



IRSP

HUNGER STRIKE BULLETIN NO.2



BRENDAN HUGHES -BELFAST

Monday 27th October - H5

Today we began our hunger strike to the death. The last food we got was at 6pm. last night. The doctor explained to us the implications of prolonged hunger strike - the damage it does to vital organs like the liver and kidneys. We are still taking water. We are well but due to the bad conditions we have existed in for 4 years this hunger strike will take its toll on us more quickly. We dont give ourselves much time to live -perhaps 30-35 days. We havnt been medically examined or weighed yet. They may keep us in this condition hoping it will weaken our resolve.



SEAN McKENNA- NEWRY



TOMMY McKEARNEY -MOY



JOHN NIXON - ARMAGH



TOM McFEELY - CO'DERRY



LEO GREEN- LURGAN

The Brits will let us die. Paisley McCusker etc. are howling for our blood. We can only put our faith in you the people - the oppressed people. You must show in every way that you are not prepared to let us die. In the coming weeks we have all an important task to do. We must give a clear indication to the Brits and the wolves that if any of the hunger strikers die the whole country will erupt. We must make this clear. This issue concerns all the people of Ireland. **VICTORY FOR US MEANS VICTORY FOR ALL.**

John Nixon



RAYMOND McCARTNEY -DERRY

HUNGER STRIKE HISTORY

So far this century 12 Irish Republican prisoners have died on hunger strike. Fasting for justice has a long tradition in Ireland and can be traced back to the Brehon laws which were the old tribal laws of Ireland before the Norman invasion in the 11th century.

In Brehon law the ritual hunger strike was a method by which a person of lower rank could demand justice in a legal dispute with a person of higher rank. However this fast was only required to last from sunrise to sunset and the person fasted against was required to fast also and to submit the settlement of the dispute to arbitration.

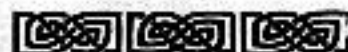
The first hunger strike undertaken by an Irish Republican in this century is thought to have been the short but successful protest undertaken by James Connolly in 1913. He went on hunger strike to protest about the bad conditions in Mountjoy prison and was released after a few days. Connolly's action was inspired by the feminist movement of that time which had many women imprisoned for fighting for the vote.

The next hunger striker was Francis Sheehy Skeffington, husband of Irish feminist Hanna Sheehy Skeffington. He went on hunger strike when he was jailed for 6 months for making an anti-recruiting speech. He was released after 9 days. This was in 1915 when Britain was looking for Irish recruits to fight their war in Europe.

After the 1916 rebellion the Brits took an increasingly hard line attitude. The first hunger striker to die after the declaration of the Irish Republic was THOMAS ASHE.



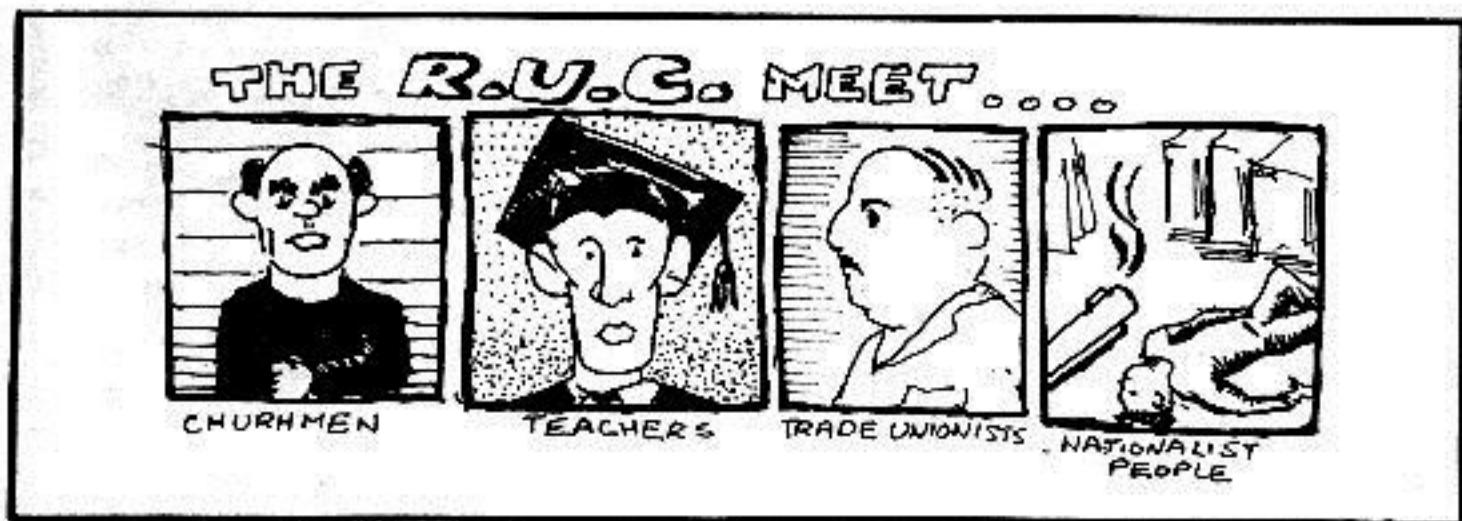
Thomas Ashe



Ashe who had been a commandant in the 1916 rising was sentenced to death but then reprieved. In 1917 he was rearrested along with other republicans and charged with making speeches calculated to cause disaffection (from Britain) in Mountjoy prison. He and his comrades demanded to be treated as prisoners of war and went on hunger strike. Five days later Ashe was dead as a result of forced feeding.

Thirty thousand people followed his coffin through Dublin while thousands more lined the route. His body, dressed in the uniform of the Volunteers lay in state in the City hall. The concessions which the British government granted the other prisoners following the public outcry lasted for only a few weeks, but the anger of the thousands lasted for years and it brought the country a step nearer to independence.

Hunger striking now became an increasingly popular weapon in the struggle for Irish independence. Austin Stack did it in Dundalk prison and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington whose husband Francis had been shot by the British in 1916, went on hunger strike in Holloway. In April 1920 60 men went on hunger strike in Mountjoy. After 10 days in which there had been massive support on the streets, including a three day general strike, they were all unconditionally released.



LETTER FROM JOHN NIXON

In 1968 I wasn't yet 13 when the first civil rights march was held. I didn't understand it. The most I remember was being crushed in the crowd.

1969 August 14th. That night I stood at the Shambles area. A meeting was in progress at the city hall. B. Specials R.U.C. and Paisleyites gathered in the town. I remember the tension. After the meeting the Paisleyites and R.U.C. attacked. I stayed for about an hour or so and then the shooting started and the older men chased us home. That night I didn't sleep. The gunfire continued until early morning. I watched the glow of the burning buildings from my bedroom window. Next day I attended John Gallaghers wake. I still remember the dark clotted blood on the walls. My da said at the graveside that this was only the beginning. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, wait and see. This was how it was, trouble followed trouble.

1970 The B Specials were disbanded and the R.U.C. disarmed. The riots and shooting went on. We all took part, we didn't have to be told why it was happening. I saw it as the poor hitting back, looking for something better.

In August 71 armoured cars rumbled into our estate. After that internment was more than just a word to me. We built barricades and rioted for weeks on end. I began to learn a lot more. I slept at the barricades until dawn many a morning.

1972 I learned that there was more to war than throwing petrol bombs. The Officials had called a ceasefire that year and the Provos had too. I was arrested and questioned more times than enough. I appeared in court where I pleaded not guilty to riotous behaviour charges but was found guilty.

1973 I was avoiding the Brits now but not for long. I was arrested and taken to the R.U.C. station. Next morning I was taken to Gough barracks. I was dragged out of the jeep and frogmarched to a helicopter. I was very scared as this wasn't the usual procedure. The helicopter headed off with me handcuffed to the seat. An R.U.C. man threatened to toss me out. Threats and insults accompanied me all the way. I spent three days in Ballykelly, I survived but 'Sam' who interrogated me assured me that I would be got and no questions asked. I was beaten up but that was nothing new.

In April 73 I learned that my friends Tony Duncan and J.J.O'Neill were to be interned in Long Kesh. That night (April 7th) a bullet from a Brit rifle killed Jake McGerrigan and seriously wounded me, as we were walking up the street. My bowels and intestines hung from a big hole cut in my abdomen. I don't know how I didn't die. Jake was hit in an artery, his blood splattered over me as we both fell to the ground. I talked with him before he died. I remember well all he said. I will always remember how he faced death bravely.

I'll never forget the blood and the screams for help. After this I have been afraid of death that is of a painful death. When I regained consciousness in Musgrave Park Hospital, my life wasn't safe. Brit soldiers who were also patients made attempts on my life more than once. I was then moved to Crumlin Rd. Prison charged with possession of a weapon with intent but I got bail and came out of Crumlin Road weak from my operations and wracked with pains in my abdomen.

1974 In Feb. at my trial in the Diplock court I pleaded not guilty but despite my testimony and that of 3 witnesses the judge Gibson accepted the word of a Brit soldier and I was sentenced to 5 years. This was not to be my last experience of the Diplock courts.

Long Kesh I arrived in Long Kesh the day after my trial and tried to settle in and take an interest in education. I read a lot, learned a lot but trouble soon arose. Conditions were bad and in protest we threw our food out over the wire. Visits and parcels were stopped and tension increased. When we burnt the camp we were attacked by Brits with tear gas, batons and dogs.

When the split came and the I.R.S.P. was formed, myself and McQuaid joined. We were not given recognition by the prison authorities but after a 13 day hunger strike we got out demands. I was released after 2 1/2 years, well aware of our history both social and economic and eager to get back to the fight.



1976 - December, I was back in Crumlin Road Gaol, the blanket protest had just begun.

1977 - In September, after nearly 10 months on remand I appeared in another Diplock Court. I pleaded not guilty to their charge of armed robbery but McGrath the judge, found me guilty on the basis of a verbal statement the R.U.C. claimed I made. He didn't listen to my side of the story. He gave me 14 years. Two days later I was in a H. block cell wrapped only in a blanket. Then came the dirty protest.

THREE YEARS LATER I'M STILL HERE -
My skin covered in a rash, my body emaciated three years of suffering in this stinking wretched cell. I refuse to be treated like a criminal. This history since 1968 clearly shows why I am here doing what I do. I am prepared to do much more. EVEN TO DIE. I believe my death will do something for others. DARE TO STRUGGLE - DARE TO WIN!

MASS RESISTANCE ON THE STREETS.

SUNDAY 26th OCTOBER - Massive support for the hunger strikers was shown in Belfast on the eve of the hunger strike. At least 55,000 people took to the streets. Rally outside the G.P.O. in Dublin, over 500 people attended.

MONDAY 27th OCTOBER - Roads throughout the counties were blocked, torchlight procession in the Short Strand and a 2,000 strong procession in Dungannon.

TUESDAY 28th OCTOBER - The Primark shopping store in the city centre was occupied for an hour and a half by 300 people inside and out. Torch-light marches took place in Stewartstown and the Bone.

WEDNESDAY 29th OCTOBER - 50 people highlighted the hunger strike by picketing Leisure World in Belfast were Alan Minter former world Boxing champion signed autographs. Also H.U.C. and Brit Barracks were picketed by thousands throughout Belfast.

THURSDAY 30th OCTOBER - The Petty Sessions Court in Chichester Street was picketed successfully. Torchlight marches took place in the Markets Ardboe and Lurgan where 2,000 people turned out, relatives occupied Magee College in Derry and vigils took place in Belfast, a 72 year old woman was shot in the New Lodge vigil from a passing car. Loyalists suspected.

FRIDAY 31st OCTOBER - Central Station in Belfast was picketed, from the Markets - Short-Strand by 100 people. City centre shops were leafleted, the Grand Opera House was picketed on the 21st anniversary of U.F.V. by 100 people.

SATURDAY 1st NOVEMBER - Vigils took place in the Markets Ormeau Rd. Ladybrook Beechmount and Lenadoon, R.U.C. and Brit stations were picketed throughout the 6 counties.

SUNDAY 2nd NOVEMBER - Torchlight processions took place in Dungiven, Twinbrook, Ladybrook, Bergh, demonstrations in Ballymurphy, Turf Lodge, pickets at G.A.A. match in Newcastle, leafleting of Churches in West Belfast and Short Strand.

MONDAY 3rd NOVEMBER - Rosaries said in various areas. Picket of Gloucester House Unemployment Office, 60 people attended. Youth Against H.Block picket at Fort Jericho, over 100 youth present. Marches in Derry and Strabane.

STREETS.

TUESDAY 4th NOVEMBER - Torchlight processions took place in Clonard, Turf Lodge and Craigan, Co. Tyrone. Ballyowen Health Centre, Andersonstown was picketed and the income tax office in Belfast.

For details of Marches, Pickets, activities, etc. contact your local Hunger Strike Committee or the Belfast Hunger Strike co-ordinating Committee.



The First 2 To Die?

As the hunger strike in the H.blocks enters it's second week. Deaths seem eminent there and in Armagh jail, with the critical conditions of Seamus Mullan and Pauline McLaughlin respectively. Seamus Mullan is now well over 40 days on hunger strike in the H. blocks and doctors have described his condition as critically ill. Mullan's health was already seriously deteriorated due to a previously prolonged hunger strike of 70 days, the last 10 of which he refused water as well. After that hunger strike Seamus received an appeal which failed. Pauline McLaughlin is also considered to be dying by the doctors at Armagh, weighing only 4 1/2 stone. She is now back in Armagh after a few weeks in Musgrave Park Hospital. Her condition is still the same. She is **CRITICAL**. Only proper medical treatment can save Pauline from an inevitable death in Armagh. WE DEMAND THAT PAULINE MCLAUGHLIN BE FREED FROM ARMAUGH JAIL TO RECEIVE THAT TREATMENT.

HUNGER STRIKE FIGHTING FUND

DONATIONS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED FOR OUR HUNGER STRIKE FIGHTING FUND IN ORDER TO PRODUCE POSTERS AND LEAFLETS TO COUNTER BRITISH PROPAGANDA AND ORGANISE SUPPORT FOR THE HUNGER STRIKERS.

DONATIONS SHOULD BE SENT TO..... HUNGER STRIKE FIGHTING FUND

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