

International VIEWPOINT

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**DOSSIER ON THE
PHILIPPINES**

**Turning point in the Philippines
Chernobasle: who killed the Rhine?**

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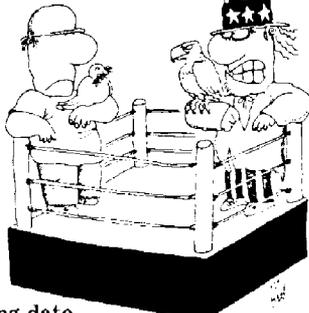
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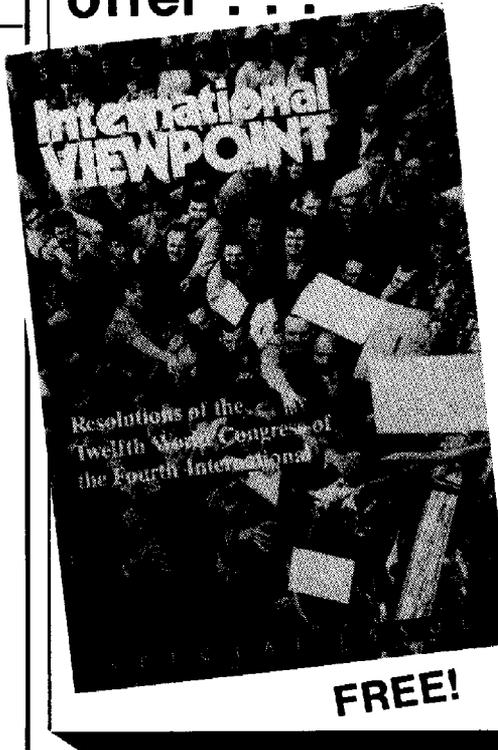
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This state of affairs can be seen today at Sandoz. Worse still, the confederal and cantonal institutions lack the necessary means and information to make such an accounting. Representing Sandoz, Ernest Zugger had the gall to say that independent inspection of the chemical firms is virtually impossible technically. The American example alone is sufficient to refute this. But worst of all he had the effrontery to claim that such a regulatory agency would cost the taxpayers dear! As if pollution does not cost them anything, as if the profits of the chemical industry were not enough to finance a genuine independent inspection!

The mechanisms themselves of producing intermediate toxic products lead to increasing the dangers. A line of research needs only be abandoned and the result of the past research piles up in the form of toxic waste. A chemicals firm making intermediate products needs only to see its orders decrease, either conjuncturally or structurally, and dangerous residues build up. The list of examples is endless.

Imagine only, to get a concrete picture of the problem, that all the cars junked or kept in storerooms were highly toxic products, poorly looked after and poorly put away but with clearly identifiable dangers for the population.

Some would say that efforts are being made now to get better looked after disposal sites for toxic waste. That is partially true. But one figure alone is enough to show the limits of the measures taken in countries that are much more advanced in this field than Switzerland. For example, in the United States in 1983, the Environmental Protection Agency judged that only 35 of the 275 tons of toxic products produced annually came under its purview. (9)

Finally, everyone thinks that it is normal that before a medicine goes on sale, a state institution, independent if possible of the pharmaceutical industry, gives the go-ahead. But for thousands of highly toxic intermediate products put on the market (if only on the inter-enterprise market) such precautions do not exist. That is another feature of the capitalist chemicals scandal.

The Basle accident poses at once the problem of the procedures for invention and fabrications of chemical products, of their social, economic, and ecological utility for humanity (and a number are useful in the present historical stage), and of effective social control over the activities of the chemicals firms, of safety and protection measures. □

Dutch complicity with British repression

ON OCTOBER 21, the Dutch Supreme Court ruled that Brendan McFarlane and Gerry Kelly, two escapees from Northern Ireland's Maze Prison, could be extradited. (1) In effect, it put the decision in the hands of the minister for justice.

Because of the court's recommendation that the minister seek guarantees that the prisoners would not be ill-treated, it was generally expected that the actual handing over of the two could be delayed. However, the minister announced within a matter of weeks that the two would be turned over to the British authorities. It is urgent that there is an international protest against this decision. Letters and telegrams can be sent to Korthes Altes, Ministry for Justice, PO Box 20301, 2500 EH Den Haag, The Netherlands.

The following article is from the November 28 issue of *Klassenstrijd*, the paper of the Dutch section of the Fourth International.

KAREL TEN HAAF

The two IRA men arrested in the Netherlands, Gerry Kelly and Brendan McFarlane, can be handed over to the British authorities, according to the decision of the Supreme Court. The defence's political objections were rejected.

Of course, the court advised the minister of justice to ask for guarantees from Britain that Kelly and McFarlane would be treated humanely. But the ministers rejected this advice.

In the parliament's standing committee on justice, a majority represented by the Christian Democrats and the [free-enterprise] Liberals agreed with the minister's decision.

Van Bennekom, Kelly and McFarlane's lawyer, has instituted summary proceedings. In this way, he is trying to force the minister to ask for guarantees and to wait for a decision from the European Court of Human Rights on this affair.

In his presentation, Van Beenekom systematically pointed out the political character of the struggle the IRA is waging in the North of Ireland. The law on extradition includes a ban on extraditing people for political crimes. Britain called for extradition on the basis of alleged crimes committed by Kelly and McFarlane during their escape from the Maze prison on September 25, 1983. Mentioned in the extradition request were the murder of a guard and grievous

bodily harm to four other guards, as well as wrongful imprisonment of some people.

As regards the alleged murder of a guard, the facts are clear. The autopsy report shows that the guard died from a heart attack. As a man with serious coronary problems, he was in fact unsuited to the job.

As for the charge of causing grievous bodily harm, from the statements of three of the four wounded guards there is no proof of any kind that either Kelly or McFarlane caused these wounds. In the case of the fourth guard, there is evidence that grievous bodily harm was inflicted on him by Kelly.

Did the British authorities in their extradition request refer to this as an attempted murder because this was the only case in which it could be shown that one of the two IRA men held in the Netherlands wounded a guard? The truth, however, is different from what the British authorities would have us believe.

The plan of the escape called for subduing people who jeopardized the breakout. Guard John Adams put the success of the escape in danger. So, he was subdued.

On the wrongful imprisonment of

1. See articles in 'International Viewpoint' No. 108, November 10, 1986.

some people, the fact that this was necessary for the success of the escape is shown clearly by the unfolding of the operation. (This is recounted in the interview Brendan McFarlane gave to Derek Dunne in Amsterdam and which was published in the April issue of the Dublin Magazine *Magill*.)

"On Sunday, September 25, at 2.15 in the afternoon, Brendan McFarlane and two others walked into the nerve center, the "Circle" of H-Block 7. They were armed. The guards in A, B, C and D wings were overpowered. One of the guards made an attempt to push the alarm button, and was shot down. The guards were stripped and some of the prisoners put their uniforms on.

"McFarlane ran to the door marked 'guards' and was let through. The plan was to take over all the doors one after the other and station the IRA prisoners there dressed as guards. They seized a food delivery truck, and the plan was that men from the truck would take prisoner any guard who got in the way. In the place known as the Tally Lodge, however, there was too much coming and going of guards. One of them started blowing his whistle as he was running away. Two cars stopped in front of the truck. Skirmishes occurred and some guards were knocked down.

"The IRA prisoners pretended to give up. Tempers calmed. Then they stormed over the fence. In the confusion, the army was unable to fire on the fleeing men. Prisoners dressed as guards, and guards dressed in civilian clothing were running together. Cars were hijacked as soon as they reached the road. Nineteen escapees were almost immediately caught.

"Brendan McFarlane, dressed as a guard, led seven men to the road, commandeered three cars and rode away in the direction of Moira." [Retranslated from Dutch.]

That the escape was a political act is shown by the fact that the IRA men who escaped and managed to stay out of the hands of the police all continued the struggle against the imperialist yoke of Britain. Their objective in escaping was to continue the struggle. It is disgusting to see a so-called unpartisan body such as the Supreme Court reject the argument of the defence that this was a political case.

This false judgement stemmed from a political unwillingness to recognize the right of the Irish people to self-defence and therefore to condemn Britain's imperialist policy. The fact that the minister of justice eagerly took this golden opportunity to gratify a "friendly

state" should surprise no one.

Although the Supreme Court did not want to recognize the offences as political, it was convinced that very rough treatment was in store for Kelly and McFarlane. For that reason, it advised the minister to ask for special guarantees from the English authorities (without however specifying what these guarantees should be). The minister rejected this advice.

Grave physical dangers facing Kelly and McFarlane

This recommendation to get guarantees about the treatment of the IRA men from the British

FROM JIMMY BURNS' LETTER:

WHEN I was brought back to the Maze with the other recaptured prisoners, we were met at "reception" by the guards. While we were taken out of the prison van one by one, we were set upon by various guards with drawn truncheons. They systematically clubbed us to the ground. Others tried to set German Shepherd dogs on us, and then pulled them back at the last minute, just before the beasts got a chance to bite us. I was beaten over my head, neck, arms, back and legs with truncheons and repeatedly punched and kicked. Then I was dragged to the reception room, where I was verbally abused and threatened with further punishment, and even with death.

That afternoon, I was beaten again, but not so hard, because the prison doctor and the head of the medical service were present. After these two had had the nerve to "search" me, I was taken to the punishment cell. Before being locked in, I was beaten again. My head was repeatedly banged against an iron barrier and I was again kicked and punched. That is just a brief resume. You might object that tempers were heated and emotions were running high. But all this happened six days after the escape. Until that time, the police had held us in custody. The authorities and the guards made no secret of the fact that they hold Brendan McFarlane responsible for everything that happened during the escape. And they make even less attempt to conceal that they would give him much worse treatment. The beating we got would pale by comparison!

Therefore, I again appeal to you to do everything possible to get the judges to review their decision to hand over Brendan McFarlane, if only for humanitarian reasons. [Retranslated from the Dutch]. □

authorities did not come out of the blue. Immediately after the initial decision on the case by a local Amsterdam court on March 25, 1986, Irish Republican prisoners in the Maze prison started a letter-writing campaign to warn the outside world of the grave physical dangers facing Brendan McFarlane and Gerard Kelly if they were handed over to the British authorities. Special attention was called to the position of McFarlane, who was seen as the brains behind the escape.

These letters were not allowed out by the prison authorities. They were written on cigarette paper and smuggled out.

In April, Jimmy Burns wrote from the Maze prison in the North [See box]. He is one of the 38 political prisoners who escaped from this prison on September 25, 1983. He was one of those who were almost immediately recaptured.

But humanitarianism is an unknown concept for the minister. That is why Van Bennekom initiated summary proceedings to force the minister to wait for a ruling from the European Court of Human Rights. On Thursday, November 20, the European Court decided not to ask the Dutch government to postpone the extradition. The court wants to wait for the decision in the summary proceedings, which is expected for November 25. Moreover, the court claims that there is insufficient evidence to suppose that the IRA men would be subjected to ill treatment in British prisons.

Van Bennekom's response to the ruling was as follows: "The meaning of this decision is limited. The complaint as such was not rejected. The practical importance of the ruling is that since the court at the moment sees no reason to intervene, it is not likely that in a short time it will see reasons to."

The European Commission is to take up this case on December 1. In the Standing Committee on Justice, a majority made up of Liberals and Christian Democrats are in agreement with the minister. The PvdA [Labor Party] and the PPR and PSP [small "far left" parties] are considering the possibilities for putting the case on the agenda of parliament. As we go to press, nothing has yet been decided. The PvdA leader Maarten van Traa has said: "In any event, we are not happy about this. I think that a formal question will be put to parliament. □



“The revolutionary reconquest of Ireland”

THE CONGRESS of the Irish republican political organization Sinn Fein, on November 1-2 marked a watershed in the history of the traditional revolutionary movement. In our last issue, we published an initial assessment of the meaning of the decision to participate in parliamentary politics in the formally independent part of the country. Below we are publishing major excerpts of the keynote speech at the congress (Ard-Fheis) by Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams.

The speech illustrates the process by which the republican leadership came to its decision and the arguments it used to convince the majority of the movement. It tells quite a lot about the republican movement and about a leadership that is now trying to give this movement a more developed program. It also helps to explain how this leadership has been able to carry through a fundamental change without yet suffering a major split. (There has indeed been a split which is not insignificant, but whether or not it will become a real challenge remains to be seen. That will probably depend to a large extent on how effectively the Sinn Fein leadership applies its new approach. For the moment it holds the high ground.)

For all these reasons, we have decided to publish the bulk of Gerry Adam's presidential address. There are many historical references, which are explained when they are important to the political points he is making. It should be pointed out at the start, however, that when he says he rejected a “dual power” approach, that refers to schemes for building up parallel governments now as a substitute for participating in parliamentary politics. He says that in 1918, when a rebel parliament was set up, there was a genuine dual power situation.

One thing has to be said and said loudly so that the whole world can hear. *We are still around.*

Despite all the best efforts of the British and Dublin governments, despite all the bluster of Fine Gael or their Northern representatives, the SDLP [Catholic bourgeois party], despite the bullies of the DUP [Democratic Unionist Party], Sinn Fein has not gone away. Ta muid ann agus fanfaigh muid ann go mbeidh bua againn. [We are here and will remain until victory is ours.]

The IRA is also still around. The Volunteer soldiers of Oglagh na hEireann, now 17 years in the field, have demonstrated, time and again in the past 12 months, that they are unbeaten and unbroken. Their tenacity, in the face of a numerically stronger and much better equipped enemy, has become a legend among

freedom-loving people throughout the world.

It is no accident when Conor Cruise O'Brien [a consistent advocate of Irish national surrender to British imperialism] was quite properly chased ignominiously out of South Africa by students they chanted: “*Victory to the ANC! Victory to the IRA!*” We share their contempt for Dr. O'Brien and we also share their solidarity in our common struggles. We extend that solidarity to national liberation armies throughout the world. We especially extend that solidarity to the men and women Volunteers of Oglagh na hEireann.

The struggle for the past 12 months has been carried at a great cost by republican activists.

One of the most important debates so far in this phase of our struggle will take place tomorrow when the

Ard-Fheis will address itself to the question of abstentionism.

You will be asked to consider and support a motion from the Ard Chomhairle, [national committee] and from cumainn [branches] and comhairli ceantair [district committees] throughout Ireland, calling for a change in our abstentionist attitude to Leinster House.

Before addressing this issue directly, I would like to take this opportunity to address myself to the debate and to the mood and conditions in which I think it should be conducted. Of course, I cannot force these conditions upon anyone. When delegates address the Ard-Fheis they are free to do so in whatever way they choose, but I appeal to you all, regardless of what view you hold on this issue, to remember that we are comrades in struggle and should conduct ourselves accordingly.

We are a political organization and political organizations must, by their very nature, discuss and debate issues which they consider pertinent. We cannot do so properly unless all sides of the argument are articulated, unless all sides are accorded equal respect and consideration and unless all are bound by the democratic wishes of their comrades. The Ard-Fheis is the supreme authority in Sinn Fein — not the Ard Chomhairle, not the Coiste Seasta [Executive], not the president. The assembled delegates of an Ard-Fheis are the authority. *You* are the leadership. And whatever you decide on this issue, as on any other issue, is binding on us all. None of us can predict or anticipate tomorrow's vote; none of us, on our own, can decide which way this party is going to vote, but each of us can decide as individuals what we are going to do when the vote is counted. And we can make that decision today.

Many republicans have deep and justifiably strong feelings about abstentionism. I share and understand those feelings. But none of us, regardless of the strength of our views, has the right to present the establishment and our opponents with the opportunity to project internationally the spectacle of yet another republican “split”. Indeed, we have a duty to deny them such an opportunity. This struggle is bigger than all of us and it demands of us, as a basic requirement of our involvement, that we develop the ability and maturity to agree to disagree, even on fundamentals, and to unite in the great struggle for the reconquest of our country.

Unity is strength. Not a conditional unity or a qualified unity but a total commitment to a unified acceptance of the democratic mandate of this Ard-Fheis.

I can understand that some comrades view a change of the abstentionist policy as a betrayal of republican principles. Some of you may feel that a republican organization making such a change can no longer call itself "republican". If there are delegates here who feel like this I would remind you that another republican organization has already done what you fear we are going to do tomorrow. I would remind you that the Army Authority of Oglai na hEireann [the IRA], assembled in a General Army Convention, has democratically made a judgement on this issue and that Oglai na hEireann has remained united in its determination to pursue the armed struggle and is united in its confidence in us and our ability to pursue the political struggle.

"To leave Sinn Fein is to leave the struggle"

The decisions of a General Army Convention are not binding on Sinn Fein Ard-Fheiseanna, but the logic of those who would consider withdrawing from Sinn Fein if we change the abstentionist policy must be applied also to your attitude to the Army. And the logic which would dictate withdrawal of support from Sinn Fein if decisions go against you means that you have already decided to withdraw solidarity and support from the IRA and the armed struggle. It means that you have decided to stop supporting captured republicans incarcerated in British or Free State prisons or in prisons in Europe and the USA. I do not believe that any republican could take such a decision and then attend this Ard-Fheis.

There is going to be no split in Sinn Fein on this or any other issue.

Some comrades may decide to leave us. Perhaps they have already decided to do so. If this is so it is something I deeply regret. I have spoken privately to some of the main supporters of abstentionism from Leinster House [the Irish Parliament] and I am firmly convinced that anyone who leaves us over this issue will regret their decision in the years ahead.

To leave Sinn Fein is to leave the struggle. The spectre of a "split" is being raised to panic and intimidate us. It is aimed at unnerving people who want to remove abstentionism but who don't want the price for this to be a split. Talk or speculation about the split is aimed at making people draw back.

This leadership is not going to be blackmailed by any such speculation. We have been elected by you

to give leadership and we will not be found lacking in the task of leading and uniting this party.

In the course of a debate, one may, of course, review, change or alter one's opinions, but it is the quality of the debate and not the vote which has that effect. The question is wider than one of principle or tactic and it is not unique to Ireland nor post-partition Ireland.

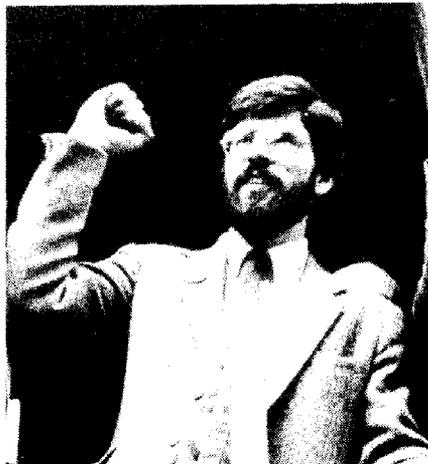
It is a question of whether a struggle such as ours can be advanced by opening up another front in a parliament of the establishment which oppresses us and the interests we seek to represent. As such, this question of electoralism as a means of revolutionary struggle has affected all struggles in areas where parliaments with universal suffrage exist. As with all such questions, the answer lies in people's attitude to those institutions.

Our experience has taught us that our struggle — and this affects every aspect of the struggle for national liberation — cannot be built merely on the republican perception of things. We have had to consistently pitch our struggle at the level of people's understanding and we have had to develop it from this common denominator, taking into account, in an objective way, all the forces and factors involved.

It would be much easier, of course, if all the Irish people, or a large section of them, were born with our perception and our view of things, but this is not the case. If it was, there would be little need for a republican struggle. But there is such a need and if we want to win then there is a fundamental need to make it a people's struggle. Of course, if we have no concept of winning we can remain as we are — a party apart from the people, proud of our past but with little involvement in the present and only dreams for the future.

If this is so, it is easy to ignore this problem or to let our own republican view of things blind us to realities. If nothing else, republicans must be realistic, especially about people's

Gerry Adams (DR)



perception (as opposed to our perception) of things. In the 6 Counties, in regards to Stormont or Westminster, a sizeable section of nationalists and republicans feel no affinity with those institutions. In the 26 Counties, it is different. It is a massive mistake to presume that our republican attitude to Leinster House is shared by any more than a very small section of our people, especially the citizens of this state, who might otherwise be open to our policies on all other issues. It must also be clear that the reconquest of Ireland, much less a British withdrawal, cannot be completed without the support of more of these people.

Of course we have a duty to point out to these people the shortcomings and the history of the present system, and we have a duty to win them to our view, but we can only do so at *their* level of understanding and we can only proceed from the objective reality of their consciousness.

We should not reject participation out of hand, but we should always be aware that such rejection may become essential. It all depends on the objective reality and conditions of the time.

1918 was such a time. The strategy of 1918 was the correct one. It was a dual power situation. It was much more than merely refusing to attend any enemy parliament. It meant withholding our consent to be governed by the British when the people — not us, but the people — established an alternative Dail Eireann. (1) But even then republicans made a mistake. To a large degree many of those politicians who represented us in Dail Eireann were not republicans. They did not reflect the interests of the mass of people and they certainly did not represent the interests of the people doing the actual fighting. Thus a majority of them found it possible, if not easy, to accept the Treaty arrangement. (2)

It was in their own class interests to do so. For this reason they implemented the Treaty with a terrible ferocity. And they defeated us. With animal savagery, great cruelty and brutality, they imposed the British partition of Ireland upon this nation and they established the Free State and, within a modernised

1. In 1918, Sinn Fein elected the majority of Irish members of parliament. They then withdrew from the London parliament and proclaimed an independent Irish legislature, the Dail Eireann, under whose formal authority the war of independence was fought.

2. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which accepted partition and association with Britain. It led to a civil war in which the intransigent nationalists, the ancestors of the modern republican movement, were defeated.

neo-colonial arrangement, they continue to represent those interests which crucify the Irish people.

At that time, many republicans refused to co-operate in any way with new Free State set-up. At that time, unlike today, abstentionism meant the withholding of all consent to be governed by the new state. As in 1918, this meant much more than merely abstaining from taking their seats.

It meant refusing to co-operate in any way with the new state. It meant a refusal to recognize any aspect of the Free State, its courts (in both civil and political cases), its education system, its labour and agricultural schemes, limited though they were, or even its postal system. But unlike 1918, no political alternative existed during the Treaty period and Liam Mellows' *Notes from Mountjoy*, which pointed in a clear [left] political direction, was never implemented. By the time the "soldiers of the rearguard" dumped their weapons — not in surrender but in exhaustion and in weary anticipation of another round of hostilities — the offensive was with the Free State. Armed struggle had been the only manifestation of republican resistance. Once that armed struggle ceased, as it had to, there was no other form of organized resistance relevant to the needs of ordinary people.

In 1924, Sinn Fein fought its last meaningful election on an abstentionist policy in the Free State. Given the destabilising effect that abstentionism had on a young Free State, plus the widespread though mistaken belief that partition would not last, and coupled with the support that we continued to enjoy despite the vicious cruelty of the civil war counter-revolution, it can be argued that abstentionism was the correct approach at that time. If so, the emergence of Fianna Fail [the more nationalist of the two bourgeois parties], and its subsequent electoral successes with republican support, marked the end of abstentionism as a viable policy in this state. The coercive policies of the Fianna Fail leadership in government are a matter of historical record.

The IRA leadership and a depleted Sinn Fein organization remained on the high ground of abstentionism but yet, at the same time, they were prepared to give at least passive support to another party which was not only prepared to attend Leinster House but was committed to becoming part of the partitionist system. They failed to present the people with any realistic political alternative.

I have talked and listened to men and women who have fought for the Republic since 1914 to the present

day. In the last 20 years, in all parts of this country, I have enjoyed the hospitality of republican households which sheltered the Countess Markievicz, James Connolly, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey, George Plant, Frank Ryan, Charlie Kerins, Sean McGaughey, Tom Smith and many others.

I have spoken at monuments to the heroic victims of Free Stateism and knelt in prayer at lonely graves in Kerry and Donegal. I know many of those invincibles who spent years in Free State dungeons not just in the '20s, '30s, '40s and '50s but in the '70s and '80s. Some of them are present here today.

I share their abhorrence of neo-colonialism and their detestation of those who govern this part of Ireland in the interests of imperialism. My family were opposed to the Treaty and the Partition Act. Like many Northern republicans, they suffered for their beliefs at that time, not only in the 6 Counties but in later years in the glasshouse of the Curragh Concentration Camp and other Free State prisons.

"Fundamental need for republican politics"

They witnessed the rise of Clann na Poblachta, [the Republican Party], which received republican support when many republicans again made the mistake of leaving the "politics" to those outside our movement. Sometimes I ask myself if we will ever learn. The central issue is not abstentionism. It is merely a problematic, deeply-rooted and emotive symptom of the lack of republican politics and the failure of successive generations of republicans to grasp the centrality, the primacy and the fundamental need for republican politics. This truth must be grasped. It is a difficult one for many to accept given the conspiratorial and repressive nature of our past, our distrust for "politics and politicians" and a belief that "politics" is inherently corrupt. But once it is grasped then everything else follows logically, especially the need to develop our struggle at the level of people's understanding.

Too often republicans have appeared dogmatic on the question of abstentionism and yet successive leaderships and generations of republicans have at least passively, and in many cases actively, supported other political organizations in election campaigns. This is certainly the case with Fianna Fail in the Free State general election of 1932, later with Clann na Poblachta, and in our own time with the late Frank Maguire,

Frank McManus and Bernadette McAliskey and — although some of them will deny it now — it was also the case with Gerry Fitt, Paddy Devlin and Paddy Kennedy. (3) They would not have been so successful on their entry into politics without republican support and in some of the above cases I was witness to, and in most cases opposed to, that support or at least to a "standing aside" being agreed.

Some republicans believe that politics is the property of the establishment, that so-called "constitutionalism" and politics are the same thing and thus that politics are inherently corrupt and corrupting. The logic of this is that de Valera [the founder of Fianna Fail] was okay until he went into Leinster House, or that the opportunism of the Clann na Poblachta leadership only occurred after their entry into the Free State parliament. If we still believe that, then we don't know our own history and we have little concept of the class nature of this struggle.

The great and most recent example of the corrupting nature of "politics" which is often quoted by some of our membership is the Sticks. (4) Indeed, in the past few weeks some republicans who should know better have actually referred to some people on this platform as Stickers. Oh ye of little faith! Of course, it is easy to hurl abuse — sticks and stone may break our bones — it makes headlines in the media but it also makes this problem more difficult to resolve. To compare us with the Stickers is an obscenity. To talk of "only the personalities being changed" and of "some people believing that the British can be talked out of Ireland" is contemptible.

It is a sign of the maturity of this leadership that we have refrained from publicly answering these remarks and it is a sign of our comradeship that we forgave those who made such remarks.

For anyone who has eyes to see, it is clear that the Sticky leadership had abandoned armed struggle as a form of resistance to British rule as part of their historic new departure into British and Free State constitutionality. Any vestige of armed struggle that continued after this decision was localised and mainly on the initiative of elements which later

3. Fitt, Devlin and Kennedy were originally "Republican Labour" politicians who came to collaborate with the British establishment in the name of "working-class" material interests.

4. The ex-Official Republicans, now the "Workers Party." They were called "stickies" because they introduced stick-on badges. They followed the same route to pro-imperialism as Fitt and Devlin, but combined this right-wing workerism with virulent Stalinist sectarianism.

formed the now almost defunct INLA. (5)

For our part, this leadership has been actively involved in the longest phase ever of resistance to the British presence. Our record speaks for itself. We have led from the front and from within the occupied area itself. We have learned that to be victorious a struggle for freedom must be a struggle of the people. We have said many times that even the most successful armed struggle in the 6 counties — and the struggle there is not merely an armed one — cannot achieve the Republic. The aspiration for the Republic has never been defeated, not even when the republican forces were defeated and the legitimate government of the Republic was overthrown. It is not vested merely in governmental structures. It is not vested merely in proclamations or in parliaments of the past. It cannot be voted, negotiated or coerced away.

Even if our history only started yesterday, the right to the Republic exists today in the right of the Irish nation to sovereignty, independence and national self-determination. It is up to us to make that Republic a reality.

We must develop a 32-County-wide political struggle. This is the most important task facing us at present. While consolidating our base in the 6 Counties, we must develop a popular struggle here in the 26 Counties to complement the struggle in the 6-County area. Of necessity this means, in order to advance at the level of people's consciousness, the removal of abstentionism in regard to Leinster House. You may not do this tomorrow but one thing is certain: as Sinn Fein continues to develop its understanding of the needs of this struggle, you are going to do it, sooner rather than later and your leadership is going to be back here year after year until it has convinced you of this necessity.

But no generation of republicans could or should ever merely absorb the teachings of previous generations. Those who were successful in the past in advancing the republican cause, even by one inch, updated and modernized the teaching and experience of their predecessors. This is what Lalor did, what Pearse did, what Connolly did — and it is what we have to do also.

We have to develop a coherent social and political philosophy which provides a rationale for consistent political as well as armed action. Such a process is one of continual reinterpretation and refinement in response to constantly changing social and political reality.

Mar a deirtear i nGaeilg 'An te nach bhfuil laidir ni folair a bheith

glic'. [As we say in Irish, "those who are not strong must be clever."]

We have at all times been more committed to rebellion than to revolution. The cement which held us together was physical force and, until recent times, physical force was applied in isolation, unsupported by organized political sentiment in the country.

"The development of strategies which can succeed"

Over the last few years I have, like many of you, given serious consideration to the question of abstentionism and of what part it plays in our struggle. I have considered all the alternatives in great depth including a dual power situation which is neither feasible nor practical in this state at the present time. I have considered the strategy of taking seats only when we have a majority in Leinster House. This is advanced by some comrades and is among other things, an admission by them that only mathematics and not principle is involved. But it is also as impractical as the dual power theory.

The only feasible way to break out of our isolation, to make political gains, to win support for our policies, to develop our organization and our struggle is by approaching people at the level they understand. This means Sinn Fein getting among people in the basic ways which the people accept. This means new approaches and difficult — and perhaps risky — political positions have to be faced up to by us.

It will mean the difference between another glorious defeat or the development of strategies which can succeed.

The removal of abstentionism will not provide a "magic wand" solution to all our problems. Indeed, in this state it merely clears the decks and it makes the burden of struggle heavier upon all of us.

We have to cease being spectators of a struggle in the 6 Counties and become pioneers of republicanism in the 26 Counties, putting our politics before the people, confident of the logic of the alternative which Irish republicanism offers.

I say this means risky political positions. This should not be underestimated.

The removal of abstentionism allied to implementation of the other necessities I have touched on here, and detailed in other addresses, will initiate an increase in our party membership and could change the political complexion of this party. It is important therefore that those who wish to change abstentionism recommit themselves to

this struggle and that those who are opposed stay with us also . . .

We need to keep our republican gut. While developing the struggle in the 26 Counties we must never lose sight of our national objectives. We must change our strategies but must never let this change our objectives or our aims. We are a republican party committed to the struggle for national self-determination, committed to the overthrow of British rule in Ireland and to the end of partition and committed to bringing about the political and economic changes necessary for the well-being and security of this nation.

In other words, we are committed to the reconquest of Ireland by the Irish people. This means the expulsion of imperialism in all its forms, political, economic, military, social and cultural. It means the establishment of a real Irish republic and the organization of the economy so that all its resources are under Irish control and organized to bring maximum benefit to the people in a 32-County state in which Irish culture and national identity is strong and confident.

There has been much talk and speculation about how many seats Sinn Fein will win if we contest the Free State election on an attendance ticket. We should not seek to see such a contest merely in terms of winning seats.

If we do contest on an attendance ticket the election after the next one will be the first serious test of our ability to win major support. At this time, our entry in a serious way into electoral politics in this state should be seen in terms of broad political gains as opposed to immediate gains in terms of a seat or seats.

What will make an organization like ours revolutionary is not whether it is committed to any particular means of achieving revolution — such as street agitation, electoralism or physical force — but whether all the means it uses — political work, publicity, mass education, electoralism and armed struggle (which should play no part in the struggle in this state) [i.e. the South] or projects of economic, social or cultural resistance — are conducive to achieving the revolutionary reconquest of Ireland.

No one form of revolutionary work is inherently superior to any other. The judgement of what form of work is required must be made on the basis of what form is most conducive and necessary for the national indepen-

dence struggle in the particular circumstances currently existing.

Republican TDs [Teachtaí Dála, members of parliament] will act, in consultation with the grassroots, on the direction of the Ard Chomhairle. They will vote in the interests of their constituents, our struggle and this party. I am totally opposed to this party becoming involved in any coalition, at any time, with any of the establishment parties in Leinster House. If we, at times, agree on specifics or if we vote along similar lines, that is fair enough and is acceptable.

“Anti-people policies of successive Dublin governments”

The failure to build a republican base in this state has meant that the anti-people policies of successive Dublin governments are implemented with almost no opposition and that the lowering of national spirit and the pretence that this state is a nation goes on unabated. Partition is virtually a fact of life here for many people who feel powerless.

In this, the 70th anniversary year of the 1916 Proclamation, over 23 per cent of our people are unemployed in the 6 Counties. In the 26 Counties, the official figure is 232,448 people unemployed. Over 74,000 of these are under 25 years of age. The official figures nationally amount to almost 400,000 people suffering the misery and poverty of unemployment — a massive indictment of British rule in the 6 Counties and neo-colonial rule in the 26 Counties.

Not only is the Dublin government exporting the human wealth of our greatest national resource — our youth — it is also exporting our material wealth. In the past 12 months, the wealthy ruling class, in an overwhelming vote of no confidence, has shifted more than £1.5 billion out of this state.

Michael Noonan recently boasted that Dublin has a pro-business government and a pro-business opposition and that not many other countries could say the same. Most other governments would be ashamed to make such a boast. Mr Noonan, like his cronies, is not renowned for his sense of national pride.

He and his cronies are place seekers, shoneens and yes people who have neither the virtue, the sense, nor the ability to govern us. In every sphere they have failed to provide leadership to our people and they have the gall to boast about it.

They continue to foist the dictats

of the EEC upon us while the agricultural sector, like other sectors of the economy, is belatedly beginning to view EEC membership as damaging. They sign the Single European Act — due to go to Leinster House before Christmas — and signal the greatest single retreat from sovereignty ever made by the 26-County state.

This Act effectively binds Dublin by legal agreement to supporting a NATO view of international affairs.

It is no surprise that the Coalition has been reluctant to call for the closure of Sellafield. It produces the plutonium for Trident missiles and the new EEC treaty commits Dublin to “maintain the technological and industrial conditions” necessary for the NATO war machine.

Sinn Féin demands the closure of Sellafield and a complete end to the dumping of radioactive waste in the Irish sea. We indict the Dublin government for its refusal to halt this infringement upon the basic rights of this nation.

We also indict Garret FitzGerald for the mess he made of the divorce referendum. His performance in that campaign was vintage FitzGerald: bumbling, no sense of timing and absolutely amateurish. He proves that the only thing that is worse than a wishy-washy pseudo-liberal is an incompetent wishy-washy pseudo-liberal.

The most telling and historic example of Dublin subservience to outside interests lies, of course, in the Hillsborough Treaty [the Anglo-Irish Accord]. A year ago this month, the news was dominated by this event. Everything was to change: nationalists could hold their heads high, the nightmare was over, we had a framework through which nationalist alienation would end.

Instead of peace — even if we restrict the meaning of the word “peace” to mean an absence of violence — this experiment has, so far at any rate, exploded in the face of its proponents, who range from the desperate political gurglers in the Dublin establishment to their Northern representatives in the SDLP leadership, to lukewarm British godfathers whose support for and understanding of the Treaty is how far it will go in advancing their interests. The British confrontation with the loyalists, designed to split the loyalists and create a pragmatic leadership which would be bold enough to do an internal deal with the SDLP, has temporarily subsided for a number of reasons.

At our Ard-Fheis last year, before Hillsborough, I warned about a violent loyalist reaction and I pointed out that such a reaction was needed, and indeed that it would be deliberately provoked by Dublin and the SDLP, in

order to exaggerate the substance of the Treaty as far as concessions were concerned and also to camouflage its pro-British bias.

The Hillsborough Treaty, a mediocre agreement by Dublin to assist Britain to govern part of Ireland as a British colony, is not designed to redress the historic injustices perpetrated against the Irish people. It has not been worth the loyalist reaction it has provoked. There is ample evidence to link the resumed loyalist sectarian assassination campaign with Hillsborough and there is a heavy responsibility on the likes of [SDLP leader] John Hume, who has said that a united Ireland is not worth the loss of one life, to explain to the nationalist people why they are dying, why they are being intimidated, and why they are being evicted from their homes for the Hillsborough Treaty. Is the political survival of the SDLP really worth it? Does that survival justify the renewed pogroms and assassinations?

“Stop spending millions on maintaining Britain’s border”

Mr Haughey says that he is going to renegotiate the Hillsborough Treaty. He needs reminding that no Irish person has the authority to negotiate or renegotiate any treaty about any issue with the British government while that government claims jurisdiction over any part of Irish national territory. While they continue to do this, Irish people, and particularly Irish political leaders, are duty-bound not to help Britain to maintain its partitionist status quo. This means that if Mr Haughey is serious he will stop spending millions of Irish taxpayers’ money on maintaining Britain’s border. In this regard we pay much more than the British themselves. It means that he would stop extraditing Irish citizens into the hands of the British. It means that he would send the British ambassador home and recall the Irish ambassador from London.

Sinn Féin is the only party in this country which is totally committed to securing a complete British withdrawal from Ireland. It is only a matter of time until we assist the British government in taking this inevitable course of action which will be hastened by the actions of O’Glaigh na hÉireann, [the IRA] the spearhead of republican resistance in Ireland. It is only a matter of time until the British are forced to get out of our country. And when they do, then, and only then, will the basis for peace, unity, prosperity and democracy be established in our country. □

Sinn Fein debates abortion policy

SINN FEIN's policy on abortion was the second most contentious issue at its recent Ard-Fheis. Last year delegates had surprisingly – and narrowly – added the phrase: “We recognise that women have the right to choose” to existing policy. (1) It passed by 77 to 73 votes after the majority of delegates had left the conference.

TONI GORTON

In the view of the leadership the policy became contradictory, a “fudge”. The party had not been prepared and it took different positions publicly. (One delegate referred to physical attacks on Sinn Fein candidates in nationalist areas as a direct result of this decision.)

The Ard Chomhairle (executive) recommended the removal of the phrase this year. Overwhelmingly carried, the policy now reverts to pre-1985 and says:

“We are opposed to the attitudes and forces that compel women to have abortions, we are opposed to abortion as a means of birth control, but we accept the need for abortion where the woman's life is at risk or in grave danger, e.g. ectopic pregnancy and all forms of cancer.”

Sile Fanning, officer for the women's department set the tone for the debate. “We export our abortion problem to Britain”, she declared. “No positive alternatives to abortion are given. Women who become pregnant outside marriage are punished – unwed mothers are forced out of their homes. Young girls are accused of deliberately ‘seducing’ men in order to get pregnant and get the paltry government handouts available. We must continue education on this issue.”

Rita O' Hare emphasized the leadership's framework, stating categorically that the “woman's life is paramount.”

Broadly, three positions were put: no abortion under any circumstances; abortion under limited conditions (medical); and women's choice/demercriminalization.

The whole of Ireland is dominated by the Church – the South is one of the most Roman Catholic Church dominated countries in the world. The Church is active, aggressive, and remorseless in its political campaigns, especially against women's rights. The recent defeat of the divorce bill, and the long delay in access to contraceptive facilities, show the success

the Church has in maintaining its power.

The social conditions which allow the Church's teachings to prevail are a long way from being changed. The most important factor against this is the partition of Ireland. Meanwhile, thousands of women and men suffer from the lack of individual freedom which the Church/state official morality denies them, North and South.

“Our aim is to establish
a secular state”

Following last year's Ard-Fheis, women in Derry set up a working group on abortion which drafted a new resolution that recognised the problems set up by last year's decision.

It stated: “Our aim is to establish a secular state. As a secular organization, we believe that the state, its constitution, its laws and criminal code should not embody the code of any particular religion, theology or morality.”

“We therefore accept the individual's right to make a conscientious decision for or against abortion without coercion from any other individual or group. In the meantime, we recognize that present legislation must respect the rights and beliefs of minorities and must not criminalize those who avail themselves of abortion in accordance with their conscience. Our short-term objective is to encourage further discussion and examination of all aspects of this issue aimed at advancing the overall understanding to that end. Non-directive pregnancy counselling embodying all choices should be freely available.” This was defeated, 117 for and 212 against.

Daisy Mules, a leader of the trade union department speaking for this motion, stated that the Ard Chomhairle position was “disappointing –

they have given it no time, resources or thought. We must lead the people of Ireland on this question. Freedom of choice should apply to all areas of life.”

She was supported by a large number of women experienced in Sinn Fein, veterans of all its major campaigns, some of whom gave day to day counselling to prisoners' wives in the North and spoke from their real experiences.

Referring to their republican beliefs, one Belfast woman said that most people feel that life is sacred, but those here feel that other values are more important – justice and liberty for example. She felt people were using the “sanctity of life” argument as a smokescreen to hide their real views, which were that carrying through a pregnancy was a punishment. If women don't make the decisions over their own lives, who does decide? Doctors are given power over two lives.

A very small minority characterized abortion as “murder” and expressed total opposition to it. The only circumstances in which it is permissible to take a life, said one delegate, was in self-defence and in the armed struggle.

Queuing up along with all the other delegates, Gerry Adams said that last year the Ard Chomhairle had opposed the “woman's choice” not because we're anti-feminist, but because it's identified with the “abortion on demand” slogan. He stressed its contradictory character and appealed for people not to “go too far, too fast, to keep the discussion going and for others not to reject the basic policy”.

Replying to the debate, Rita O' Hare objected that some delegates had “defended the leadership's proposals” for the wrong reasons. Ours is a “progressive” stand, she said. “We will be taking a strong stand on our policies. We take positions because they are right and reasoned, not because they'll win or lose votes.”

In other discussions, the Ard-Fheis reaffirmed policy on the organization of childcare to encourage women to become active, especially as candidates. It voted down a proposal to end the system of positive discrimination for women at the leadership level. On gay and lesbian rights it said:

“Sinn Fein publicly demands the decriminalization of homosexual acts between men, and also calls for full equal rights for lesbian women and gay men with their heterosexual counterparts.” □

1. For a report on last year's Ard-Fheis, see ‘International Viewpoint’ No 87, November 25, 1985.

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