



The blanket

A Journal of Protest and Dissent

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IRISH REPUBLICANISM

New Phase of the Struggle or Strategic Failure?

by Liam O'Ruairc

Irish Republicanism is in crisis. The British presence is still there, the Unionists are still ruling the place, all this for the foreseeable future. The fact that Irish Republicanism has not been able to realise its aims and has suffered a massive defeat is at the root of this present crisis. What has greatly aggravated it is the fact that Provisional Irish Republicanism has effectively integrated the institutions that it once tried to destroy. In the North, Sinn Féin ministers are sitting in Stormont, and it is a matter of time before the party

enters into coalition government in the South. Far from subverting those institutions, the participation of the Provisional Movement makes them effectively administer British rule and implement neo-liberal policies such as closing hospitals, promoting PFI in the field of education, etc. Had the Provisional Movement retained any sense of Republican principles, it would have gone into opposition instead of taking up ministerial posts. Rhetoric of the Provisional movement set aside, Republicanism has de facto transformed itself into its opposite. The fact that people that once led

dissent and resistance are now being part of the problem and the status quo against which they protested is traumatic and difficult to get over for many. Contemporary Irish Republicanism is at present deeply divided; there are no fewer than four IRAs and two Sinn Feins. Those divisions show a clear crisis as to what the way ahead is. There is a crisis of leadership and a strategic uncertainty. A current able to regenerate Irish Republicanism is not yet hegemonic and is not presently capable of transforming itself into a significant political force.

The relevance and future of Irish Republicanism is also threatened by objective factors. The 26-County state is the legitimate Irish Republic in the eyes of the vast majority of its citizens, and in the North an agreement far short of a United Ireland free of British control has the support of the greater number of the Nationalist population. Both the "Free State" and British Rule have relatively succeeded in making themselves acceptable. The worst effects of the national question have been deflected. Combined with the ability of the British and Southern states to address people's discontent through economic and social reforms, this has severely undercut Irish Republicanism's potential to develop. However, this presupposes that it is always possible for reforms to succeed, which is highly unlikely. Also, the level of integration of the people by the State is never absolute, but relative and situations are not static but dynamic. Those two factors indicate that this situation might

THE REAL REPUBLICAN PARTY Pan-Nationalist Cohesion is Weakened

by Tommy Gorman

The cracks already evident in the "Pan Nationalist Front" should, by the time the next Dáil elections come around, be of Grand Canyon dimensions. The existing, relatively minor, differences revolve around the timing of the total surrender of IRA weaponry. The real crunch will arrive when two of the elements of the "front" hit the hustings vying for the republican vote.

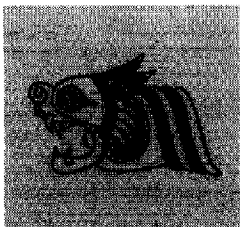
Since their metamorphosis from physical force nationalism to constitutional conservatism Fianna Fail have insisted, despite mountains of evidence to the contrary, that they are "The Republican Party." They have and will continue to use this addendum on all of their election material.

Having come in from the political fringes, jettisoning all revolutionary republican principles on the way, Sinn Féin too will be proclaiming themselves to be "The Republican Party" or even the "Real Republican Party."

War has already been declared and we can already see a curious symmetry in the respective battle-lines and tactics of these former bedfellows.

Some weeks ago there was a "National Day" of commemoration in Dublin for the 10 men who died in the H Blocks in 1981. We were led to believe that this parade was the result of a spontaneous demand amongst the masses to give due recognition to these ten brave men. But spontaneity needs a bit of a nudge here and there and the usual Sinn Féin heads were at hand to make sure it all went well and

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You cannot put a rope around the neck of an idea.

—bobbySands

EDITOR'S BOX

This is a journal of protest and dissent coming from the Irish Republican tradition. This might seem problematic. Protest and dissent existed long before people called themselves Irish Republicans, and many people around the world can dissent without being at the same time Irish Republicans. History has also shown that on a number of occasions Irish Republicans have crushed dissent and protest inside and outside their ranks, and that the ideology has been used to legitimise conservative and oppressive structures of power. To the first objection, it can be replied that in the Irish context, it is very difficult to think and develop protest and dissent if one ignores the Republican tradition. The second argument passes over the issue of whether, in spite of the occasions where Republicans have crushed protest and dissent, does the tradition still have any progressive potential left. The baby shouldn't be thrown out with the bath water. The ideas of Irish Republicanism have been able not just to survive, but to develop over the last two centuries in Ireland, precisely because they could critically address the major problems faced by the Irish people at different periods in time. It is within Irish Republicanism that the forces of dissent and protest have found the necessary intellectual resources to criticise the practices and discourses of powers responsible for the problems they faced. This journal believes that those ideas contained within Irish Republicanism will continue to grow and are still relevant for 21st century Ireland, because the problems they address haven't yet been resolved; and as the ideals of Irish Republicanism are still waiting to be realised. Until that day, Republicanism remains the unsurpassable horizon of our time. However, this journal is also very conscious that Irish Republicanism is at present facing a serious crisis. To attempt to solve this crisis, this journal intends to regenerate what is best in the Irish Republican tradition. We believe that what is most valid in it could be summarised as the "three Ds:" defiance, defence and dissent. Any society needs dissent from the structures of power, defence against the structures of power, and to defy the structures of power. Provisional Republicanism long enough provided that until those ideas were "decommissioned" by people claiming to be Republicans. Failure to regenerate them today will allow Truceleers and Good Friday Soldiers to use the Republican tradition to legitimise their own ends. Nowadays, it is "Republican" to recognise British rule in Ireland, it is "Republican" to sit in Stormont. The concept of "transitional phase" towards a united Ireland is nothing but a metaphor for the transition of the Provisionals into the British administration. Deconstructing the rhetorical strategies and exposing the underlying tropes of their discourse is no academic exercise. It is about reclaiming the discursive space of Irish Republicanism for dissent; and defending it from censorship and Direct Action Against Thought. This in turn will facilitate the process through which the "three Ds" will be able to re-emerge and protect what is best in Irish Republicanism from stagnation.

Liam O'Ruairc and
Anthony McIntyre
October 2001

Under the Foot of the Mountain

by Brendan Hughes

I had a walk down the Grosvenor Road yesterday to see my sister, to the place I was born, to the place my father brought up six children on his own, to a place I spent almost four years on the run, a place where we fought the B Specials, RUC, British Army, British Intelligence, and undercover killers. A place where poor people left their front and back doors open. A place where you had to get to know every yard wall in the event of a Brit army raid. A place where we had great hopes of our Republic.

But it had all changed. I saw nice new houses. No more yard walls; one way in and one way out. Most of the old people who had fed and looked after us, gone, dead and buried. The old people's home knocked down, leaving a wide open space, being prepared for the next rogue builder to come in and build some cheap houses for the poor people of this area. But what struck me was the view the place had left for us to see and wonder at. Towering above the small and neat houses, like two giants protecting those who can afford entry into their bellies; reminding us that we are in the place we belong. The giants even have their names boldly written across their foreheads - Europa and Russell Court.

It reminds me of a time I sailed

into Cape Town on a merchant ship. The imposing table top mountain towering above - beautiful sight. A sight that cried out for you to come up and see. That is, until you step off the ship and witness the ugly feet of this mountain. The poor, the hungry, the poverty this great beauty hides.

Before leaving the ship we are told to stay away from the shantytowns, and especially stay away from 'District 6' as I'm sure many visitors to our Europa are told when they arrive in Belfast. Of course many things have changed in South Africa, many things have changed in the North. But have they? Yes, for some! But for the major-

"THE BIGGEST ROGUE EMPLOYERS ARE THE PEOPLE TASKED WITH GOVERNING US."

ity of people, poor people, here and in South Africa, nothing much has changed. We still have the rogue employer, maybe a different colour, maybe a different religion. We are allowed to climb the mountain but few can afford to do so. Few people living under the shadow of the Europa can afford to spend one night in its belly.

We spend billions of pounds each year on weapons. Each year millions of children die both from hunger, and from the weapons we spend billions on. More often than not whether in Western Europe, South Africa or Palestine the biggest rogue employers are the people tasked with governing us. ☐

Macintologist

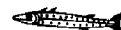
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The blanket

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The Blanket exists to facilitate dialogue within the Irish republican family. Our differences will never defeat us so long as we have the courage to air them.

Author's Choice: Rogelio Alonso

A JUST WAR?

Zoya is 23 years of age. She is a member of RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. I met her in July at a conference on "Violence and Religion" at which she shocked all the participants. Her voice was calm and her life, as the lives of Afghan women, absolutely harrowing. She showed us a video recorded by one of the members of her organisation.

Under the "burka" that Afghan women are obliged to wear in order to cover their body the RAWA member had carried a small video camera. The film showed the executions that on a weekly basis take place in Kabul's football stadium. We saw human beings gathering in the capital enjoying the slaughter of other human beings. We saw a Taliban pointing his AK47 to a woman on her knees before her body fell on the ground surrounded by blood.

Some minutes later we saw what Zoya described as "the camel's dance." A man had his throat cut. Regulars to this horrendous show of death were particularly happy to see the deceased's body move while the decapitated head, separated from the body, made noises similar to those camels make. The inferno went on and one including hand's amputations.

Zoya had been showing that video around the world. But other than shock she had got very little help from governments and politicians. Some weeks before the Taliban had made international headlines because some Buddhist statues had been blown up in Afghanistan. Zoya was disgusted that the human rights violations of Afghan women had not received so much attention. At the end of the summer hundreds of Afghan refugees were stranded in Australian territorial waters. Nobody wanted them and nobody really cared much about them.

All of a sudden, after 11 September Tony Blair and George Bush have remembered that Afghan are also human beings. It was particularly repulsive to hear both of them justifying their so called "War on Terrorism" in the name of the Afghan people that the Taliban have oppressed. The Taliban conquered Kabul in 1996, but it seems that all those years in between and all the cruelty that has taken place since then never mattered.

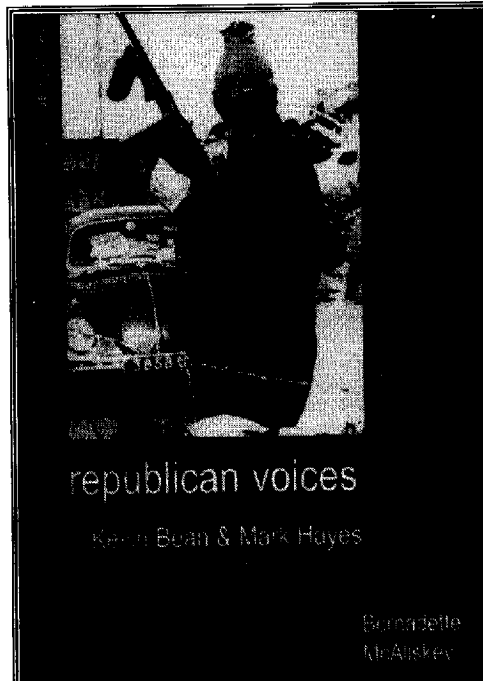
On the same day that the atrocities in New York and Washington took place, it has been estimated that over 30,000 children died of hunger in the world. We haven't heard much of them and we haven't seen a "War on hunger and poverty." If the political will existed this enemy would be easier to defeat than Osama Bin Laden, but probably it wouldn't require the display of the war machinery the Americans are arrogantly displaying on our TV screens.

The ultimate insult by the American government has been

the cynical combination of bombs and food. Previous international experiences showed how that kind of aid is never going to reach the starving and most needed population. As happened in the past, it may even kill some of them when they try to reach it. Humanitarian agencies have denounced the action pointing out that American deliveries will disrupt food programmes and will raise prices worsening the already terrible situation endured by the Afghans.

In the middle of this worldwide hypocrisy it was disappointing to hear somebody like Fr. Aidan Troy saying that Northern Ireland together with Afghanistan are the only countries in the world where children are denied the right to education. A man who is tirelessly working for a resolution of the disgraceful protest in Ardoyne and who has worked in some of the most deprived countries in the world before coming to Belfast should know better.

Perhaps the children in Sierra Leone who are taken away from their villages by the Army, drugged and trained to kill their own would have something to say about their rights too. Chema Caballero is a Spanish missionary who has lived in the African country for some years. He is in charge of a project which tries to rehabilitate children who have been made soldiers at a very early age - some are as young as four. Sierra Leone's civil war has caused tens of thousands of victims and amputees but this country who is one of the main sources of diamonds in the world doesn't fit in the current "War on Terrorism" waged by the so called "international coalition." Chema works and lives with children who have murdered their own parents. As part of the ritual to initiate them, these children are brain washed and ordered to murder a relative. Then they must sever a limb which they will always carry with them because - so they are told - it will protect them while in combat. They are children too but we don't care enough to do anything about them. ☒



Featuring interviews with Tommy Gorman, Brendan Hughes, Eamonn McDermott, Anthony McIntyre, Tommy McKearney, and Mickey McMullen

Available from Republican Voices
PO Box 31,
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(+P&P £2)
or email: theblanket@mail.com
for more details

Readers comment on Republican Voices— 'I would just like to say that having picked up a copy of 'Republican Voices' at the Michael Devine commemoration in Derry at which Tommy McKearney spoke, that I thought it a brilliant piece of work. We really need this debate.

— Regards, James Doherty.

Q: How do you see the lay of the land for Republicans?

A: I think it's very interesting. I felt and still do believe that Sinn Féin will go the whole way. I don't think they have any intentions of going back from this agreement. As far as Republicanism goes, I wouldn't consider SF of today being republicans, I see SF as being a nationalist party. And that's by choice. For Republicanism I think we had a setback, I believe that it's fragmented. But I think that if we just stop and take stock, we can rebuild the Republican Movement and probably it will be a stronger movement for this, because the people who will be in the Republican Movement will be republicans, not nationalists or militant Catholics.

Q: So in saying that, do you think that this movement you envision will come out of a Republican tradition rather than a defender tradition?

A: Well, in many ways, the Provo movement, and I was a member of it and have no regrets about being a member of it, but there was an element within the Provo movement that certainly would have been a Catholic defender element and I think we all have to acknowledge that. Yes, I do think that this movement will be a purer movement because we realise that what SF have done at the moment is they've skirted around every issue except the core that republicanism is concerned with and that is the establishment of the Republic. I think that now that the RM would be concentrating on the one issue, that is of the greatest importance. We can plaster over cracks within society with regard to equality agendas, better social things for people but the core issue has never been addressed and certainly this GFA doesn't address it. So yes, I see it as a purer movement and a better movement.

Q: *The GFA really has institutionalised sectarianism and it has also really brought out the sectarian elements in each of the parties in order to uphold it. This leads to the question, the Republic, if this movement does revolve around the ideal of the Republic, can you see it transcending the sectarianism that has been brought to the fore and being something that Protestants in this community would be attracted to, interested in, feel that they could have a place in it? Or do you think that what's been going on in terms of entrenching the sectarianism will make that harder?*

A: It will make that harder, but I don't think that should stop us from trying. Certainly I do feel that the parties involved in the GFA – I want say encourage sectarianism but they play on it very much to their own advantage. That isn't what I see Republicanism being about. And I think that the Republicanism that I want to build is going to be a secular republicanism that

“...THEY'VE SKIRTED AROUND EVERY ISSUE EXCEPT THE CORE THAT REPUBLICANISM IS CONCERNED WITH AND THAT IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC.”

everyone would feel included and I would hope that that would include the Protestant community. I don't see why Protestants should be excluded from republicanism.

Q: *Going back to the defender tradition, with the increasing problems in North Belfast, the attacks in Short Strand, the organised campaign of the UDA, and with elements of the IRA responding to it as well that is only going to add fuel to the fire, and may as it progresses and gets worse, it may have a similar effect that '69 had in firing up people... Can you see this purer Republicanism that is based on republican ideals, how would it react to that kind of anger and that kind of motivation?*

A: Well there always is the danger and I know traditionally in the past republicanism would have always come to the aid of the nationalist community when they have been attacked – I don't believe that that has been really on a sectarian front. I think it's

THE INTERVIEW

Marian Price has been a life long Republican. She was jailed for her participation in the IRA bombing campaign in England in 1973, went on hunger strike and was force-fed for more than 100 days. She was released in 1980.

She left the Provisional Movement in 1998, due to differences over the Peace Process. She is now chairperson of the Irish Republican Prisoners Welfare Association (IRPWA), and is active in the Thirty-two County Sovereignty Movement (32 CSM). Carrie Twomey speaks to her about the past, present and future of Irish Republicanism.

more that their base would be in the nationalist community and therefore they feel that they have to consolidate and protect their base. And I can understand that. But I think that within the RM we must keep paramount in everything that our war isn't with the Protestants at all or even the loyalists. It's with the Brits. Because that's ultimately where the decision lay. If the British decide to get out of the 6 counties the loyalists won't have a say in it. And that's why I would hope that if the Brits make a declaration of an intent to withdraw then Republicans and even the Loyalist community can start discussing the way forward together.

Q: *Can you see the British identity sitting side by side with the Irish identity in the Republic?*

A: Absolutely, I have no problem with that. I have no problems with the Orangemen marching up and down the Shankill Road. The only problem I have is if they are trying to enter Nationalist areas. So if there is a Republic and they want to celebrate King William or the Battle of the Boyne, I don't have a problem with that. As a Republican, I have no hidden agendas; it doesn't bother me if King James was beaten at the Battle of the Boyne, because it is a total irrelevance!

Q: *Do you think that there is a large level of marginalisation in the working class areas of Belfast?*

A: Certainly. I believe that there

is a greater gap between rich and poor, and in that sense the working class is more marginalised. But I think that this is a worldwide phenomenon too. I don't think that it is limited to Ireland.

Q: *What do you see contributing to it?*

A: The large multinational companies throughout the world. The combined assets of the two hundred richest companies in the world are greater than the combined income of two thirds of the world's population. They control the world.

Q: *Do you see any merit in the anti-globalisation campaigns?*

A: Yes. I am very sympathetic to the protestors out there.

Q: *How do you view the needs of the loyalist working class?*

A: I think that they are every bit as great, if not more than the nationalist working class.

Q: *Can Republicanism offer anything to the working class loyalists?*

A: I would hope so. I hope that with Republicanism – not nationalism – they will see a bright future for themselves in the country of Ireland, that within Republicanism, they could grow and blossom. Because I feel that if this country is united, they would find the republicans to be their best friends. I wouldn't want to work within a State in which the Roman Catholic Church has a special place, Republicanism is about a secular state.

Q: *What do you think of punishment beatings and shootings?*

A: I don't have any sympathy for the so-called hoods, but I don't see punishment beatings and shootings as the answer to the problem. When you look at Sinn Féin, who's a hood? The one getting beaten or the one giving the beating? There is a demand within the communities to have something done, but we should reach young people in a different way, and try to channel their energy into more productive things. If they were more involved within their own communities, and did not feel so isolated, maybe they would act differently. I think that there is a danger that in the community trying to police itself, they are exchanging one set of thugs for another. I think that there is a big danger there. I think that when individuals take upon themselves to police, they have to be very careful.

Q: *What's your view of public demand for the Provo decommissioning?*

A: Well, as a Republican, I have no problem with whatever the Provisionals choose to do with their guns, because as I see it the only people they use them against are young nationalist men and certainly Republicans. The only threat that Provisional guns pose are to people who disagree with their strategy. I don't think that they pose any threat to the British or the Loyalists. The Provisionals use their guns to control their own communities, and as a threat to people who have a different political analysis. So what they do with their weaponry doesn't really concern me.

Q: *It seems that grassroots have accepted concession after concession; do you think that they will decommission, and if so, will there be any major reactions against it?*

A: I believe that the leadership of the Provisional movement have actually accepted decommissioning. I think that the problem they are having is how to sell it to their grassroots, or how they get round to their grassroots, how they do it, and then tell their grassroots they haven't really done it. Everything is sold to the grassroots as a "tactic." It has been said to me by supporters of

the Provisionals that decommissioning is the line in the sand, and they can't cross that. That will be for their grassroots to decide. But in my view, they crossed the line in the sand many years ago. Their grassroots have told me "decommissioning is THE line in the sand, they won't cross it," but I replied to them not to be surprised if it did happen.

Q: *Do you think that there has been a change in the make-up of the grassroots, and if so, does this explain why so much has gone past them?*

A: I think that over a number of years, the composition of Sinn Féin's grassroots has changed. They are encouraging more middle class people to come into the movement, because it is now respectable to be associated with Sinn Féin. A lot of people think that if they support Sinn Féin it automatically means that they are Republican. But a vote for Sinn Féin today is not a vote for Republicanism.

A vote for Sinn Féin is a vote for Nationalism. But a strong nationalist vote is nothing recent. Joe Devlin always won in the 1930s and 1940s. I think that Sinn Féin have moved ground, rather than there has been a big influx in the Republican family, or because many people have been converted to Republicanism.

Q: *As chairperson of the IRPWA, you are doing a lot of work with prisoners...*

A: I am very committed to work with the prisoners, because I have been in prison, and I know what it is like, and I feel that our prisoners are being forgotten. Certainly when I was on hunger strike and protesting for my beliefs, I knew I got people behind me and supporting me and it meant a great deal to me; I am just returning that.

Q: *What about ex-prisoners, are their needs met?*

A: If you follow the Sinn Féin line, you are OK, if you don't watch your back.

Q: *There are so many different organisations supporting ex-prisoners. Why is support being so fragmented?*

A: To be honest I think this is just a phenomenon of this campaign, because I do know that in previous campaigns when prisoners came out there was only one Republican family to move to and they were welcomed home. The difficulty now because of this so-called Peace Process, the wider

Republican family has been fragmented, and if you do not belong to the Provisional Movement you are ostracised and sidelined, and that hasn't been the case in the past. It's a sad thing. I hope that the Provisional Movement will go back to the ethos of the wider Republican family.

"THEIR GRASS-ROOTS HAVE TOLD ME "DE-COMMISSIONING IS THE LINE IN THE SAND, THEY WON'T CROSS IT," BUT I REPLIED TO THEM NOT TO BE SURPRISED IF IT DID HAPPEN."

Q: *Do you think that there's enough discussion among ex-Republican prisoners of their respective experiences?*

A: That's a hard one to answer. Sometimes I think that discussions of the experiences of prisoners are being used for another agenda. I notice that there is a commemoration coming up to commemorate Kieran Doherty. I see that there are various social events organised around that (stories from inside, etc). I would wonder if anybody is going to sit down and discuss why Kieran Doherty died on hunger strike, why he made that sacrifice, and the implications that this has for today. I don't think that this will be discussed. I don't think that the hunger strikes and that whole period should be written into folklore, and I think there is a danger of that happening. The reasons why people were on hunger strike should be discussed in a serious, not in a light way.

I was on hunger strike, and I did what I had to do because the circumstances dictated it, I had no other option. But it has been transformed into some sort of myth. But that doesn't make me any greater or better than any other prisoners. As ex-prisoners, we should sit down and talk and share our experiences, especially with younger generations of Republicans, that they can learn from it. But not learn that we are some sort of icons, that we are different from everybody else. We are just humans. We all had our bad days inside, but you kick yourself and go beyond. The Blanketmen are heroes, but that does not mean that they did not suffer. What they did wasn't easy and to have it presented in a way which makes light the actual human sacrifices that this has entailed, that would be wrong. The Republican Movement consists of the young men and women who live in the same street as us, it is not some master race who lives down in caves up in the hills, who are a breed apart. The RM is ordinary people who do extraordinary things for what they believe in, that's where it gets its strength.

You have to remember that there are a lot of people within the Republican Movement who are never identified as Republicans, who do sterling work in the background, in whatever capacity they are working in, and they are really the backbone of RM, the unsung heroes, they are the people whose name will never go down in books, who are never going to be sung about in songs, they are the backbone of the RM.

Q: *A lot of people have become disillusioned and have walked away from Republican politics. How do you react to this fact? What has made you take a stance?*

A: It definitely is the easier option. Certainly from my point of view, it came to the point I felt that somebody had to speak out, it wasn't right that true Republicans be on the side lines and that everything that had been fought for and died for, all the sacrifices that had been made were just irrelevant. Nobody was saying anything about it. That was what compelled me to speak out and be politically active. However, I do understand true Republicans walking away and

Continued on page 10

There is a worldwide protest movement developing. It might end up in a revolution... if we are not careful. In confirmation of this we have only to read the screaming tabloids as they take up the cudgels for their owners and controllers. Who better promotes the interests of the working-class and the oppressed? As we move away from the protests in Genoa at the recent 'G8 summit', in the aftermath of Seattle, London, Toronto, Prague, and Gothenburg, the same historically tried and tested format is being wheeled out. Anyone, whether Environmentalist, Third World Debt relief protestors, Socialists or Anarchists, who dares to bring their concerns and questions onto the streets just trying to be heard, is labelled as trouble-maker or terrorist or even, God forbid, a communist.

Two new books offering very different analysis of this global protest movement suggest that this time the tabloids may not be too far wrong. The movement did not start in Seattle, nor is it likely to end in Genoa. Is it however the prelude to a new historical epoch, the beginning of a new global agenda developed across the internet by the dispossessed and the caring?

Naomi Klein in her recently published book, *No Logo*, outlines the history of the burgeoning protest movement in great detail. There is little doubt that she has used the four years that went into the research and writing of the book to clearly identify the Brand bullies and also those who have them in their sights.

She initially tells us that the book is based on first hand observation and is not a book of predictions, it is 'an examination of a largely underground system of information, protest and planning, a system already coursing with activity and ideas crossing many national borders and several generations'. It undoubtedly is that, and worth reading for the insight. She then goes on to make those very predictions she wanted to avoid although staying well away

from any hint of revolution. As a well-known Sinn Féin friend told me recently 'you don't make many friends in America talking about revolution.'

Exploring the early social and environmental campaigns of 'small town and campus America', usually against the Wal-marts or McD's; bridging across to the national and international protests such as those which targeted Shell Oil after the atrocious hanging of Nigerian author and anti-Shell activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, or the links between the Burma junta and the global corporates, through to the street 'counter-summits' which now stalk our 'world leaders' in politics and economics, Naomi Klein tries to fit them

into an understandable and focused model of radical international change.

Claiming, with some superficial rationale, that a group of corporate Goliaths have come together and now form a de facto global government, she presents the book as an 'attempt to analyse and document the forces opposing this corporate rule and to lay out the particular set of cultural and economic conditions that made the emergence of that opposition inevitable.' And she does a very thorough job of it.

She examines in detail the surrender of culture and education to the needs of the marketer; a process that is only just beginning here. She then looks at how this process leads to corporate control of both our bodies and our minds - their censorship and obliteration of the right to choose. As she sees it, this right to choose is not only set in terms of products and thoughts but is giving rise to the new labour market tendencies of tenuous worker-employer rela-

tionships, out-sourcing, forced self-employment, part-time and temporary posts. This unfortunately is not a new tendency here. Our voluntary and community sector knows this process only too well and unfortunately feels obliged to pander to it.

From Naomi Klein's perspective it is the collusion of, and the interplay among, these various tendencies, the hidden forces that employ them and the political structures that protect them which have given rise to the activism, which, she says is sowing the seeds of a genuine alternative to corporate rule. Well to be honest she doesn't mention the political structures which protect them. That is a little piece I threw in.

It is also the focus for another book that is centred on the theme of globalisation. Perceived as a 'sweeping history of humanist philosophy, Marxism and modernity that propels itself to a grand political conclusion: that we are a creative and enlightened species, and that our his-

"THE PASSAGE TO EMPIRE AND ITS PROCESSES OF GLOBALIZATION OFFER NEW POSSIBILITIES TO THE FORCE OF LIBERATION."

tory is that of humanity's progress towards the seizure of power from those who exploit it.' (Observer 15/07/01; Ed Vulliamy. P.23) The book is certainly creating a stir in certain circles in America. Again it begins by examining the global economy, named 'the Empire' by authors Michael Hardt,

an American academic, and Antonio Negri who is now imprisoned in Italy because of alleged links with the Italian Red Brigades among other things. It goes on to argue in defence of 'modernity' and makes the argument that the globalised economy presents a greater opportunity than ever for

humanist and even 'communist' revolution. In doing this it makes a number of critical, and even conventionally heretical, arguments.

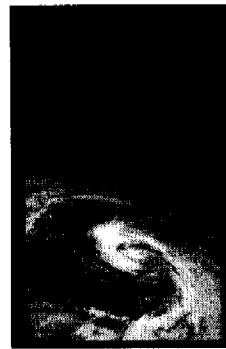
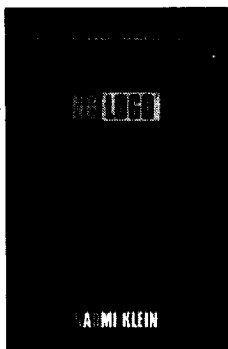
Firstly it suggests that the "Empire," like the Internet, has no centre - it is a 'non-place'. The conclusion of this particular argument is that we do not have a specific centre to storm, to take over. There is no Winter Palace to attack as the Bolsheviks had in 1917.

Secondly, and just as critical, is the suggestion that the working-class, the defined proletariat, no longer exists in its classical, or class form as outlined by Marx. It is now the new, miscellaneous, and powerful 'Multitude'.

Thirdly, and somewhat less ingeniously given what happens in the real world, they argue that the structures and leadership of the global economy, rather than being the all-powerful mechanism which has been portrayed by the past two generations of aged, despondent, and despairing 'revolutionaries', contains the seeds of its own destruction. From their perspective the political climate has never been more favourable for uprising by a 'communism which is Marxist, but is bigger than Marx'. Shades of Marx indeed.

The Empire we are faced with wields enormous powers of oppression and destruction, but that fact should not make us nostalgic in any way for the old forms of domination. The passage to Empire and its processes of globalization offer new possibilities to the force of liberation.

Globalization, of course, is not one thing, and the multiple processes that we recognize as globalization are not unified or univocal. Our political task, we will argue, is not simply to resist these processes but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends. The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges.



BOOK REVIEW

AND THEY CALL IT A REVOLUTION – IF ONLY: A TALE OF TWO BOOKS REVIEWED BY JIM MCCORRY

NO LOGO: Taking aim at the Brand Bullies
Naomi Klein; Flamingo. 2000

EMPIRE
Michael Hardt.
Antonio Negri; Harvard University Press. 2000

The struggles to contest and subvert Empire, as well as those to construct a real alternative, will thus take place on the imperial terrain itself - indeed, such new struggles have already begun to emerge. Through these struggles, and many more like them, the multitude will have to invent new democratic forms and a new constituent power that will one day take us through and beyond Empire."

They are undoubtedly right in one element of their proposition. It is not simply that the struggle has only started. It has been an ongoing struggle for many of us even if at times those engaged in it do get depressed, or burnt out, or diverted. It is not that the struggle will only take place on 'the imperial terrain'. It will indeed need to be an international struggle, but that is nothing new. It will however also need to take place in our communities, in our workplaces, in our cultural, social and economic centres, in all our relationships.

The authors are undoubtedly right when they say our struggle will have to "invent new democratic forms and a new constituent power that will one day take us through

and beyond Empire."

That is our challenge. That requires a debate, even if at times it seems that debate has echoes of other discussions, other arguments, of another century, another time. Despite the fact that there have been major changes in the structures

"...WE SHOULD ALSO REMEMBER THAT OPPRESSION AND GREED STILL HAVE A NAME, THEY STILL HAVE AN ADDRESS."

and control mechanisms of capital that we need to understand and address, we have much to learn from those past debates, and from the experiences, good and bad, which flowed from them. We have allowed others with their vested interests to throw out

the baby with the dirty bathwater.

Perhaps the first thing we need to accept is that it may be that no one of us, no group or organisation, is completely right at all times in either analysis or tactics or strategy. We should all however, have the option of pursuing our beliefs in comradeship and in a spirit of collective growth and development. Mistakes and failure also provide opportunities for learning. We have much to learn and share with each other. If there is one lesson which stares us in the face it is that for too long, and at a shameful

cost, we have turned our anger, our confusions, and our anxieties inward. We have spent more time attacking and confronting each other than confronting those who oppress us.

Both these books make an important contribution to this debate. They pose it from an internationalist perspective. This is necessary, particularly when the daily demands of our own struggle push us towards introversion. Allowing for the need to play our part in the international struggle against oppression and exploitation does not however negate the need for a fundamental debate, and the interrelated confrontations with oppression in its various forms, in the here and now. This is where we, each of us, will make our major contribution to the building of a new world liberation movement. Finance capital has long been globalised. We here played our part in that development as the multi-nationals stopped over in the 1950's on their way to the next 'cheap labour' market. We just did not see it.

Perhaps Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri are right when they write that "The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges." Perhaps the contradiction is that as we share in the fruits of 'the Empire's' exploitation by buying and wearing their sweated labour, logo flaunting, commodities we are also only shamefacedly beginning to really appreciate its power and potential for domination. In this awareness of the international reality of capital's latent misery

we should also remember that oppression and greed still have a name, they still have an address. They need to be confronted where they live as much as where they oppress. And the reality is that they, and those who service them, live among us.

Perhaps a quote from Ursula Franklin, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto puts our struggle here into an international perspective in a very real sense:

"I picture the reality in which we live in terms of military occupation. We are occupied the way the French and Norwegians were occupied during World War II, but this time it is by an army of marketeers. We have to reclaim our country from those who occupy it on behalf of their global masters"

Maybe she is right. Maybe we need to be asking who is really

"THEY NEED TO BE CONFRONTED WHERE THEY LIVE AS MUCH AS WHERE THEY OPPRESS. AND THE REALITY IS THAT THEY, AND THOSE WHO SERVICE THEM, LIVE AMONG US."

occupying our country, on whose behalf they are doing it, and how we, the 'multitude' who are collectively exploited and oppressed, can organise together to build our country, and our world, a world which is being destroyed by the 'Empire'. Perhaps we need to share our experiences, of war and of peace. Maybe that means we have to make contact with those others, in many countries in the world,

who are also making their fight for freedom even if it annoys those who are at the heart of Empire. Even if sometimes they are presented by the media as 'left-wing' guerrillas. Now where have I heard that one before?

Or is that being disloyal to those who try to control us here in the name of freedom? ■

Three Irish Anthologies Package Our Literary Past

by Seaghan Ó Murchu

(Part One of Three)

Ferocious Humanism: An Interpretative Anthology from Before Swift to Yeats and After. W. J. McCormack, editor (London: J. M. Dent, 2000). U.S. title: *Irish Poetry* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). xxvi. 355 pages.

The Penguin Book of Irish Fiction. Colm Toibin, editor (London and New York: Viking Penguin, 1999). xxxvi. 1085 pages.

Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century: A Reader. David Pierce, editor (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000). xlv. 1351 pages.

Countess Markievicz, pistol by her side: her photo glowers from the dustjacket of W. J. McCormack's collection of Irish poetry. Colm Toibin's volume's wrapper brushes Marion Deutscher's swatches of blood red and deep violet striped over a canvas-muted background. For David Pierce's tome, details of Kathy Prendergast's "Land" reveal an oilclothed sheet dappling ripples of water blue over a desert-gold crinkled terrain of deep rifts and slight elevations. Such depictions signal the intentions of these three anthologies. Arriving to close the last century, each gathers up wheat from the chaff of the past. And each of the three attempts to package the fractured Irish experience within the covers of a book likely to be used by students and teachers as well as the diligent and curious reader who seeks pleasure and instruction from those judged best among the island's past and present prolific scribblers, ranters, and ravers. And the quieter folks, those scattered in the diaspora (in Pierce), na Gaeltachtaí (in McCormack), and the mainstream (in Toibin).

Ferocious Humanism certainly aims to provoke. Can culture be reconciled with the cult of the gun? The cover photo confronts us with an image far from the abstractions painted for these other two collections. But an image as posed, as calculated,

and as iconic as those on canvas or easel. The studio portrait of Constance, from the Gore-Booth lineage, seeks to rouse us—as her family was from their aristocratic comfort to aid victims of the famine, and as she was to aid the rebels of 1916 and the destitute for decades after. Now belonging to the National Museum, it is an heirloom rather than a call to arms. Canonised, demilitarized, a belonging to history rather than the present. Do poets meet the same fate, once confined within an anthology? (He includes Yeats, but no Countess.)

McCormack's selections likewise investigate the junction where the studied response meets with the sudden reality. The poets he includes all navigate the edge between (dis)engagement and (dis)comfort at assuming such a certainty as the physical-force tradition expects of its recruits. From the last of the Gaelic Munster bards, Ó

Rathaille and Ó Bruadair, through the 18th and 19th century Anglo-Irish intelligentsia, up through last century's variety of native responses, McCormack celebrates the end of what his title presents as an oxymoron for all of us—not merely poets—to ponder: the preference of anger or restraint, revolt or reconciliation, idealism or pragmatism.

Few of McCormack's choices astonished me. All can be found, with perhaps the exceptions of a "party song" or two with which he concludes his volume, in print elsewhere. But is this not precisely an anthologist's purpose? To gather into a bouquet, an arrangement, the scattered flowers and twigs lying neglected in the literary garden except to a few careful observers? (cf. medieval collections—known as *Florilegia*.) By arranging these 130 individually ordered Irish responses to "outrage," McCormack argues that poets have resisted the rhetorician's appeal and the easy sell-out of the doggerel-spouting

"sham shamans" in the pockets of "the Minister for Triviculture or Touraculture." [xiii] (Which surprises me, because I'd list at least two of his own choices as in the pay of just such a post-GFA sinecure.)

McCormack, who as Hugh Maxton engaged himself as a poet within the maelstrom—arriving in Derry to teach just before Bloody Sunday, and who as himself has long written incisively upon the issues of Irish literary resistance and acceptance in the period from Swift and Burke up to the present, offers his personal choice of poets who largely agree with his own stance of contemplative dissent. Viewing this attitude as characteristic of Irish poetry worthy of that noun and adjective, his roll-call serves largely as a compact illustration of his own critical and political position. While this edition suits best those already familiar with the individual poets and their context, it

is not as helpful for the beginner. Unless the novice wishes to read poetry unencumbered by introductory or supplementary material, footnotes, or—in the Dies

Irae excerpt from Eoghan Ó Tuairisc's *Aifreann na Marbh*—lack of translation as *Béarla*. And the dustjacket's coy arousal of a frisson of vicarious

rebelliousness, the excitement felt by a reader plunged into the intellectual's donning of the Fenian's bandolier, the poet taking up the pistol: this is not sustained by a careful inspection of the book's contents. Beneath its assertive title and insouciant packaging, its poets insist that the gun be reholstered, and the uniform replaced by a more fitting, and pacific, choice of attire. The editor tells us that the rebellion is over, and implies such as the Countess might better serve the causes of peace. ■

Parts 2 & 3 of this series will appear in upcoming issues.

“...THE DUSTJACKET'S
COY AROUSAL OF A
FRISSON OF VICARIOUS
REBELLIOUSNESS...”

Continued from page 1

maybe even to scoop up some of the resulting kudos.

The following Sunday the streets of Dublin were once again resounding to the stomp of marching feet as thousands turned out to pay homage to ten IRA men who had given their all during the War of Independence. Having lain for over eighty years in prison clay they were at long last given due recognition through a state funeral and reinterment in more fitting resting places. The Fianna Fail government had arranged for the exhumation and re-burial of the volunteers. This belated gesture had more to do with out "Sinn-Feigning" Sinn Féin that genuine concern for the families of ten IRA men.

This use of coffins as political platforms is nothing new in Irish politics. Throughout this 20th anniversary year of the H Block hunger strikes the Sinn

Féin leadership has not missed an opportunity at the many commemorations. We were all informed that this is the most "revolutionary leadership" ever and that those who died would, without doubt have swung in behind the present policies. Leaving aside the fact that three of the dead were not from the Provo axis this is a highly dubious claim from a party that has expressed its readiness to 'administer British rule in Ireland for the foreseeable future'. That these men, who died rather than criminalise themselves and our struggle, would be at all at home in a movement that is becoming more and more tied up in criminal activity and with dodgy diesel is a highly contentious idea.

But then when has truth and integrity ever got in the way of a good party political broadcast, even one made from atop the coffins of our patriot dead? ■

Go Surrender? Unionism and Decommissioning

By Sam Gilchrist

Way back in 1986, the New Society columnist Martyn Harris described Unionist political strategy in the bluntest of terms; it required little rigorous analysis for it amounted to no more than the pursuit of communal superiority. It was "simplicity itself. It is about keeping out the Taigs." Whilst the political landscape has changed radically since the "Ulster says No" campaigning of the 1980s, this notion of an ingrained inability on the part of Unionism to embrace change, and to countenance the inclusion of Nationalists and Republicans in government, can still bubble and percolate within the Republican analysis. Unionist stalling on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement has been presented as "not wanting to have a fenian about the place" and the dismissive overriding of Sinn Féin's mandate; truculent phrases about unhousetrained Republicans have done nothing to dispel this view of an obscurantist Unionism. The decommissioning imperative of Unionism is seen as a red herring, to draw attention from the Unionist resistance to change, and also provides a useful stick with which to chastise Sinn Féin whenever the political need arises. Republicans seem bewildered at Unionist foot dragging when they can so readily point to the massive ideological concessions that they have themselves made. Why does Unionism need proof of republican bona fides when the IRA has maintained a ceasefire for five and a half of the last seven

years? When Sinn Féin has signed up to the principle of consent and sits in a partitionist assembly? Sinn Féin likes the institutions so much that there was even the suggestion that British ministers could be slotted into Unionist seats when the latter evacuate their Executive positions. This is a long way from the traditional Provisional analysis. Republicans argue that their concessions to the process have been sweeping. It was in March 1998 that Gerry Adams emphasized that his bottom line was the disbandment of the RUC; the retention of Articles two and three; powerful, stand alone cross border institutions and a form of all-Ireland police and courts. A month later this bottom line had slipped right off the page and into nothingness.

What then is the Unionist problem? It's true that for anti-Agreement Unionists, decommissioning has an instrumental value rather than a strategic one. It is an easy stick with which to beat the peace process. But for those who voted 'yes', it has enormous significance. Disarmament would fulfil several functions for Unionists. Firstly, it would fill an ethical hole in the institutions. In twenty five years, the Provisionals killed seventeen hundred people in an attempt to lever Unionists out of the UK. Now their political wing sits in government with a private army that is (mostly) intact. To Unionists, this does not sit well with notions of peace and good government, and in this they can point to Fianna Fail's attitude to sharing power with Sinn Féin, as a clear indicator of how societies at peace relate to

secret armies. Perhaps the greatest value decommissioning has for unionism though, is an emotional and symbolic one. For them, decommissioning would bring a sense of balance to the peace process. Nationalist gains seem much more tangible; there are ministerial feet under tables, there is reform of the RUC, and cross border institutions have sprung up in a variety of areas. All these innovations are essentially invulnerable as long as the peace process chugs along at even a modest pace.

In contrast, the gains which Unionism can point to seem mostly in the hands of the Provisionals themselves; the increasing constitutionalism of Sinn Féin and the snapping of the cutting edge of 'armed struggle' can theoret-

ically be changed by votes in the Ard Fheis and the Army Council. In practical terms, this is obviously highly unlikely, but Unionism requires something concrete to prove that the war is over. The scrap metal of decommissioned arms would provide ballast useful in settling Unionism within the fluctuating waters of the process. The fear that Republicanism might return to war has been present within Unionism, but declined over the years as Sinn Féin reaped the electoral dividends of peace. But it is a niggling fear nonetheless, and was partially jump started by the arrest of three Republicans alleged to have been helping to train FARC guerrillas. To Unionism, this is proof positive that the Provisionals are keeping their options open and do not want to sever links to guns, money, and smuggling contacts.

What really stuck in the Unionist craw about the FARC revelations was the sheer arrogance of it all. Sinn Féin spent years glad handing US officials, schmoozing with corporate America, and rattling tins in front of Irish American groups yet still took the chance on collaborating with a group which the State Department refers to as Marxist narco terrorists. If Sinn

Féin is willing to treat its new friends in such a cavalier fashion, how can its word be trusted with its traditional enemies, runs the unionist argument. Republicanism too have pointed to Unionist hypocrisy in relation to Loyalist paramilitaries; the latter have always been on the fringes of the decommissioning spotlight. In the recent past, Unionists might have countered that loyalists weren't going to be administering in government and therefore the focus had to be on Republicanism.

The campaign of pipe bombing and sectarian assassination by strands within Loyalism has changed that profoundly. The actions of the UDA are being seen as an attempt to simply chest beat in front of the UVF and

provoke republicans into retaliation. Unionism is unsettled by this; it doesn't want to see lamp-posts turned into battle standards as loyalists mark their spheres of influence, and it doesn't want to see retaliation, which will mean, well, dead prods. Loyalist dissidents are seen to be playing with the peace for short term gain and to embarrass the Provos. If this means that decommissioning will be pushed further away, then that strand within Loyalism might have to watch out for itself. The 'specifying' of the LVF/UFF ceasefire met with a nod of approval within Unionism. But then the UDA already knew that. Who could believe that the failure of the UDP to contest elections as a political entity was the result of clerical error?

Unionism needs to be loaded with the deadweight of weaponry to anchor itself in the process - Republicans may see Unionist fixation with guns as a destabilising fetish, but they might ask themselves if they aren't holding on to them for similar symbolic, and emotional reasons. Maybe the ballast can be shared. ■

Sam Gilchrist is a Unionist commentator

"IF SINN FÉIN IS WILLING TO TREAT ITS FRIENDS IN SUCH A CAVALIER FASHION, HOW CAN ITS WORD BE TRUSTED WITH ITS TRADITIONAL ENEMIES?"

The blanket A journal of protest and dissent

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The Blanket project exists as a commitment to freedom of speech. Its purpose is to facilitate analysis, debate and discussion, to resist censorship, and to create the space for a diversity of views.

Continued from page 5 closing the door. That has happened in the past. Because when you do speak out, you are vilified, and life is made as difficult as possible for you. I just think that I have come to terms with that, I am prepared to live with that. But I do understand that other Republicans feeling so disheartened want to walk away. I can understand that, because I went through all those emotions. I think that we have to speak out. We can't let it go down in history that this was what the war was fought for, and that is what is being sold to people: that there was a thirty years war fought for what we have today, and this is such a blatant lie. We as Republicans have to go out there and say, this is a lie, this is not why the war was fought. We have to get it recorded in history that this is not what Republicanism is about, this is not what sacrifices were made for. When I talk of sacrifices, I do not only speak only of the sacrifices made by the Republican movement, I am talking of the sacrifices made throughout the country, the civilian population had made, that we in the Republican Movement have killed. I do not apologise for any actions taken by the Republican Movement, but I always believed that the justification for it was that we were fighting for a greater cause, and that in many ways, the end justifies the means. But now, we're being told that this is the end. But this end didn't justify any of the means that have been used. Sunningdale was actually better than what we have on offer today! But, a long war has been fought, many thousands of people have died, people have spent entire lives in prison, lives have been shattered, people died on hunger strike, but a better deal was on offer before this; but Republicans said no to that deal, because it wasn't what Republicanism is all about. I can't begin to understand how anybody that has been in the movement for all these years can turn round and say "right, we're running with this deal" after all that has happened before. I don't understand. In some ways, I can understand that a younger generation can accept

“WE AS REPUBLICANS HAVE TO GO OUT AND SAY, THIS IS A LIE, THIS IS NOT WHY THE WAR WAS FOUGHT.”

this deal, but the Sinn Féin leadership were there thirty years ago when that other deal was on the table, and they were part of the Republican movement that rejected it. I want to know what has changed to make this deal acceptable.

Q: *If the Provisional leadership had been honest and said, “We lost, but we can't do better, this is the best that we can get,” would that have been acceptable to you?*

A: It would have been more acceptable than what they present today, as if they had some sort of victory. My alternative to what they have done would have been that if they had come to the conclusion that the war was going nowhere, that we couldn't win – rather than lost – the right thing to do would have been to have the moral courage to say “the war is over, and we didn't win.” They should have had the moral courage to do that. Once they've done that, I think that would have opened up a variety of avenues to them, they wouldn't have been trapped in the cul de sac in which they are now stuck. If they had made that courageous declaration that the war is over because we couldn't win it, I think that they could have then regrouped and decided what is the best way forward. They didn't then have to go in the British establishment and agree to run and take part in the British rule in the Six Counties. Throughout history, Republicans have never lacked the moral courage to admit when they couldn't win, and Republicans have always stood by the movement when the movement made that courageous decision, it happened in the 1940s, in the 1950s. There were no reasons why the present leadership couldn't have said to the movement, we cannot take it any further, and the movement would have certainly accepted it. There would have been no split or anything. The movement would have regrouped and said “That's not working. Where do we now go from here?” It could have gone ahead as a united movement. Instead, certain individuals decided, this is the path that it is going down, and

force the movement down that path no matter what.

Q: *It was dishonest?*

A: I think that there was a lot of dishonesty around the whole so-called negotiations. There were contacts being made between certain individuals in the Republican Movement with the British, and this was done behind the back of other individuals in the RM who were under the impression that the war was going to be fought to the bitter end. I feel that the leadership decided where it was going, and has dragged along the movement yelling and screaming, and if people were screaming too loud, they were side-lined very quickly.

Q: *Freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed by the GFA. How do you see them in practice?*

A: They'll uphold your right to freedom of speech as long as you say what they want you to. I think it's a joke.

Q: *Is freedom of expression something important to Republicans?*

A: I would say so. I don't think that freedom of speech is of any threat to Republicanism, and certainly think that it should be open to criticism, and open to hearing other points of view. I don't have a problem with people saying what they feel or what they think.

Q: *How did you get to where you are to day?*

A: I come from a very strong Republican family. In many ways, I was born into it. But in saying that, I don't think that I have blind loyalty to Republicanism. I think that in your life there comes a time when you question everything and have to make your own decisions as to what is best for you and what is right and wrong, and in my teenage years, I did come to that point in my life, where I questioned a lot about Republicanism. I think that although I was born in it, I then had to “renew our baptismal vows at Bodinstown” as they say. There comes a point in your life where you have to make the decision to be a Republican. Luckily, I found the answer in the Republican Movement, and was able to renew my “baptism of vows.”

Q: *When did you break with the Provos?*

A: At the start of this so-called peace process, I had great concerns, but like many Republicans I was prepared to let them run with it for a while, to see where it was going. That was the case for a few years. I was prepared to trust the leadership in place that this was the best road. When the Framework Principles, and the Mitchell Principles were presented, I saw the writing on the wall, and thought there's nothing for us in this, now is the time to get out of this, this is just a cul de sac.

Q: *Where you threatened by the Provisionals?*

A: Yes I was. A member of the Provisionals visited my home to tell me that the fact that I was expressing views that were critical of Sinn Féin, was not tolerable, and that I should better keep my mouth shut. Those visits continued for quite a number of weeks, but I made it perfectly clear to them that I wasn't going to be intimidated by them. I hadn't let the British intimidate me, and I wasn't going to be intimidated by the Provisionals.

Q: *Why do you think that the Provisionals have to keep threatening people such as yourself while you have given so much to the movement?*

A: Whatever you've given to the Republican movement counts for nothing, if you're not a “Yes” person within the Provisional Movement of today, everything else is disregarded. If you don't go along with the leadership, it doesn't matter what you've done in the past, you're completely disregarded. If this leadership is so convinced that it is in the right path, I don't understand why they won't debate with others, be upfront about things and let us all put all our cards on the table and air our grievances, and if we are so wrong in our analysis, let them explain to us why we are so wrong. We are prepared to argue with them, if they are so convinced that they are right, why can't we all talk about this? Why is there this conspiracy of silence, where no one is allowed to speak out? Or if someone speaks out, they are vilified?

Q: *Do you have any regrets?*

A: None

Q: *How do you view the future?*

A: Unfortunately I see a long hard struggle coming. I know that when I joined the Republican Movement and the IRA and ended up in prison, I was always confident in the thought that my generation would be the last generation. History and events on the ground proved me wrong. But I hope that new Republicans will feel as I did when I joined the Republican movement, and will be encouraged by the principles and ideals and the quality of people around them, and also by the history of Republicanism and the sacrifices that have been made, that this will encourage them in thinking that Republicanism is the only way forward. I fervently believe that Republicanism is the only viable option for the people Ireland.

Continued from page 1

not remain identical in the future. The youth of Ardoyne and those protesting against racism and exclusion in the South are there to prove it. But the fact that at present no significant section of the people North and South are mobilised and the majority of the population demobilised

make the emergence of a credible radical opposition difficult. People are tired of politics in general, they have been betrayed by the politicians so many times. Increasing EU integration and globalisation are also challenges to

the traditional Republican project of establishing a sovereign nation-state. Those are objective factors that threaten Irish Republicanism with becoming an anachronism and an irrelevancy if it is not able to develop. But time and again, Irish Republicanism has shown great ability to adapt itself to changing circumstances. Even if it operates in difficult circumstances, its strength and ability to regenerate are not to be underestimated.

The fundamental question is whether this present conjuncture is just a crisis of Irish Republicanism – albeit a serious one – or its death agony. During its two

Q: *Do you think that Republican objectives can be achieved by purely political means?*

A: I don't know, I have to say that. But coming from the background I come from, if there are people who believe that it can't be and want to try other means, I won't be the person who is going to say that they are wrong, because I was at the stage in my life where I believed that armed struggle was the way forward. There are other people who think that.

Q: *Short term future?*

A: A lot of hard work. We have a growing number of prisoners to be looked after. We in the 32CSM, we have a lot of hard work to do,

hundred years existence, Irish Republicanism has gone through a number of crisis; but has always managed to recover from them and go forward. The present crisis is no different. It can be asserted with relative confidence that in due time, Irish Republicanism will once again arise from its ashes. Those who assert that this period of history sees the death agony of Irish Republicanism, as it was argued above, over-estimate the ability of the British and 26-County states to create and implement reforms and underestimate

Irish Republicanism's ability to sustain and develop itself. However, what remains to be seen is under what form Republicanism will re-emerge, under a fundamentalist or a progressive one. The crisis of Irish Republicanism is perhaps less related to objective problems than subjective ones. The fundamental problem is that an alternative strategy and political vision that would regenerate Irish Republicanism is very slow to emerge. Where we can be confident is that Irish Republicanism has proved itself to have a progressive potential and be able to evolve. On that basis, let us develop that vision and strategy. ■

to show that the core issue has never been addressed, and until it is addressed, nothing else will work. The core issue is the British presence in Ireland, and until it is addressed, through a British declaration of intent to withdraw, the basic problem will remain.

Q: *What do you make of the fact that people are backing the GFA?*

A: You're hearing people say

on the street, "Well, at least no one is getting killed," and if you reply "But what we've got today is a complete sell-out," they say "but no one is dying." And that is true, but then what was the point of starting in the first place? I do think that, as history proves it, when so-called revolutionaries become the establishment, they become more establishment than the establishment ever was. ■

The Turkish Hunger Strike And International Solidarity

by Davy Carlin

W While watching a recent TV documentary on the 1981 hunger strike I caught a glimpse of a young black child looking nervously into a coffin. Twenty years on as I sit on the Belfast committee to build support for the Turkish hunger strike I try to recollect my young thoughts as I looked into that coffin of hunger striker Bobby Sands. The images of that time are etched firmly onto my mind.

Twenty years on it has given such inspiration to the Turkish hunger strikers with some who were involved in the Irish hunger strikes now providing solidarity.

Today the main demands are four-fold. Firstly the closure of the special F-type prisons which create the isolation cells. Incidentally it should be noted such a policy of these high security isolation prisons have been condemned by numerous international organizations as it has proven to be detrimental to both physical and mental well-being.

The second demand of the prisoners is for the abolition of law 3713 used against trade unionists or people sympathetic to revolutionaries on the grounds of 'aiding terrorism'. Thirdly the abolition of the state security courts; and fourthly investigations into murders and torture of prisoners.

The recent footage from Turkey showed the true brutality of one of Americans main military benefactors. On top of this we have the states response to the growing support and resistance. They release prisoners on 'death fast' to attempt to break that very resistance. So

now we have seen that fight also taken to homes in solidarity, from Armutlu to Sefakoy. The death fast continues, forged by commitment, dedication, willpower and belief to each other, their struggle and their ideas.

Fighting back means then standing up not only to the brutal Turkish regime but to the very politic that supports and feeds it. The western governments and especially America arm, fund and train the Turkish military machine while they mention little of what is happening to the DHKP-C, the TKP-ML or the TKIP because it benefits them politically. They mention little also about the plight of the Kurds as it would run counter to their strategic interests and they say little of Turkey's human rights record as it would not tally with their foreign policy interests of the region economically.

Turkey recently has taken out a ten billion pound loan with the IMF which comes with severe measures attached to it. So we shall see the deepening of the pain and poverty of the working class and poor along with the intensification of repression of persons and organizations.

The ideology behind the Turkish struggle cannot be abstracted from the increasing practicalities of this period while they give the ultimate sacrifice for those ideas. For revolutionaries our support is crucial but so also is the understanding of the system that has forced such sacrifice, and why collectively with our class we need to organize our stance against such a politic of brutality. ■

Davy Carlin is a Marxist activist currently involved in organising support for the Turkish hunger strike.

Taking Sides In The War On Modernity

by Kevin Bean

After the initial shock of September 11th come the attempts to understand. American politicians talk of a world that 'will never be the same again,' of a new type of war against a new type of enemy. The 'civilized world' is enjoined to line up behind the United States in its defence of freedom against the evil forces of 'terrorism personified' in the frail, menacing figure of Osama Bin Laden.

These themes are repeated ad nauseam as the United States and British military operations begin against Afghanistan; we are subjected to a high altitude propaganda bombardment which pounds us into identifying any opposition or even slight reservation about the policy with support for the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden.

It is not unusual for socialists and republicans to take an unpopular, isolated position. Indeed many of us could be almost defined as congenital oppositionists who instinctively oppose any action carried out by the United States and its British sidekicks. So opposition to a military campaign that pits the most modern of destructive technology in an obscene bombing campaign against the lightly armed population of one of the poorest counties on earth is both easy and right

But the moral indignation of the Guardian reading liberal is not enough -whether it is applied to George Bush or Osama Bin Laden. We need to go beyond condemnation and outrage to the more difficult and narrower ground of analysis and explanation. Beyond the rhetoric of politicians pandering to the clamour for revenge lie some simple truths. The attacks of September 11th do represent an attack on modernity. No amount of cynicism about the stale slogans of Bush and Blair can hide this fact; no amount of Marxist ledgermain can transmute the base

metal of Bin Laden's obscurantism into the pure gold of progressive, anti-capitalism. New York and Washington were targeted not only as the symbols of aggressive American power, but also as signifiers of Western values and modernity itself.

Osama Bin Laden's methods of struggle will not overthrow American imperialism or end the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The world it wants to win offers nothing to the poor, the oppressed and the excluded of the Arab world. Taliban-controlled Afghanistan is not a beacon of hope for anyone.

However, socialists and republicans can give no support to the armed actions of the United States and Britain in Afghanistan. Although couched in the language of human rights and progress this campaign is an attempt to control refractory elements along the borders of the empire. As the world's dominant power the

**"THE JOB OF
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United States is acting to control opposition and incorporate its enemies into its imperium - just as other empires have done before it Britain has, of course, been here before; it's their fourth Afghan War and they have had plenty of experience in controlling the 'lesser breeds without the law'. Not only is the aim of this campaign not to genuinely liberate the Afghan people - a U.N. protectorate or a puppet Northern Alliance government seem likely options at the moment - but the job of liberating the Afghan people belongs to the Afghan people themselves. Freedom given at the whim of the Great Powers is no freedom at all.

The other feature of opposition to the United States armed campaign is its implications for domestic politics in the West. The identification of any dissent with 'terrorism', the threats to civil liberties from state repression, and the mobilization of the population behind the slogans of a crusade

for freedom will be powerful agencies in consolidating the political and social status-quo. This war-like atmosphere will encourage us to think in terms of a Manichean world in which an unseen, faceless enemy awaits around every corner. Attempts will be made to stifle dissent and rational critique with the politics of paranoia.

In these ways September 11th did change the world-but in many other ways the world system continues to revolve in the same old orbit. The response of American Imperialism to the attacks is the only possible one for a Great Power when faced with lese majestie by an insurgent group that starkly revealed the vulnerability of the world's only remaining super-power.

In this 'new world' the ground on which we must stand is necessarily narrow. But conflicts of this type represent the future of world politics; battle lines will be blurred and confusion and contradiction will replace the old certainties of a bi-polar conflict. As we attempt to develop a new politics that addresses these issues of the new world order we have to take these complexities into account. A good start to the process of redefinition of our politics is to assess the events of September 11th by reference to some of the first principles of the modernity and the Enlightenment from which our philosophies of socialism and republicanism spring. In the war against modernity we cannot stand on the sidelines. We defend and advance the ideas of human emancipation and progress. But we don't simply identify modernity and progress with American capitalism and its foreign policy. Our narrow ground is one that pits us against both Bin Laden and Bush; as the new wars of the twenty first century unfold the creation of a meaningful political analysis and the development of forces to translate that analysis into political reality will be difficult. But the imperatives of our intellectual and political heritage mean that we can do no other. Battle is joined and we must continue the fight for the future. ■

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