sought physically to divert the Republican Movement from its goal of a Socialist Republic.

He had his enemies. And it is sad to record that the first attempt on his life was by men, led by former comrades, who hated him for his refusal to engage in the sectarian anti-socialist, anti-republican policies they were foisting on the Irish people. Liam was never in doubt at any time about the attempts to sidetrack the Republican Movement into the path chosen by Fianna Fail and their dupes. His resistance to their corrupt intrigues and his unswerving loyalty to the Republican ideal was the measure of his greatness.

There certainly are thousands of Republicans who remember him with affection. His love of life, of people, of human company was exhilarating. And although his black moods were dark he never stayed long in the well of depression; he would not have admitted it but he was the first, as is said in the North, "to catch himself on".

We remember him with deep affection but without sentimentality, for his life was a revolutionary lesson of our times; a lesson in growth and development to a mature Republican Socialist position.

Many have personal recollections which understandably they wish to hoard but as a man, as a Republican, as a revolutionary Liam now belongs to the Irish working class not only of today but of all time. Of Liam Mac Maolain we can truly say he is a Republican, a Socialist, a Revolutionary.

The Sinn Fein Comhairle Ceanntar of Dublin in June 1972 organised a series of meetings to commemorate the Birth of Wolfe Tone. Liam McMillen who at that time was wanted by the British Army was invited to deliver a lecture on the role of the IRA, 1962-1967. The meeting was held in Tailor's Hall, Dublin.

Lecture — The Role of the I.R.A. 1962-1967

By Liam McMillen June 1972.

I have chosen as the subject for my talk tonight, "*The role of the IRA in the North from 1962 to 1967*". I chose this period for the very good reason that it is the period with which I am most familiar and also because I believe that it was one of the most difficult and challenging periods that has ever confronted the Movement. It was a period of re-appraisal and change, and the role of the IRA in the North as elsewhere during those crucial years was central to the dramatic developments we are witnessing today. Selective force was employed during the period and contributed in large measure I believe to those developments.

The defeat of the 1956-62 campaign in the North had a traumatic effect on the IRA. Although the organisation was not completely shattered, the moral effect of that defeat was sufficient to cause a full scale re-evaluation of IRA strategy and tactics. In the first instance it was seen that physical force alone had failed. The people had not rallied to support the guerrillas in the field. The support that had been readily given in the early stages of the campaign had begun to fall away in 1957 when it was seen that the Belfast and Dublin governments were getting the upperhand of the IRA and the IRA had to face the fact that armed resistance to British rule in the North was getting the cold shoulder from the overwhelming mass of the Irish people on both sides of the border.

After the end of the campaign in 1962 many of the men who had been on active service became dis-spirited and succumbed to the general feeling of hopelessness and despair and drifted off to attempt to build their personal lives again.

The initials IRA had become synonymous with defeat in the eyes of the people and the task of re-building the organisation in the face of paralysing apathy and lack of support from the ordinary people was a daunting one, but as before men were found ready and willing to undertake that task.

In the years following the defeat of the '56-'62 campaign the establishments North and South were at the zenith of their power and were firmly entrenched in their positions of patronage and privilege for as far into the future as the eye could see. Members of the Free State Government in their public utterances or when they came North to speak at Hibernian and other pseudo-nationalist functions, openly and unashamedly preached the two-nations theory, claiming that the fight for national freedom had been won when the 26 County State had been set up and that the nationalist population of the 6 Counties should accept things as they were and settle down to become happy little Britishers.

So secure did both establishments feel in their future tenure of office that Terence O'Neill invited Sean Lemass to visit him at Stormont in January 1965. This visit marked the first step by Fianna Fail to officially recognise the Six Counties as a legitimate State. Coming so soon after the defeat of the IRA campaign in the North when the De Valera and Brookborough governments had been aligned against the IRA. Lemass' visit was recognised by Republicans as the final surrender by Fianna Fail of the national ideal. Their fears were compounded two months later when the Parliamentary Nationalists became Her Majesty's Official Opposition in Stormont; but so weak and disorganised were the IRA at that crucial time the prospects of their preventing the complete implementation of Britain's Imperial policy in Ireland were practically non-existent.

In 1961 when the last internee was released, the total membership of the IRA in Belfast was 24 men, and their total armaments were two servicable short-arms. The position of their Northern units wasn't much better. Yet despite this unfavourable start the role of the IRA in the North in upsetting Britain's plans for Ireland's future was a crucial one and can be traced in chronological sequence from 1963. June 1963 was the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Wolfe Tone, and to commemorate this historic occasion celebrations were arranged throughout the country in all the major centres, including Belfast.

The Wolfe Tone Society took on the job of organising the celebrations in Belfast and they requested the local IRA unit to supply a colour party for the parade from Beechmount Avenue to Casement Park. The route to be taken was 100% Roman Catholic and nationalist, but so strong was the Stormont Government at that time, and so determined were they to crush any further manifestations of Republicanism that they served notice on the Wolfe Tone Committee forbidding them to carry the tri-colour, on the manifestly ridiculous grounds that the display of the tri-colour could lead

to a breach of the peace. A large force of R.U.C. were present at the starting point to enforce the ban and despite the wishes of the Volunteers present the organising committee, by a majority vote, decided that the tri-colour would not be carried.

The then O/C of Belfast, Billy McKee, also ignored the demands of the Volunteers to defy the ban, with the result that the parade to commemorate the Father of Republicanism marched up the Falls Road headed by an IRA colour party minus the tri-colour to the hoots and jeers of derision from a couple of hundred onlookers. The humiliation and embarrassment of the Volunteers was acute and McKee's refusal to sanction the carrying of the tri-colour created bitter resentment among them, and led to his early resignation. The tri-colour was to play a central part in the future developments in Belfast, especially in re-awakening the dormant nationalism that slumbered in the hearts of the people.

In the years previous to 1964 the annual Easter Parade in Belfast had been organised by the National Graves Association. It had been the practice for the parade to assemble at the cemetery gates and to march the short distance to the Republican Plot where the commemorative service was held. Following the debacle of the previous June the Belfast Battalion Staff decided that the IRA would organise the 1964 Easter parade and that the tri-colour would be carried. It was also decided that the parade would commence from Beechmount Avenue and thereby cover the same route that the Wolfe Tone commemoration parade had covered. Preparations were made to defend the colour party against any interference by the RUC. It was significant that a larger crowd of spectators than usual were present that day in the hope, no doubt, to witness or to participate in a Donnybrook, but in the event, no ban was imposed and the parade went off without incident.

However, in Newry, a member of the IRA, was sentenced to three months imprisonment under the notorious Flag and Emblem Act for carrying the tri-colour at the Newry Parade. He had also served 3 months the previous year, 1963, for the same so-called offence.

In October 1964 a general election was held for the British Parliament in which the North of Ireland has twelve seats. The leadership of the Movement decided to contest all twelve seats on the abstentionist ticket. In Belfast, as in all other areas, the task of contesting the election fell on the local units of the IRA. The Republican election head-quarters for the West Belfast constituency was situated in Divis Street in the heart of a Catholic ghetto area. On display in the window of the HQ was a photo-

graph of a very handsome candidate, flanked on one side by the Starry Plough and on the other, by the Tri-colour. Although Stormont's Flag and Emblem Act was designed expressly to prevent the display of Irish Republican emblems in the North, the Stormont authorities did not interfere for some days in Divis Street.

Following threats from Dr. Ian Paisley that if the flag was not removed he and his supporters would march on the HQ and remove it themselves, the police sent a deputation requesting that the flag be removed from the window. Needless to say this request was refused. That night, Wednesday 28th September a large force of police armed with rifles, sten-guns, batons and crowbars arrived at the HQ, smashed down the doors and removed the "offending emblem". The next day, after announcing our intention through the news media, another Tri-colour was placed in the window at twelve noon.

Many hundreds of people gathered to witness developments and after the flag had been replaced they stood solemnly to attention and sang the National Anthem with a solemnity and fervour that I never witnessed before or since.

The police at this time were conspicuous by their absence but some hours later, after most of the crowd had dispersed, they arrived in force, smashed the window and removed the flag for the second time. This gave rise to what were to become known over the world as the Divis Street riots. Several hundreds of people assembled in the area. They were armed with sticks, stones, rotten vegetables, pieces of iron gratings and petrol bombs, and they attacked the police re-enforcements who were sent to disperse them. Vicious rioting ensued which lasted for three days and the battle became world news through the newsmen and television crews who were present to cover the story.

Many casualties were inflicted on both civilians and police and the brutality of the police on those unfortunate enough to fall in their hands coupled with the savage prison sentences imposed by the courts on the rioters, embittered the nationalist population against the Stormont regime, revived all their frustrations and resentment against the Government repression, and set the stage for future confrontations between the youth of the nationalist areas and the RUC.

On the following Sunday 2nd October a massive parade headed by the Tri-colour, flanked by youths with hurley sticks and followed by thousands of defiant, spoiling-for-a-showdown supporters marched from

Beechmount Avenue to Hamill Street where a public meeting was held. But on this occasion, in the face of a formidable show of strength by the people, the police decided that discretion was the better part of valour and remained discreetly out of sight.

The result of the 1964 Election was a trail of lost Republican deposits, a costly demonstration that people with the vote were not willing to vote for abstentionist candidates – that abstentionism was dead, and that it was time to bury the corpse. But the Divis Street riots also demonstrated that there was a groundswell of support for militant Republicanism especially among the younger generation, that the embers of patriotism still smouldered within the people, and that a good strong Republican breeze was all that was required to fan those embers to flames. However, despite the increase in patriotic fervour generated by the riots, the stigma of defeat still clung to the Republican Movement and the only benefit enjoyed by the IRA at the time was the enlistment of a couple dozen of new recruits.

1965 was a fairly uneventful year. The routine work of organising a physical force movement continued, and although the IRA progressed to a degree, it failed to make any impact on the political scene. The Easter parade that year was larger than in previous years and passed without incident, but the increase in the number of people who participated and who turned out to watch, was an indication of the slowly growing national consciousness and spirit of resistance that was developing among the people.

The two major developments of 1965, although at the time no great importance was attached to them, were the formation of the first Republican Club in Belfast, and the attempt by GHQ to establish “one-man, one-vote” committees in the North. Following instructions from Head-quarters an ad hoc committee was formed by members of the Belfast Republican Club, the IRA and members of Cumann na mBan who convened a larger and more representative meeting of as many organisations and political parties as would attend. The purpose of this larger meeting was to form a broadly based “one-man, one-vote” committee, to agitate for the extension of the franchise to everyone over the age of 21. That this committee never got beyond the initial discussion stage was due in large part to the lack of political acumen and awareness among the Belfast IRA who failed to grasp the importance of this move, and also to the intransigence of the Northern Ireland Labour Party who spared no effort to ensure that the committee would never get off the ground. This attempt

by the IRA to establish a broadly based agitational movement, around a popular demand, was in keeping with their recently adopted policy of involvement in the social problems of the people, and it was the forerunner, to the establishment of the Civil Rights Association, which was to have somewhat better success, a few years later.

April 1966 was the 50th Anniversary of the 1916 Rising and the task of organising a fitting commemoration of this historic event devolved on the local units of the IRA throughout the country. The Belfast staff saw these commemorations as a golden opportunity to drive a coach and four through the notorious Flag and Emblems Act. From January until April the whole resources and energy of the Belfast movement were devoted to preparations for the celebrations.

The services of every member of Cumann na mBan and dozens of other women were enlisted to make thousands of Tri-colour flags and miles of tri-colour bunting and banners, which were distributed throughout all the nationalist areas in Belfast. This, combined with the individual efforts of local committees led to keen competition between streets and areas, to make their own street or area the best decorated in the city. The result was that practically every house in every nationalist area had the Tri-colour or the Starry Plough flying from their window. The streets and roads were festooned from one end to the other, with Tri-coloured bunting and even the curbs and lamp posts were painted green, white and orange. Despite the Flag and Emblem Act, and for the first time in four years the Tri-colour was carried in Newry that year without anyone having to go to prison for the privilege. In fact, to my knowledge no prosecution has been brought against anyone, under that notorious Act since that massive public display of defiance in 1966.

Despite a bitterly cold day, the turnout for the 50th Anniversary celebrations was the largest in living memory. It was estimated that over 12,000 people participated in the march itself, while somewhere in the region of 40,000 people lined the route of the parade which had been extended by over a mile for this special occasion. Two members of the Belfast Battalion Staff, were subsequently sentenced to 3 months imprisonment for their part in organising the commemoration parade but it was generally accepted that this was a small price to pay for the vast return of national fervour which the celebrations had so obviously generated and although no great material benefit accrued to the IRA from this stirring among the people, there was general satisfaction that progress had been made in dispelling the deadening apathy that had immobilised the people for so many years.

Contemporaneously with our involvement in elections and parades the ordinary every day work of organising the IRA was going on. Men were still being recruited, organised into sections, companies and units, and were being trained in the use of arms and explosives.

On the 6th of June 1966, Paisley led a demonstration in Belfast against the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to protest against its "Romeward trend", and was allowed to proceed through Cromac Square, a predominately Roman Catholic part of the city which had been the scene of sectarian riots in other years. Serious rioting broke out but the procession, protected by the police, finally got through. Police reinforcements returned later to disperse the Catholics who were still standing around after the rioting had simmered down and once again great brutality was used by the RUC against the Nationalist population whom they were determined to teach a lesson. The RUC returned in strength to the area the following night, intent on another night's sport at the expense of the local population but a couple of hand-grenades tossed into a group of them by two Volunteers caused them to beat a hasty retreat and wrote finis to that particular episode.

A couple of weeks later, on the 27th June a gang of men called at the home of a member of the Battalion Staff, but he was not at home. Some hours later at 2 o'clock in the morning in Malvern Street, this same gang shot dead an 18 year old Catholic youth, Peter Ward, and seriously wounded his two companions. Three men, Spence, McClean and Williamson, all members of the UVF, were subsequently charged with murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

At the latter end of 1966 a unit of the IRA entered St. Gabriel's Boy's School on the Crumlin Road where a British Army recruiting lecture was in progress. They smashed the film projector, being used for the showing of propaganda films, and injured the British Army officers who were conducting the show. This minor action put a stop to similar recruiting drives being conducted in other Catholic schools.

By 1967 we had a total of 5 Republican Clubs in Belfast and strenuous efforts were being made to radicalise our membership who were still very reluctant to discard the traditional physical force role of the IRA and to adopt the unfamiliar role of political activists. Elsewhere in the country the Movement's new policies of social agitation were being implemented. Opposition to the foreign takeover of Irish lands and assets was being mounted, and members of the Movement were active in

the housing problem in Dublin, Cork, Waterford, and other areas, running citizens advice bureaux, harassing foreign landowners and the owners of ground rents, and actively supporting industrial strikes. While the rest of the country was striving towards reality, Belfast dragged its feet. The Belfast Battalion Staff impressed on H. Quarters the necessity for a happy blend of political agitation and military activity. In view of a concerted recruiting drive being undertaken by the British Army at that time, permission was sought and granted for an attack on three British Army training centres - 2 in Belfast and 1 in Lisburn. These three centres were subsequently attacked and extensively damaged by explosive fire-bombs.

But the main event of 1967 was the formation of the Civil Rights Association with "one-man, one-vote" wa one of its central demands. The initiative to set up the CRA was taken by the Belfast Wolfe Tone Society and although the initial meetings were attended in strength by members of the Belfast republican movement that the personell of the first Executive Committee could have been completely dictated by their votes, but in order to have as broadly based a committee as possible, only two members of the Republican Movement were elected. I was one of those elected to the first Executive and was also a member of a 3 man sub-committee that drew up the Association's first constitution; myself and other members of the Movement remained on the Executive until internment was introduced.

I mention these facts in order to nail a current falsehood that the IRA has taken over the CRA in recent times, and to demonstrate the positive involvement of the Movement in the CRA since its inception.

After some varied and limited success as a Citizens Advisory Body, and after turning down a Republican request for a protest march in Belfast, the CRA eventually embarked on its first march in August 1968. This march - from Coalisland to Dungannon - was expected to attract 10,000 marchers but in fact only about 2,000 people took part, and including the bulk of the Northern IRA units. The presence of prominent members of the Republican Movement in Coalisland was noted by high-ranking RUC officers of whom a large number were in attendance. This first march of the CRA was halted on the outskirts of Dungannon by a large force of RUC and despite some sporadic stone-throwing, the protest broke up peacefully after a short sit-down on the road and the whole affair ended in a disappointing anti-climax.

Following the march a meeting of Northern Republicans was held in South Derry to analyse the results and the implications of the march and

to plan our strategy for future marches. Derry was the venue chosen for the next protest. Minister of Home Affairs William Craig however, banned the march on the grounds that a breach of the peace might ensue, but the organisers decided to defy the ban and to go ahead with the march. About 400 people, including a busload of Belfast Republicans, turned up for the Derry march.

It is very probable that had the marchers been permitted to proceed without interference that the CRA would have died a quiet and natural death that day as had so many other similar anti-unionist movements before it. Everyone is aware of the outcome of the Oct. 5th march in Derry and how the events of that day led directly to the dramatic developments we are witnessing today, but there are two facts which are not so widely known and which probably played a big part in the over-reaction of the police to the situation. The first "fact" was that the Special Branch had been informed that the IRA intended to use the Oct. 5th march to set Derry ablaze and to create all sorts of havoc in the city that day. Undoubtedly this was one reason why the police were present in such force, why they reacted so violently to the first gentle nudge.

The second factor was that the Belfast Republicans had been instructed, in the event of the parade being halted by police cordons, to push leading Nationalist politicians or any other dignitaries who were sure to be at the head of the parade into the police ranks. This they did to such effect that one became the first casualty of the days of violence, receiving a busted head from a peeler's baton. In the ensuing clash the RUC spared no one. A British M.P. Mrs. Ann Kerr, who had been invited over as an observer, said that the savagery that day was worse than anything she had seen during the Chicago riots a short time previously. The television coverage of the RUC brutality that day exposed the fascist nature of the Orange/Unionist domination and its ruthless denial of elementary democratic rights to a large section of the citizenry.

Hitherto, the Unionists had done much as they wished, because the Westminster Parliament didn't want to hear how the 6 Counties were being ruled. Efforts by the IRA and Sinn Fein in the '40s, the '50s and the '60s, to expose the falsity of the Orange/Unionist democratic front were neutralised when De Valera's government was also seen to be opposed to the Republicans, and Sinn Fein had helped to muzzle itself with a policy of abstention from the Dublin and Westminster Parliaments and their lack of involvement in immediate problems of the people.

But at Derry in October 1968 the Civil Rights Movement and the

violence which took place that day did more in a few hours to rock the tribal Orange/Unionist Establishment, and did more for the minority in the Six Counties than the IRA physical force campaigns had been able to do in fifty years. For the first time the world was given a look at the kind of rule that was fostered under the aegis of the Union Jack in Northern Ireland while at home the people were so incensed and aroused that 15,000 of them marched in a banned parade in Derry the following week.

The Civil Rights Movement became the umbrella organisation which united the many separate organisations that were striving to secure democratic rights for all citizens in the 6 Counties. It exposed in a manner which no other movement could have done the blatant injustices of the Special Powers Act, gerrymandering and discrimination in employment and housing against Catholics and against the poorest class of Protestants who were not members of the Orange Order or of the Unionist Party. O'Neill and the other members of the Unionist cabinet were embarrassed by this publicity but Craig blundered on, stubbornly determined to hammer the protestors to silence.

In January 1969 a People's Democracy march from Belfast to Derry was attacked at Burntollet Bridge while the RUC stood looking on. Members of the "B" Specials took part in this attack, with the knowledge and approval, no doubt, of William Craig. On the 20th April following rioting in Derry, the RUC forced their way into the Bogside, causing widespread damage to property in the Catholic areas and assaulting Samuel Devenny, inflicting such serious injuries on him that he subsequently died on the 17th July. In an effort to draw off the large force of police who were laying siege to the Bogside the Belfast units of the IRA set fire to and destroyed 10 post offices throughout the city.

By 1969 the total membership of the Belfast IRA was approximately 120 men and their armaments had increased to a grand total of 24 weapons most of which were short range pistols. Strenuous efforts had been made by the Belfast leadership over the previous years to politicise the Volunteers, to encourage them to join the Republican Clubs and to become involved in political agitations, but in this we were only partly successful. Our membership of the CRA was such that we still exercised considerable influence on the elections to the Executive Committee and a number of our members were active in Republican Clubs, Tenants' associations, housing action committees and trade union groups. Through our involvement in these committees we were gradually building a nucleus of support among the people, and contact had been made with the

Shankill Re-development Committee with whom we had meetings to discuss common problems in the housing field.

Joe McCann, ar dheis De go raibh a anam, was one of our most active members on the social agitation front and was also a courageous and competent leader, where and when military action was required to back up the people's demands and his example of complete involvement in all aspects of the revolution contributed to a large extent in winning many of the younger volunteers away from their purely physical force commitments.

During May and June 1969 the RUC made vicious attacks on the people of Ardoyne and Unity Flats and heavy pressure was being exerted on the Belfast Battalion Staff to introduce weapons into the situation. This we were reluctant to do as we realised that the meagre armaments at our disposal were hopelessly inadequate to meet the requirements of the situation and that the use of firearms by us would only serve to justify the use of greater force against the people by the forces of the Establishment and increase the danger of sectarian pogroms.

On August 12th the Apprentice Boys' march in Derry collapsed into an escalating riot that ripped the city apart. The Bogside sealed itself off in a state of siege defending Free Derry from the RUC, "B" Specials and the Orange mobs. Stormont had mobilised the "B" Specials and on August 14th they clashed with a crowd in Divis Street who were demonstrating against the police siege of the Bogside. In Leeson Street a group of marauding policemen were dispersed by a volley of revolver shots and a hand grenade which injured an RUC sergeant.

The North then deteriorated into widespread violence and arson. In Belfast on the night of August 14th six people were shot dead. Derry was quiet but Belfast had gun battles raging on the Falls Road and by August 16th 420 people had been treated in hospital, 108 for gun shot wounds, 150 houses had been destroyed by fire and hundreds of families forced to evacuate their homes. The Protestant mobs seemed determined to break their way into the Catholic districts alongside the RUC and the "B" Specials. Barricades were erected at strategic points and at all entrances to the Catholic areas; and the people turned to the IRA for leadership and defence.

The membership of the IRA was inflated by the influx of hundreds of recruits and the Republican Movement enjoyed a popularity among the people that it had never experienced before. It was this popularity and the

support of the people that created the conditions which brought so many disgruntled and ex-members of the IRA out into the open again and which led to the establishment of the Provisionals. To deal with this development would require another lecture, so I will finish there.

Every year on the nearest Sunday to the 20th June Republicans from all over Ireland come together at Bodinstown Churchyard Co. Kildare where Theobald Wolfe Tone is buried. Organised by the National Commemoration Committee the Bodinstown Commemoration is the place where the Republican speaker generally assess the position of the organisation and points out to members and supporters the tasks that face them. Liam McMillen was invited to deliver the main speech given below in Bodinstown, June 1973.

A Chomradaithe,

“It is well to remember that nations which submit to conquest or races which abandon their language in favour of that of an oppressor do so, not because of altruistic motives, or because of a love of brotherhood of man, but from a slavish and cringing spirit, from a spirit which cannot exist side by side with the revolutionary idea.”

Duirt an Conghaileach na focla seo 70 blian o shoin nuair a d’athain se go raibh na Gaeil ag treibhheail an tuirlis a bhfearr a bhi acu le troid in aghaidh impiriulachas Shasana. D’athain se fosta go raibh slanu na Gaeilge fighte fuaite le slanu na ndaoine nuair a duirt se le Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge san am: “Ni feidir Gaeilge a theagasc do dhaoine ocracha agus seanfar saibhreas ar litriocht naisiunta ar slabhaithe bochta ata daortha ag an gCoras Soisialta ata againn le bheith streachailt o dhubh go dubh ar mhaith le paighe mifol gortach – Da bhri sin deirim lenar gcomradaithe i ngluaiseacht na Gaeilge – cuidai linn saol saor sona iomlan a bhaint amach dar ncois mhuintir agus ansin beidh an bealach reidh do threithre uaisle ar aicne fas agus teacht i meadaiocht”.

Ach is beag a thug aird ar an gConghaileach – threig gluaiseacht na Gaeilge an choismhuintir agus dfheoigh siad i measulacht, d’a barr. Ghreamaigh siad den ‘ascendancy’ ur a dfhas ar mhaithe le lucht gaimbin agus thacht siad sin an beatha astu. Siad Fianna Fail, Fine Gael agus Pairti Lucht Oibre searbhontai an lucht gaimbin sin agus is dearg-namhaid duinne-lucht labhartha na Gaeilge-iad. Nil de dhifriocht eatorra ach dath a geoid leinteacha agus suibheacht a bhfuath don chultur Gaelach.

“We recognise” adeir an Conghaileach “that those who drop Irish in favour of English are generally actuated by the meanest of motives and are lick spittles desirous of aping the gentry.”

Na creid focal ona boic sin a rinne striopaigh an lucht gaimbin diobhtha

fhein fiu ma i nGaeilge fein a labhrann siad faoi shlanu na Gaeilge—ciathfidh siad a radh gur ar shon na Gaeilge ata siad no caillfidh siad tacaiocht mor chuid den choismhuintir nar chaill a gcreidiuint i dtabhacht na Gaeilge da n-aindeoin.

Mar sin deirim libhse Gaeilgeoiri na tire seo smaointu oraibh fein agus smaointiu ar fhuascailt na ceiste seo: An feidir an Cultur Gaelach a shlanu agus beith neamartach i gcoimhlint na ndaoine in aghaidh na rachmasoiri? Deirimse libh nach feidir – ta slanu agus fuascailt na ndaoine fighte fuaite le slanu na teanga agus nuair a cuirtear deighilt eatorra, mar ata deanta ag Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge le fada, is tu namhad an choismhuintir agus is tu namhad na Gaeilge ce bith acu fios duit e no nach fios. Is le coismhuintir iomlan na tire seo, Protastunach, agus Caitiliceach an Cultur Gaelach agus ni leis an mean-aicme feoighte a rinne rud toir tirim gan beatha as an athbheochan.

Se do dhualgas a bheith do reabhloidi Soisialach.

“Caithfidh tu” mar aduirt Mairtin O’Cadhain, a bheith pairteach no feidhmuil feasta i gcoimhlint mhuintir na hEireann le cuspoiri Fhoruagra na Casca a thabhairt i gcioch. Seo i Athghabhail na hEireann, An Peabhloid, reabhloid intinne agus reabhloid anamna, reabhloid i gcurtai maoine, seilbhe agus maireachtala, maireactail mar Ghaeil leis na rudai is dual duinn mar Ghaeil”.

Mar sin a Ghaeilgeoiri na tire seo is le Gluaiseacht na Poblachta a ba choir diobh tapu – se athghabhail na hEireann ata sinne an gabhail ina cheann – Reabhloid Iomlan – ni athru maistri. “Biodh an Ghaeilge ag stiuriu na reabhloide, ar an gcaoi seo biodh an Ghaeilge ar na smaointe is forasai in Eirinn” adeir an Cadhanach. “Si an Ghaeilge Athghabhail na hEireann agus si Athghabhail na hEireann slanu na Gaeilge. Si teanga na muintir a shlanos an mhuintir”.

Tiocfiodh an Soisialachas i reim in Eirinn luath no mall ach ta an chontuirt ann gur ro-mhall a thioctas se o thaobh an chultur Gaelach do ma leannann doini den tuairim go bhfuil se ceart go leor Athbheochan na Gaeilge a fhagail ar leataobh go mbeidh an Reabhloid thart. Gan an Ghaeilge ni reabhloid a bheas againn ach coscairt corais agus muna ndeanann muid gníomh fiuntach anois leis an Ghaeltacht a shlanu marofai lucht gaimbin na tire seo i.

“Siad muintir na Gaeltachta an aicme is direoile agus is buailte den mhuintir seo againne in Eirinn. Is mar a cheile an t-aicme sin “Pobal na Gaeilge a shlanu agus an Ghaeilge a shlanu” aduirt an Cadhanach. Mar

sin goide ata le deanamh? Caithfear iomlan neart agus bri na Gluaiseachta a chuir i dtacaiocht agoidi mhuintir na Gaeltachta.

Aithníonn sinne go gcaithfidh muintir na Gaeltachta Udaras Aitiuil a fhail — Udaras laidir eifeachtuil — seort Soviet Gaeltachta. Caithfidh smacht a bheith ag an Udaras d'aonfhlaithreach seo ar Fhorbairt agus Pleanail sa Ghaeltacht agus smacht ar Radio na Gaeltachta fosta. Caithfidh seilbh a bheith aige ar na príomh fhoinnsí saibhris le go mbeadh se i ndon iad a fhorbairt ar mhaithe leis an gcois-mhuintir. Tuigean sinne fosta nach bhfuil an capital ins an Ghaeltacht fhein leis an Ghaeltacht a chuir ar a chosa mar go raibh an lucht gaimbin da ghoid uatha is da charnu doibhtha fhein leis na cianta agus mar sin do se an rud is lu a ba choir do Rialtas na tíre seo a dheanamh ce bith airgead ata dhith a chuir ar fail don Udaras. Troidfidh Gluaiseacht na Poblachta gualain ar ghualain le muintir na Gaeltachta le Udaras mar seo a fhail agus no ghlacfaidh siad leis an seort "Udaras" gan mhaith gan eifeacht gur mian le Tom O'Donnell — "The statutory Uncle Tom of the Coalition Cabinet" — chuir trasna ar na ndaoine.

Is leis duinne chomh fimineach is ata an Rialtas faoi cheist na Gaeltachta — an cuir i gceill faoi Scoil Dhun Chaoin — scoil amháin a athoscailt agus na scorthaí scoltacha a ndruid an forsai eacnamaíocht ata ag ruaigeadh na ndaoine as an tír. Ní mo na go bhfuil duine ar bith sa Ghaeltacht a chreideann gur slanu na Gaeltachta a bhí a dhith ar Dick Burke — Ní hea ach votai na Gaeltachta.

Agus Conor Cruise O'Brien — fear ata ar theann agus dithcheall ag iarraidh neamh-chultúr damanta an impiriúlachas a thabhairt isteach sa tír seo trí mheán Piped Television le borraí feabhais a chuir ar thruailliu RTE — ní shamloch se coras Telefís Lán Ghaelach a chuir ar fail do lucht labhartha na Gaeilge — a gceart faoi an Bhun-reacht.

Ach ca bhfuil me ag cainnt faoi an Bhun-reacht no cearta — ní Cearta ata ag muintir na Gaeltachta ach naimhde agus siad na naimhde ceanna ata againn fosta.

Caithfidh an namhad a throid i ngach cearn ina gcuireann se daor-smacht orainn ach go hairthe sa Ghaeltacht — mar ma chailleann muid an cath sa Ghaeltacht caillfidh muid cogadh na hAthghabhála.

Comrades:

Each generation of Irish Republicans, taking to itself the philosophy of Tone, has come to Bodenstown to remember the man and renew its conviction in the correctness of his beliefs. Each generation, in coming here, has added to the vision of Tone its view of contemporary events. If this were not the case, your journey today from the four corners of Ireland would be a mere commemoration of the man who lived with passionate pride the life of a soldier of the Irish Republic and died the death of a consummate patriot. But thus to commemorate Tone — without adding the vision of today — would be as meaningless as any sentimental pilgrimage to a place that had associations with the great and the dead.

We return to Tone, as we return to Bodenstown, because we know the central relevance to our time of Tone's philosophy. We draw strength and courage from that philosophy. But, in coming here, we acknowledge too the greatness of men of other generations who followed his clear, cool thought and who sought, by their actions, to make his vision the reality of Irish life. We salute the contributions of Lalor and Mitchel, of Davitt and Connolly, of Pearse and Mellows to the fullness of the philosophy we now hold, as we remember McCracken and Hope and Tone. Where Tone began, at the core of our thinking, with the ideas of separation from Britain and independent nationhood, with unity and brotherhood and equality, these others applied to his thinking the vision of their days, adding to that body of social, political and cultural thought, which is now the essence of socialist republicanism, our philosophy, the philosophy of our time.

Tone and the United Irishmen, with little international revolutionary experience to draw on, succeeded in formulating a classic example of how to build a revolution.

Tone's secretaryship of the Catholic Committee and the early objectives which the United Irishmen set themselves to achieve — the complete emancipation of Catholics — were reformist in character and designed to unite the mass of the people behind a number of democratic demands which were clearly just and achievable. They were however, demands, which if conceded, would smash the power of the ascendancy class in Ireland which was the pillar on which British Imperial control rested. Thus when these reformist demands were answered with coercion Acts it became obvious that a Republican form of government in Ireland would only be possible with the destruction of British Imperial control — a point which Connolly was later to emphasise again and again.

One of the greatest achievements of the Society of United Irishmen was to unite the urban and rural working class right across the sectarian divide. The primary unifying factor in the situation was a clear Republican ideology, and of the many lessons we can learn from this period, this perhaps, is the greatest. One of the main reasons the '98 Rising failed was the indecision of the national leadership due to its being, in many cases, in the hands of people who had too much to lose.

The year 1963 marked the 200th Anniversary of Tone's birth. It also marked the establishment of Wolfe Tone Societies in many centres throughout the country and the re-assessment of the Movement's policies and strategies.

Since then all our policies have been based on the people's struggle for the ownership of the wealth of their country and for the full control of their lives and destinies. All our actions since have been designed to strengthen the people's resistance against the economic and political forces which are oppressing them.

When the Republican Movement decided in the 1960's as part of its revolutionary programme to involve itself in the struggle for basic Civil Rights in the Six Counties it did so in the full knowledge that the lessons learned by the people in the course of their struggle for democracy and equality of citizenship would later be used by them in the further struggles for their economic, social and national rights. The Civil Rights Association united for the first time in 50 years all the opposing and sometimes hostile factions within the nationalist community.

Those who remember the events of 1969 and early 1970 will recall how invincible were the people and how confusion and disarray was spreading among the forces of the establishment. There was no way by which Stormont or the British government could defeat the people's demands or to break their unity and determination. Furthermore a vast reservoir of support and good will had been created throughout the world for the Irish cause and for the first time in 50 years the apathy of the people of the 26 Counties towards their fellow-countrymen in the North was dispelled. The Dublin Government had lost all control of the situation since the eclipse of the Nationalist Party in 1969 and the insidious dissemination of the two nations theory, so carefully fostered by successive Fianna Fail and Fine Gael spokesmen over the years was thrown back in their teeth.

Control of events and the leadership of the people's struggle was in the hands of the Republican Movement although many other forces were also at work. The revolutionary potential of that period posed a greater threat to the Establishment than had confronted them for many years. In this situation the forces of Imperialism consciously decided to change the course and the character of the struggle and to take it out of the hands of the mass of the people. Their objective was two fold:

1. Escalate sectarian confrontations to create the maximum bitterness and division among the common people and,
2. Provoke a military confrontation by increasingly aggressive tactics by the State forces, both RUC and British Army.

In the Spring and Summer of 1969 the RUC became increasingly aggressive resulting in the first deaths on the streets. Eventually the RUC launched an all-out attack on the Bogside in Derry in August 1969 and in Belfast a vicious pogrom was carefully organised and carried out by the B Specials and some orange sectarian bigots in which a number of people were killed and hundreds of homes burned. This was no spontaneous uprising by the Protestant people against their Catholic neighbours. It was organised by the forces of the State following a political decision at the highest level. It was protected and assisted by the RUC who actually participated in the shooting into Catholic homes. The political purpose of this was to terrify the people, smash the Civil Rights Movement and change the course of the struggle from one of civil rights to one of defence of people's homes. This they succeeded in doing temporarily but by the spring of 1970 important contacts were being made between members of the Movement and the Protestant working class people and the potential for united action on class issues was developing to a high level.

The Republican Movement and the Civil Rights Movement had set their faces against all forms of sectarianism and the A.O.H. and the Nationalist Party were dead. So a new Catholic sectarian force was needed if the plans of the Imperialist forces were to succeed. The ground-work for this had already been done. As early as February 1969 the Dublin Government had begun their part in the Imperialist plot by making their first contact with Republicans and Civil Rights workers in the North.

Following the August pogroms they intensified their efforts on much more fertile ground. By concentrating their efforts on those Belfast Republicans and ex-Republicans who saw their role as Catholic defence groups and by playing on their latest sectarianism and militarist desires,

they created a split among Republicans, and offered money and guns to those who would reject the leadership of the Republican Movement. Thus the Provisionals were born, and the mindless violence and senseless sectarianism which followed their birth fitted perfectly into the plans of the Imperialists. Sectarianism, ably assisted on its way by special units of the British Army, has been raised to new heights of viciousness and the purely militaristic activities of the Provisionals provided the British government with the excuse they sought for so long to subject the people of the North to a deliberate policy of harassment, murder, internment and torture and to develop a purely military response to all their actions.

Now at last the British forces and their agents in Ireland feel that they are winning. The horror and revulsion generated by the Provisional bombing campaign has irreparably destroyed that vast reservoir of support and good will which existed throughout the world. We now find that the people of the 26 Counties have washed their hands of what they term the "troubles in the North", fearful that the awful violence there will overspill and engulf them.

Protestant extremists are killing Catholic workers and Catholic extremists are killing Protestant workers, while the two communities eye each other with fear and hostility from their respective armed camps. And we had the tragi-comic spectacle of prominent Provisionals standing here last week saying (and I quote) "If we do not subscribe to the non-sectarian programme of Tone, then we are hypocrites." Their obvious confusion reflects the enormous confusion that exists among the general public about events and policies. This confusion has been produced by a deliberate lack of informed and intelligent comment in the Establishment press and is of course of considerable assistance to those who wish to take advantage of public confusion: the forces of Imperialism and their agents.

For while there have been changes in the elements that go to make up the historic republican movement, so too have there been changes in the face and operation of capitalism and imperialism. If once the imperialist sought control of trading post and territory, today his trading post is at every street corner and his territory is measured in square feet in the gutted centres of our cities and towns. The Six Counties at peace, if that could be achieved by a combination of war-weariness, subjugation, repression and political trickery, would be more valuable to the imperialist than the Six Counties risen in resistance against him. We may even ask if the 32 Counties, united as one market place but free of resistance by any group, would not serve his purpose even better? For the lesson which

has been underlined by fifty years of the Free State's existence has been that a mockery of independence without the reality of control by and for the people is a petty and a useless thing. And a government of Irishmen who would betray its working people, to the British Army, the RUC or the sectarian UDR finds it no great contradiction to betray its people to the international capitalists whom it pays to come and control its industry, its mines, and its people.

Strong in the belief that they have intimidated one half of the Irish people and that they have purchased the other half, Cosgrave and his cohorts are preparing to perpetrate the final act of treachery by handing over to the British government Irishmen and women whose only offence was to oppose the occupation of part of our sovereign territory. Let them take heed now that this proposed act of national apostasy could well be the straw to break the back of a long suffering people's patience.

Day after day we see many important changes in the pattern of Irish life. Imperialism which was once represented simply in territorial control is now being extended in a thousand insidious ways. Our people in the North are still subject to the territorial demands of imperialism expressed in murderous attacks and repressive force while the people of the South have long since become the victims of an economic imperialism, which has insinuated itself into the daily lives of the mass of the Irish people crippling them with high food prices, exorbitant mortgage rates and disastrous interest rates.

The sell-out to foreign speculators of our national wealth and resources initiated by Fianna Fail continues unabated under Cosgrave and his coalition while the insidious uses of education and propaganda, in schools, churches, newspapers, radio and television are ruthlessly employed to condition the Irish people to the acceptance of foreign masters, and not only British masters. The economic and revolutionary progress of the Irish people will never be achieved unless we recognise this and the people are organised and educated to fight against it. What we stand for now is not simply the separation of this country from Britain, but the separation of the people of this country from the interference of any other group or international boss who finds it profitable and easy to indulge in exploitation here, North or South, in Ballyfermot or Ballymurphy, in the Shankill Rd. of Belfast or in Burrenabraher of Cork.

We are a country with sufficient resources to maintain a growing population. If these resources were to be used for the benefit of the people rather than for the enrichment of the few. A combination of greed and

accommodation of the greedy by Tory Governments in Belfast and Dublin has deprived the workers of the right to live and work at home, has needlessly increased the price of food for Irish housewives and destroyed native industry, such as the woolen and linen industries while keeping up the flow of emigration to the centres in Britain where the factories flourish. The continued economic enslavement of the people of the South shows clearly that mere withdrawal of the British Army will not bring freedom to people.

We say that Sinn Fein means the development of our resources for the benefit of our people in a system in which the people will control the means of production and exchange; in which preference will be given to those who have a stake in the country rather than fly-by-night junketeers; a system in which the workers will have real control through democratic workers' organisations, beginning with consultation on all issues that affect them and ending with workers' control of the factories which will be theirs.

Sinn Fein means no ostrich-like isolation from the influences of the world, no lessening of trade with other countries — rather does it mean that influence will be accepted where they are beneficial to the mass of the working people and rejected where they are not. It means that we would trade with more countries, not less, for we would break the bonds that tie us to Britain as a controlling market and single dominant partner, and we will continue to fight North and South the decision to join the Common Market, the disastrous affects of which are rapidly making themselves felt on the workers and small farmers of the country.

Understanding the justified impatience and frustrations of our many volunteers especially those from the North who daily witness and experience the harassment and excesses of armed, uniformed Englishmen in their Irish towns and villages — understanding your desire to blaze forth in the red rage of war, I would say to you, be patient yet for it is as important to know when not to fight as it is to know when to fight.

The immediate task of the Republican Movement is to clarify for the people what the alternatives are at this point in time, what the British plan is and how to subvert it; what the objectives of the Irish people are and how to achieve them. We are not on the brink of victory, but on the brink of sectarian disaster and sell out by Free-State free-booters. But we can avoid the disaster, we can prevent the sell-out if we are constantly at work among the people educating them as to the true nature of imperialism. We must dig in deeply in the organisations of the people and

provide them with leadership in every crisis. If we prepare for every eventuality, if we keep a cool head, stand fast by our policies and remain with the people in their struggle we will maintain our revolutionary impetus right through whatever settlements may come from the imperialists conference tables. We must be prepared in every way possible to fight for the God-given rights of the Irish people.

Recognising as we must that the vast majority of the Protestant population in the North are not members of, nor do they condone the activities of the various fascist murder gangs that operate there we now say to them: together we can solve our people's problems. Divided and opposed we can only benefit the rulers who have gained from our divisions in the past and who will sell you out just as soon as their interest requires it. We believe that the future happiness, prosperity and progress of the Irish people, North and South, Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter can only be guaranteed in breaking the connection with England and in establishing a 32 County Democratic Socialist Republic. Any interim solution which arises out of the present crisis must guarantee the freedom of the Irish people to move towards this objective.

Our immediate demands remain: that the British government publicly commit themselves to a complete withdrawal of its military and political control from the Six Counties; the ending of internment; an amnesty for all political prisoners and for all those forced to leave their homes through their activities in the people's struggle; an end to the harassment of working people; there must be freedom of political expression for all, cancellation of all debts arising from the rents and rates strike; a Bill of Rights which would provide guarantees that the people would be delivered from the morass of neo-fascism now existing there. We demand the immediate withdrawal of British troops to their barracks as a preliminary to their final withdrawal.

Only a people united behind a leadership of principled men and women can secure these demands. The Republican Movement has that leadership and has begun to organise the people in political action, while preparing to defend whatever gains are made against attacks from whatever source. We will demonstrate to all by our involvement in the people's struggle that the alternative to the corrupt sectarian Unionist and so-called Nationalist is the policy of the Republican Movement.

In the 26 Counties we will continue to give leadership in the struggle for the rights of men and women to work, to house their families and feed their children, to enjoy education free from the control of clergy of

any denomination and class discrimination of any kind. We will fight by whatever means we deem necessary, for the rights of all people to control all the resources of this country which is theirs, and theirs alone. We will fight the mine operator who grows fat on the profits which belong of right to the Irish people and we will fight the gombeen agents who for a few pounds and a pat on the back from his imperialist master is prepared to sell his people out.

Wherever there is conflict between the masses and the interests of the ruling few, between capital and the value of human life, the Republican Movement will take its stand with the people to educate, agitate, organise and fight so that the people may go forward in dignity and consciousness to the final success – ownership of their resources, control of their own destinies.

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Murdered in Belfast on 28th April 1975 by members of the I.R.S.P., Liam McMillen was buried in Milltown Cemetery the following Wednesday 30th April. His friend and comrade of many years, Cathal Goulding of Dublin, delivered the following oration over Liam's grave.

Oration at Grave of Liam McMillen

By Cathal Goulding

Taimid anseo chun caoineadh ar Laoch Ghaelach, Liam aluinn Mac Maolain agus is dubh do-bhronach an curam sin. Mar niorbh ghnath fearalta da nadhlachadh againn fe lathair. Ach sar fhear ar gach bhoth, sar treorai cliste calma go raibh mor-taithi aige ar gach cursa reabhloideach, sar laoch i gcogadh, laoch cliste crionna mar rialtoir reabhloideach. Sar cosantoir cearta coismhuintir Ghaeil, sar abhchoide ar dteangan agus ar gcultur duchais, duine lach, croiuil, cinnealta.

Mor duinn tuile a chailliuint. Ach is mordhe go mor a chailliuint dibhse, a Oglaiigh Armtha Bheal Feirste, mar chreid seo uaimse, ni bheidh a leitheid mar Liam againn aris go deo na ndeor. Ta slanathoir Cuise na Poblachta basaithe, Ar laoch, ar gCurai, ar sciath cogaidh, ta se ar lar. Seasaimis an fod mar sin, ar naghaidh leis an sean namhad, ce go bhfuil gadhair na mbreathadoiri ag tafaint faoin ar gcosaibh. A Oglaiigh Bheal Feirste, ar aghaidh libh, geal gleo, den cath. Ach biodh se de reir briathair Liam uasal alainn.

A laochra is a mhuintir Beal Feirste is oraibhse anois ata a shaothar. Is ionnaibhse ata ar ndochas. Ni bog na easga an curam ata romhaibh gan Liam MacMaolain mar thaoiseach oraibh. Ta sibh anois mar clann gan athair, man na Fianna gan Fionn.

We are here to mourn no ordinary man. For our friend and comrade, Liam McMillen, was the authentic voice of working class Belfast. A man of whom it was possible to say – he speaks for you, the working people

of this city, struggling to be free. His life was yours, his murder is your tragedy, it is for every Irishman to mourn his death.

Liam McMillen lived, worked and died in Belfast. He learned here the lessons of Republicanism that were taught by Tone and Pearse, he learned the lessons of socialism that were taught by Tone and Pearse; he learned the lessons of socialism that were taught by Hope and Connolly, but not from any book or from any teacher did he learn more than he did from the streets and the lives of his people.

Experience was Liam McMillen's tutor, imprisonment his education, compassion, tolerance and humanity his guide. He knew, with a depth of knowledge that few men have, the viciousness of sectarianism. He recognised that whoever won or lost the futile struggle that set worker against worker it was the people of the small streets of this city who paid the price.

And Liam McMillen, our comrade, has paid the price of his vision. He was coldly and savagely murdered by men who were inspired by hatred of that vision, who believed that to destroy it, they had to destroy him, by men whose only philosophy — if you can call it that — is the philosophy of bigotry, by men whom later generations will remember, if at all, only because they murdered him.

Liam McMillen's place, even now, is secure in the history of Ireland, rooted in the traditions of socialist republicanism, alive in the hearts of the Irish people, and a bare recital of his achievements is no measure of the insight, the courage and the resolution of the man. To list the forces that sought his downfall is to tell the story of his success.

He recognised that the first and greatest enemy was British imperialism and he fought for separation. But he also saw the failure of blind nationalism and he struggled for civil rights. He felt the need of the people of the Six Counties for peace and he maintained a ceasefire. He heard the demand for political action and he died on his way from election headquarters. He recognised the dangers of sectarian civil war and he was murdered by those who would, as coldly and cynically as they shot him, start the sectarian conflict that would consume the working class. They stand condemned by their action in the sight of the people of Belfast and the world, enemies of the people and allies of imperialism as surely as if they wore the uniforms of the British Army.

An Orange junta sent Liam McMillen to prison because he fought for

separation. The Provisional Alliance attempted to assassinate him because he held his socialist principles and fought for civil rights. The RUC and the British Army of occupation harassed and hounded him because he was a socialist republican. A small, mad band of fanatical malcontents, the sewer rats of Costello and McAliskey who finally laid him low.

When the time was right to lead the Republican Movement in a new direction it was Liam McMillen who stood in Belfast for radicalism, that the time and the people of the Six Counties demanded. When the pressure was heaviest on the Irish Republican Army to engage in action that would have been disastrous for the workers of the Six Counties, Liam McMillen stood and argued and reasoned and maintained the discipline that was needed to prevent that action.

When there was an opportunity to promote co-operation between the Shankill and the Falls, Liam McMillen, the son of ancestors who were both Catholic and Protestant, took that opportunity and won the respect of the radical activists of the Shankill Road. When organisation was needed to help the old, the young, the poor and the under-privileged he worked night and day to make it succeed. When the time came to defend these gains he was the leader and inspiration of defence.

Let no man call him coward, for he was the commander in charge of the defence of the Falls when British forces attempted to crush the people of the area into submission. Let no man call him weak, for he withstood the fury of the misguided and the onslaughts of the bigoted. Let no man dare to call him fool because he devoted his life to the struggle of the working people of the Six Counties, of the people of Ireland, for full freedom, will continue and will succeed.

The only way that Liam McMillen would have recognised a mourner for him here, or in any other place, is by the strength of his determination to carry on the fight he fought. The dying wasp of lunacy may sting its sting of death but it will surely die even while we are here. And those throughout the country who learn from the example of Liam McMillen will pledge themselves to survival, to struggle and to his final victory.

Working class people of Belfast, you have suffered a great loss. The Irish Republican Army has lost a great comrade and a great leader. The grief we feel at the grave of Liam McMillen must be matched by our determination to honour this leader, who is dead, by our lives, by our lives, by our organisation, by our work, and by our belief in the beliefs he held.

Bás: Fás; Blás.

"Man's dearest possession", said Mayakovski, "is life"

Alive or dead, that life and its style

May only be lived for man's fellow man

If the living of it is to be worthwhile.

You lived that way, Billy, validly, hurriedly

Because time was so little

And the liberation of mankind is time,

And time and life consuming,

And the wee men – gombeens of infantile disorder,

Wearing red sack and ashes around their arses

To hide the blueshirts near their breasts

Went, with their John Wayne politics

Their Wild West tactics to subdue

What they could not comprehend

– The existentialist ... the communist –

Thinking that in death they can make an end of you.

They don't know us as we do!

Proud to have known you, friend.

Dominic Behan.

Title: Liam McMillen: Separatist, Socialist, Republican

Organisation: Sinn Féin [Official]

Date: 1975

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