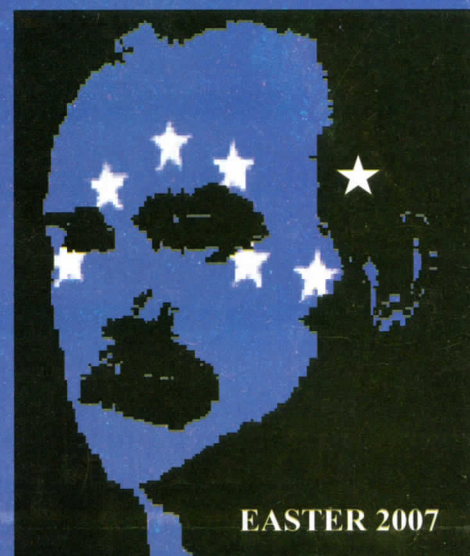


Starry Plough



EASTER 2007

MAGAZINE OF THE IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY

91st Anniversary of the Easter Rising Commemorative Edition

£3/5 EURO



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editorial

A YEAR IN POLITICS

A year ago the leading newspaper in Ireland, The Irish Times, made a remarkable admission: "The hard fact of the matter is that it is now eight years since the Belfast Agreement was laboriously put together. If one crucial part of the deal is still not working, after all that time, then maybe the inescapable conclusion is that it is never going to work." (1) According to Peter Mandelson, one of the reasons for this was that the British state policy under Blair was premised upon the idea "that the process is the policy, that as long as the process is being sustained and you are giving plenty of evidence that you believe in the process, even if you can do nothing else, that is sufficient policy." There is this process and policy should just keep with it and keep feeding it, whatever the outcome. "So even if you don't have any other policy and don't know what the process is going to achieve the fact that the process is still happening is the bare minimum policy that you need." (2) However, with the prospect of retiring from politics, Blair became obsessed with going down in history as the one who "brought peace to Ireland" rather than war on Iraq. Blair, however, is no Gladstone. "Some would suggest a more appropriate comparison would be with Lloyd George, who brokered the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 by telling lies to both sides and who left office in a scandal about the sale of peerages. Seamus Mallon would appear to take the latter view: 'This man with a moral dimension to everything, who applied morality to nothing. I got increasingly to the point where I wouldn't have taken his word for anything. And that was a result of the dealings that I had with him' said Mallon." (3)

Keeping the process going was therefore no longer sufficient. Blair's final attempt to settle the Irish question was the St Andrew's Agreement unveiled on 13 October 2006. The essence of the proposals contained in the Agreement is that if the Provisional movement openly supports the policing and court systems, the DUP will have to share power with them with a DUP First Minister and a Provisional Deputy First Minister in devolved local government after Assembly elections. According to a DUP Document

the St Andrews Agreement makes fundamental changes to the Belfast Agreement and offers from a Unionist perspective "undoubtedly a better package" compared to the 1998 Agreement. It secures:

- * Unionists setting the political agenda
- * DUP veto over all major decisions
- * DUP veto over cross border relations
- * Republicans jumping first
- * Republican support for the police, the courts, and the rule of British law
- * No Sinn Féin policing and justice minister (4)

For the Provisional leadership the most contentious issue in the St Andrews Agreement is the pledge to support the PSNI, MI5 and court system. On 28 January 2007, a Sinn Féin Ard Fheis made a 'historic' decision to support the PSNI and the criminal justice system; appoint party representatives to the Policing Board and District Policing Partnership Boards; and actively encourage everyone in the community to co-operate fully with the police services in tackling crime in all areas and actively supporting all the criminal justice institutions. "Republicans inside the political and policing systems will use and stretch these institutions to the outer limits of their all-Ireland potential. This approach of critically engaging with all institutions will make the border irrelevant." (5) However, as Anthony McIntyre recently remarked, the paradox at the heart of the Sinn Féin position, is one of claiming to be Republican while at the same time being prepared to support political policing that will put republicans in jails for armed resistance to the British state. If the party is not prepared to perform such functions at the behest of the British state and the DUP, then it will never attain the justice ministry. Provos declared their opposition to 'political policing', however when Sinn Féin asked people to cooperate with the police over a double murder related to a CIRA dispute, the Unionist Belfast Telegraph said this move was "proving that Sinn Féin's decision to support the PSNI is taking effect. The days when republicans would suggest that priests or solicitors could be used as go-betweens have gone. And no distinction was drawn; in this case, between 'civic' and so-called 'political' policing." (6) The transfer of 'counter-terrorist' intelligence from the police to MI5 means at present that any justice minister would have no effective control over counter-terrorist operations in Northern Ireland. Sinn

Féin is colluding with the British state to hide the fact MI5 has been given an expanded role in the North to take supreme control of all counter-terrorist intelligence with virtually no accountability or outside control. The SDLP's Mark Durkan correctly points out that the Provisional agenda is in fact allowing the British Government to set the clock back on policing. Under the Patten reforms the PSNI is obliged by law to open all its files to the Ombudsman in any investigation, whereas under the Blair-Adams deal, the police Ombudsman will not be able to investigate MI5. (7)

With Sinn Féin support for policing secured, elections went ahead on March 7. The results were a triumph for Ian Paisley's DUP and a spectacular defeat for the UUP. The DUP took 36 MLAs - a gain of six seats since the 2003 elections. In contrast, the UUP only succeeded in getting 18 MLAs - a loss of nine seats. The DUP based its campaign on a platform:

- * For a Unionist-dominated executive
- * To ensure a Unionist First Minister
- * For a strong Unionist voice in government

- * To keep Republicans under pressure

- * For devolution, which will mean that the party will be able to stop legislation such as the Irish Language Act

The elections leave Unionism stronger. With its increased share of the vote, the DUP is likely to impose even more humiliating terms on the Provisionals. Provisional Sinn Féin increased its share of the vote, with 28 MLAs returned - a gain of four seats since 2003. Its rival, the SDLP continued its decline losing two seats and returning 16 MLAs. The Provos are ready to put Paisley in power. Who would have believed twenty years ago that the day would come where Martin McGuinness would declare: "We're trying to put the institutions in place now with Ian Paisley as first minister... I think to bring about a situation where the DUP and Sinn Féin are in government is probably one of the biggest political developments on the island of Ireland in over 100 years." (8) No wonder we find Peter Hain praising the Sinn Féin leadership: "Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are very, very good negotiators - the best negotiators I have come across. They were clearly ready to move the movement on. They showed tremendous long-term political vision in moving republicanism from where it was to where it is now." (9) Earlier this year, Prime Minister Blair stated: "I recall time and again

EDITORIAL

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being told that the IRA would never decommission; they would never give up violence; they would never commit to exclusively peaceful means. But they have done all these things. Sinn Féin has demonstrated one of the most remarkable examples of leadership I have come across in modern politics. It has been historic and it has been real." (10)

The deal between Sinn Féin and the DUP on May 8th is no guarantee of a positive outcome on May 8th and, even if there is a deal to share power on that day, there is no guarantee that it will last. One problem is that neither side is quite sure what secret assurances may have been given to the other." (11) That is because obfuscation - or 'creative ambiguity' as it is branded - has been central to the peace process. As Jim Gibney reminds us: "If there is one big lesson coming out of the peace process... it is words like 'certainty' and 'clarity' are not part of the creative lexicon that conflict resolution requires if it is to be successful... Give me the language of ambiguity... It has oiled the engine of the peace process. Long may it continue to do so." (12) Both the DUP and Sinn Féin have been assiduous in offering their own coloured version of what has been 'agreed' at St Andrews. Both have, indeed, consented to sell its contents to their grass roots while vehemently denying the version being sold by their opponents. Robert McCartney QC rightly points that such a situation will hardly produce either clarity or truth. Like the 1998 Belfast Agreement, there appears to be enough ambiguity in it to suit everyone. (13) A fundamental contradiction remains unsolved: "Lasting peace demands a deal on the agreed status of Northern Ireland into the foreseeable future. The Belfast Agreement claims to be this. But, to republicans, the Agreement is not a deal: it is part of a process, a moving conveyor belt which, little by little, will remove surviving traces of Britishness from Northern Ireland and play down any which remain. To unionists, though, the Agreement is a settlement, a deal in which republicans and nationalists, in return for fair play by a representative devolved Government, would seek to make a go of a British Northern Ireland - on two conditions. They would be guaranteed

fair play by a fully representative, devolved Government; and the possibility of future constitutional change, whereby Northern Ireland would cease to be British, would be provided for - democratically. Both these conditions are satisfied in the Agreement. But there remains a split in its interpretation by the two communities which is fundamental enough to bring it down." (14)

NOTES

- (1) *Stephen Collins, The Belfast Agreement has resulted in stalemate, The Irish Times, 11 March 2006*
- (2) *Carrots and capitulation - Mandelson on Blair, The Guardian, 14 March 2007*
- (3) *Stephen Collins, Prospect of deal in North dominates US celebrations, The Irish Times, 17 March 2007*
- (4) *DUP flyer, St Andrews Agreement/ Devolution Consultation: Your Verdict - What is it to be?*
- (5) *Jim Gibney, Reunification is solution to partition problem, The Irish News, 1 February 2007*
- (6) *Editorial, The barriers over policing are crumbling, The Belfast Telegraph, 14 March 2007*
- (7) *SDLP, The Truth About MI5: what they don't want you to know, <http://www.sdlp.ie/documents/MI5Truth-jan07.doc>*
- (8) *'We had no file on him but it was clear he was up for the business', The Guardian, 14 March 2007*
- (9) *Ten years of delicate deals and hard bargaining, The Guardian, 13 March 2007*
- (10) *Prime Minister Blair, Good faith is key to breaking current peace process impasse, The Irish Times, 8 January 2007*
- (11) *Stephen Collins, Prospect ... op.cit.*
- (12) *Jim Gibney, Ambiguity: Oiling wheels of progress, An Phoblacht/ Republican News, 17 April 2003*
- (13) *Bob McCartney, 'This is a situation hardly calculated to produce either clarity or truth', Belfast Telegraph 26 October 2006*
- (14) *Eric Waugh, One big question remains: why does the IRA still exist? The Belfast Telegraph 16 March 2007*

STATEMENT FROM THE IRSP MEDIA AND PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

As regular readers and subscribers of the Starry Plough many of you will be aware that there have been production and distribution problems over the past 12 months. The Ard Comhairle has set up the media department in an attempt to address these problems. The Department has looked at the format, regularity, effectiveness and cost of the Starry Plough newspaper and has decided with Ard Comhairle permission to attempt new approaches to making sure that the IRSP political message gets to the heart of working class communities across the Ireland.

The Starry Plough Magazine (Easter 2007) is a review and analysis of the past year, we believe the articles contained in this issue many of which were first published in the Plough ezine are worthy of a wider readership. We hope to produce four Starry Plough magazines a year. It is also planned that a monthly on-line version of the Starry Plough newspaper will be available, this version will be a printable pdf download. This will be supplemented with regular, local free monthly newsheets in areas where our Cumainn are active. As always our websites are available the continuation of the regular Plough ezine is guaranteed. Indeed we commend the comrades who have insured its regular production has meant that the voice of the IRSP has been heard.

With all new strategies there will be teething problems and we ask for comrades patience as we try to insure the most effective method of getting the IRSP's political message across. To all the contributors to this issue we thank you for your analysis

THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT SHANNON

The people of the Irish Republic have for decades prided themselves in the comforting knowledge that their country was neutral. This ensured their sons would never have to go to war; their homes and cities would never be attacked as a result of foreign conflict, nor would industry and trade be affected as a result of such either. Ireland continued to stay out of affairs that didn't concern them.

However, this was all about to change since the terrible events of 11/09/01 and the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City. As millions throughout Ireland watched in horror as the events unfolded before their very eyes, others were already planning their response.

The American government, under the Bush administration, were plotting an all out strike on the people of Afghanistan, as they believed the attack came from the infamous Osama Bin Laden and the Al Qaeda movement who they believed took

refuge in the mountains bordering between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Throughout the 1980's, the CIA and the American government aided these very guerrilla fighters in their war of independence from the USSR, in what was later known as the 10 year Afghan war. They trained, armed and funded the Afghans in their fight and possessed first hand intelligence on the terrain of the Afghan mountain ranges in the Kunar province north of Jalalabad along the Pakistan border which they would be targeting in response to the 9/11 attack. The Americans would be declaring all out war.

In order for the Americans to wage

war against this country they needed assistance from others. The geography involved in such a war meant that the United States military faced obstacles that would hinder their assault on the Taliban regime and the Afghanistan based Al Qaeda. They themselves needed an alliance.

The Bush administration called upon all its friendly countries to join with them in the "War on Terror" and vowed that anyone who refused would be treated as being as guilty as the terrorists. "You are either with us or against us" was the rallying cry to which all

coming An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to Washington D.C.

"We're working together to bring freedom and justice to Afghanistan and the Balkans and other countries that have not known it."

So, just exactly how could such a tiny country as Ireland assist the biggest country and military might in the world? What help could they give that would be of vital importance in the American led "War on Terror"? What action or course of actions could Ireland surrender to the Americans that

would jeopardise the long standing position of Irish neutrality? What did the Irish government set to gain out of such a gesture?

**Recognition?
Friendship?
Wealth?**

The actual truth of the matter is



those who feared USA embargo on trade and funding readily signed up. In a massive show of strength and determination, all the leaders of the countries newly involved in the alliance supporting the "War on Terror" called a press conference to show their solidarity with the USA government and its crusade. It was attended by An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern.

On 17th March 2005, St. Patrick's Day, the level of help and assistance from Ireland in the "War on Terror" was publicly acknowledged by the American President George Bush at the Whitehouse in his speech wel-

much more startling. Much more than the average citizen could endeavour to imagine. To the Bush administration and the American military Afghanistan was the stepping stone, the launching pad for greater and bigger things. All roads and signposts in Afghanistan pointed directly to Iraq.

Iraq was the big catch for Bush and his military. It was his goal, but first he needed to establish a threat. A reason to invade. He needed to validate his overthrowing of Sad am Hussein, to link it with his crusade to rid the world of the evils of terrorism. He needed to be quick, efficient and to maximise his potential attacking power. The

THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT SHANNON *continued from P4*

US military needed to utilise all of their resources and manpower with the littlest of effort and ease in order to make this campaign successful, but there was something missing. They needed Shannon.

The Irish government accepted the American proposals and granted George Bush his wish. The full resources of Shannon airport and Irish air space were surrendered to the US Military, unbeknown to the citizens of this very same island. With one stroke of a pen Ireland's neutrality was flushed down the drains of history.

As the situation in Iraq deteriorated during the year of 2004, an increase of 30% was witnessed in US troop movements than that of 2003. Over 158,000 US troops had passed through Shannon on chartered commercial aircraft in 2004, in comparison to the 120,000 in 2003.

An amazing 18 million Euros had been generated in Shannon airport in charges in 2004, and a total of 43 million Euros since 2002, all a result of this US military business.

All of these troops are armed and are carrying their weapons of war with them. According to military analyst Tom Clonan, M16 rifles are standard issue for the troops and these are likely to be carried in the holds of the commercial aircraft. The M16 is personally adjusted for each soldier and therefore it is highly unlikely that they would be transported separately to the troops.

Possibly as many as half of the 150,000 troops who are currently situated in Iraq, some of whom have been there almost a year, have travelled through the Shannon route.

The increase from 2003 is due to heavy troop rotations in Iraq in March and September 2004. As troops were

being rotated, the numbers passing through Shannon soared, to nearly 17,000 in March and over 22,000 in September. This is in comparison to the usual 12,000 in any of the other months.

Another factor for the large increase is that the US Military reservists are being called into the war, which unlike their regular counterparts comes direct from the US and not from bases



in Germany.

As Shannon is the nearest refuelling point to the US, it has been a vital resource to the US military in getting their troops in "theatre" in Iraq as quickly as possible and has enabled them to maximise their fuel to weight ratio, allowing them to carry less fuel in exchange for more soldiers and equipment, requiring less flights. However, this is only the amount of US troops that are being transported in civilian commercial aircraft. A further 753 military aircraft has landed in Shannon in 2004 according to the statistics that were released by the Department of Foreign Affairs,

although they refused to disclose the number of troops that were carried on these flights.

Commercial airlines are also providing charter services to the US military to carry munitions and equipment. As with charter aircraft carrying troops, these are the responsibility of the Department of Transport. There were 816 landings of "foreign aircraft carrying munitions or weapons of war" in 2004, according to the Department of Transport.

According to the Irish Aviation Authority, 75% of ALL air traffic from

America to Europe has the permission to use Irish air space. Under a new agreement instituted earlier this year, Ireland has taken over a new portion of air space to the north west of the country, as a result of which it is estimated that 90% of all traffic from the USA will now pass through Irish air space. As well as the 43 million Euro that the airport has generated in un waived charges for commercial aircraft, the Irish Aviation Authority has also cashed in on the deal with millions that they have charged for over flights and landing facilities. The total sum of which has been undisclosed to the public.

The Irish government need to redress this issue and to stop the facilitation of the US military through our airports and ports. They have placed their citizens at risk of attack from these Islamic fundamentalists, all the while keeping their secret deals from the public eye. The Irish were loved throughout the world, now we face becoming the bete noire race of Europe.

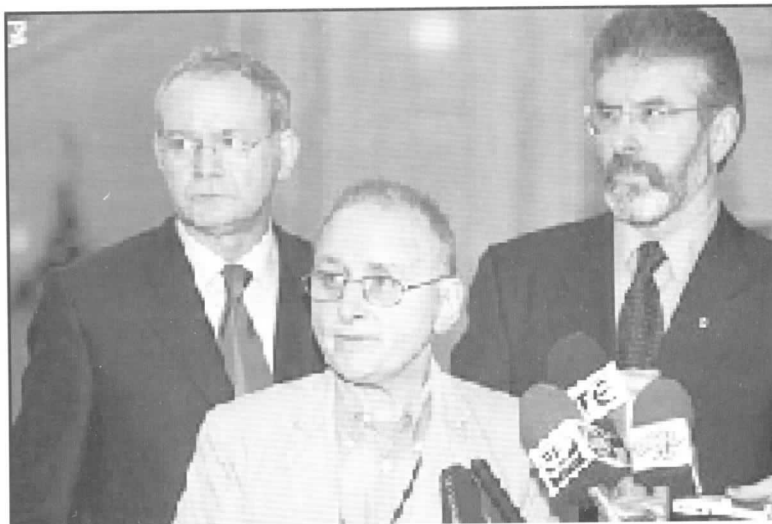
We are at present setting up dedicated contact details for the media department, if in the meantime you wish to contact us you can do so at:
392 Falls Road,
Belfast, County Antrim.
Tel- 028 90321024

SPIES, LIES AND MEDIA SPIN

This article first appeared in the Plough Ezine in January 2006. What an ending to the old year!! Charges dropped

over the alleged spy ring at Stormont. A British agent discovered at the heart of the Provisional Sinn Féin movement!

Paranoia and suspicion may be starting to grip many republicans. But before people lose the run of themselves let us face a few home truths.



All organisations have been penetrated by the British security and intelligence services. That after all is their job. Their function is to preserve the status quo and carry out the policy of the British government of the day. Any republican who claims their organisation is spy free is a liar. After all republicans want to change the status quo not only in the North but also in the South. Therefore, they have to be targeted by the defenders of the status quo.

The methods of the status quo include "turning" people, removing implacable opponents, slandering and destroying people's good name, creating dissension and feuds, helping to promote those who may be sympathetic to some aspects of the establishment's position. At one stage, there were more FBI informants in the CPUSA than genuine communists.

Revolutionaries have to take infiltration as a given. Developing paranoia and mistrusting everyone is not the answer. In the current political climate in Ireland today the emphasis has to be in reaching out to the mass of the people by the political work carried out. That requires knuckling down to class work and patiently explaining to

the mass of people the connections between the class and the national

question.

But before politically sectarian people jump in and say the IRSP are under the hegemony of "economistic Trotskyites" or some such nonsense

let no one be in any doubt where we stand -- for national independence and socialism. But simply saying that and quoting James Connolly is just not good enough. Action is required. We have tried to reach out in the past 12 months to other republican and socialist organisations.

Some even refused to acknowledge our existence. Arrogance by self-appointed elites in political or military leaderships is one of the commonest of political errors, but even if we overcame this arrogance and had the left talking to the left or republican talking to republican, while good in itself, that is not the complete answer.

The connection has to be made between the everyday lives of working class people and the continued existence of imperialism. And be under no illusions those connections can be made. Only recently we had a tremendous display of solidarity among Irish workers when nearly 100,000 turned out to express their class anger at the impor-

tation of cheap non-union labour. The Irish ferries dispute was more than about 543 workers. It was about the rapid spread of the low wage economy model facilitated by years of social partnership. There is also the added factor of racism as non-national labour is imported from east Europe. The number of workers in trade unions has been continually falling and it is estimated that in four years only 17% of the Irish work force

could be unionised.

What a price to pay for social partnership! Any fight back must be at grass roots level, at the level of shop stewards, for it is clear that the full time trade union officials are too well embedded in the social partnership model. And these shop stewards need to become politically conscious and see the connections between the low wage economy and the EU and the spread of neo-liberal economics. And that is to confront imperialism.

Unless those who call themselves republicans see the connection between political settlements like the Good Friday Agreement and day to day class struggles, and unless those who call themselves socialists see the connection between class struggles and imperialism, and unless both those groups do something about these connections, then the future for the Irish working class whether Catholic, Protestant or migrant labour is one of increasing exploitation.

The question for the year 2007: is the Irish left up to the challenges ahead?

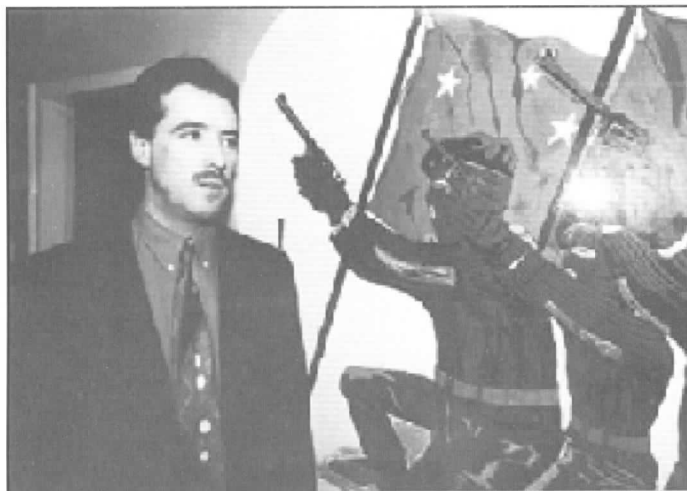
COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

By Willie Gallagher

A question many of us here today have asked ourselves is where are we ten years after Gino's death and where are we going? Gino gave his life in order to give this movement back to the membership. Much has happened since his death and the party has seen many advances since then. It would be fair to say that just prior to Gino's death the party was in effect non-existent and had no relevance to the working class. It was being run down politically with Torney selling off party offices in Derry and attempting to sell off the Belfast office. Many areas that once had a strong presence went into decline and, in my opinion, the movement faced extinction. Even after his death, I believed at that time, after witnessing at first hand from a leadership level, the state the movement was in, that it would slowly disappear. I'm happy to say that I was wrong in my assessment and that some of Gino's aspirations have been realised.

Since 1996, we have seen the membership taking control of this movement and democratically electing an Ard-Chomhairle at regular Ard-Fheiseanna since then. We have seen the rise in membership and support throughout the country with new offices opening in Strabane, Derry, Dungiven and North Belfast. We took control of the welfare and representation of our prisoners, North and South, and stabilised and energised their position like never before. We also oversaw the release of the vast majority of our prisoners. We set up structures and acquired finances thereby enhancing the position of our ex-prisoners and their families. We paid fitting homage to our dead comrades by the erection of memorials and yearly commemorations as well as engaging with the relatives of our dead. We have seen the creation of memorial bands to honour our dead. We have

seen a large increase in numbers attending our Easter Sunday commemorations since 1996. We have ensured that the in-



tegrity and principled positions of the movement remained intact. Many of us here today have risked our lives and liberty and have underwent sustained campaigns of demonisation to achieve what we have and even though progress has been slow and not as quick or efficient as we would all like, it has been worthwhile and something all of us can be proud of. It has been a long and difficult journey and many of us at times periodically were downhearted at the slow pace of our development. At times when we focused on our difficulties and weaknesses, we would forget about our achievements thus becoming even more downhearted but we struggled on and we are still here doing the best we can.

Whether we like it or not the GFA has changed the political landscape of Ireland making it more difficult for the party to advance politically. Many of us believed that we would remain in political limbo until the contradictions that existed within the new dynamic came more to the fore and until our analysis of the process and GFA were proven correct. It is now abundantly clear that republicanism has been shafted and that it really was a

pacification process in order to negate militant republicanism. I believe we are now entering into that phase where our analysis has been proved, beyond doubt, to be the correct one and we

are now entering a period where we can advance and convince others of our position. In recent times I have heard a lot of criticism directed against the leadership and have even heard claims that there is no proper leadership though I don't know what no proper leadership meant exactly in the context that the article was written.

There is a proper leadership and that is the Ard-Chomhairle who is elected to carry out the will of the movement through motions, debated and carried at the Ard-Fheis. The leadership has been democratically elected by all of the membership. Therefore, to me, there is a proper leadership but it is functioning to the best of its ability, if not, what can we as a collective do to resolve that.

Despite our shortcomings and weaknesses, it is more than clear that we are the only movement within the left and within anti-GFA republicanism who has the capabilities to enhance the position of our class. All of us here today share a collective responsibility for our present shortcomings and weaknesses, both at leadership and grassroots level. In saying all that, all of us need to grab this movement by the scruff of the neck and put more energy and commitment into this movement. We need to examine our shortcomings and weaknesses in a constructive manner, re-organise, restructure and reinvigorate both the leadership and membership. We can do this but we can only do it as a collective with an input from all and not just the leadership.

"THE BEST TRAINED ARMY IN THE WORLD"

So "the best trained Army in the world" has been caught at doing what

it does best, beating unarmed and defenceless civilians. Being Irish, this will be nothing new to us; we always knew that they were the best trained army in the world at beating civilians; on this occasion it happened to be Iraqi youths.

But just as we will not be surprised at the fact they beat people to a pulp. We are also not surprised at the people who have thrown themselves into the media, to support "the best trained army in the world". It is these people that I want to talk about, because talking about the British Army and the people they beat, is old news to anybody, in any country, who has come across these jolly bunch of Brits as they "keep the peace" in their own strange way.

We are already getting the usual faces of ex-Brit servicemen, though never women, and politicians who row in with all sorts of excuses for these uniformed thugs. They range from "they are young, most only teenagers who are under great pressures", "it was a few years ago, we have learnt since then" or the one most familiar to us, "it's only a few bad apples, don't let this reflect on the military as a whole, who are doing a great job for us and are an example to other armies all over the world". It is easy to see what other armies. Usually from former colonies of Britain and as the British Army showed them all they needed to know about oppression, is it strange they learned so much from their former masters?

Everywhere Britain has sent her uniformed thugs they have disgraced themselves. But they don't have to worry too much about it, back home the great and powerful will enlighten us as to why it was necessary for their army to act the way it did. Plus

the media will soon weigh in behind "our boys and girls". They will role out the usual experts like "Andy McNab", whose utterances are so unreal he won't use his own name;



he says it for security, but who he is hiding from is still unclear, let's face it, he is no Salmon Rushdie. He says that there is

a major difference between what Britain's "boys" are doing to civilians and what Americas "boys" are doing to P.O.W.s. Well to me battering some one inside or outside prison is still torture. I think our anonymous "Andy" should stick to writing books for people like himself; those who have the I.Q. of a dead cockroach... you don't need to be Einstein to get into the British Army, from my experience of them in Belfast, a lack of even a standard education seems to fit all the requirements to join it.

So for generations we have had British uniformed thugs disgracing themselves all over the world, backed by the British establishment who think we should be grateful to them for it. Do these politicians and so-called experts believe what they say, or do they just expect us to believe it? They blatantly talk about their military in glowing terms, as if they actually care about what their "boys" are do-

ing in other

countries, as a matter of fact, they are annoyed that their "boys" actions are being questioned at all. Blair says there will be an investigation, if British investigations in Ireland are anything to go by, we know the outcome of it already. Media military "experts" will spin out the usual rubbish to a square eyed audience, who would believe anything their "betters" tell them. The British establishment have to back their troops, even if they commit mass murder, as we have seen with Derry, or they will not even have an investigation, as we have seen with the mass murder their soldiers committed in the New Lodge and Springhill.

But as these soldiers return to Britain, the T.V. crews will be out in force to show them tearfully reunited with their families and loved ones, we will get interviews with wives and children, who will answer questions about how good it is to have them home etc. But no interviewer will ask them "what about the beatings that were handed out to civilians and prisoners?" No these interviews at the airports are meant to convey a feeling of a job well done by the boys in uniform. Not the dirty, messy things soldiers do to people they see as less human than themselves.

So as we watch British soldiers doing what they are trained to do, and the establishment rowing in behind to support their every action, my anger is towards a system that turns a blind eye to their own injustices and human rights abuses, yet will use lies and story's of human rights abuses to invade another country. The invasion of Iraq is illegal, but so what. What Britain, and other countries, are doing in Iraq is illegal, but so what. The world is not a safer place since the invasion, but so what. Certain people are making billions of dollars out of the invasion, but so what.

So long as the likes of Bush and

CONTINUED ON PAGE25

REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST YOUTH MOVEMENT

Founding Conference Held

The Republican Socialist Youth Movement was founded by young republicans, socialists and members of the two flute bands aligned to the Irish Republican Socialist Party at a weekend residential at Glencree Centre for Conflict Resolution from Friday September 30th until Sunday October 2nd. The participants at the inaugural conference were largely inexperienced in the field of politics and the level of politicisation was low. However, all participants left having learned something.

The day started with a lecture on the history of the movement by ex-INLA prisoner Gerard McGarrigle. Gerard spoke specifically on the movement in the period of the late 80s until the middle of the 90s, mentioning his own personal experiences. Ex-INLA prisoner Willie Gallagher then spoke on the history of the movement within the prisons, relying heavily on his own personal experiences also. Willie's lecture had a profound impact on the audience as he spoke of his hunger strike, the cages, H-Blocks, dirty protest and so forth. Willie mentioned the disastrous effects of other organisations attitudes towards the movement in a historical sense he also pointed out that numerous events such as escapes from Long Kesh by INLA prisoners have been effectively removed from written history.

Once Willie had finished, the participants were divided into five workshop groups. The groups penned their thoughts on the movement, the direction of the movement, what is needed within the flute bands and so forth. They submitted their thoughts orally, most of which were centered on the need for a greater amount of discipline within the flute bands and the need for those within the flute bands to understand what and whom they represent.

We are hoping to organise such weekends again focused primarily on educational seminars. We would like to thank Teach Na Failte for their assistance and support throughout the weekend.

Republicanism and Youth Today

Ciaran Boyle, Derry RSYM

As Republicanism moves onto the next generation the youth differs in opinion. Most youth today will find it difficult to accept the PSNI despite insinuations from nationalist politicians. The genuine Republican youth will carry in their hearts 100% pure republicanism which is passed down from generation to generation and through literature and experience.

As most of the youth like myself were in favour of Sinn Féin, the policing debate has changed the mood. When SF set out to satisfy the broad nationalist electorate they leave behind the long serving Republican voice and principles.

This Republican voice has been bought into believing that the Good Friday Agreement was leading somewhere, when SF initially sat in Stormont we were told that unity is around the corner.

When they decommissioned arms we thought "surely this cant be true, surely they didn't decommission the

lot", this was reinforced by off the record conversations with senior SF members. Now with SF ready to put on the British uniform it has become clear that SF is no longer a Republican or a revolutionary party, they are firmly part of the capitalist system in Ireland.

Not only have they sold out their Republican principles by administering British law on Irish soil, they have sold out the working class of which they once stood for. They need not worry about a slump in votes in the Bogside or Balllymurphy, this is reinforced by the move into what was once SLDP territory, the new found respectability sits well with the Catholic middle classes.

SF refused to back the non payment of water charges because it would include the breaking of British law on Irish soil, they signed up to this unjust tax in the Executive along with the SDLP and all other mainstream parties. Water charges possibly could break the back bone of

already exploited working class and they will have no option but not to pay.

The working class of the 6 counties should not be held to ransom for years of mismanagement of what they pay for through their rates, the wealthy elite should be held to account for their own crisis. If worst comes to worst the working class will once again man the streets and water charges will be defeated by the people for the people.

With the internet the youth can be easily educated and are not fooled with ease through lack of an alternative as was in the past. They know true Republican principles and they understand socialism, the fact that the "Northern Ireland" statelet is illegal does pass them by, the youth and the next generation stand as Republican Socialists fighting for the original goal of a 32 County Socialist Republic as set out in the Proclamation and Democratic Programme of the 1st Dail Eireann

IRSP PROTEST AGAINST RUC/PSNI IN WEST BELFAST

On the afternoon of Saturday 3rd of March, the IRSP Daly/MacNamee Cumann staged an anti-RUC/PSNI white line picket on the Falls Road Belfast. The protest was organized in conjunction with the Republican Socialist Youth Movement Belfast Cumann.

The picket was intended to show continued Republican Socialist opposition to the existence of a locally recruited armed branch of British Imperialism in Ireland. Before the protest got



underway, an armoured RUC/PSNI landrover arrived and began recording the participants of the protest with camera and microphone.

Local IRSP Ard Comhairle representative, Tomás Gorman referred to the Police presence as reinforcing the message of the protest. "Here we have concrete proof that political policing remains unscathed here in the 6 Counties. We are here involved in a legitimate political protest and right beside us is a political intelligence gathering exercise by the RUC/PSNI on behalf of the British State. Anyone who believes the nonsense of civic policing being separated from political policing is either delusional, a liar, or a fool."

Whilst the RUC/PSNI were targeting IRSP members on this occasion, Tomás Gorman feels that others have reason to be worried. "In this incidence it was IRSP members being profiled, In the very near future it will be those protesting water tax, those in favour of more social housing or any other political issue viewed as a potential threat, those people will be victims of political policing."

Republican Socialist Youth Movement

McCann / Gallagher Cumann, Belfast.

The Stormont elections are over once more, to us the exercise is entirely cosmetic and bears little relevance to those in opposition to the cementing of British rule in Ireland – following the results we are calling upon youth to reject the unreformable RUC.

Speaking after the election Republican Socialist Youth Movement spokesperson Chris Duffy said "It is clear from the election results that both Nationalists and Unionists are voting for the two parties they believe will guarantee two polar opposites through the same structures and agreements – on one hand a United Ireland the other for the strengthening of the connection with Britain

"In light of the election results, especially the poor results that many anti-Good Friday Agreement candidates yielded, we are calling upon young people in particular to reject the RUC as an unreformable bastion of Unionism

Mr. Duffy continued "Sinn Féin has adopted the positions of the SDLP and have consistently moved in on respectable areas that were once SDLP strongholds but this is to be expected. We cannot expect change through parliamentary politics, the British will not give an inch to any genuine Republican that challenges their system" "The RUC in its present form of the PSNI will always be unreformable, this was reinforced by the videoing of recent pickets and the arrest of

Gerry McGeough

"More worrying has been the firing of shots in north Belfast in relation to what is called 'dissident' activity, children were out playing at the time of the shots being fired by the PSNI and one narrowly missed a woman as she stood just inches from where the bullet was to penetrate her door."

In conclusion Mr. Duffy said "It is our view that policing will always be political. The PSNI will still be hauling Republicans to prison for their activities even with a detachment of M15 from civic policing, the policing board does not contain any mechanisms to prevent the arrest or detainment of Republicans."

Socialism supports Maghaberry Political Prisoners

I have listened with open ears and an open mind to those anti-imperialists, sporting Che Guevara t-shirts, who protest the Iraq war but who choose not to throw their full support behind Republican prisoners' right to political status, mainly, on the basis that they are involved in an armed campaign in some way or another. But what is the difference between our comrades in Maghaberry and the anti-imperialist icon they proudly sport at rallies and demos, Che Guevara's struggle? They both were engaged in armed struggle, they both were fighting imperialism and they both were demonized for their anti-imperialist struggle.

I wonder into the deepest parts of my mind and ask myself, how, can any true socialist, in their right mind, not fully support Republican POWs and their demands for political status. Isn't their struggle political? Don't they have a politically legitimate argument against Imperialism and Capitalism? These are people who are fighting, not only against a major Imperialist propaganda system which injects itself into the minds of the politically naive and brain-washed, but also any force said Imperialist may decide to administer under threat of rebellion from working people.

The state in Ireland, Britain, the US and most western states in recent times have enacted laws in order to outlaw even a sniff of political dissent. They usually call them offences against the state, anti-terrorism legislation, the patriot act and so on, and the do their best to put political activists and, CIA built, mass terrorists under the same category. Well we are not religious fundamentalists, we are not fighting for a small minority of people. We are fighting for the right to self-determination for the entire working people of our countries, all the working people regardless of our background and we have a legitimate political objective as do the POWs.

I enjoy listening to these so-called 'socialists/ libertarians/ believers in freedom and justice' who talk down the efforts of Republican groups and dismiss them as terrorists, failing to present some constructive criticisms about the struggle. It sounds like these people have gone to the houses of capitalist parliament to buy the Imperialist propaganda documents from the Imperialists and use it as an argument against people who use reasonable force against the occupying Imperialist/ Capitalist. Armed struggle may not be answer but armed defense is certainly needed in certain working class areas, especially those who are under attack from British controlled mobs and also the bigoted police.

Who are those people who are out in their droves to commemorate and salute the fallen heroes for the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion in 1916 (hypocritical, opportunistic, capitalist leaders of the state and their working class armed forces dragged out behind their military leaders should be included here) yet they refuse to support the Republican groups of today

who use the exact same tactics as our anti-imperialist forces of the Easter Rebellion. I could use this as an example to define hypocrisy.

James Connolly was a leader in the Easter Rebellion and a Socialist Revolutionary, a mammoth voice of the labour movement and defender of working people. He opposed the free-state, he opposed partition, he opposed home rule, he opposed Imperialism, Capitalism and their wars and he was demonized as a terrorist also. He led a small armed force, the Irish Citizen Army, who ideologically were the predecessors of the INLA, with no ideological difference what-so-ever, against the British Government, and it was against the will of the majority of the time. The majority did not support the Rebellion and, in fact, some even fought against it. It's just like today and it's all down to ignorance coupled with the effectiveness of Imperialist/ Capitalist propaganda. In 1916 they used violence, they used guns and explosives but it was to achieve a politically sound objective. This was terrorism through the eyes of the state, again, just like today.

So why do people support the Easter Rebellion today? Because they were Republican and Socialist activists out to try and free working people from the state supported exploitation and oppression by capitalist means and the Irish free-state Government, on the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion, acknowledged their heroism by commemorating them along with thousands upon thousands of working people all over the country. I've heard all the desperate arguments over the years trying to link republicans/ socialists with terrorism but I've yet to hear a credible and non-hypocritical one.

The reason for this incredibility is because there is no plausible link. The Republican/ Socialist/ anti-imperialist ideal has always been sound and armed resistance has been justified, simply, by Britain's occupational presence on this Island.



These same reactionaries will use British/ US Government anti-terror arguments as they watch these same Governments order hundreds of thousands of innocent soldiers to go off to kill and mame their foreign counterpart and all because the working class soldiers need the money to send home to their families. How can the reactionary socialist types side with a body who allows this to happen? These same reactionaries will wear t-shirts sporting the face of Ernesto Che Guevara who also used extreme violence and even claimed it was the only tactic to achieve revolution, yet when these same revolutionaries are on their doorstep reactionary socialists oppose them.

Revolutionary Socialists much strive to understand the truth behind Imperialist propaganda, they must understand that state media often leave out vital information in news reports to put a pro-Government slant on the majority of news reporting, they must understand the Imperialist, and the half-truths they employ because without understanding this, you cannot understand imperialism and thus cannot understand your own struggle. The number one rule in any war, including our own class war is 'know your enemy' but also know your comrades.

Coaimhain Ceallaigh



Coalition Against Water Charges

The British government's case for charges. The government set about the introduction of water taxes a number of years ago. Their arguments for the introduction of the charges were as follows:



- That the Water Service was in desperate need of upgrading.
- That the service was rundown and dilapidated, many of the pipes having been laid over 100 years ago.
- That leakage of clean water was close to 30 per cent.
- That the demands on the service, because of population growth and the growth of new water based appliances, dishwashers, washing machines etc were going to increase.
- That the European Government directive on water, demanded a certain standard in cleanliness of water and this had to be implemented by 2010.

Few people could disagree with the idea that the water service needs an upgrade. All sorts of difficulties exist with the present system: Sewerage is pumped out into the sea, water is sometimes of poor quality and leakage is high.

The government argued that they had no funds to upgrade the service and would need to find funds from another source. They suggested charges and consulted on this.

At the consultations, the government argued:

- That we, the public, didn't pay for water.
- That there was no allocation in the rates bill for water.
- That according to the European Framework Directive the water service had to be self-financing.

That the only way to get the funds required for an upgrade was to introduce charges

The government's case is flawed.

- We do pay for our water through the regional rate.

- We pay approximately 40% of our regional rate to the water service.

- While there may no longer be a direct allocation on the rates bill that is where they get the money for the service.

- The European Framework Directive does not say that the water service has to be self-financing; all it says is that there had to be an adequate con-

tribution.

- There are any number of ways the government could get the funds to pay for the upgrade of the water service. They have found billions for other projects.

- The government is committed to the privatisation of public utilities.
- That is the real reason behind the introduction of the charges.

The government has said a number of times that it considers privatisation a more efficient and cost effective method of running public services.

There is no evidence to support this view if anything all the evidence points in the other direction.

When privatisation takes place:

- The service becomes less efficient.
- There is less money spent on infrastructure upgrades.
- Staff numbers are reduced.

It is the view of Communities against Water Taxes that:

- Water is a basic human right and that it should be provided for all citizens through a publicly owned service.

- It should not be sold off to major multinationals or even locally owned companies where the sole reason for running the service becomes a commitment to maximising profit.

In England and Wales where privatisa-

tion has taken place the water service has increased prices dramatically.

The quality of water is poor and many people have to reduce the amount of water they use to reduce their water bills.

This often means not flushing toilets, having baths or showers and generally putting their health at risk

- We are suggesting that people refuse to pay their water bills.

- We know this is a big decision for many but it is the only decision that people can take which can defeat the government's campaign.

- The government is going to introduce any number of measures to force us to pay.

- At the moment it is not a criminal offence to refuse to pay. The government is looking at introducing new legislation to take people who don't pay to the magistrate's court where we would need a solicitor to represent non-payers. CAWT is preparing a legal fund if this eventuates.

The more people who don't pay the more likely it is we can win!

We at CAWT are saying that no-one should have to pay twice and that water should remain in public hands.

We oppose Peter Hain's privatisation agenda.

We are suggesting that a mass campaign of non-payment will force the government to find the money somewhere else.

Water Charges were defeated in Dublin and

The Poll tax was beaten in the UK using this method

Coalition Against Water Charges

Water Tax is a Double Tax

Yet we already pay for our water through our local rates 37% of our rates bill currently goes to the Water Service. That's why water charges are a double tax. The average household at present pays £225 per year towards water and sewerage services. If the Water Tax is not beaten water charges will rocket. The water company will be privatised and the demand for rising profits will lead to massive water bills. No household will be exempt from water bills — not pensioners, the unemployed or

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those on benefits. The reduced tariff for people on benefits could be scrapped in 2 years time.

The Water Tax can be beaten but not without a battle. If households refuse to pay, money cannot simply be deducted from wages. This can only be done by taking people through the courts. If we stay united they cannot take tens of thousands to court. Amass non-payment campaign would make the water tax dead in the water! We urge households to unite and ensure that no-one is left isolated. This means building a grassroots campaign of non-payment in every community. Non-payment and a legal campaign defeated the poll tax. 40% of people refused to pay. The courts and the system were totally clogged up and paralysed.

The Water Tax cannot be implemented if tens and hundreds of thousands of families say:

"The Water Tax is a Double Tax — Don't Pay Water Charges!"

HOUSEHOLD WATER bills averaging £100 per year will begin coming through your door on 1st April 2007. In 2 years this will treble to £334, at least. THE Water Tax can be beaten. The poll tax was defeated in Britain in 1990. In Dublin water charges were abolished in 1996. Both were defeated by a mass non-payment campaign and a legal campaign to defend non-payers. Don't Pay Water Charges

email: watercoalition@btconnect.com www.waterchargesnonpayment.com



THE VOTES ARE COUNTED

The votes are counted. The talking begins to form a local administration for Northern Ireland/Six Counties. The winners prepare for power while the losers lick their wounds. But in a telling

remark a newly elected DUP Assembly member said that the differences between the DUP and the UUP were that the DUP had "the personal touch."

Indeed it will become increasingly difficult as the years go on to differentiate between the five main parties, the DUP, Sinn Fein, UUP, SDLP and Alliance. Already they are lining up to put their snouts in the trough of Chancellor Gordon Brown as they seek sweeteners in the form of "a peace dividend" of

£1 Billion to share power with each other. In the past they have introduced pro-capitalist policies in the form of public private partnerships and there is no clear differentiation in the economic policies they have advocated. Of course the reality is that they will introduce and implement the economic policies dictated by the British Government and which have their origins in the policies of the international capitalist bodies such as the IMF and the World Bank. Those with the republican traditions who still harbour illusions in the radicalism of Sinn Fein should note the pathetic performances of Gerry Adams on TV in the 26 Counties/Irish Republic when he floundered when pressed on specific policies to deal with issues such as health.

When the IRSP took up a principled position of opposition to the Good Friday Agreement we were vilified by some on the left and by Sinn Fein (P) as warmongers and anti-peace. But we clearly indicated we opposed the GFA because it endorsed the British policy of divide and rule. It institutionalised sectari-



partition. Now the chickens are coming home to roost. Condition after condition was put on Sinn Fein, which saw massive decommissioning and eventually endorsement of the PSNI.

Faced with a set up that forced them into choosing sectarian camps the vast majority of the voting population choose to vote for the party that seemed the strongest to represent their sectarian interests. Hence the great success of the DUP and Sinn Fein in the elections taking just under 60% of the

seats available. But before getting carried away supporters of Sinn Fein should note the actions of the PSNI during the elections. The arrest of a candidate outside the count, and the arrest of the husband of a Sinn Fein councillor was the PSNI sticking two fingers up to those Shinnners who talked about putting manners on the Police. The reality is that the boot is on the other foot. However there was little joy for anti-policing candidates or indeed candidates from the left. Below we print their votes. It makes sorry reading.

Republican Sinn Fein

West Belfast: Geraldine Taylor.....427 votes (1.3%)

Mid Ulster: Brendan McLaughlin.....437 votes (1.0%)

Upper Bann: Barry Toman.....386 votes (0.9%)

East Londonderry: Michael McGonigle.....393 votes (1.2%)

Fermanagh South Tyrone: Michael McManus.....431 votes (0.9%)

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West Tyrone, Joe O'Neill.....448 votes (1.1%)

THE VOTES ARE COUNTED

Dissident Provos

North Antrim: Paul McGlinchey.....383 votes (0.9%)

Newry and Armagh: Davy Hyland.....2188 votes
(4.4%)

Fermanagh South Tyrone: Gerry McGeough.....814 votes
(1.8%)

Other Republican Independents

South Down: Martin Cunningham.....434 votes (0.9%)

Foyle: Peggy O Hara.....1789 votes (4.4%)

Workers Party

West Belfast John Lowry (Workers Party).....434 Votes
(1.26%)

East Belfast Joe Bell (Workers Party).....107 votes (0.35%)

South Belfast Paddy Lynn (Workers Party).....123 Votes
(0.40)

North Belfast John Lavery (Workers Party).....139 (0.46%)

Lagan Valley John Magee (Workers Party).....83 Votes
(0.19%)

South Antrim Marcella Delaney (Workers Party).....89
Votes(0.23%)

Socialist Party

South Belfast Jim Barbour (Socialist Party).....248 Votes
(0.81%)

East Belfast Thomas Black (Socialist Party).....225 Votes
(0.75 %)

Labour

South Down Malachi Curran (Labour).....123 Votes (0.26%)

Socialist Environmental Alliance

Foyle Eamon McCann (Socialist Environmental Alliance).....2045 Votes (4.5%)

People before Profit

West Belfast Sean Mitchell (People before Profit).....744
Votes (2.17%)

It is clear from these results that there is little or no support for those republicans who cling to the old certainties that the Provo movement once clung to. Indeed it is extraordinary that the group we refer to above as the Provo Dissidents only realised within the last year what the implications of the Good Friday Agreement were. Did they really believe the Provo internal propaganda that they were moving the struggle forward by recognising the police, decommissioning the IRA (P) and implementing pro-capitalist policies when in power?

Republican Sinn Fein's complaints that they were denied proper coverage in the media is really a pathetic attempt to hide the reality that they have little support from republicans within the nationalist community. Their obsession with "English" as in their statement of Friday 9th of March, 07

"To consolidate English rule" and "by unscrupulous English governments."

is a blatant attempt to appeal to a reactionary form of nationalism playing up people's dislike of the English, a view shared by many people world wide. But what about not only British Imperialism but also world imperialism? And it ignores the reactionary nature of the ruling classes in Scotland and Wales who have embraced Imperialism, as indeed did the Ulster bourgeoisie. But their position is fundamentally wrong because they ignore or downplay the

class struggle. They have forgotten every thing James Connolly wrote about, especially the bit about the flags and post boxes! "Imperialism would still rule you" The national question will be



solved with the victory of socialism and not before.

Both the Workers Party and the Socialist Party performed poorly and in some cases it looked as if only their relatives voted for them. Splendid isolation may protect the purity of one's politics but seemingly cuts no ice with a working class deeply divided and stuck into two sectarian camps. Ignoring or downplaying the reality of the sectarian divisions by abstract appeals to class unity in party statements and papers without actual action and unrelated to actual conditions on the ground is just another form of left liberalism. Both these organisations are in grave danger of simply becoming sects.

But from a socialist perspective there were some bright spots. The vote for Eamon McCann in Foyle showed the value of campaigning on real issues following long sustained work on class politics. While the IRSP has strong reservations about the stance of the SEA on key issues such as Imperialism, the national question, and broad fronts we applaud their work on key class issues. That is also probably why the People Before Profit got such a comparatively high vote in West Belfast. They emphasised the issue of water charges, which will affect every working class family if implemented. That obviously has struck a cord with much right across the sectarian divide. That discontent must be built upon.

The vote for Peggy O Hara was extraordinary given that there was no electoral experience from her team but the enthusiasm and dedication of her workers tapped into an emotion that needs

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THE VOTES ARE COUNTED

to be built upon. The alliance between the IRSP/32CSM and Concerned Republicans shows what can be achieved among republicans on a platform that dealt with key issues of concerns for republicans but avoided a knee jerk anti Sinn Fein bashing approach. The comparative success of the Peggy O'Hara campaign has led some republicans to believe that a new Irish republican alliance (ira) can be built as a political party. Such a venture would ignore the ideological differences that exist between the existing forces. For its part the IRSP will continue to do what it has been doing over the past 11 years, while others stood on the sidelines, building a credible left revolutionary force advocating the Connolly /Costello road to revolution. The gradual build up organisationally of the IRSP in Derry over the last five years undoubtedly added to the vitality of the Peggy O'Hara campaign. It has established a base that can be built upon. Now the IRSP need to push positive policies approaches and ideas from an anti-imperialist and socialist perspective rather than get diverted down cul de sacs.

The overwhelming victory of Sinn Fein is not a cause for despair for republicans or socialists. Rather it is an opportunity for the left to take stock and also take advantages of the stance and compromises that that organisation will have to make to exercise power. In the south of Ireland nearly one third of the electorate vote for a range of parties and individuals that can be broadly classified as "left". As the economic conditions worsen in both parts of Ireland, as witnessed by the loss of 900 hundred jobs in the Munster area announced last week, the discontent of the masses will become evident. Already a number of rises in the interest on mortgages in both parts of Ireland has dramatically increased the cost of living

for thousands. Spiralling house prices in the North has meant that 4 out of five houses now sold go to property speculators. Dublin houses prices mean that locals cannot afford to buy in Dublin. Young married couples are finding it increasingly difficult to secure suitable accommodation. The privatisation of public utilities and the cutting back of all the gains of the working class over the past ninety years is on the agenda of all capitalist Governments. The coming election in the South will make no fundamental changes regardless of which coalition is stuck together. The new Government will carry out the policies of globalisation at the bidding of the capitalist classes.

Now is the time for the left and republican left to build alliances that can channel the coming discontent into political advances for the working class. The door is now opening for the resurgence of the left because with new administrations looming in the North and South with no essential differences in policy but to implement pro big business policies the left can now become, in the unions and on the streets and hopefully in the electoral field a real opposition to the pro-capitalist policies of the new regimes.

Reformists, Policing and the State

In the elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly the Socialist Workers Party is standing its long time figure head, Eamon McCann, under the banner of the Socialist Division. On 22nd January, the SEA had this to say about a foreign, imperialist police force in Ireland: "We do not believe that the ongoing debate between the Sinn Fein

the barricades their local police force is on the side of capitalism. Policing is an everyday issue for the working class. Who allows the druggies to ply their trade? Who ignores attacks on working class homes but comes down like a ton of bricks on those who may be seen to be a threat to the property of the rich? Who plants false evidence on political activists? Who infiltrates political organisations and who works in collusion with loyalist and right wing organisations to suppress dissent?

Eamon McCann made his name in the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1960s having previously been a member of the Irish Workers Group. The IWG took a principled position on the issue of the Imperialist occupation of a part of Ireland. Unfortunately the same can not be said for the SWP which has continuously downplayed the importance of the anti-imperialist and national liberation struggle in Irish politics. This trait they share with the Socialist Party. Both parties yearn for the "normalisation" of the class struggle- a classic economism approach that Lenin Trotsky, Connolly and Costello consistently attacked

This economistic approach can be seen in McCann and the SEA's approach to the

leadership and republicans who disagree with them about policing is productive from a working-class point of view." The reality is the exact opposite. The working classes in all the main cities

A debate about policing would really be in the interests of the working class. Not that Sinn Fein(provisional) had a debate about policing prior to their endorsement of the imperialist police. Adams lied when he said they had held 60 meetings and had a debate. On the contrary dissent in Sinn Fein was stifled and former members threatened. So McCann ignored a real opportunity to seriously engage in the whole debate. Oh yes in his election statement, McCann denounced police

members threatened. So McCann ignored a real opportunity to seriously engage in the whole debate. Oh yes in his election statement, McCann denounced police

VOTE
McCANN
LABOUR



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN CASH, TALLIN, IRELAND. PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN STREET, DUBLIN. PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN STREET, DUBLIN.

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Reformists, Policing and the State

harassment of youth, exposing their role as defenders of capitalist property on picket lines, and encouraging young people not to join up. But he ends with this reformist statement on the relationship between bourgeois democracy and a body of armed men:

"We believe that the only proper position of elected representatives is to remain at all times independent of the police and hold them to account and subject them to public scrutiny. In a phrase, to police the police."

This ignores the whole issue of the national question, the gerrymandered nature of the Six Counties, which give a built in majority to Unionism. Do McCann and the SWP really believe the PSNI is fundamentally different to the RUC? Do they believe they can be made accountable to the nationalist population, to Protestant as well as Catholic workers, via Stormont or Westminster?

Rather than foster illusions in the reformability of the six counties the SWP should shed their reformist illusions and join the admittedly weakened struggle to smash

this whole state, with its police force and army. Our job is not to just hold it to account. Our job is to smash Stormont as a prelude to transforming the national struggle into a struggle for socialism in all Ireland.

Gerry Ruddy

UNDERSTANDING THE IRISH PEACE PROCESS: PART 1

by Xabier JIMENEZ and Liam O RUAIRC

The conflict in Ireland has essentially been one between the "principle of self-determination without external impediment" and the so-called "principle of consent". The demarcation between republicanism and other political forces like constitutional nationalism (government parties in the south of Ireland such as Fianna Fail or the SDLP in the North), unionism and the British state is the principle of consent.

The essence of Republicanism in Ireland is democracy. Democracy is rule of the people, by the people in the interests of the people. For Republicans, the people of Ireland should be able to determine their own future democratically (that is 'self-determination') without external impediment. British interference in Ireland is a barrier to democracy. The problem is that the people of Ireland cannot determine their future democratically as it is the British state which determines the parameters on how self-determination should be exercised: there will be no change to the constitutional status of the North unless a majority there agrees to. In diplomatic jargon, this is called "the principle of consent". Republicans reject the principle of consent because in practice, it means that 12% of the people of Ireland can have a veto over the other 88%. Any political changes to the constitutional status have to be acceptable to the 12% of the people who are Unionists before they are enacted. Republicans reject this as anti-democratic and therefore call the "principle of consent" a "unionist veto".

It is necessary 'to break the British connection' because an alien government divides a minority from the majority and erects obstacles upon the resolution of differences. A minority should certainly have rights, but should not have a veto over the majority. It is the rejection of the "principle of consent" which mainly distinguishes republicanism from constitutional nationalism. Constitutional nationalism also believes in self-determination, that the people of Ireland should be able to de-

termine their own future. However, it accepts to operate within the existing constitutional parameters and therefore recognises the "principle of consent" that there won't be any changes unless they are acceptable to a majority in the North. Constitutional nationalists believe that constitutional politics should be the only means used to achieve self-determination.

Republicans were unambiguous in their view of constitutional nationalist parties such as the SDLP as 'partitionist nationalist'. For republicans, the gap between 'partitionist nationalism'

and republicanism was unbridgeable. In the eyes of Gerry Adams in 1986, the SDLP was "a fully fledged catholic partitionist party" (1).

The British government's political strategy was devised in 1973/1974. Its alternative to republicanism consisted in a power sharing system in the North with cross border bodies and a Council of Ireland to recognize the (Irish dimension) all of this premised upon the 'principle of consent'. This materialized in the 1974 Sunningdale Agreement. These political parameters were similar to those of the 1998 Belfast



Agreement.

The IRA emphatically rejected out of hand the various constitutional initiatives and the 1974 Agreement, viewing them as British attempts to marginalize Republicanism and isolate the Irish freedom struggle. The British government's March 1973 White paper which set out its alternative was immediately rejected by the IRA (2). For the then Sinn Fein president Ruairi O Bradaigh,

'the Green Paper solves nothing', 'it merely seeks to perpetuate Britain's grip on Ireland'; the White paper was devised 'to stabilise the situation and perpetuate her own control over the area', the Sunningdale Agreement 'constitutes a step backwards rather than an advance' for the liberation struggle (3). The Provisionals opposed the Sunningdale Agreement and when it failed to secure necessary unionist support and was

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UNDERSTANDING THE IRISH PEACE PROCESS

brought down by the May 1974 Ulster Workers' Council strike, this was praised by the Provisionals. Constitutional nationalists who accepted the Sunningdale Agreement and saw it as a stepping-stone to a united Ireland were denounced. Gerry Adams accused the SDLP, because it had endorsed the arrangement, of being the first Catholic partitionist party.

However it is worth pausing for one moment to reflect upon the many political characteristics that are common to both Sunningdale and the subsequent 1998 Belfast Agreement. Both Agreements were founded upon the unionist veto and both sought to establish power-sharing executives within the six-county state, which were designed to co-exist alongside minimalist cross-border institutions. While bearing these similarities in mind, perhaps we should also remind ourselves of the fact that hundreds of republican prisoners have served thousands of years in jails across Ireland and Britain between 1973-1998 and we must also never forget the graveyards across Ireland that are filled with republican dead who fell on active service during this period. When one considers these facts one must ask oneself: how in 1998 could the Provisional leadership morally justify their acceptance of the Belfast Agreement, which was procured at so great a human cost, while its political equivalent, the Sunningdale Agreement, was rejected in 1973? (4)

This point has also been underlined by mainstream media.

"What incidentally was the 'martyrdom' of nearly 300 IRA volunteers about? What did it achieve that could not have been achieved through political means alone? More specifically, what advance does the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 represent on the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973? Yes, there are some differences. The Good Friday Agreement envisages a reversion of responsibility for security and policing to the Northern Ireland executives. Sunningdale did not provide for that but left it open. But what else? Sunningdale provided for power sharing and all-Ireland institutions... Do the 'advances' of the Good Friday Agreement, beyond what was agreed at Sunningdale 25 years previously, justify the loss of a single human life, be that

of an innocent civilian, a member of the security forces or of an IRA volunteer?" (5) After Sunningdale, the IRA was therefore "fighting the wrong war" (6). The republican armed struggle has to be understood as a kind of "counter-veto" to the unionist veto. The central aim of the armed struggle was to create conditions, which render an internal Northern Ireland settlement (even with the



'externality' of cross border bodies and 'Irish dimension' grafted upon it) impossible thus forcing a progression towards Irish unification as the only option for peacemakers.

Malachi O Doherty (7) correctly summed the IRA strategy as "a strategy of vetoing an internal settlement through the narrowing of options". Its purpose is the prevention of any settlement on Britain's terms: "The campaign does not primarily force the British to leave Ireland through making their presence too costly, but it sets limits to their ability to resolve the conflict internally." The armed struggle narrow the political options the British government had for settling the violence. "The British would continue to resist the option of withdrawal until all alternatives had been tried and proved not to have brought peace." "Republicans saw their campaign as narrowing the options of the British to the point where they would have to consider withdrawal."

The so-called 'peace process' signaled a dramatic shift for Provisional republicans. The shift from armed struggle to a 'peace process' strategy was essentially a Republican retreat disguised as some new 'strategic initiative'. By the late 1980s, the Provisional Movement experienced considerable political and military marginalisation. This position of weakness compelled it to envisage

a strategic alliance with constitutional nationalism.

The Pan-Nationalist Alliance Central to the new strategy was the idea that the pan nationalist alliance of the Irish government, Sinn Féin, SDLP could pressurize the British government in a diplomatic offensive to 'persuade'

the Unionists that their interest was in a united Ireland. The Provisionals spent a long time in the early 1990s building that pan nationalist coalition through secret talks with Fianna Fáil, and in particular the Hume-Adams initiatives of 1993. When the Provisional movement finally succeeded to build an alliance with those other political forces, it was not on its own terms: for this 'national consensus' to be possible, it had to accept considerable sections of the SDLP and Fianna Fáil's constitutional nationalist agenda.

(i) The emphasis was no longer on the traditional objective of a British government declaration of intent to withdraw, but upon its recognition that "the Irish people as a whole have a right to self-determination" (8). While in appearance being in continuity with traditional republican demand, the concept represented a shift in position, because the constitutional nationalist understanding of self-determination allows for a degree of ambiguity around the means of exercising that right. For example this means that if a majority of people in Ireland as a whole decide that there will be no united Ireland until a majority of people in the North decide to, that constitutes national self-determination rather than a partitionist compromise.

(ii) Consequently, the Provisional movement now stated that the exercise of self-determination is a matter for agreement between the people of Ireland. This signaled a profound change. The 23 April 1993 Hume Adams statement contained the following two crucial sentences: "The exercise of self-determination is a matter for agreement between the people of Ireland. It is the search for that agreement and the means of achieving it on which we will be concentrating." (9) Never before had the republican movement stated publicly that there had to be agreement on the exercise of self-determination. That meant that any agreement had to be

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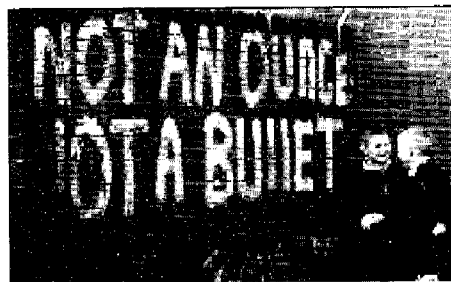
UNDERSTANDING THE IRISH PEACE PROCESS: PART 1

based on terms acceptable to the Unionist community. It meant that the unionist community had a veto over whatever was to happen. In other words, it was the Unionist veto rewritten.

(iii) The Provisional movement now recognised that the consent and allegiance of Unionists are essential if a lasting peace is to be established. While still arguing that the unionist veto must go, they were "seeking to obtain the consent of a majority of people in the North" (10). However, the difficulty with this is that the unionist right to consent is precisely what republicans have always claimed constituted that veto: unity by consent of the majority of the North of Ireland was nothing more than a partitionist fudge.

(iv) Last but not least, the Provisional revised its analysis of the British presence. Rather than being seen as the cause of the problem it was now seen as part of the solution, the British government now given a neutral if not a positive role by "joining the ranks of the persuaders" (11) and convincing the Unionists that their future lies in a united Ireland. However, the British state's main strategic objective has always been to render ineffectual the military capacity of the IRA to effect political change, not convincing the Unionists to change. Thus it is not the Dublin government and the SDLP that had come to the Republican position, but rather the Provisional movement, which had moved to the constitutional nationalist position that Irish self-determination would have to be achieved with the consent of the people of the North. Republicanism had become subsumed within a partitionist nationalist project. The price of the inclusion of Republicans in the pan nationalist alliance was the exclusion of Republicanism. By relying on elements who had always been much more hostile to the IRA than to British involvement in Ireland, the Provisional movement's anti-partitionist thrust could only be seriously weakened. In seeking an alliance with parties who accept the unionist veto as the foundation of any political settlement, the Adams leadership was implicitly acknowledging that any future political arrangement would be a predominantly internal one, leaving the constitutional status of the six-counties unaltered.

Parallel to this, the objective of a 32 county socialist republic was given a very ultimate, nature. A very important departure from previous positions was that the Provisionals now stated that "the British government's departure must be preceded by a sustained period of peace and will arise out of negotiations" (12). In 1993, Martin McGuinness signaled this major compromise on the objective of 'Brits Out' when at Bodinstown; he spoke about 'interim arrangements', implying that armed struggle might end short of British withdrawal. (13) Those interim arrangements would provide a transition (duration unspecified) into the ultimate objective. The thing Provisional no longer had any specific timetable for British withdrawal. Later, in early 1995, Gerry Adams spoke of a 'transitional phase' in which there must be 'maximum democracy', 'equality of treatment' and 'parity of esteem'.



(14) Those statements signaled that the Provisional leadership would inevitably attempt to sell any future political agreement as transitional, while ignoring the absence of any concrete transitional mechanisms for democratic political change, thus representing a de facto recognition of British rule in Ireland. In the early 1990s, the Provisional leadership engaged in secret talks with the British government. This, as well as other positive signals from the British, led the Provisional to believe that at some point in the 1990s London and Dublin agreed that the old policy of excluding republicans was futile and that the only strategic alternative was one of inclusion in dialogue and negotiations. What goes unmentioned is that "the strategic objective was to include republicans while excluding republicanism". (15) The price to be paid for the inclusion of republicans in the talks was the exclusion of republicanism. This means dialogue with Republican leaders and organisations but on the basis of an agenda that excludes the political objec-

Republicanism. Central to the political objectives of Republicanism were that there would be no internal settlement (a settlement internal to Northern Ireland) that the political connection with Britain must be severed, that partition should go and therefore Ireland reunite. The whole peace process may have included Republicans, but from the 1993 Downing Street Declaration to the final 1998 Belfast Agreement, was always based on the British state's political alternative to Republicanism since 1972: an internal solution (a power sharing assembly in the North which includes Nationalists) with the externality of an Irish dimension (cross border bodies) grafted on it. The longstanding Provisional demands were never serious runners for all party talks. And none of them appeared in the final Belfast Agreement.

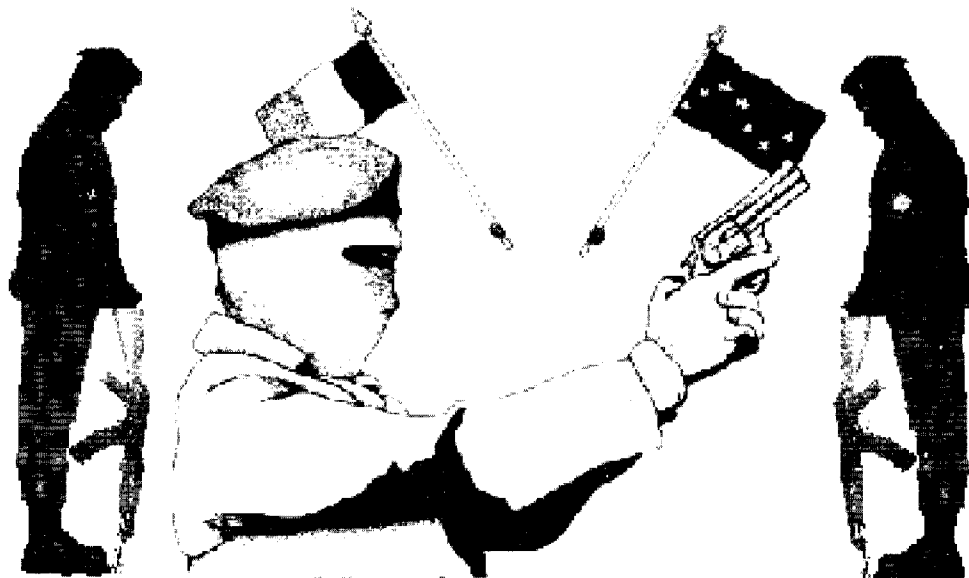
"What the British were allowing republicans - by permitting them into all-party talks where they can argue for a united Ireland without the remotest possibility of securing it - is an opportunity to dig a tunnel to the moon." (16) By negotiating with the Provisional movement, the British state was signaling to the IRA a way out of its armed campaign rather than a way out of Ireland for itself.

The SDLP and Fianna Fail were only prepared to work with the Provisional leadership if the IRA called a cessation of operations, and the British government made clear that it would be ready to include Sinn Féin in negotiations if Provisional IRA weapon were silent.

CEASEFIRE

So on 31 August 1994, it declared a cessation. For the Adams leadership, preserving the unity of the movement was crucial. It had to avoid at all costs elements skeptical of the peace strategy splitting away. The message given internally was that the Provisional movement was in a 'win-win' situation. Either the movement's objectives could be won through the 'unarmed strategy', or it could go back to war. However, the problem was that the Provisional movement would find itself in a situation in which it could neither win its objectives through the unarmed strategy nor go back to war and its traditional political agenda. The 1994 IRA ceasefire lasted until February 1996 and broke down because of a growing number of preconditions to inclusive negotiations, which were unacceptable to the Provisional movement. The Provisional movement had invested too much and had gone too

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Irish Republican Socialist Movement Roll of Honour

VOL.Hugh Ferguson - 20 Feb 75
VOL.Danny Loughran - 6 April 75
VOL.Brendan McNamee - 6 June 75
VOL.Ronnie Trainor - 15 Dec 75
VOL.Seamus Costello - 5 Oct 77
VOL.Colm McNutt - 12 Dec 77
VOL.Thomas Trainor - 8 March 78
VOL.Tony McClelland - 16 Oct 79
VOL.Miriam Daly - 26 June 80
VOL.Ronnie Bunting - 15 Oct 80
VOL.Noel Little - 15 Oct 80
VOL.Jim Power - 7 May 81
VOL.Matt McClarnon - 12 May 81
VOL.Patsy O'Hara - 21 May 81
VOL.Kevin Lynch - 1 Aug 81
VOL.Michael Devine - 20 Aug 81
VOL.Roddy Carroll - 12 Dec 82
VOL.Seamus Grew - 12 Dec 82
VOL.Neil McMonagle - 2 Feb 83
VOL.Brendan Convery - 13 Aug 83

VOL.Gerard Mallon - 13 Aug 83
VOL.Joe Craven - 5 Dec 83
VOL.Paul McCann - 15 June 84
VOL.Michael Montgomery - 1 Dec 84
VOL.John O'Reilly - 20 Jan 87
VOL.Thomas Power - 20 Jan 87
CDE.Mary McGlinchey - 31 Jan 87
VOL.Mickey Kearney - 18 Feb 87
VOL.Kevin Barry Duffy - 21 Mar 87
VOL.Emmanuel Gargan - 21 Mar 87
VOL.James McPhilemy - 10 Aug 88
VOL.Alex Patterson - 12 Nov 90
CDE.Dominic McGlinchey - 10 Feb 94
CDE.Hessy Phelan - 21 Jan 96
VOL.Gino Gallagher - 30 Jan 96
CDE.Dermot McShane - 13 July 96
VOL.John Morris - 5 June 97
CDE.Anthony Dornan - 16 April 99
VOL.Patrick Campbell - 10 Oct 99

POBLACHT NA H-ÉIREANN
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Irish Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish Nation must, by its valour and discipline and the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Tomás Ó Cléirigh | |
| Seán Mac Diarmada | Tomás Mac Donncha |
| Pádraig Mac Piarais | Seosamh Pluincéad |
| Séamas Ó Conghaile | Eamonn Ceannt |

UNDERSTANDING THE IRISH PEACE PROCESS: PART 1

far in the peace process to do a u-turn at this top of that, the disastrous nature of the 1996-1997 campaign showed that it was difficult to go back to war. The movement had not prepared a 'plan B' and thus was stuck in the process. The worst was that the movement had paid a very high price to be included in a process, which brought it few benefits. By the time the Provisional IRA re-instated its ceasefire in July 1997 and Sinn Féin entered political negotiations in September of that year, the political parameters had been set and any future political arrangement would be a predominantly internal one. The publication of the Framework Document in February 1995 envisaged the establishment of a power sharing arrangement in Stormont along with the establishment of minimalist cross-border bodies. From a Republican standpoint, rejection of the Framework document (like the Downing Street declaration) should have been immediate. But the Provisional leadership did not reject it. Already back in 1993-1994 they had not immediately rejected the Downing Street declaration, like they did with Sunningdale in 1973 or the Anglo Irish Agreement, and instead were asking for 'clarifications'.

After the 1997 ceasefire, the Provisionals downgraded the republican political agenda to the point where Gerry Adams now wrote about 'renegotiating the Union' rather than ending it. (17) In January 1998 the London and Dublin governments published the Heads of Agreement Paper, which provided the blueprint for the subsequent Belfast Agreement. To conclude, one can only agree with Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey that the whole 1990s peace process was 'ideologically wrong as well as strategically and tactically stupid'. Its central purpose was 'to demobilise, demilitarise and demoralise the republican people of Ireland -and it has done all three.' (18)

NOTES

- (1) Gerry Adams, *The Politics of Irish Freedom*, Dingle: Brandon Books, 1986, p.110
- (2) See Provisionals reply, *An Phoblacht* 30 March 1973 and also Provisional IRA: *Freedom Struggle*, 1973 pp.89-90
- (3) Ruairi O Bradaigh, *Our People Our Future*, Dublin: Sinn Féin, 1973, pp.31-32, 43, 50-52, 59-60
- (4) *The Irish Republican Struggle 1969-1998*, www.newrepublicanforum.ie
- (5) Vincent Browne, *Provos were always killers without a cause*, *The Sunday Business Post*, 31 July 2005
- (6) Tom McGurk, *After Sunningdale, the IRA was fighting the wrong war*, *The Sunday Business Post*, 31 July 2005
- (7) Malachi O Doherty, *The Trouble With Guns: Republican Strategy and the Provisional IRA*, Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1998, pp.96, 114-115, 120
- (8) Sinn Féin, *Towards A Lasting Peace* (Dublin and Belfast, 1992)
- (9) Joint Statements from Gerry Adams and John Hume, APRN 30 September 1993, p.8
- (10) *Towards A Lasting Peace*, p.12
- (11) *Ibid*
- (12) It is our job to develop the struggle for freedom - *Bodenstown Address*, APRN, 25 June 1992, pp.8-9
- (13) *There will be no turning back*, APRN 24 June 1993, p.10
- (14) *Peace means justice - Justice demands freedom*, APRN, 2 March 1995, pp.8-9
- (15) Anthony McIntyre, *Why Stormont reminded me of Animal Farm*, *Sunday Tribune*, 12 April 1998
- (16) Anthony McIntyre, *Sinn Féin Stance Hinders Republican Cause*, *Sunday Tribune*, 20 July 1997
- (17) *Another Chance for Progress*, APRN, 24 July 1997, p.9 and *Irish News*, 17 July 1997
- (18) <http://rwg.phoblacht.net/bernadette.html>

THE 'NEW NORTHERN IRELAND'



THE 'NEW NORTHERN IRELAND'

News reports are increasingly dominated by the 'success story' of the 'New Northern Ireland'.

"There is an optimism and realism in Northern Ireland today that is dissolving ancient prejudices and boosting business confidence, the essential underpinning for growth and prosperity. Belfast and Londonderry have been transformed by peace: business parks are springing up in place of derelict shipyards, while restaurants and cafés cater to a more relaxed public culture, and the walls of Derry are attracting tourists who no longer have need to be nervous." (1)

Northern Ireland has been tipped by Lonely Planet as one of the must-see countries to visit in 2007.

"There is no better time to see Northern

THE 'NEW NORTHERN IRELAND' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

Ireland than now. Freed from the spectre of the gun by cease-fires and political agreement, it's abuzz with life: the cities are pulsating, the economy is thriving and the people...are in good spirits." Belfast is also mentioned in another part of the book as one of the top ten "Cities on the Rise". (2)

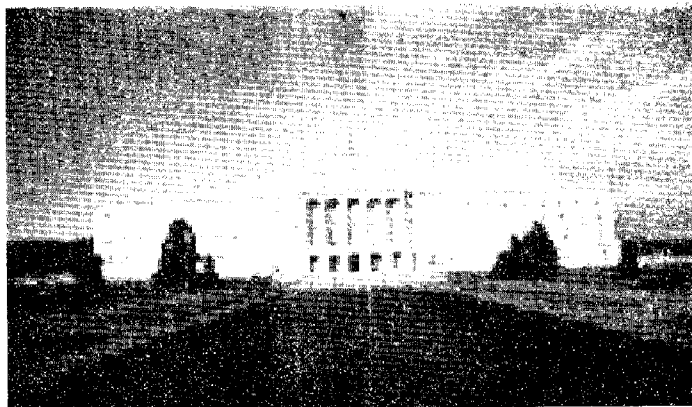
"Many UK cities have been regenerated in recent years but it is doubtful whether any have been transformed as dramatically as Belfast. Its image in the 1970s was of a city dominated by the threat of terrorism; its streets at best bleak and grey, and at worst reduced to rubble after another bomb attack. Today, however, Belfast is emerging as a shiny new metropolis of head-turning galleries, museums, restaurants, luxury hotels - and exciting new property developments." (3)

The Belfast skyline is now dominated by schemes such as Lanyon Place with its £20m Hilton Hotel, £35m BT Tower and £30m Fujitsu building and the Odyssey Complex, a £91m entertainment, leisure and education centre, alongside such massive regeneration projects as Europe's largest commercial and residential waterfront development, the Titanic Quarter. One of the most visible signs of the 'new Northern Ireland' has been the immigration instead of the traditional emigration. It's estimated 35 000 ethnic minorities have settled in the North and there are another 50 000 migrant workers. Sign of the times, a thousand Poles recently applied to join the PSNI. The 'Troubles' as they were called by the media seem to be largely over. The IRA campaign is over and it has destroyed all its arms.

"The war is over. Let's build the peace" concluded Gerry Adams. (4) With a few exceptions, so-called 'paramilitary prisoners' have all been released on licence between 1998 and 2000 and HMP The Maze is being demolished. The security landscape in Belfast, Derry and South Armagh has changed. By 1 August 2007, British troops will be reduced to 5000 and the number of sites where they are stationed will be reduced to 14 from about 40 while most watchtowers will be demolished, bringing the 35 years Operation Banner - the longest in British Army

history - to an end.

"The moves are part of the government's security normalisation plans." (5) Normalisation has been a British state strategy since the mid-1970s. Today is less a post-conflict situation than a successful



normalisation. From a Republican perspective, this is hardly a gain. As an IRA leader concluded as early as 1975: "Suppose we get the release of all detainees, an amnesty and withdrawal of troops to barracks, we are still back where we started in 1969." (6)

But from a British state perspective, it is a clear success. As PSNI Chief Constable Hugh Orde concludes, "there has been (successful) normalisation". (7)

Claims that the North could somehow become an 'Orange Tiger' are totally unrealistic. In the words of Lord Trevor Smith of Clifton, the reality is that the North has "an economy more collectivized than Stalin's Russia, more corporatist than Mussolini's and more quangoised than Wilson and Heath's United Kingdom governments." (8)

Conservative writer Alan Ruddock writes:

"Eight years on from the historic Good Friday Agreement, the much-longed-for dividends of peace remain an elusive dream for the province...The province's once-vibrant manufacturing sector has been relentlessly eroded over the past 35 years; its dependence on traditionally labour-intensive industries such as textiles and shipbuilding mean that it has suffered exponentially at the hands of globalisation. More than 100,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since 1970, and there's no end in sight. Inward investment is sluggish and indigenous entrepreneurialism low-key; employment is now concentrated around a service sector that is an extension

of mainland Britain's. The result is an economy that has more in common with the old communist regimes in Eastern Europe than with the dynamism just across the border in the Republic of Ireland, where the Celtic Tiger has delivered remarkable and sustained

growth for more than a decade. Public spending by the British government is responsible for 63% of Northern Ireland's gross domestic product, and the state directly employs about a third of all those in work, double the rates south of the border and substantially more than in the rest of the UK.

The effect is economic sclerosis, with statistics that point to steady economic growth masking

Northern Ireland's suckling dependency on government spending. Last year, Northern Ireland received £5 billion more from the British government than it contributed, a sub-vention that has been rising steadily each year despite a decade of 'peace', yet the province remains one of the poorest regions in the UK, with GDP per head of population almost 20% below the UK average. Low unemployment figures of 4% conceal the fact that the levels of economic inactivity are far higher than the rest of the UK, with the number of people on incapacity benefit 74% higher than average, while university graduates leave in droves. Two demographics are against it: the province's baby-boomers are some 10 years older than their counterparts in the Republic, while school enrolment has been falling steadily for the past nine years and is forecast to fall by a further 10% in the next nine years. It's a grim backdrop, made inescapably worse by the dismal politics that have characterised the province since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998." (9)

The performance of private enterprise is "dismal".

"There are eleven main ten ples; the largest is the monopolised electricity board. The province also has the second-lowest level of business start-ups in the UK. In spite of all the various subsidies from Whitehall, the European Union and even money from the Irish Republic, average wages are 20 per cent lower than the UK average, while

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the large number of people deemed to be "economically inactive" makes a mockery of the "historically low" figure of 36,000 unemployed. The boom, such as there is, has not been driven from within - hence the frustration from Northern Ireland's paymasters." (10)

Jobs have been lost faster than they were created in the North, so much for the 'vibrant knowledge-based economy'. (11)

As for the much-heralded financial package going with the St Andrews deal

"is akin to receiving a pair of Primark socks for Christmas instead of a pair of Gucci shoes." (12)

Despite this, there are claims that Northern Ireland's business growth is booming and employment is rising at a record rate, according to research from the Ulster Bank. The bank found that business activity has gone up for 46 months in a row. (13) The reason for this apparent growth is the housing market.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, found in its European Housing Review 2007 that Northern Ireland experienced a 36% price growth in 2006 - the highest in Europe. (14) This is especially true of areas which were once synonymous with the conflict that are now becoming property hotspots.

In the loyalist Shankill Road, terraced houses rose from £70 000 to £130 000 in a year. (15) House prices in Nationalist West Belfast have increased by 22 per cent in the past three months. There is currently an average of eight people bidding on each available property. Houses that were being sold for £40 000 15 years ago are now going for over £200 000. Property speculators and the growth of the buy-to-let market are pushing the cost of homes out of the reach of people, particularly first-time buyers. House prices are being fuelled by mortgage companies who are giving out 40-year mortgages and mortgages of up to five times one's salary. This can lead to debt and danger for young people and first-time buyers.

The lack of affordable housing is compounded by the serious under-provision of social housing: latest figures from the Housing Executive show that at the end of March last year there were 2 575 people on the social housing list in West Belfast. The result is that thousands of people looking for affordable housing, thousands of people trapped on waiting lists for social housing and spiraling homelessness. (16)

Things are made worse by the fact that the government is not releasing enough land for houses to be built on. Compared to England, twice as many houses need to be built in Northern Ireland. According to Sir John Semple, who was appointed by the Government to look into the housing crisis:

"The very sharp rise in house prices in Northern Ireland has created a new situation here. The market here has changed from a relatively stable one to one where house prices in some areas are ahead of the UK - in a province where earnings are 20% lower."

He said the latest Council of Mortgage Lenders figures show the number of first-time buyers has halved from 60% to 30%. First-time buyers are being outbid by in-

vestors - 70% of new homes are bought by investors. (17) Investors purchase properties in order to let them. A study by the University of Ulster revealed that the buy-to-let sector in NI has grown by 120% over the past 15 years. There is evidence of increasing numbers of vacant properties in the private rented sector. By 2004 there were over 12 000 vacant properties, bringing the total number of private rented properties to 75 000. (18)

With rise in house prices, homeowners have built up over £58bn in equities in their properties over the last ten years. The average homeowner has made £134 000 and many people have become millionaires. This accounts for the growing numbers of new bars, cafes, restaurants, shops and flashy car dealerships. Jas Mooney opened Belfast's first 'style bar', The Apartment, in 2001. Since then his Botanic Inns group opened one trendy drinking spot after the other as there is a growing market for it. (19) The appearance of new life style publications such as South Belfast Life reflect the growth of new money. (20)

This provides the material basis for the collapse of political consciousness of the so-called 'anti-imperialist masses' of the so-called 'most politicised community in Western Europe', namely the republican base. What were once 'war zones' are now a kind of 'Republican Disneyland' for tourists. (21) The famous murals from being symbols of resistance are now totally commodified. (22) To a large extent, prosperity has killed Republicanism "by kindness". It has created a whole class of conservative property owners and small shopkeepers with the most philistine kulak and nepmen mentality.

This can be illustrated by the evolution of the Andersonstown News, a large circulation community newspaper in the Sinn Féin heartland of West Belfast. From being the official voice of the Andersonstown Central Civil Resistance Committee the paper now celebrates the local entrepreneurial spirit and has an extensive property supplement. Some years ago, after visiting Indian reservations in the US its editor suggested opening casinos in republican areas! Its enthusiasm for the South African peace process is fuelled by the fact that there never has been so many black millionaires.

Young people are politically apathetic and morally nihilistic. For many, the 'struggle' is not something contemporary. The population in the North is one of the youngest in Europe. Over 40 percent is aged 29 or less, and nearly 60 percent is under the age of 40. (23) There is a generation gap between those who were involved in the war, many of whom are already grandparents, and people who will first be able to vote now who were ten years old at the time of the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

Apologists for the Provisional strategy such as Laurence McKeown and Jim Gibney argue that the peace process has made life better for Nationalists in the North, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 24**



THE 'NEW NORTHERN IRELAND' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

and that the struggle was successful to the extent that never again will Nationalists be second-class citizens. (24) It is undeniable that life is better for many Nationalists. The 1998 Belfast Agreement copper-fastened partition; yet it also involved the advancing of nationalist communal interest within the North itself. As Suzanne

Breen points:

"Certainly the Agreement represents advancement in many areas for Catholics in the North - but within the existing constitutional arrangements." (25)

Material prosperity has gone hand in hand with political apathy. The latest electoral register shows that the number of people entitled to vote is 7% down on last year with 82 000 fewer on the electoral register. Republican areas are "disproportionately affected" by registration shortfalls. West Belfast has been the hardest hit, with "twice as many as any other constituency stripped from the last register". (26) The nationalist community may be dynamic, however "it should be noted that the celebration of a community spirit is not discouraged by the British government. It is part of the process of transforming political aspirations into cultural ones." (27)

It is in the shift towards identity politics that the collapse of political consciousness is most evident. Politics are now about the recognition of the nationalist 'identity' and ensuring its 'parity of esteem' within the North. The shift from politics to culture and sport can be illustrated by debates about the funding of the West Belfast Feile festival, the development of a Gaelic quarter in Belfast and the use and redevelopment of the GAA Casement Park.

Denis O'Hearn's political biography of Bobby Sands *Nothing But and Unfinished Song* has now been readapted as a children story in Irish entitled *D'Eirigh Me ar Maidin* (I arose this morning). Loyalism has found new legitimacy thanks to the shift towards identity politics. It is now a legitimate identity, which needs 'parity of esteem' rather than a form of political supremacist that needs to be fought.

Orange marches can now be rebranded as aesthetics of percussion rather than sectarian intimidation. The twelfth of July is allegedly the largest carnival in Europe. Re-branded in the language of cultural studies, loyalism has even proved to be very popular with ex-leftwing publishers in Britain like Pluto Press. (Also note that

while the media has concentrated on the issue of IRA decommissioning, it has totally failed to make an issue of the fact that not a single UVF or UDA weapon has been decommissioned, and worse they have not remained silent!)

The other symptom signaling the collapse of political consciousness is the shift from



political solutions to therapy. The idea is that what is needed even more than radical change or political transformation is therapy, a helping hand to 'get over' things. (28) 'Truth body is 'top priority' was the headline of the Irish News (20 February 2007) The Bloody Sunday Inquiry as well as the attempt to set up some kind of Truth and Reconciliation Commission for example are based on this idea. As Bernadette McAliskey argued about the Bloody Sunday inquiry:

This inquiry is like therapy. It has allowed people to tell their stories, it has had a therapeutic effect for many people in Derry - but that is not what an inquiry is about. It is not the function of public inquiries to facilitate people's grieving processes'. (29)

This focuses on individual experience and memory. But in the process, the more political and structural aspects of the conflict are forgotten.

It is true that prosperity has at best been uneven. Northern Ireland's house prices may be rising by £600 a week but less than a mile from south Belfast's most prestigious properties, some residents are living in squalor. (30) If people further up the social ladder have done well out of the peace - the gap between rich and poor is higher than in the rest of Britain. (31)

The poorest members of society in NI, both Catholics and Protestants, are worse off now than 10 years ago. (32) Half of Northern Ireland's population has an in-

come of less than £300 a week, according to a government report. The study found that the number of people living below the average income was high compared to the rest of the UK. Pensioners are particularly affected with over 50% living on less than the national average. (33) According to university researchers, 37.4% of children

are growing up in poor households, and the poorest 40% of households have 17% of total household income. The report concluded that 'Northern Ireland is one of the most unequal societies in the developed world.' (34) And the poverty gap is growing rather than decreasing. (35)

Despite the spin about prosperity, the tendency towards deprivation is likely to increase further. An influential think tank, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, has warned in a report (*Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in*

Northern Ireland) that rising rates and impeding water charges will send countless families plunging into poverty. (36) Apart from economic deprivation, there are also growing symptoms of alienation and social anomie. A study carried out by the University of Ulster and the Department of Psychiatry at the Belfast Mater Hospital found that suicides have sharply risen since the Peace Process. (37) Young men from deprived areas of North and West Belfast have been particularly affected. (38) There has also been a sharp increase in crime and anti social behavior, particularly so in Nationalist areas. (39) A PSNI detective said that in nationalist area of West Belfast, car crime had increased by 48% and burglary by 15%. (40) Gerry Adams stated that the single biggest election issue in his West Belfast constituency was anti social behaviour. It was the only issue people wanted to talk about on their doorsteps. (41) He also said in 2002 that "We do have a problem with alcohol abuse, with prescription drug-taking, with solvent abuse and with illicit drug abuse such as cannabis, ecstasy, and a growing problem of cocaine use." (42)

This is not to mention the alcohol and binge drinking problem. Those symptoms are an indication that whatever social discontent is now expressed in a criminal or privatised form rather than a collective political one. With a culture of paranoid parenting and the rise of the therapeutic state, it is unlikely that political conscious-

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ness might arise from this situation.

Nowhere is this most evident than in the recent campaigns organised against the introduction of water taxes. The fact that oppositional politics are now reduced to what Connolly called "gas and water" socialism is in itself an indication of how successfully normalised the North has become. In a balance sheet of the campaign against water privatisation, Socialist Democracy (ex-People's Democracy) noted:

"The fundamental weakness of the campaign against the water charges was the lack of organised working class opposition. This itself was a reflection of the low level of political consciousness amongst the working class in the North, and related to this, the continuing hold of the dead hand of the bureaucracy on the trade union movement. It also shows that, contrary to the unstated assumptions of the (Ewe won't pay, campaigns, you cannot simply bypass that existing leadership. It has to be challenged. The lack of an organised working class opposition also undermined our own arguments which looked to water workers, and more generally public sector workers, to lead a fight against privatisation. This was emphasised by the lack of reaction to the privatisation of water treatment facilities. The government's water reform policy has not been sufficient in itself to provoke the sort of reaction amongst the working class that could translate into a serious opposition movement. This cannot be created by small campaigns such as our own." (43)

Some may challenge the idea that there is a lack of working class opposition and a low level of political consciousness by pointing to the growth of trade union membership in the North. Total trade union membership in the North now stands at 250 948. Members paid a total of £20 million in contributions. 75% of members are affiliated to UK unions, 20% to Northern Ireland ones, and only 5% to Irish unions.

The public sector dominates with over 65% of membership, NIPSA being the largest with 43076 members. (44) With the dominance of British unions and of the public sector (which includes many unionised 'workers in uniform'...) this hardly provides a basis to develop political consciousness; especially since Anglo-Saxon unionism is based on the separation of politics and economics.

The extent of discontent and how much could be mobilised into political protest is unclear at the present moment. It is also too early to know how successful

the Provisional movement will be in reforming the Northern state and the extent to which this will reconcile the vast majority of Nationalists to the status quo. However the collapse of political consciousness means that any attempt to build an alternative will be extremely difficult. Objective and subjective factors are heavily weighted against us.

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HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IN NORTH BELFAST HAS TO BE TACKLED - IRSP

The IRSP in north Belfast have called on the incoming Stormont executive to take immediate action to rectify the housing stress imbalance between the unionist and nationalist working class in that part of Belfast. North Belfast IRSP representative Paul Little said: "For too long the British government through its housing quango the Housing Executive have been allowed to ignore the plight of working class families who are suffering from over crowding and poor housing infrastructure. In areas such as Ardoyne, Carrickhill, Cliftonville and New Lodge it is not unusual to have three or four generations of the one family to be living in the one house or Flat. This situation has been allowed to worsen whilst many social houses remain blocked up and unused across the city. The situation needs addressed, the IRSP recognise that housing is a sensitive issue but that is no reason not to begin addressing the problem. The IRSP support dialogue with the unionist community on the issue of the fair and equal housing opportunities and allocation."

PART2: THE BELFAST AGREEMENT AND AFTER

by Liam O RUAIRC and
Xabier JIMENEZ

The culmination of the peace process was the signing of the Belfast Agreement on April 10th 1998 and its subsequent endorsement in two referenda's in May 1998. Apologists for the Belfast Agreement argue that it was an act of self-determination as it had been freely negotiated and democratically endorsed.

But the British government, democratically unaccountable to any Irish constituency, and constituting the foremost military strength on the island, determined the parameters of the negotiations, which led to the signing of the Belfast Agreement.

Those parameters stipulated that partition was a legitimate state of affairs, that Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution were illegal claims of sovereignty over part of the United Kingdom and that the right of the Irish people as represented by the 32 counties to self-determination without external impediment is non-existent.

The Agreement was not 'freely negotiated', as the price of participation in the negotiations was the acceptance of their pre-determined outcome through the British imposed pre-condition that all participants concede to the principle of "consent". The premise for any agreement was partitionist. The fact that the British government, democratically unaccountable to any Irish constituency, insisted on this precondition renders any assertion that the ensuing referenda could in any meaningful way be described as an act of self-determination by the Irish people.

What the referenda actually represented was an exercise in how the British government believed the Irish people should vote, leaving itself insulated from any objections the Irish people may have because such a vote is subordinate to the 'consent' pre-condition. This is why the option of Irish unity was not presented to the Irish people in the dual referenda. There were two referendums held in two different states for different purposes and different sets of questions. The fact that they were held concurrently did not make them a single event and even less an act of self-determination. The "act of concurrent

self-determination" was nothing more than a rubber-stamping of British demands. Just because there's a vote doesn't mean it's democratic; the facts bear scrutiny. (1) Voting statistics must be further considered in light of a mass media campaign sponsored by the British and Irish governments in the months and weeks preceding the vote, in which a "No" vote was equated in the public mind with a vote for violence and a "Yes" vote as a vote for peace. Reasonable



and thought-provoking discussion and debate was utterly quashed in a total media blackout of dissenting voices, such as those of Marian Price, Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey, Anthony McIntyre

and others; many of whom agreed with the peace but not with the process.

The logic, dynamic and parameters of the peace process combined to mould a partitionist framework which served to predetermine a type of outcome republicanism had for long stood rock solid against. The 1998 Belfast agreement amounts to the following: the British state has repeated its 1973 Sunningdale declaration of intent to remain in the North until a majority in it asks it to do otherwise; the British state has made it clear that the unionist veto shall remain in place and has strengthened the partitionist ethos underlying that veto by having it enshrined in the revised Southern constitution; the British state has ruled out any transition to a united Ireland by refusing to state that by a certain date - no matter how far in the distant future - it will no longer have a presence in Ireland.

The fact remains that the unionists will determine when the north will join a united Ireland. This represents the best deal unionists could possibly have won. In the words of Anthony Blair, the British Prime Minister: "This offers unionists every key demand they have made since partition eighty years ago...The principle of consent, no change to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of the people,

is enshrined. The Irish constitution has been changed...A devolved assembly and government for Northern Ireland is now there for the taking. When I first came to Northern Ireland as a Prime Minister, these demands were pressed in me as what unionists really needed. I have delivered them all." (2)

With no end to partition, no British declaration of intent to withdraw, no united Ireland, the outcome of the peace process had no identifiable Republican content. It was a partitionist fudge. "In trade union terms, the republican leadership had secured a six-day week and lower wages." (3)

The Provisional movement claims that the Belfast Agreement does not represent a defeat for Republicanism. Danny Morrison, former Sinn Féin publicity director, claims that the British couldn't defeat the IRA nor could the IRA defeat the British, so the IRA did not win but had not lost either. (4) That is demonstrably wrong. "The political objective of the Provisional IRA was to secure a British declaration of intent to withdraw. It failed. The objective of the British state was to force the Provisional IRA to accept - and subsequently respond with a new strategic logic - that it would not leave Ireland until a majority in the North consented to such a move. It succeeded." (5)

Nevertheless, the Provisional leadership still maintains the myth of an undefeated army. The Provisional movement claims that the Belfast Agreement does not represent a defeat but an honorable compromise. Gerry Adams stated that it was "a historic compromise between nationalism and unionism" (6).

The problem is less that it is a compromise than the fact that it is a bad compromise. (i), First is that it was Nationalism that did all the compromising. It accepted the principle of unionist consent on the national question

(ii), the maintenance of British sovereignty

(iii), deleting Article 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution claiming the North

(iv), the retention and not the abolition of the Northern Ireland police force

(v); the resurrection of Stormont. All in exchange for six cross border bodies and British government appointed commissions on the equality and human rights agendas. To get a measure of how little has been ceded by unionists - and by implication how much by republicans - we need only view it through the following

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prism:

"If, for example, through the Good Friday Agreement, the unionists had signed up to a British declaration of intent to withdraw from the North and a Dublin declaration of intent to annex the six counties, no amount of wordplay and casuistry would have permitted this outcome to be regarded as anything other than a resounding defeat. Small consolation it would have been to them to have won outright on Strand One matters, such as keeping the RUC intact or the prisoners locked up. Unionism would have lost on the great philosophical question of consent." (7)

It looks more like a Republican Versailles than a honourable compromise. Second, there had been a better deal on offer in 1973-1974. For example, Austin Currie, a minister in the 1974 power-sharing executive actually feels that the Sunningdale Agreement was a better deal for nationalists than the Belfast Agreement. (8) The Provisional movement had rejected Sunningdale, denounced it as a sell-out, and finally settled for less than the SDLP got in 1973.

One of the main arguments used by Provisional Sinn Féin to sell the 1998 Belfast Agreement to its supporters is that it is supposed to provide the transitional mechanisms for Irish unity to happen by 2016, the one hundredth anniversary of the Easter Rising. (9) For Gerry Adams, by accepting the Belfast Agreement the Provisional movement was entering a "new phase of the struggle": while the Agreement "is not a settlement, it is a basis for advancement", "it could become a transitional stage towards reunification". (10) Thus, the motion officially ratified by the party at its 1998 Ard Fheis read: "The Good Friday document is not a political settlement. When set in the context of our strategy, tactics and goals the Good Friday document is a basis for further progress and advancement of our struggle. It is another staging post on the road to a peace settlement. (...) The Good Friday document does not go as far as we would have liked at this time but it is clearly transitional. (...) It can be a basis for pushing forward national and democratic objectives. In short, it allows us to move our struggle into a new and potentially

more productive phase." (11) This rests on two sets of arguments.

In negative terms, the Provisionals argue that it weakens the Union as well as destabilises and divides Unionists. Gerry Adams stated that thanks to the Belfast Agreement, there were no longer any raft of legislation to maintain Northern Ireland as part of the UK, with the British government's repeal of section 75 of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. However, the replacement of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act was legally 'of no significance', rather it reconstructed British sovereignty. (12)



Legally, the Agreement does not shift the balance of constitutional forces towards reunification. The only significant constitutional shift went in the opposite direction; the British state retained sovereignty in the North and the consent principle was embedded, whereas Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish

constitution were deleted. In the words of Prime Minister Blair, the settlement "is not a slippery slope to a united Ireland. The government will not be persuaders for unity." (13)

As to dividing and destabilising Unionists, Provisional supporters misquote James Molyneux, the UUP leader at the time of the first IRA ceasefire. Molyneux merely claimed that the ceasefire (and not the Agreement signed four years later) had destabilised Unionism.

"Writers fond of citing this in favour of the 'GFA is a stepping stone to a United Ireland' position invariably fail to tell us that Molyneux explained why the ceasefire was destabilising; insisting that it was beyond his ken why republicans sold a horse and bought a saddle. Or as Stephen King puts it, Unionism was confounded as to why Republicans had fought so hard just to settle for so little. Eleven years after the 1994 ceasefire and the Molyneux observations, we can find Eric Waugh mocking Republicans: 'the old ideal of unity is more remote than ever. Unionists are not interested.' Even one as hostile to the Agreement as Jeffrey Donaldson can still claim Republicanism was 'defeated by a partitionist settlement based on the con-

cession of self-determination of Northern Ireland.'" (14)

In positive terms, according to Mitchell McLaughlin:

"There is steady demographic, political, social and economic change, undeniably pointing in one direction, towards support for a united Ireland." (15) But do these changes really point in that direction? The first argument is that demographics show that the Catholics will soon be in a majority position in the North and will vote for a united Ireland at the earliest opportunity. (16) Partition will supposedly come to an end when Catholics reach the magic figure of 51% of the population in the North.

However, the idea that a united Ireland could be brought about by demographic change has been highly disputed and dealt a blow by the most recent (2001) census figures. (17) It could be decades before the two communities will have equal numbers and before this translates into votes. On top of that, Northern Ireland Life and Times surveys indicate that 30% of Catholics would not vote for unity.

The second argument is that the development of an all-Ireland economy will create a dynamic towards unification and therefore make partition redundant. Peter Hain, Northern Ireland Secretary of State, recently said on the argument that the 'all Ireland economy' is a stepping stone towards a united Ireland: "The interpretation that this is a kind of Trojan horse for a united Ireland is 100% wrong." (18) Economic exchanges by themselves will not abolish the border no more than the development of the Benelux economy merged the three countries together.

Says Hain: "It has nothing to do with the constitutional future, that's entirely separate and dependent on the votes of the people and they've decided that through the referendum following the Good Friday agreement; so the border exists constitutionally, but in economic terms it doesn't; in economic terms it's about cooperating across the border and making use of best friends either side." By way of example, Hain referred to counties Derry and Donegal. It was in the interest of both to be "joined at the hip" economically and for business purposes. However, "the constitutional separation will remain unless otherwise decided by the people." (19)

The third argument is that the development of cross border institutions will generate a political dynamic towards unification. Cross border bodies - cannot and will not lead to reunification and an end to British rule. In his address on 30 September

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2000, Martin Mansergh, Northern Advisor to three successive heads of 26 counties administrations, stated that 'there is no evidence, let alone inevitability, from international experience, that limited cross border co-operation necessarily leads to political unification.' Such bodies have existed for decades and have not brought a united Ireland any closer. (20)

That the Agreement is non-transitional and that republican strategy is no longer designed toward destabilising the northern state which would possess the potential to create transitional structures can both be ascertained from the following exchange in 2000 between Frank Millar of the Irish Times and Gerry Adams on the question of Peter Mandelson suspending the Stormont Assembly.

Millar: "For wasn't the act and fact of suspension rooted in the legislation establishing a devolved Assembly at all times subject to the authority of the British Crown?"

Adams: "Oh yes, and, in terms of the realpolitik, we have accepted entirely, it's obvious, partition is still here, that the British jurisdiction is still here."

Millar: "Is this a peace process, about reconciliation with the unionists, accepting the existing constitutional parameters until such time as there is consent to change them? Or is Sinn Féin's real game- struggle continuing by other means - to destabilise Northern Ireland and show it to be irreformable?"

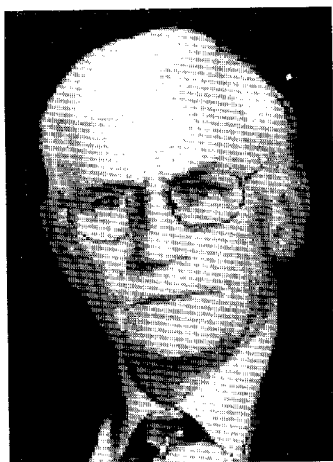
Adams: "No, that isn't the case, the second scenario isn't the case." (21)

Clearly, by its own admission, it is no longer Sinn Féin's intention to destabilise the northern state and seeks to administer it. Consequently all the central tenets of both traditional republicanism and Provisional republicanism have been jettisoned.

Prominent SDLP leader Seamus Mallon sums up the Provisionals, trajectory: "Sinn Féin have come on board, essentially to the thesis that the SDLP has been promoting for over 30 years. The Good Friday Agreement was based, by and large, on the SDLP analysis on the principle of consent, on non-violence, and on the concept of partnership and it is Sinn Féin who have made a substantial move from support for

violent republicanism to the policies and strategies of the SDLP." (22) That is why he called the Agreement Sunningdale for slow learners..

The Belfast Agreement is not a transition to a united Ireland, but rather the transition of the Provisional Movement in the British institutions: "By claiming the GFA will lead to Irish unity, Adams et al are providing a fig leaf for an ideological retreat unequalled in Irish history. What they have done, and are anxious to conceal from their supporters, is to accept a reformed Northern Ireland that, in accordance with the consent principle, will remain British as long as one can see. In return they have avoided political extinction, kept their skins and attained respectability and access to power. The Agreement is indeed 'transformative', but not in the way 'Provo' spinmeisters suggest. By guaranteeing Catholics their place in the Northern Ireland sun, it has the potential to erode nationalist alienation from the constitutional status quo and, by so doing, dismantle the *raison d'être* of the Provisional IRA." (23)



This is why despite the fact that Sinn Féin has substantially increased its share of the vote in elections North and South it represents no growth of republicanism: "The more effective that Sinn Féin is as an electoral force, the more impotent it becomes as an ideological one. Every deal it strikes with Tony Blair legitimises the British presence in Northern

Ireland. Every concession it secures that advances the economic and social standing of ordinary Roman Catholics in Ulster weakens the argument that it is only through Irish unification that those material interests can be realised. With every step that Ulster takes towards becoming a 'normal society', so what Sinn Féin officially regards as an 'interim settlement' becomes more deeply entrenched. This is the outlook for Republicanism. A larger and larger number of nationalists in both the North and the South will vote for Sinn Féin -but more because they regard it as the best vehicle for representing them in a divided Ireland than out of support

for a united one. Nor will it make much difference if Catholics finally outbreed Protestants in Ulster. Even at the height of the Troubles a substantial percentage of nationalists preferred the status quo to the upheaval of unification." (24)

The Provisional movement has been in the habit of describing its strategic failure in terms of 'new phase of the struggle'. For Republican veteran Tommy Gorman this 'new phase of the struggle' only points to the fact that they are a failed leadership: "In the early days our struggle was depicted as an odyssey of sorts and that, along the way we would come to and pass various milestones and road signs keeping us on track and giving us a clear vision of progress made toward the socialist republic."

- * An end to partition
- * No return to Stormont Rule
- * The disbandment of the RUC
- * A declaration of intent by the British Government to withdraw from Ireland
- Through their efforts Sinn Féin have managed, in collaboration with other right wing partners, to negotiate
- * The copper-fastening of partition
- * A resurrected Stormont
- * A renamed RUC
- * A declaration of their intent to stay by the British Government." (25)

Republicanism may have been defeated, but media coverage of post-Belfast Agreement Northern Ireland like to point that it has made life much better. Typical of this is this editorial from The Times:

"There is an optimism and realism in Northern Ireland today that is dissolving ancient prejudices and boosting business confidence, the essential underpinning for growth and prosperity. Belfast and Londonderry have been transformed by peace: business parks are springing up in place of derelict shipyards, while restaurants and cafés cater to a more relaxed public culture, and the walls of Derry are attracting tourists who no longer have need to be nervous." (26)

However, beyond shiny appearances is another story. Jobs have been lost faster than they were created in the North -so much for a 'vibrant' economy. (27) Also, if people further up the social ladder have done well out of the peace, the gap between rich and poor is not only higher, but higher than in the rest of the UK. (28) Despite all the reforms, Catholics still experience substantially higher unemployment and poverty rates than Protestants. While Catholics make up 48.1 percent of the total population of working age, they make up 55.7 per cent of economi-

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cally inactive population of working age. Equally, while Protestants make up 51.9 per cent of the total working age population, they make up only 44.3 per cent of those economically inactive population of working age. Based on NIHE figures, Catholics are spending on average almost one and a half times as long on the housing waiting list as Protestants. While the absolute numbers of those on the waiting list has increased for both communities, the increase for the Catholic community has been almost double that for the Protestant community. (30 per cent and 16 per cent respectively).

Tim Cunningham, CAJ,s Equality Officer, said, "Despite government rhetoric to the contrary, the reality is that the poorest members of our society, both Catholics and Protestants, are relatively worse off than they were ten years ago. Northern Ireland has the highest economic inactivity rate in the UK, so the idea that Northern Ireland as a whole is benefiting from increased prosperity and economic growth is nonsense. The situation of the "hidden unemployed" is getting worse. Moreover, government,s own

research shows that programmes such as the New Deal benefit least those who are in most need of employment."

Mr. Cunningham continued, "Rather than genuinely tackling poverty in both Catholic and Protestant working class communities, government appears to be sectarianising the debate. It has disregarded major differences in labour market trends between the two communities; failed to target investment effectively at those in most need; and has pursued measures such as Shared Future and the Taskforce on Protestant Working Class Communities that at best ignore and at worst exacerbate community differentials." (29)

As to healing divisions and bringing peace, an increasing number of commentators are pointing that in fact divisions have increased. The leading English conservative newspaper recently noted:

"Walking through the centre of most Northern Ireland cities and towns, it's hard to see that this was, little more than a decade ago, a war zone. New businesses, hotels, theatres and opera houses have blossomed. The streets are vibrant and bustling and in the evening, especially in Belfast, where good restaurants and

hotels are frequently booked out. (...) But hidden behind the Government's "Ulster is Blooming" facade, the familiar pattern of sectarian violence and intimidation that spawned the Troubles is growing once again. Police statistics reveal that sectarian attacks have increased by nearly 40 per cent. Between April 1 and July 1 this year there were 491 serious incidents. In the same months in 2005 there were 353. Knife crimes have also doubled since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, and in the same period some 8,000 families have been forced out of their homes by paramilitaries. In Londonderry, sectarian crimes have risen by 70 per cent from April to July 2006, compared to the previ-

attacks were carried out by Loyalists. (31) A major new official report (32) based on statistics from the PSNI, Housing Executive and other research shows that levels of sectarian violence are higher than before the ceasefires.

North Belfast is the worst affected. From 1996 to 2004 there were 6623 incidents of sectarian disorder there, including 3883 of criminal damage, 1343 of assault, 1021 disturbances and 376 riots. There has been an average of five attacks a month on Churches, GAA clubs and Orange halls. Most occur in counties Antrim and Tyrone, the fewest in Fermanagh. More people are being intimidated out of their homes. An average of 1378 people a year

seek rehousing because of sectarian intimidation.

About 500 people a year formally complain of religious discrimination at work. 19% of Catholic and 10% of Protestant workers say they experience sectarian graffiti, jokes, songs, ostracisation or threatened or actual violence. Up to 60% of complaints are not formally reported. There are 37 peace walls across the North; none have been removed since the cease-

fires, with 18 actually built. The same reported that 42% of Protestants and 33% of Catholics prefer to live in unmixed religious areas, while 48% of young Catholics and 42% of Protestants want separate schools. This confirms the other trend: that the North is more segregated, polarised and sectarian since the start of the peace process. A report issued in 2002 by the Royal Geographical Society (33) found that sectarian divisions have worsened since the peace process began in Northern Ireland.

Prompted in part by the Northern Ireland Office's denials that sectarianism was on the increase, Dr Peter Shirlow of the University of Ulster interviewed 4,800 people in 12 Belfast estates, 6 Catholic and six Protestant. The results are damning. Believing the hype about the peace process many, mostly Catholics, moved house to areas not dominated by their own religious denomination. The Housing Executive report that three thousand moved between 1994 and 1996 but sectarian intimidation forced a reverse movement of 6,000 in the following five years. Two-thirds of the population now live in areas which are either 90% Catholic or 90% Protestant. In



ous year. (...) If sectarian attacks continue, many fear the Troubles may reignite. Peter Shirlow, a lecturer at the University of Ulster and co-author of Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City, has predicted as much. "I don't think we have the circumstances to take us back to conflict yet," he says, "but in 20 to 30 years' time, with constitutional uncertainty, the same pattern could emerge." (30)

The facts are there. "Seven years after Good Friday, the North is more violent than ever", titled a Sunday Tribune headline last year (28 August 2005). The number of sectarian crimes rose by 35% in a year averaging five attacks every day. Latest police statistics point to a deteriorating situation. Latest police figures show that since April there have been an average of 38 sectarian attacks across the north every week. Between April 1 and July 7 there were a total of 491 reports. This compares to 363 for the same period in 2005, up more than a third. Police classification of sectarian incidents, ranges from verbal abuse to bomb attacks and attempted murders. Although the figures are not broken down by community, it is generally accepted that the majority of

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predominantly Protestant areas companies have a Catholic workforce of only 5% while in Catholic areas only 8% of the workforce is Protestant. Only one in five people would take a job on the other side of the peace line. 62% in areas separated by a peace line think community relations have got worse. 68% of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 claim never to have had a meaningful conversation with someone from the other religious denomination and 62% say they have been the victim of physical or verbal sectarian abuse since the 1994 IRA ceasefire. Of those surveyed, 88% said they would not enter an area dominated by the other denomination, even by car, and 58% would not use shopping or leisure facilities in areas controlled by the other religion, even if they were better.

It is of great significance that *The Irish Times*, the leading newspaper in Ireland (equivalent of *El Pais*) could note earlier this year: "The hard fact of the matter is that it is now eight years since the agreement was laboriously put together. If one crucial part of the deal is still not working, after all that time, then maybe the inescapable conclusion is that it is never going to work." (34) People of the Basque country should well take note of this at a time when they are being told that a Belfast Agreement type settlement is the way forward to solve the conflict in the Basque country.

- (1) http://www.irishfreedomcommittee.com/HISTORY/StormontTreaty/voting_results.htm
 (2) Blair's Dawn Call kept the heat on Trimble, Sunday Times, 4 July 1999

- (3) Anthony McIntyre, We, the IRA, have failed, *The Guardian* 22 May 1998
 (4) Danny Morrison, The war is over Now we must look for the future, *The Guardian*, 11 May 1998
 (5) Anthony McIntyre, We, the IRA, have failed, *The Guardian* 22 May 1998
 (6) A moment in history, APRN 25 November 1999, p.9
 (7) Anthony McIntyre, Britain - the sovereign power, www.phoblacht.net/mackerrarchieve13.html
 (8) Cfr: Austin Currie, All Hell Will Break Loose, Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2004
 (9) Cfr: Adams Predicts United Ireland, BBC 14 January 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/601115.stm and Mitchell McLaughlin, Towards 2016 - A United Ireland, APRN 22 August 2002
 (10) 'Preparing for a new phase of the struggle': Presidential Address by Gerry Adams, APRN 23 April 1998, pp.16-18
 (11) Resolution Number 1, Ard Chomhairle Paper to 1998 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, special supplement to APRN 7 May 1998
 (12) see B. Hadfield, *The Belfast Agreement, Sovereignty and the State of the Union*, Public Law, volume 15, Winter 1998, p.615
 (13) Speech by the Prime Minister Tony Blair at the Royal Ulster Agricultural Show, Friday 16 May 1997, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page948.asp>
 (14) Anthony McIntyre, Jude The Obscure, lark.phoblacht.net/am2904058g.html
 (15) Rosie Cowan, Census hits republican hopes, *The Guardian*, 20 December 2002
 (16) Ed Moloney, Nationalists advance inexorably, making love not war, Sunday Tribune, 12 April 1998
 (17) Cfr: Malachi O'Doherty, Breeding schemes, *The Guardian*, 13 April 2001 for a refutation of the theoretical basis of the demographic argument and Rosie Cowan, Census hits republican hopes, *The Guardian*, 20 December 2002 for an empirical refutation of the figures on which it is based.
 (18) Liam Clarke meets Peter Hain - Man with a north-south plan, Sunday Times, 15 January 2006
 (19) Ray O'Hanlon, An all-island economy: It's Hain's way or the highway for North polls, *The Irish Echo*, 2-8 August 2006
 (20) Ed Moloney, Mansergh doubts the GFA will lead to unity, Sunday Tribune, 1 October 2000. Nationalist commentator Brian Feeney noted that not only is there reluctance on the part of the Irish civil service to beef up all-Ireland structures, but the difference this time as compared to 1974 or 1986 is that Irish politicians are lukewarm too. (Brian Feeney, Ministers have lost interest in north-south links, *The Irish News*, 13 September 2006)
 (21) Frank Millar, Is there enough time to revive the Agreement? *The Irish Times*, 15 April 2000
 (22) Mallon comes in at last as key trust-builder, *Irish Times*, 4 July 1998
 (23) Ed Moloney, The Mild Man of the North's one fatal flaw, Sunday Independent, 5 September 2004

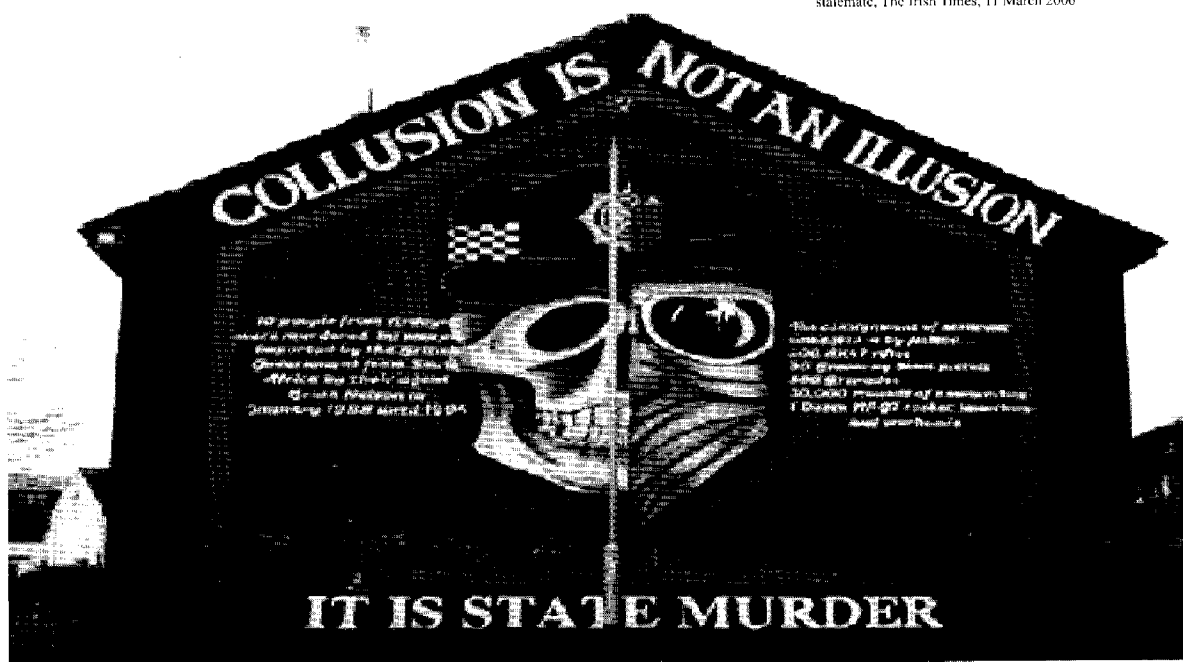
- (24) Tim Hames, The IRA disarms, Sinn Féin sweeps the polls. And Gerry Adams is a loser, *The Times* 1 August 2005
 (25) Tommy Gorman, Dropping the Last Veil, <http://www.phoblacht.net/tg23112g.html>
 (26) Editorial, Ulster moves forward, *The Times*, 5 October 2006
 (27) Jobs lost despite huge investment, BBC 26 September 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/5380094.stm
 (28) Mary O'Hara, False Dawn, *The Guardian* 24 November 2004. See also publications of the Northern Ireland Anti Poverty Network <http://www.niarn.org/public/publications/reports.htm>
 (29) CAJ report "Equality in Northern Ireland: The Rhetoric and the Reality" (September 2006). Also, the "Indicators of Social Need for Northern Ireland" published by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (<http://www.research.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/publications.htm>) show that Catholics are still suffering considerable economic disadvantage.
 (30) Olga Craig, Are the Troubles really over for Northern Ireland? Sunday Telegraph 8 October 2006
 (31) See Sharon O'Neill, Sectarian Incidents double in past year, *Irish News*, 25 September 2005; Marie Louise McCrory and Barry McCaffrey, Sectarian attacks increasing despite quiet march season, *The Irish News*, 25 July 2006. The PSNI started gathering figures for sectarian attacks last year. The first annual figures available shows police recorded 1701 in Northern Ireland between April 2005 and April 2006. Only 142 of the 1470 sectarian crimes recorded by the police in the 12 months to March resulted in a charge or a court summons. From April to July 2006 just 30 out of 559 reported sectarian crimes were brought to court. (Sharon O'Neill, One-in-10 sectarian crimes end in court, *The Irish News*, 23 August 2006)

- (32) Neil Jarman, No longer a problem? Sectarian Violence in Northern Ireland, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, August 2005.

http://www.community-relations.org.uk/document_uploads/OFMDFM_-_Sectarian_Violence.pdf

- (33) Paul Brown, Peace but no love as Northern Ireland divide grows ever, *The Guardian*, 4 January 2002; and Charles Clover, Belfast is still divided despite ceasefires, Daily Telegraph 4 January 2002. Cfr. the official reports by Peter Shirlow, Mapping the Spaces of Fear in Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne (North Belfast Partnership Board, 2001) and (with B. Murtagh, V. Mesev and A. McMullan) Measuring and visualising labour market and community segregation in Belfast (OFMDFM-Equity Unit, 2002). Also see his Fear and Ethnic Division in Belfast, *Peace Review* (Vol. 13 issue 2, 2001 pp.67-74)

- (34) Stephen Collins; The Belfast Agreement has resulted in stalemate, *The Irish Times*, 11 March 2006



...Even where there is no prospect of achieving their election the workers must put up their own candidates to preserve their independence, to gauge their own strength and to bring their revolutionary position and party standpoint to public attention. They must not be led astray by the empty phrases of the democrats, who will maintain that the workers' candidates will split the democratic party and offer the forces of reaction the chance of victory. All such talk means, in the final analysis, that the proletariat is to be swindled. The progress which the proletarian party will make by operating independently in this way is infinitely more important than the disadvantages resulting from the presence of a few reactionaries in the representative body."

-- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

Address Of The Central Committee To The Communist League

March 1850

The above quotation from Marx and Engels bears some relevance to the Ireland of today. The coming assembly elections in the North are based around identity politics, a fact brought out well in the article by comrade Liam entitled "The New Northern Ireland". Liam's argument is highlighted by our Whats'On section, where three separate public meetings on the issue of water rates are advertised.

Three separate campaigns weakening an already weakened and divided working class and socialist movement. But that should not lead to the politics of despair nor to the left sinking back into gas and water socialism. The IRSP have only endorsed one candidate in the coming elections, Peggy O'Hara, mother of dead INLA volunteer and hunger striker Patsy O'Hara. We urge all our supporters and friends to rally in support for Peggy, who is standing to highlight the fact that not all republicans endorse British police rule and to clearly state that the national question will not go away. Those associated with Provisional Sinn Fein may and do argue what is the alternative?

For the IRSP the alternative is very clearly set out not only in the writings of great socialist republicans and Marxists like James Connolly but in the radical writings of many Marxists. It is certainly not by trying to restart a war against Imperialism. That is the road to despair and defeat. Those who either argue for or try to carry on armed struggle at this time are no friends of the Irish working class

Nor is the way forward helped by trying to recreate the Provisionals agenda only with "true republicans" in the leadership. The failure of the Provo strategy was not leadership based but policy based. And it is only politics and for us that is class politics that will transform this



island. The alternative is to build a revolutionary based movement prepared to fight elections in all parts of the island, lead mass struggles win support in the trade unions and energized the youth to see the relevance of socialist ideas and rescue republicanism from its identification with "catholic" politics.

There are no short cuts. The way forward may be difficult and there are many obstacles not least our own inhibitions and lack of political education. But if we remain principled flexible and do the work of winning the working class to socialist ideas and policies then we gradually turn this period of downturn in the overall struggle into the beginnings of a new upsurge in mass struggle.

John Martin

Republican Socialist Movement
IRSP - INLA - RSYM

Easter **1916**

Commemoration



Assemble: 11am, Easter Sunday
Dunville Park, Falls Road, Belfast

Title: Starry Plough, Easter 2007

Organisation: Irish Republican Socialist Party

Date: 2007

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