

# Spark

New political  
magazine for  
young people

SPRING 2001 £2

## RESIST, REBEL, REVOLT

### 1981 - 2001

Remembering the  
Hunger  
Strikes



Free the  
Leaf?  
PAGE 3

**FOCUS:**  
Sinn Féin's  
Student Forum -  
politicising in  
the colleges

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**PALESTINE**  
Sharon, the butcher of  
the Mid-East, PAGE 19



DAVID TRIMBLE RONNIE FLANAGAN TONY BLAIR

# *These men are after your hearts and minds*

*They want YOU to join a  
paramilitary force that:*

- has been condemned by international human rights organisations, including the UN, Amnesty and Helsinki Watch*
- has engaged in collusion with loyalist death squads*
- has used plastic bullets to kill children*
- has engaged in shoot-to-kill operations*
- is unwelcome in nationalist and republican areas*

**COMING SOON**

# **PSNI, the thrilling sequel to RUC.**

**Only the name has been changed.**

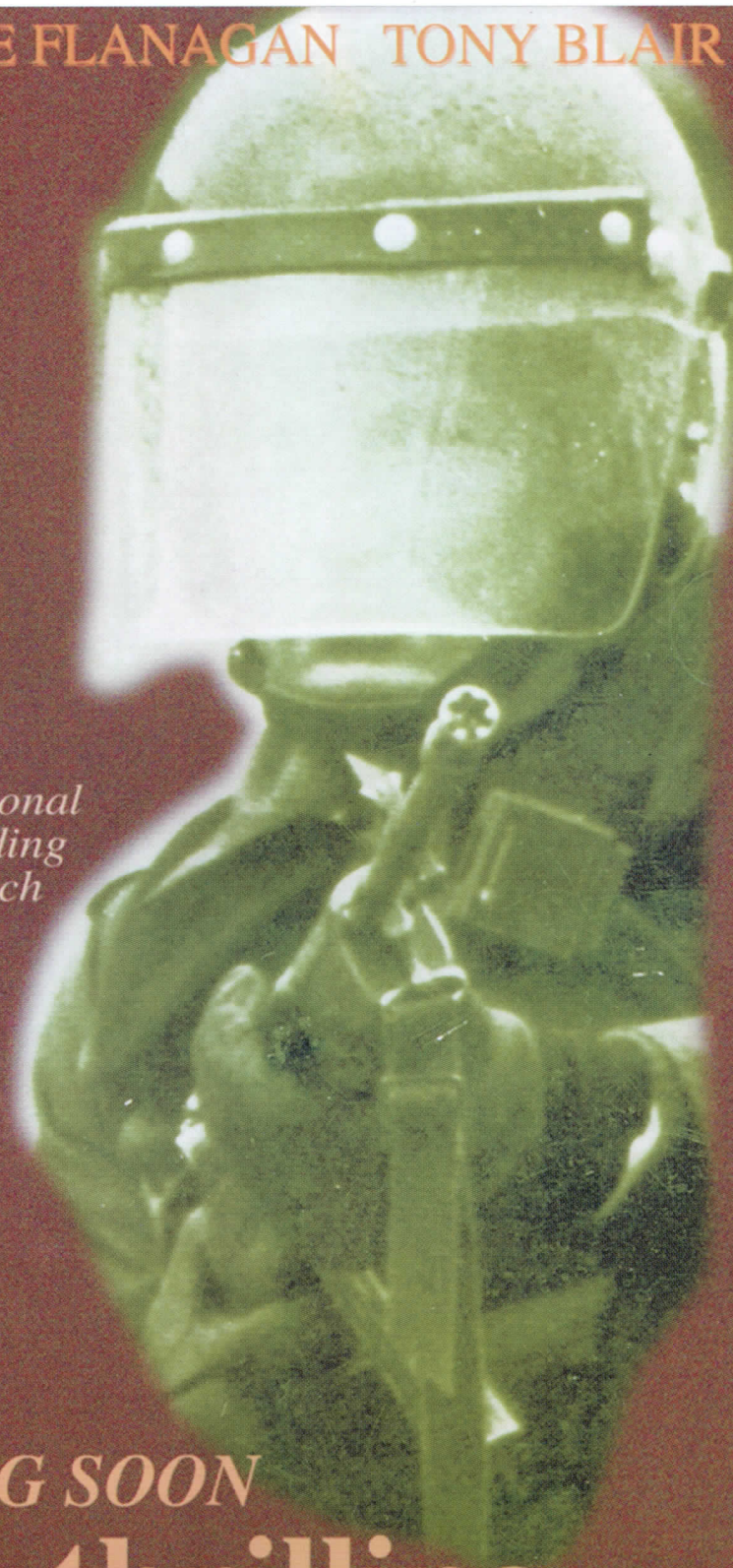
**What the critics said**

**"A fine bunch of Protestants" - Ian Paisley**

**"Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein RUC" - Ronnie Flanagan**

**"My kind of police force" - Augusto Pinochet**

**"PSNI? But we can still beat Taigs, can't we?" - Sergeant Sammy**



It is a pleasure and an honour to welcome readers to this, the first of hopefully many editions of Spark.

Spark has been compiled by a group of young republicans who have perceived for some time the need for a radical, revolutionary forum for written political debate, opinion and information for young people. With this perception in mind, we have launched this, our first magazine.

Youth culture today, unlike that of the past, is possibly as confusing to young people as it is to their parents' generation. We are referred to as Generation X, as if we are lost in some indistinguishable limbo — oblivious to political life. There is some rationale behind this. Many young people are disaffected — not surprising considering the corruption, chicanery and staleness that epitomises establishment politics in Ireland.

But not all young people are apathetic. There is also a palpable energy for change. In recent polls in the 26 Counties, Sinn Féin has consistently commanded the support of 24 per cent of young people between 12-18 years and 18-25 years. In the Six Counties the same party is poised to overtake the SDLP — a lost, fuzzy-liberal party, like their establishment peers in the 26 Counties, with nothing to offer young people but conservative, banal career politics.

Sinn Féin is a party on the move.

However, this is not a phenomenon confined to Sinn Féin. More young people are becoming aware of the effects of global capitalism on our lives and the oppression it causes internationally. For example, the Union of Students in Ireland has been organising effective protests on issues like student poverty and international protests against the World Bank have gathered momentum. Though the potential for radical youth politics in Ireland cannot be over-estimated, there is definitely space for development.

Spark can only play a small, but hopefully not insignificant part in this development. We hope that the articles in this edition encourage political debate and are relevant to the concerns of young people. If you, our readers, have any advice, contributions (even articles), criticism or ideas, they would be greatly appreciated.

A big thanks to all those who have contributed to and supported this project. Enjoy.

Michael Pierse,  
Editor.

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Articles contained in this magazine do not necessarily express the views of its editorial staff.

# FOCUS

## The Sinn Féin Student Forum

By JUSTIN MORAN

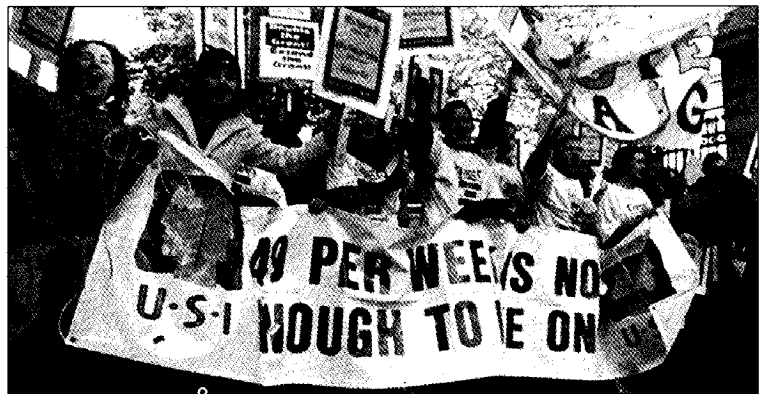
**THE SINN FÉIN STUDENT FORUM** is a relatively new Sinn Féin department. Set up last year, the aim of the organisation is to function as an umbrella group, a co-ordinating body for the party organisations on college campuses throughout the island.

The Forum has been fairly successful so far. A recruitment drive at the start of the year brought a large amount of students into the party, attracting the attention of a national media surprised at the rapid growth. Sinn Féin has invested heavily in the Forum and this has allowed for a unified national campaign to be run on the issues of grants and student poverty. Another national campaign is in the pipeline and this magazine is another sign of the continued importance placed by Sinn Féin on Irish students and young people.

Sinn Féin's Student Organiser, Damian Lawlor, explains the attraction of Sinn Féin to young people on the campuses. "The basic reason I give is that most Students Unions are not active on political issues,"

Lawlor says. "Most of them are not active on basic student issues like grants, things like that. When I contacted the various Sinn Féin cumainn in the colleges last week, to see were they going to tie into the Day of Action, the majority of them said 'we can't', there's nothing happening in their colleges. Talking to activists from the past, there was a time when unions used to be more active on issues like Section 31, prisoners, on loads of political issues as well as student issues."

*Growing disillusionment with the hypocrisy and corruption of the larger parties is forcing young people to look elsewhere and many are looking to Sinn Féin*



• Students protest against poverty...But despite a well organised Union of Students in Ireland campaign, Lawlor says, most students have little interest in politics

Like many student activists, Lawlor admits there is a problem, with a lack of interest among students in political issues. "People don't think they can achieve anything through politics," he says. Lawlor places the blame for this squarely on the 26-County political system, pointing out that Sinn Féin's main objective on the campuses is to politicise people, to make them aware "that they can change society themselves. People have to understand how society works, that capitalist society exploits. We're politicising people gradually."

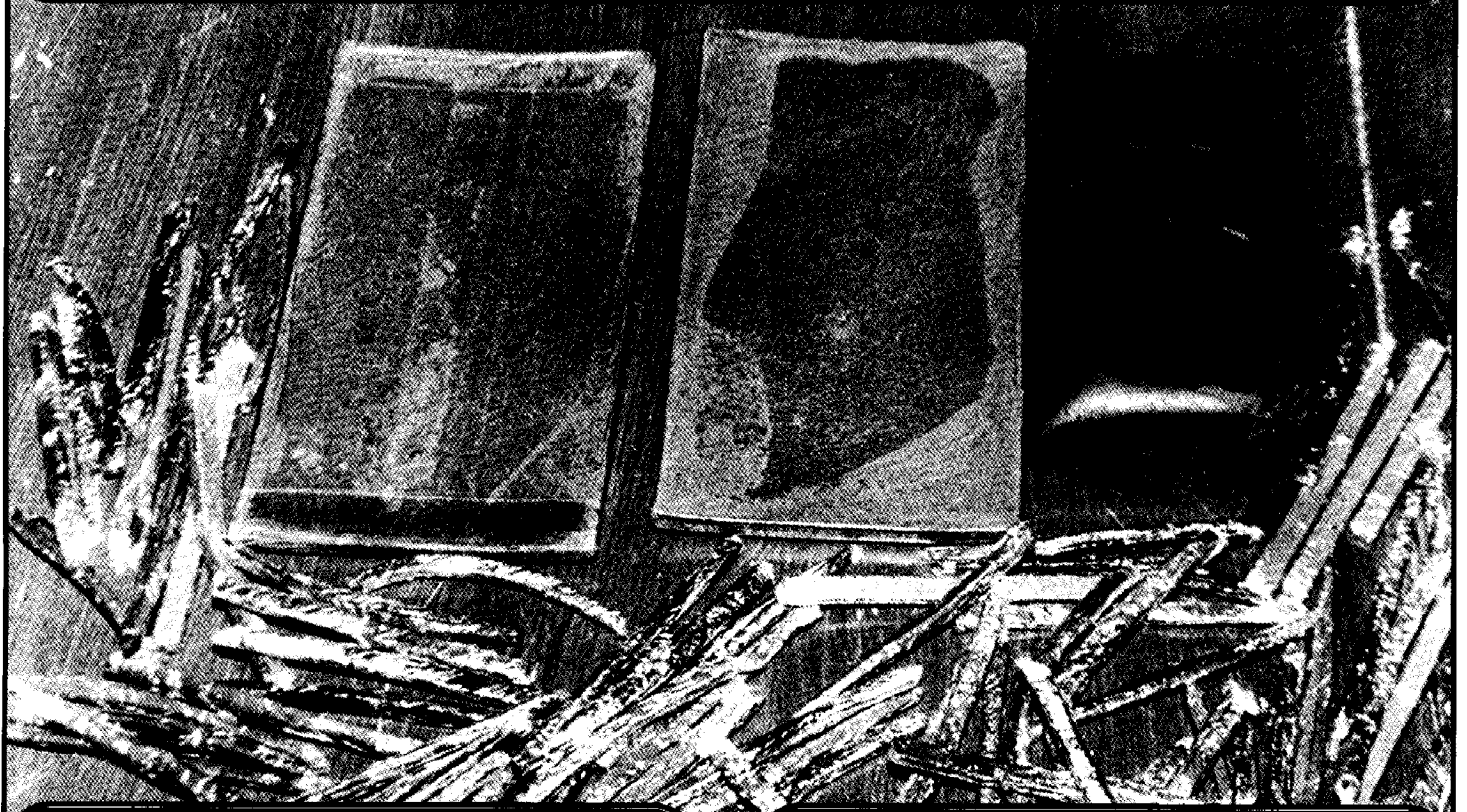
Growing disillusionment with the hypocrisy and corruption of the larger parties is forcing young people to look elsewhere and many are looking to Sinn Féin, he says. "What we can offer young people, is an opportunity to campaign, to make a difference in their local areas."

As well as building the party in the colleges, Lawlor believes that the main priority at the moment must be the politicisation of Irish students. "Firstly, you politicise people in the colleges. Secondly, you're going to have to get the majority of students at colleges politically active. It doesn't make a blind bit of difference if everyone's sitting back. To change things you need the majority of people's support. For the campaign and at present, most students are apathetic."

In the past political organisations on campuses have been split between those whose main concerns are trips away or free beer and those who try to drag people along with them without first politicising them. People must be politicised first, Lawlor says.

The Students Republican Forum is about changing that. It's not about leading students, it's about teaching students that they can lead themselves, that they can affect change themselves, that they have nothing to lose, but a world to win. □ Spark

# THE DRUGS DEBATE



## SPEAKING OUT AGAINST DRUG LEGALISATION

By Gráinne Kenny

International President of EURAD  
(Europe Against Drugs)

• EURAD is a voluntary non-governmental organisation with no political or religious ties.

**CERTAIN CIRCLES** in some countries are under the erroneous impression that permitting unrestricted use of so-called soft drugs would allow better control of other drugs they deem more harmful and addictive. These voices also add to the public confusion by calling for decriminalisation, saying that this is not the same as legalisation. This may sound like a reasonable argument but it is blatantly untrue.

The term decriminalisation means to bring the particular drug problem out of the scope of penal (criminal) law. Law enforcement would no longer apply to the export, import, manufacture, distribution, sale, possession, or use of drugs. In the case of legalisation the government would have to make laws for the distribution of drugs, in much the same way as for alcohol and tobacco. The legal status of tobacco has not prevented cigarettes from being the most smuggled drugs on the black market. These →

## A CASE FOR LEGALISING CANNABIS?

By Martin Cooke

(Drugsense Ireland)

<http://www.esatclear.ie/~drugsense/>

**IT SEEMS THAT** it is impossible to get a proper public debate in this country about the question of legalising cannabis.

"It is ten times more carcinogenic (cancer causing) than tobacco and two or three joints a day would be equivalent to thirty cigarettes," asserted Eoin Ryan, Junior Minister with Responsibility for Drugs, when he recently stated that there is no question of it being legalised.

Indeed, when the Labour TD Emmet Stagg called in the Dáil in March of last year for a debate on the matter, Eoin Ryan categorically stated that it was not a matter that was open to debate.

The previous November, commenting on a report that indicated that as many as 60% of young people in the 26-County state have used cannabis, Mr Stagg had asked in the Dáil whether the Dublin government would "consider decriminalising the use of cannabis? It is not sustainable to have 60% of the young people of the country in criminal capacity." →

→ two legal drugs, between them, account for more deaths, diseases, and family misery than the illegal substances. Because they are legal they are socially acceptable and easily available. Yet some armchair strategists within the universities, Young Fine Gael, and others who should know better, continue to ignore the warnings of world-class scientists on the physical, emotional, and physiological damage caused to society by the use of these toxic substances.

It is not the illegality of drugs that causes addiction and subsequent health problems. To make stupifying drugs more freely available cannot be considered a victory for freedom. In the case of free availability of such drugs, a fundamental question still remains: How to protect those who are too young to make an informed decision? Those people who advocate the availability of stupifying toxic drugs should attempt to formulate answers to this question.

Their spurious arguments about criminality, free choice, etc. raise some other questions to be answered. For instance: Which drugs should be legalised/decriminalised? Who is to be responsible for the quality and strength of the drugs? How are drug prices to be set? Are

drugs to be sold by anyone or only in pharmacies? Should restrictions apply to certain groups in sensitive professions? What about airline pilots, doctors, nurses, taxi drivers, politicians? The list is endless. We must ask the advocates of free availability what kind of society they want.

If any drug, or perhaps just the one that usually springs to mind, cannabis, is to be decriminalised or legalised, would there be any age restrictions? Children as young as twelve can easily obtain cigarettes

## SPEAKING OUT AGAINST DRUG LEGALISATION

even though they cannot legally be sold to anyone under the age of eighteen. How do the armchair generals propose to stop these same children from accessing cannabis or some other toxic substance?

It is also false to argue that criminality will decrease. The drug dealer will always be able to lower the price of his merchandise. He will always be able to produce a drug that will give a better buzz than that sold on the legal market because no government can



The drug dealer will always be able to lower the price of his merchandise. He will always be able to produce a drug that will give a better buzz than that sold on the legal market because no government can freely sell drugs that have the potential to poison or kill

freely sell drugs that have the potential to poison or kill. Even Valium is strictly controlled by medical prescription. A youngster's first introduction to drugs is more likely to be by a friend rather than by some hardened drug dealer, and the spread of drugs in the early stages, during what is known as the 'honeymoon' stage of drug abuse, is likely to occur within the school or neighbourhood system.

The fact that we already have a number of legalised drugs that are frequently abused is no argument for the

legalisation or decriminalisation of additional drugs with, in many cases, even more destructive qualities.

In the 1960s Sweden experimented with medicalising its growing drug problem. Injectable amphetamines, the main drug of abuse, could be obtained from a doctor. Sweden's drug problem soared, with all the health and family troubles that addiction causes. Within five years the situation had grown so intolerable that the Swedish government had to reverse its policies. Now Sweden firmly adheres to the UN Conventions on Narcotics with strict drug control and humane treatment at an early stage for all drug abusers. That country currently enjoys the success it has achieved in having Europe's lowest figures in drug using population. Holland's liberal policies, on the other hand, have gained it the reputation of being Europe's drug supermarket.

As a result of the open drug scene in Holland, its neighbour Belgium is throwing in the towel and adopting decriminalisation measures for cannabis. Both countries are in breach of the United Nations Conventions, to which they and Ireland are signatories. The UN Conventions are drawn up to protect society from itself. Drugs are no respecter of class, religion, or creed. They destroy the most vulnerable members of society. The way

forward is by reducing the demand for drugs, not by making them more freely available in order to produce an artificially low crime report.

This is done by educating parents, children, and politicians, by investing in good primary prevention and early intervention programmes, working with schools and parents, by improved living and working conditions and, lastly, by means of easily accessible tertiary prevention, with the clear goal of a drug-free life.

Drugs are a reliable ally of oppression on all levels. □ Spark

→ Of course his suggestion was rejected out of hand by the government. Even the Labour Party were at pains to point out that Mr Stagg was speaking in a personal capacity when raising the question. And Gráinne Kenny of EURAD (Europe Against Drugs) was quick to point out that (in her opinion at least) cannabis was a gateway drug that led on to addiction to other, more dangerous drugs like heroin, not to mention the fact that she has "files of medical evidence" in her office showing that "cannabis is 10 times more harmful than cigarettes."

I'd love to see those files.

Let's go back to the beginning of this article.

"It [cannabis] is ten times more carcinogenic than tobacco ..." I'd surely like to know where that one comes from. Especially considering that a report published last year in the medical journal, *Nature Medicine*, indicated that cannabis may actually help in the treatment of cancer.

Not to mention the fact that a 1994 study by the US National Toxicology Program found that animals that received cannabis actually had fewer cancers than those that didn't (of course the US Federal Government tried to cover that one up).

And what about the so-called "gateway theory"?

The fact is that every serious scientific study has shown that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the use of cannabis leads on to the use of other drugs. In 1991 the Department of Health in Dublin published a document entitled "Government Strategy to Prevent Drug Misuse" which had the following to say about cannabis use: "While cannabis use seems to be on the increase among young people, it

## A CASE FOR LEGALISING CANNABIS?

is usually not an ongoing regular pattern of misuse."

But it's illegal, isn't it? Surely there's a reason for it to have been made illegal?

I'm not for a moment going to suggest that cannabis is totally safe. But it's a hell of a sight safer than many of the things we can legally take.

What about paracetamol, for example? A report in the Irish Times

ple. It is responsible for the wastage of huge amounts of time and money for both the gardaí and the courts. It is putting obscene amounts of money into the pockets of organised criminals. And it prevents any sort of quality control over what has become the drug of choice for a large proportion of our young people.

EURAD aren't even close to the truth. Drugs may have been made illegal because they were perceived harmful. But they become far more dangerous once they have been made illegal. The obscenely funny thing about it is that the law refers to them as "Controlled Substances". By

making them illegal we have handed all control of them over to the criminals.

But wouldn't legalising cannabis lead to a dramatic increase in its use?

Well, we only have to look at The Netherlands to see whether that may be true or not. They decriminalised it a quarter of a century ago, mainly in an attempt to break the link between soft and hard drugs. Despite what the narco-nazis like EURAD and the US drugs czar may tell you, the experiment has been a huge success. Not only do the Dutch have the oldest population of heroin

*Keeping cannabis illegal is making criminals out of our young people. It is responsible for the wastage of huge amounts of time and money for both the gardaí and the courts. It is putting obscene amounts of money into the pockets of organised criminals*



of 22 February 2001 stated that Department of Health figures for 1999 show that there were 1003 cases of paracetamol poisonings in the 26-County state.

It's physically impossible to poison yourself with cannabis.

As far as cannabis is concerned even the medical journal, *The Lancet*, claimed in an editorial (14 November 1998) that cannabis was less dangerous than either alcohol or tobacco.

Keeping cannabis illegal is making criminals out of our young peo-

addicts in Europe (because not many new ones are coming on-stream, and because their existing heroin addicts are not dying of overdoses), but they also have the lowest proportion of the teenage population actually taking cannabis (even once) in the whole of the westernworld.

Seems pretty convincing to me.

For a crime to have been committed there surely has to have been a victim. Where is the victim as far as smoking a spliff is concerned? No victim, no crime. Legalise it now!  Spark

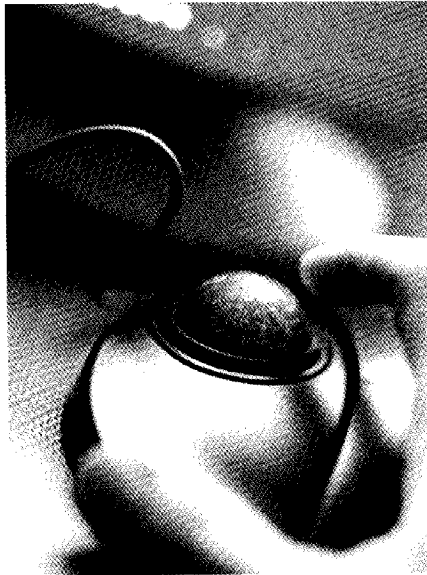
# An Ghaeilge in Aois na Teicneolaíochta - slán agus saibhir

**I**s mór an t-athrú atá tagtha ar an saol le roinnt bheag bliana anuas. Is cuimhin liom gáire a dhéanamh faoi chara liom agus fón so-ghluaiste á iompar thart aige. Agus ní fadó ó shin é ó bhí scanradh orm roimh an ghréasán agus na háiseanna a bhíonn ag gabháil leis. Is beag ógánach anois, áfach, nach bhfuil fón póca aici/aige. Agus céard is fiú litir a sheoladh chuig Alaska le go léifear an choicís seo chugainn í?

Taobh leis an teicneolaíocht, tá borradh ar leith faoin nGaeilge anois agus muinín úr le feiceáil inti. Tá an t-athrú is suntasaí le feiceáil sa líon daltaí a bhfuil oideachas á fháil acu trí Ghaeilge, bíodh sraith Ghaeilge nó scoil lán-Ghaelach i gceist. Ach, ní mór cur leis an dea-obair i gcónaí óir ní fhreastalaíonn ach 40% de dhaltaí na mbun-scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge ar mheán-scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge. Is measa arís an céatadán i gcás na gcoláistí tríú leibhéal agus an líon beag daoine a dhéanann cúrsaí trí mheán na Gaeilge iontu.

Tá obair lucht soláthar an oideachais Ghaelaigh inmholta. Ní féidir a shéanadh ach go bhfuil a seacht ndícheall déanta ag cosmhuintir na Gaeilge. Níl gach deis á tapú againn, áfach, chun an chéad teanga náisiúnta a chur chun cinn. Tá muintir na hÉireann an-bháil leis an nGaeilge i láthair na huair (go maire sé seo go brách!). Tá gasúir á gcur go naonraí, bun-scoileanna agus meánscoileanna Gaeilge aon áit a bhfuil siad ar fáil. Táthar siúd a bhfuil sé de mhaoín acu ag cur a gcuid páistí go coláistí

Le  
Daithí Mac an Bháird



samhraidh sa Ghaeltacht agus tá meon dearfach ar son na teanga le tabhairt faoi deara i gcoitinne. Ach, cad mar gheall orthu siúd atá á bhfágáil ar leataobh ag an gcóras mar atá? Cé mhéid tuismitheoirí ar mhaith leo scoil lán-Ghaeilge a bheith ar fáil ina gceantar ach nach bhfuil?

Nach minic a chloistear ó dhaoine fásta gur mhaith leo tabhairt faoi fhoghlaim nó athfhoghlaim na Gaeilge? Ach bíonn bacainní ann agus tuilleadh bacainní ina dhiaid sin. Easpa airgid, easpa muiníne, gan modh taistil acu, easpa ama toisc dualgais clainne i dteannta le post lán-aimseartha. Tá aithne agam chomh maith ar dhaoine ar mhí-chumas éigin nárbh fhéidir leo an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim, bídís dall, bodhar nó i gcathaoir rotha. Agus cad mar gheall ar Éireannaigh thar lear? Deich mbliana ó shin ba dheacrachtaí móra iad sin thuas ach tá an tríú mílaois linn

anois. Tá ré na teicneolaíochta ann. Sa lá atá uinniu ann, is féidir na deacrachtaí sin a shárú. Cén chaoi? Is é an gréasán (internet) réiteach na ceiste. Cuirimís cúrsaí Gaeilge ar gach leibhéal agus i ngach canúint ar fáil ar an ríomhaire. Ligmís do chuile dhuine an leathuair sin a chaitheamh i mbun na Gaeilge nuair a fheileann sé di/dó féin, bíodh sé ar maidin nó istoíche, am lóin ag an suíomh oibre nó ar an mbus is í/é ag tais-teal. Bíodh de dheis ag an duine gluaiseacht ag a luas féin nó fil-leadh ar an cheacht deacair nár tuigeadh i gceart ag an chéad iar-racht.

Agus, níos tábhachtaí fós, d'fhéadfadh Gaeilgeoirí an domhain mhóir - idir fhoghlaimoirí agus shaineolaithe - bheith i dteangbháil lena chéile i gcorcal comhrá ar fud na cruinne. I gcomórtas leis an seanchóras mí-phearsanta - téipeanna agus ceirníní - córas bríomhar, pearsanta, beo a bheadh anseo.

Sampla maith den chianfhoghlaim agus an chaoi mar a fheidhmíonn sí ná an Ollscoil Oscailte. Úsáidtear fax, fóin, ríomhphost, www, scainéirí, múinteoireacht multimediala, CD-ROM, téipeanna agus fístéipeanna mar mhodhanna oibre. I gcás teanga, úsáidí callairí agus cárta gutha. Cuirtear oideachas ar fáil ar an leathchuid den mheán-chostas agus déanann fostóirí urraíocht ar 25,000 duine in aghaidh na bliana staidéar a dhéanamh ann. Déanann 50,000 duine staidéar ar an ghréasán léi.

Samhlaigh na buntáistí don duine a bheadh ag gabháil lena léithéid de thionscamh. Níor ghá duit do theach féin nó do shuíomh oibre a fhágáil. Bheadh clár-ama solúbtha





agat agus deis agat teangbháil a dhéanamh le cairde agus teagascóirí in am ar bith trí ríomhphost. Níor ghá bheith singil gan clann nó bheith óg. Ní bheadh aon chostas taistil i gceist ach an oiread. Dhéanfaí beart ar son na teanga. Chothófaí meon dearfach ina leith. Níor ghá go mbeadh lucht foghlamtha na Gaeilge lonnaithe i ngrúpa/móronad daonra. Bheadh deis ann do phobal idirnáisiúnta na Gaeilge....Gaeil Bhoston, Nua Eabhrac, na Mór-Roinne, na

hAstráile srl. D'fhéadfaí oifigí riaracháin a lonnú sa Ghaeltacht (nó in áit ar bith a bhfuil obair mhór déanta aici ar leas na teanga), rud a chothódh fostaíocht don phobal áitiúil. Le gluaiseacht mar seo, bheadh deis ag tuistí an teanga a fhoghlaim taobh lena gcuid páistí ach ar an ghréasán.

Tá an scolaíocht ag druidim i dtreo an chianoideachais. I gcomhthéacs na n-athraithe scioptha teicneolaíochta, tá dúshlán romhainn uilig. Tá sé in am do Ghaeilgeoirí tabhairt faoi

anois ionas nach gcuirfear an deis ar ceal.  Spark

#### **Gluais (translations)**

Gréasán, internet; ógánach, youngster; muinín, confidence; suntasach, positive; sraith Ghaeilge, Irish language stream; céatadán, percentage; lucht soláthar...., providers of; innholta, praise-worthy; ní féidir a shéanadh, it can't be denied; anbháúil, very well disposed/sympathetic towards; mí-chumas, disability; saineolaithe, experts; Ollscoil Oscailte, Open University; fístéip, video tape; callaire, speaker; cárta gutha, voice card; urraíocht, sponsorship.

GLOBAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE... GLOBAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE...

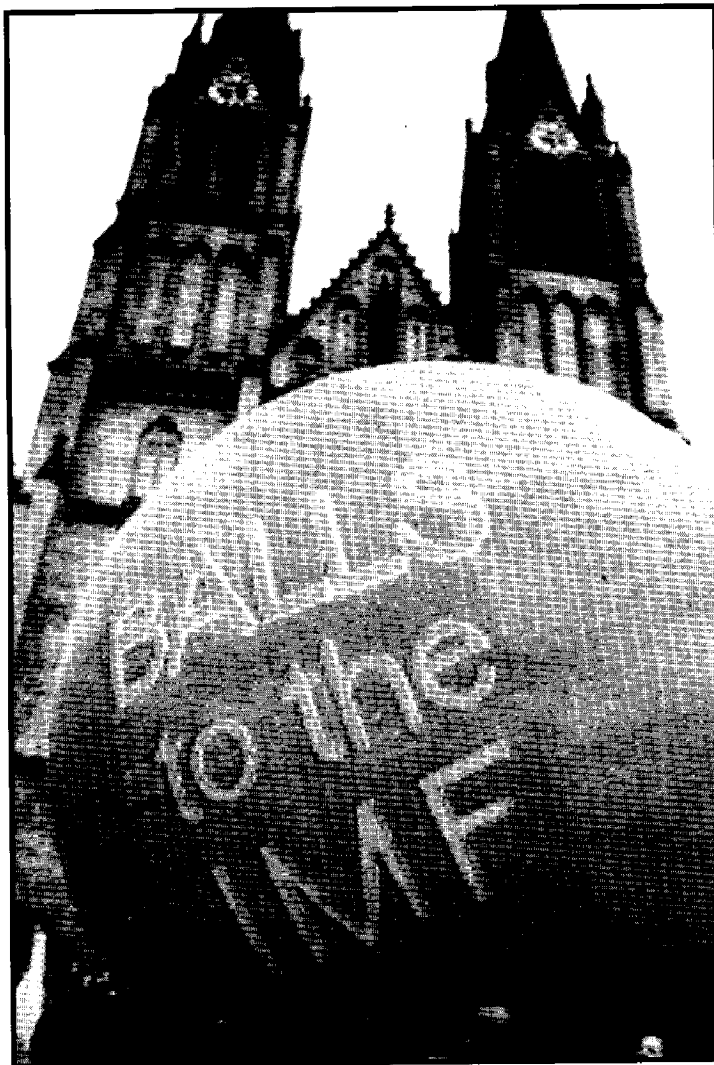
# tackling the MONSTER

**ANGRY** and well-coordinated protests at Seattle in November '99, and then again in Prague in September last year, catapulted the broken windows of McDonald's restaurants onto the pages of Time and Newsweek and once again gave bored hacks something to write about.

The hordes on the streets were threatening to throw a stick between the spokes of the great chariot of "globalisation". Not without a certain measure of success either: the Seattle demos shout down a crucial World Trade Organisation session and in Prague the World Bank/IMF meetings had to close early because delegates were too intimidated to leave their hotels after some hell-for-leather street-fighters burst through police ranks and rained cobblestones onto the balcony of the conference centre. 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, capitalism was being challenged on the streets by trade union activists, ecologists, anarchists, feminists and marxists.

## What's going on?

The whole debate about globalisation appears blurry and confused at first, probably because of the deliberate attempts of the mainstream media and the likes of James Wolfensohn (president of the World Bank) to portray protesters as well-meaning individuals who are naive and misguided in their criticism of neo-



liberal policies. Even the term itself is incorrect, for the vast majority of people on the streets see nothing wrong in communicating with the rest of the world. After all, the most recent demonstrations brought together groups from at least a hundred different countries, and there were simultaneous protests in many cities around the globe. Nobody is looking for a return to the Stone

Age. What they are mad about is the increasing globalisation of capital and the lack of any democratic controls over this process. New information technologies have not only meant that we can communicate with friends on the side of the world: they have also enabled financial brokers to drain investment out of an economy in a matter of hours. The free movement of people around the

By **NICK JONES**

world has meanwhile become harder than ever, unless you happen to have a US or EU passport.

## The World Bank

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were set up immediately after the Second World War by the Bretton Woods conference,

**New information technologies have not only meant that we can communicate with friends on the side of the world: they have also enabled financial brokers to drain investment out of an economy in a matter of hours**

charged with enabling the nations of the world to develop in a more harmonious way. The two lending institutions would supposedly provide credit from banks and the richer countries in order to allow poor countries to grow and look after the needs of their people. Of course, nothing could have been further from the truth.

In reality the two institutions have overseen a cyclical system of cheap loans followed by inter-

# .. GLOBAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE... GLOBAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE.



● 15,000 protestors from around the world filled the streets of Prague last September, to demonstrate outside the International Monetary Fund and World Bank annual meeting. Hundreds of protestors were arrested when riots flared with Czech police

repayment schedules - disastrous for the recipients of credit, but never for the bankers themselves.

Without going too far back into the mists of history, we can usefully look at the last three decades or so in order to understand how this system works. In the 1970's Western capitalists had, to put it bluntly, far more money than they could find a use for. Oil prices were rising sharply, mainly due to the OPEC cartel. Poor countries were encouraged to borrow huge amounts at quite low rates of interest by the IMF, the World Bank and other lenders. Those countries with oil reserves would soon be rich, it was felt, and those without oil needed to re-develop their economies to take advantage of other energy sources. Obviously this needed money and a considerable amount of pressure was put on countries to borrow far more than was justifiable.

## The Lost Decade

However, oil prices then failed to continue rising and interest rates also took a sharp hike in the 1980's. Countries throughout the South - and quite a few like Ireland in the North - found themselves strapped for cash and unable even to meet the interest payments on their loans. The IMF stepped in with its Structural Adjustment Programmes, which rode roughshod over notions of national sovereignty and imposed anti-social economic policies on millions of people around the world. In Ireland, this took effect with the MacSharry budget of 1987. In practice, the IMF was pushing neo-liberalism worldwide: opening economies up to outside competition and

forcing poor countries to peddle their raw materials (often very important environmental features such as rain forests) on world markets for ever-dwindling prices, given the excess of supply. Social spending on hospitals, housing, education and welfare was slashed - not by national governments but by the lending institutions who controlled the purse strings. The 1980's became known as the "lost decade", as millions of people struggled to pay off national debts, which in many cases had been accrued by corrupt dictatorships with no popular mandates whatsoever. Many of these countries are still just as "lost" ten years later, while a few have managed to move on. Ireland is probably the most successful of these, but just try telling that to the thousands of people on hospital waiting lists or sleeping rough on our streets.

## Market 'Logic'

In practice there is nothing really new about neo-liberal economics, whether it poses as

Reaganism, Thatcherism, Blairism or Humpty-Dumptyism. In the 1840's it went under the name of Laissez-Faire, and was responsible for the death of a million Irish people, and the emigration of a million more. The country was producing food aplenty, of course, but the "logic" of the market meant that it was all exported to pay the rent on smallholdings.

Government intervention was kept to a minimum, and most aid came through crackpot religious institutions or private bodies with an axe to grind. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Debt slavery as a deliberate form of neo-colonialism was around in the 19th century too - newly "independent" Latin American nations were bought up wholesale by English, US and North European capitalists as a result. Out of the frying pan, into the fire...

There are those who argue that borrowing is essential for poor countries to invest in their economies in order to generate

human development. The lending institutions are necessary to oversee this process, they say.

However, let's look at just who controls these bodies. The IMF is dominated by the 24 OECD countries (the industrialised northern ones), who control 55% of the votes between them. The People's Republic of China (population 1.1 billion) controls 2.5% of votes, while the USA (population 250 million) controls an enormous 19%.

*Economic growth is geared not towards human development but towards the maximisation of profits in order to satisfy ever-spiralling debt repayments*

Democracy or what?

As for the World Bank, famous for talking nice and acting rough, over two-thirds of the votes there belong to the OECD countries. The real role of these institutions, together with the more recent World Trade Organisation, is to open up formerly sovereign countries to be sacked and looted by transnational corporations. Economic growth is geared, not towards human development, but towards the maximisation of profits in order to satisfy ever-spiralling debt repayments. Against this backdrop, the failure even to push through a limited scheme of relief for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries is criminal in the extreme.

Time for a little justice in the global economy?  Spark

# What a tangled

**Spark's JUSTIN MORAN delves into the murky world of loyalist and neo-nazi web sites on the internet.**

"ANY FENIANS WHO LOOK AT THIS GET IT IN TA YER TINY LITTLE FENIAN FUKIN BRAINS YER ALL GONNA FUKIN DIE HA HAAAAAAAAAAAAA." Statements like this one are common place in the growing number of Loyalist websites cropping up on the internet. Proclaiming a racially pure vision of a Catholic-free Ulster, these sites are proving more and more popular, providing a point of contact for hardline Loyalists disgusted with the current Peace Process.

One of the better known sites, whose guestbook the above quote is taken from, is the Ulster Loyalist Information Service site ([www.ulisnet.com](http://www.ulisnet.com)), which proudly proclaims that it is published in support of the Loyalist Volunteer Force and the Ulster Freedom Fighters. The site carries statements from the LVF and its regular readers are passionate in their support for the UDA's pipe bombing campaign. This most



ing list which, according to the Business Post, included "...a number of very unpleasant postings about the late Rosemary Nelson, the worst an extremely tasteless joke about her murder. One posting from the list moderator justified the murder of Catholic taxi drivers..." Since then the people behind the website have increased their level of security and now require references from people before applicants are allowed.

Reflecting the divisions in Loyalism at the moment, the site spends a great deal of time attacking other Loyalist organisations. Members of the UVF and their political wing, the Progressive Unionist Party, are accused of everything from murder and drug-running to being MI5 agents and paedophiles to wife beating and drunkenness. Counter-accusations are made on sites proclaiming their support of the Ulster Volunteer Force. One 'Lisbairn Loyalist' wrote, "The pup have some cheek to call the lvf drug dealers when the pup-uvf have been caught red handed with e-tabs. True loyalists have known for some time who really does peddle drugs to young loyalists."

The feud between the two groups just before Christmas, which claimed lives on both sides and led to huge numbers of people being evicted from their homes, also split

the fledgling Loyalist web community. On some things however they continue to agree and the links between anti-Catholic sectarianism and racism are very clear.

Disturbingly, connectons between Loyalists and British far right neo-nazi organisations are mirrored on the internet.

[www.ulisnet.com](http://www.ulisnet.com)  
<http://members.tripod.co.uk/trueblue/home.html>  
<http://www.geocities.com/lvleadtheway/>  
<http://nav.webring.yahoo.com/hub?ring=Ulster&list>

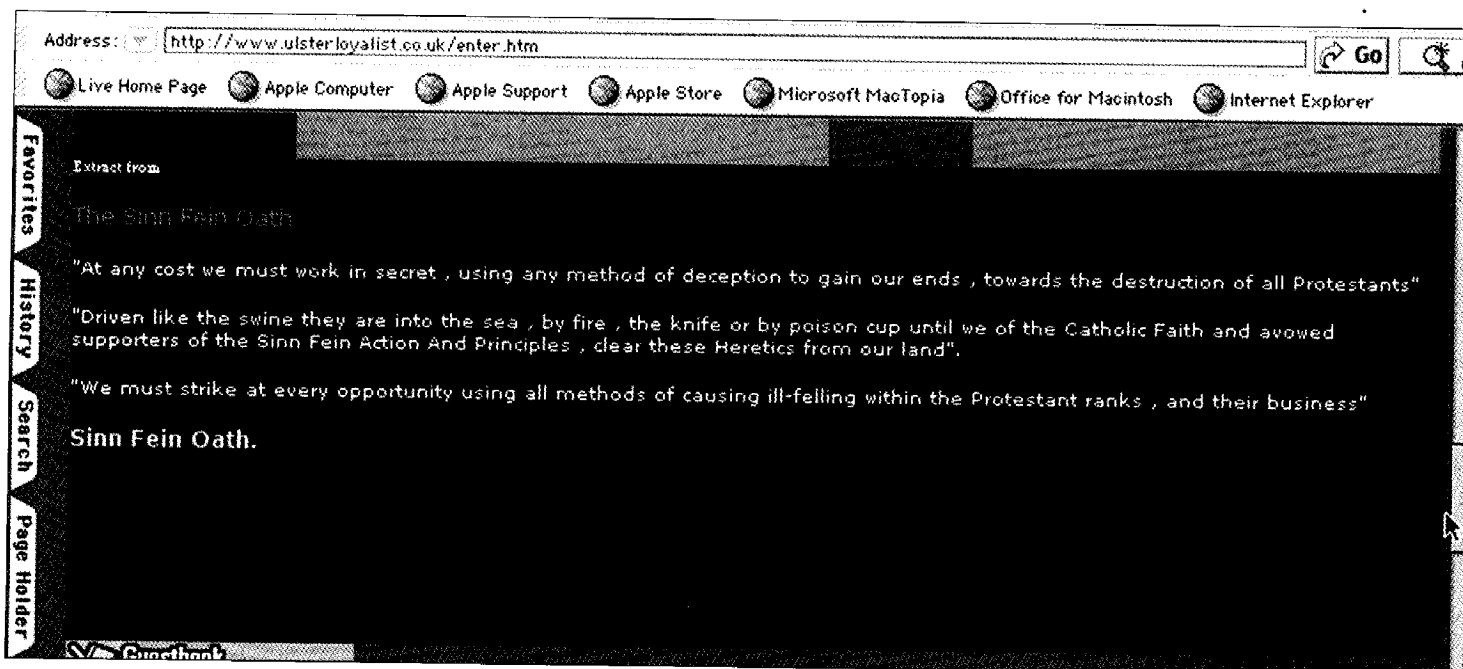
**These sites are some of the Loyalist sites I had a look at, the last is a Loyalist web ring with a list of about 30 Loyalist sites on the net.**

recent campaign has seen over 50 attacks on Nationalist homes since the start of the year, with one contributor 'BOB' declaring that Loyalists were, "DOING A GREAT JOB IN N.BELFAST LADS. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK."

The site first came to prominence with its infamous 'Know Your Provo' section, which has now been taken down for legal reasons. The site carried names, occupations and details of those that the site's creators had judged to be enemies of Ulster. One of those named, Pdraigin Drinan, who is the solicitor for the Garavaghy Road Residents Committee, is quoted on the page as saying "I was certainly shocked" by the 'Know Your Provo' site, which made false accusations against a number of Catholics and Nationalists. Time and time again the names of these people have appeared on Loyalist death lists and, though that part of the site has been taken down, the details of all those named on it were stored by many readers who share the belief that "After all the only good republican is a fuckin dead one".

The site also came to prominence when a Sunday Business Post investigation discovered that a leading member of the Liberal Democrats in Britain subscribed to the mail-

# web we weave



- This loyalist web site conveniently states the 'Sinn Féin Oath' for those of us who may have forgotten it

Appeals by Loyalists for funding and support are a regular sight on some of the most infamous racist sites on the web - like Combat 18's site (<http://www.skrewdriver.net/>) and the National Front ([www.natfront.com](http://www.natfront.com)). At the last Drumcree stand-off members of Combat 18 and other right-wing British organisations were prominent in their support of the Orangemen's 'right to march'. Leading members of those organisations were in and around Portadown at the time. Although some members of the far-right are dubious about the merits of supporting Loyalists, others have no doubts: "don't tell me that Michael Stone bombing and shooting them fuckers at Milltown wasn't good I get a fucking adrenalin rush every-time I watch it on video"

Loyalists often respond with similar sentiments, pleased to find support for their views anywhere, with one commenting: "I think its only fair to have this site linked to race hate groups and extremist white supremacy organisations, because anyone with the level of intelligence that makes them agree with those sites will obviously agree with us too."

<http://www.natfront.com/>  
<http://www.skrewdriver.net/>

**These are two British race-hate groups, the National Front and Combat 18's new page.**

Another looked forward to the day when "Needless to add the deracinated n\*\*\*\*r loving marxists of sinn fién (sic) get a drubbing"

**"After all the only good republican is a f\*\*\*in dead one"**

Many hate groups provide links to Loyalist sites and vice versa. Curiously these sites also provide links to anti-immigrant sites based in the South like Aine Ni Chonail's Immigration Control Platform and the more shadowy Éire Now organisation.

Loyalist websites also show a tenuous grasp of history. A popular UVF supporting website - 'No Surrender' - claims that the UVF's guns "fell silent until the 1960's, when sectarian attacks by the IRA prompted Ulstermen to again take up

<http://www.esatclear.ie/~eirenow/index.htm>

**This is an Irish anti-immigrant page which is a popular link on pages belonging to Combat 18 and the British National Party.**

arms to defend their land against the treacherous rebels". Pushing an alternative version of Irish history, they ignore issues like the Civil Rights Movement, the RUC backed Loyalist pogroms of the early 1970's and prefer an image of Loyalist paramilitaries as valiant defenders of an abandoned community, defending itself from Fenian hordes on one side and Socialist British governments on the other.

Reinforcing the bunker attitude of Loyalism is, in great part, what these sites are about. They provide a focus point around which a disparate collection of racists, Rangers fans and the worst elements of sectarianism can rally round and find comfort in finding those who share their hate-filled views. Many of these sites are very well produced and their articles and claims could seem very convincing to the ill-informed. Their continued growth, and the professionalism with which they disseminate their information is a disturbing feature of this aspect of Loyalism.  Spark



**República  
Resistente**

**1981 — 2021**

**Republican  
Resistance  
2001**





**Eoghan Mac Cormaic** was arrested by British forces in 1976 and sentenced to the H Blocks of Long Kesh Jail the following year. He gives a personal perspective on the period leading up to the 1981 Hunger Strike, and the effect it had on him, his comrades and the advance of the republican struggle.

**B**y the time of my arrest in August 1976, there were already more than a hundred republican prisoners on remand in Belfast's Crumlin Road prison, being held without political status. The months from March 1976 until August had been productive months for the British criminalisation policy and the jails were swelling by the day.

We walked the yard, innocents in our skimmers and Docs, our parkas and bomber jackets, learning jail talk, learning about other places in the North and gradually learning about the imminent protest, that unnamed protest in an as yet unidentified place, that lay ahead. We were just beginning to feel the effects of the loss of political status and we were sure, all of us, that we were going to get it back.

The loss of political status had been announced late in 1975, at the same time as the last of the internees were being released from Long Kesh. Outside the prisons in the north - Crumlin Road, Long Kesh, Armagh and Magilligan - people paid little heed to the 'loss' of political status, since many believed that the question of status didn't arise... the IRA was in a truce with the British, and the belief was that British withdrawal was coming. With

# FIGHTING



a truce there should be no more prisoners and so no questions about status.

Just before the tragic death of Frank Stagg in February 1976, I went to a meeting in Monaghan called by the Ulster Executive, Sinn Féin, to discuss the impending loss of status. By that stage the truce was over and loyalism, with the connivance of the British, was engaged in a widespread and deadly sectarian campaign. Republicans were being drawn into conflict and the continued British presence - indeed their military build-up and the continuing raids and arrests, combined with the lack of any political progress were sure signs that armed conflict was once more inevitable.

A whole new vocabulary was coming

into vogue, talk of criminal, of gangsters, of mafia style shootings, of travelling gunmen, and with it a poster campaign showing a population weary of war and anxious for peace. Republicanism was being targeted in a very deliberate media onslaught.

The Monaghan meeting discussed the plight of Frank Stagg and then turned to the question of the fight to regain political status, even though, by that stage, it hadn't been revoked. It was hard to focus on it, but by the end of the meeting all of us left determined that our imprisoned comrades would not be left to fight it on their own.

That Spring we held a number of protests and rallies in Derry to mark the end of political status, and as more and



# BEHIND BARS

And then a few voices began explaining it all in greater detail. We were being asked to continue our struggle inside the jails, because we were political prisoners, not criminals. When the late Kieran Nugent was sentenced in September and refused to wear the uniform, the planned protest suddenly had a name: the Blanket Protest.

Mind you, we didn't hear much from Kieran Nugent for a while. He had been taken off to a new prison called H Block (we didn't even know that there were eight of the H Blocks in Long Kesh and three more in Magilligan) and for the next few weeks all was silent. Others followed through the Diplock Courts and the silence persisted. None of us knew for sure what was happening but we were all eager and ready to join the protest as fast as we could. I even remember the odd amadán who confided in

*...trying to take on the British machine, trying to defeat criminalisation and secure our rights as POWs and the right of our people to engage in struggle, without that struggle being branded a criminal endeavour*

more were arrested the rest of us waited for some word on conditions.

And then came August and I was afforded a closer look at what jail was all about. I was arrested and charged.

We walked that yard every day. Men and mere boys. Indeed the Crumlin Road had a JRU - Juvenile Remand Unit - where the under seventeens were held. And there were plenty of them.

The prison was a powder keg. The loyalists were on lock up, we were protesting at every opportunity and the screws were trying out their new-found controls over republican prisoners. There was much talk of calling governors 'sir' and there being no OCs (IRA Officers Commanding) in the wing, and of screws being in charge. But we

ignored that and carried on. A few 'old hands' arrived in - ex-internees, ex-POWs who had experienced status. We began organising and protesting in the courts, raising the public profile of the protest.

**M**ost of us had little idea what status entailed, except for some vague notion of tin huts, Celtic Crosses and harps, and a bit of leather work. There would be drilling and parades and there would be education and gaeltachts, and better visits and less hassle from the screws. Definitely worth fighting for.

the stroll round the yard that he hoped it would 'still be on' by the time he'd be sentenced, so he could go on it for a few weeks. And then the reports started coming back.

At first it was patchy, then more definite. Remands were being taken from Crumlin Road to Long Kesh and to the H Block. Communication opened up, visits, mass, smuggled notes. By Christmas a nightmare was being painted of what was going on in Long Kesh, and to make it worse we now knew that there were other H Blocks. The Brits had obviously been preparing for this. →



→ Political Status in the Cages meant freedom within a prison to organise, educate, debate, socialise, and occupy ones time as part of an eighty or ninety strong unit. The Blocks were designed to break the unit down to one. Individual cells, limited association, twenty four cell wings, limited unlock, restrictions on everything. And brutality or the constant threat of brutality hovering over all. The stories coming from the protest bore all this out. All of us knew now that this was going to be a tough fight and while no-one wanted it to happen, every POW was determined not to be the weak link.

In Armagh, women POWs were also facing the uncertainty of a loss of Status. Some men on remand had sisters in Armagh or were co-accused with women and we listened eagerly for reports from there. Nothing was clear.

The protest grew rapidly. By May 1977, when I was sentenced, a complete H Block, H5, was full and a wing in H4 had been opened. It was a brutal place. Nothing could prepare you for the reception in the Block, a ring of screws leering and forcing the prisoner to strip naked. I arrived with two others and we brought the numbers in the wing up to twenty. The next day we were on a hunger strike to get an agreement from the screws to stop the beatings. A day later the last empty cell in the wing was filled and a couple of days later we were all brought, naked and handcuffed, across to H5.

The reception there was different. A hundred cheering Blanket men awaited us - all locked up of course - and we were greeted like heroes. They thought we were bringing supplies of tobacco, and when it was clear that whatever snout we had managed to bring from the Crum had been lost in the naked wing shift from H4, our hero status vanished. The H Blocks



● **IRA Volunteers pay their last respects at the funeral of Raymond McCreesh**

were like that, there was no room for heroes, you were only as good as your last 'op' and in any case no-one had time to dwell on their misfortunes in the madness which the protest seemed to be.

I was put in the cell with the late Martin McKenna, one of the first to be released from the Blanket (on an appeal) and sadly killed the next year in a road accident. Martin filled me in. It all seemed weird. In a nutshell we were going to remain on the Blanket protest until we were given our status back. Oh, we had high hopes.

Ten months later, the boredom was affecting us and the Brits. They tightened their rules, we responded. They tightened them some more, we responded again. They inflicted some more brutality, the IRA responded outside. In a space of

about three weeks in March 1978 the protest escalated from the passive Blanket Protest to a No Wash protest and conditions moved from poor to grim, verging on unbearable. However, it all happened so fast, and it all happened in such a way that we fully expected it to reach a conclusion that we had to bear it - for a while. Then the while became months and eventually years.

**I** was twenty when I was arrested. Many others were younger than me. By the time I was twenty two I was, I thought, in hell. All the things that young people could be doing were still being done by other



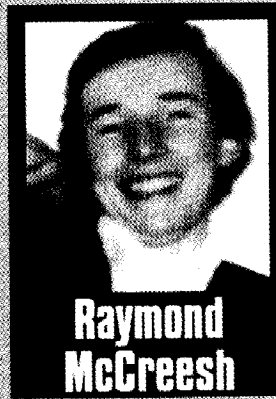
**Bobby Sands**

AGED (27) FROM BELFAST  
STARTED HUNGER-STRIKE  
1 MARCH 1981  
DIED 5 MAY  
AFTER 66 DAYS



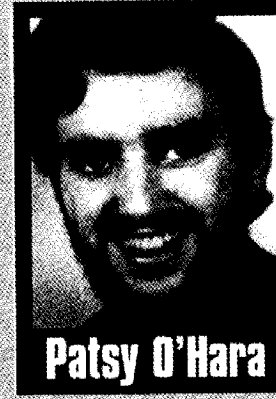
**Francis Hughes**

AGED (25) FROM SOUTH DERRY  
STARTED HUNGER-STRIKE  
15 MARCH 1981  
DIED 12 MAY  
AFTER 59 DAYS



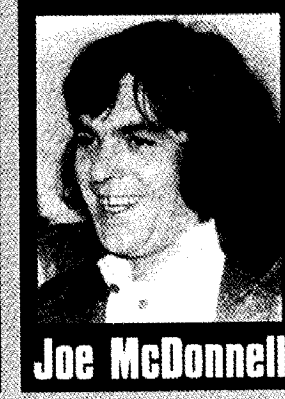
**Raymond McCreesh**

AGED (24) FROM SOUTH ARMAGH  
STARTED HUNGER-STRIKE  
22 MARCH 1981  
DIED 21 MAY  
AFTER 61 DAYS



**Patsy O'Hara**

AGED (24) FROM DERRY CITY  
STARTED HUNGER-STRIKE  
22 MARCH 1981  
DIED 21 MAY  
AFTER 61 DAYS



**Joe McDonnell**

AGED (30) FROM BELFAST  
STARTED HUNGER-STRIKE  
9 MAY 1981  
DIED 8 JULY  
AFTER 61 DAYS



● FINAL SALUTE — the funeral of Joe McDonnell

with, played cards with, swopped stories with and struggled through the past four and-a-half years with, trying to take on the British machine, trying to defeat criminalisation and secure our rights as POW and the rights of our people to engage in struggle without that struggle being branded a criminal endeavour. They were our brothers, comrades and friends. We all miss them.

The oldest hunger striker to die was Joe Mc Donnell, at thirty. We thought that was old. Tom McElwee was a mere 23, and he had already been in prison five years. The average age of the men to die was about 26. All ordinary lads, city boys, country

*The average age of the men to die was about 26. All ordinary lads, city boys, country boys, married, single, poets, messers, jokers, thinkers, unbreakable and convinced of the right of their cause*

boys, married, single, poets, messers, jokers, thinkers, unbreakable and convinced of the right of their cause. No different, I might add, than the rest of our still-young movement. The men and women who fought the fight in the Blocks and Armagh, and who fought the fight on our behalf on the streets, in vigils, protests, marches and elections across the 32 counties, were no different from the generation who came behind. We had an indentifiable cause and we rose to it.

So too can you. □ *Spark*

young people, but not us. We had nothing, tada, zilch. No radios, papers, reading material, no exercise, no tv, no sport; we had no fashion to compete with or keep up with, we had no music to listen to except the occasional blast from one of the orderlies' radios. Occasionally news would filter in about life moving on. In 1976 most people still had B&W TVs. It was the age before CDs, before home micro-waves, computers, faxes, video-rentals. And while slowly but surely these were coming into lives outside, our life remained a constant of shit on the walls, of the smell of putrifying food in the corner, of the smell of piss and the noise of gates, scuffles, cleaning machines and comrades learning Irish. It was an unusual growing curve.

In 1979 and again in 1980 there was much talk of Hunger Strikes. In October 1980 seven POWs embarked on a strike, being joined later by three women com-

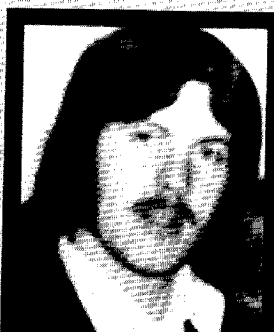
rades from Armagh Jail and eventually by thirty-odd others from the Blocks. By now we were being held in H3, H4, and H5 with around 350 POWs on protest. With the ending of that strike and the duplicity of the British which followed, another strike was inevitable. I remember thinking hopeless thoughts at the time, thinking that a second hunger strike could not win, but when it was called the whole motivation then became one of trying to find enough support in Ireland and worldwide to save the hunger strikers' lives.

We wrote letters. Countless thousands of letters. Identical in content - as the strike continued only the names changed. The central message was that the lives of Bobby, Frank, Raymond, Patsy, Joe, Martin, Kevin, Kieran, Tom and Mickey could be saved. But they were more than just names. They were the friends and comrades we had spent time on remand



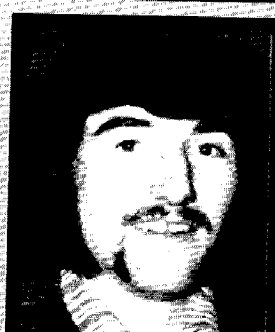
**Martin Hurson**

AGED (24) FROM EAST TYRONE  
STARTED HUNGER STRIKE  
29 MAY 1981  
DIED 13 JULY  
AFTER 46 DAYS



**Kieran Doherty**

AGED (25) FROM NORTH DERRY  
STARTED HUNGER STRIKE  
23 MAY 1981  
DIED 1 AUGUST  
AFTER 71 DAYS



**Kevin Lynch**

AGED (25) FROM BELFAST  
STARTED HUNGER STRIKE  
22 MAY 1981  
DIED 2 AUGUST  
AFTER 73 DAYS



**Thomas McElwee**

AGED (25) FROM SOUTH DERRY  
STARTED HUNGER STRIKE  
8 JUNE 1981  
DIED 8 AUGUST  
AFTER 62 DAYS



**Micky Devine**

AGED (27) FROM DERRY CITY  
STARTED HUNGER STRIKE  
22 JUNE 1981  
DIED 20 AUGUST  
AFTER 60 DAYS

BY ROBBIE  
MacGABHANN

**G**OT THE JOB, saved the money, bought the car and then find you aren't able to go anywhere because the costs of insuring your little recreational vehicle are so steep you cannot actually afford to take it onto the open road? Well join the club. You are probably a young Irish male under the age of 25.

So who is to blame for high insurance costs? The answer is a variety of factors, of which age and gender are the last entrants onto a crowded list. Increased personal injury claims, high car prices, badly built and maintained roads, long delays for driving tests, a watered down National Car Test in the 26 Counties, lack of effective policing and of course don't forget the profiteering insurance companies. These are all contributing factors to the high costs of insurance today in the 26 Counties.

In the light of these problems, high insurance costs may sound inevitable, until you consider insurance studies carried out last year.

An AA survey, conducted last June, gave a good example of the huge disparities in insurance premiums currently being levied. Quinn Direct was charging £744 to insure a 28-year-old male for a year. A 28-year-old woman driving the same 1999 Fiat Punto was quoted an annual premium of £420.

This might seem to make sense until you realise that another insurance company PMPA were charging both male and female drivers £332 for an annual premium.

So this leaves the young male driver thinking that maybe the seemingly rational reasoning for imposing such high premiums on him is not so logical after all.

In February of this year, 20-year-old David Green lodged a complaint with the Director of Equality Investigations. The complaint, which is the first made of its kind, is because Green is being charged £4,072.61 for

# BABY YOU CAN DRIVE MY CAR



**ON YER BIKE...** car insurance costs make driving a virtual impossibility for young people

insuring himself to drive. The £4,072 is over 8 times the average premium for the type of car driven by Green. In some sense David was lucky to get a quote, as many insurers will not even take on younger drivers as customers.

Yes, insurers can justly claim that younger drivers are more likely to be involved in accidents. But there is also governmental responsibility.

First off is the amount of drivers holding provisional licences without taking a test. Of the 1.7 million drivers on the road in the 26 Counties last year there were 380,000 people registered as provisional licence holders, but only 92,000 were on waiting lists to take the driving tests. This is clearly not the fault of young drivers.

Next is the quality of the road network. Ireland, North and South, has an extensive road network. Unfortunately it is a network of badly built and, in some rural areas, badly maintained roads. Huge funding is being made available to build motorways with not enough emphasis being put on improved safety measures for the existing road network.

There are obviously serious questions that need to be asked about the safety strategy of the government. One of the less obvious ones is why was there only a plan for a 20% reduction in road deaths.

In Sweden the government is committed to "Vision Zero", that is to have no deaths from road crashes as both a moral principle and a public health goal. Why does the Dublin Government not have a more ambitious target.

Why, for example, were the criteria for the National Road Test watered down when tough test criteria have been proven to lead directly to a reduction in road fatalities in Sweden?

Why is there no written test for learner drivers? Why are driving lessons not mandatory for learner drivers in Ireland? Why is car safety not part of the secondary school curriculum?

Why are young drivers blamed as the sole contributors to accidents when so many other factors beyond their control are also contributory factors for high road deaths?

The easy solution is to just increase insurance premiums. The just solution would be for all the parties involved to commit themselves to a vision zero for Ireland. □ Spark

**SOME** incorrigible optimists have suggested that only a right-wing extremist of the notoriety of Likud leader Ariel Sharon will have the credentials to broker any sort of lasting settlement with the Palestinians. Maybe so. History is not devoid of such examples. But Sharon?

Sharon's history offers a monochromatic record of moral corruption, with a documented record of war crimes going back to the early 1950s. He was born in 1928 and as a young man joined the Haganah, the underground military organization of Israel in its pre-state days. In 1953 he was given command of Unit 101, whose mission is often described as that of retaliation against Arab attacks on Jewish villages. →

# Return of the Terrorist:

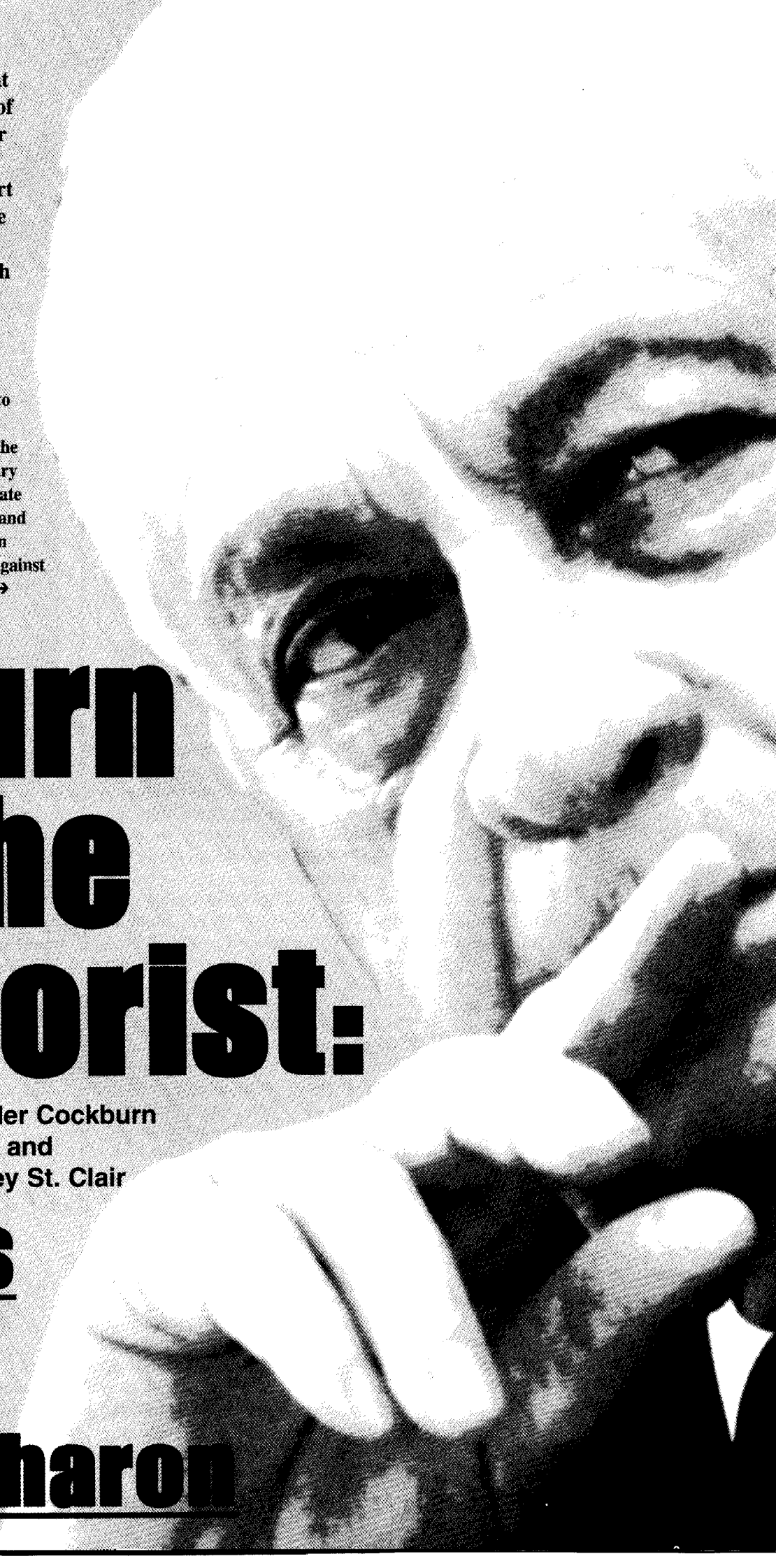
**The**

Alexander Cockburn  
and  
Jeffrey St. Clair

**Crimes**

**of**

**Ariel Sharon**



→ In fact, as can be seen from two terrible onslaughts, one of them very well known, Unit 101's purpose was that of instilling terror by the infliction of discriminate, murderous violence not only on able bodied fighters but on the young, the old, the helpless.

Sharon's first documented sortie in this role was in August of 1953 on the refugee camp of El-Bureig, south of Gaza. An Israeli history of the 101 unit records 50 refugees as having been killed; other sources allege 15 or 20. Major-General Vagn Bennike, the UN commander, reported that "bombs were thrown" by Sharon's men "through the windows of huts in which the refugees were sleeping and, as they fled, they were attacked by small arms and automatic weapons".

In October of 1953 came the attack by Sharon's unit 101 on the Jordanian village of Qibya, whose "stain" Israel's foreign minister at the time, Moshe Sharett, confided to his diary "would stick to us and not be washed away for many years". He was wrong.

Qibya and Sharon's role are scarcely evoked in the West today, least of all by journalists such as Deborah Sontag of the New York Times who recently wrote a white-wash of Sharon, describing him as "feisty", or the Washington Post's man in Jerusalem who fondly invoked him after his fateful excursion to the Holy Places in Jerusalem as "the portly old warrior".



Israeli historian, Avi Shlaim, describes the massacre thus:

*"Sharon's order was to penetrate Qibya, blow up houses and inflict heavy casualties on its inhabitants. His success in carrying out the order surpassed all expectations. The full and macabre story of what happened at Qibya was revealed only during the morning after the attack. The village had been reduced to rubble: forty-five houses had been blown up, and sixty-nine civilians, two thirds of them women and children, had been killed. Sharon and his men claimed that they believed that all the inhabitants had run away and that they had no idea that anyone was hiding inside the houses."*

The UN observer on the scene reached a different conclusion: "One story was repeated

time after time: the bullet splintered door, the body sprawled across the threshold, indicating that the

inhabitants had been forced by heavy fire to stay inside until their homes were blown up over them." The slaughter in Qibya was described contemporaneously in a letter to the president of the United Nations Security Council dated 16 October 1953 from the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Jordan to the United States. On 14 October 1953 at 9:30 at night, he wrote, Israeli troops launched a battalion-scale attack on the village of Qibya in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (at the time the West Bank was annexed to Jordan).

According to the diplomat's account, Israeli forces had entered the village and systematically murdered all occupants of houses, using automatic weapons, grenades and incendiaries. On 14 October, the bodies of 42 Arab civilians had been recovered; several more bodies were still under the wreckage. Forty houses, the village school and a reservoir had been destroyed. Quantities of unused explosives, bearing Israeli army markings in Hebrew, had been found in the village. At about 3 a.m., to cover their withdrawal, Israeli support troops had begun shelling the neighbouring villages of Budrus and Shuqba from positions in Israel.

And what of Sharon's conduct when he was head of the Southern Command of Israel's Defense Forces in the early 1970s? The Gaza "clearances" were vividly described by Phil Reeves in a piece in The London Independent on January 21 of this year.

"Thirty years have elapsed since Ariel Sharon, favourite to win Israel's forthcoming election, was the head of the Israel Defence Forces' southern command, charged with the task of 'pacifying' the recalcitrant Gaza Strip after the 1967 war. But the old men still remember it well. Especially the old men on Wreckage Street. Until late 1970, Wreckage, or Had'd, Street wasn't a street, just one of scores of narrow, nameless alleys weaving through Gaza City's Beach Camp, a shantytown cluttered with low, two-roomed houses, built with UN aid for refugees from the 1948 war who then, as now, were waiting for the international community to settle their future. The street acquired its name after an unusually prolonged visit from Mr Sharon's soldiers.

Their orders were to bulldoze hundreds of homes to carve a wide, straight street. This would allow Israeli troops and their heavy armored vehicles to move easily through the camp, to exert control and hunt down men from the Palestinian Liberation Army.

"They came at night and began marking the houses they wanted to demolish with red paint," said Ibrahim Ghanim, 70, a retired labourer. "In the morning they came back, and ordered everyone to leave. I remember

**It can be strongly argued that Sharon represents the long-term policy of all Israeli governments without any obscuring fluff or verbal embroidery**

all the soldiers shouting at people, Yalla, yalla, yalla! They threw everyone's belongings into the street. Then Sharon brought in bulldozers and started flattening the street. He did the whole lot, almost in one day. And the soldiers would beat people, can you imagine? Soldiers with guns, beating little kids! By the time the Israeli army's work was done, hundreds of homes were destroyed, not only on Wreckage Street but throughout the camp, as Sharon ploughed out a grid of wide security roads. Many of the refugees took shelter in schools, or squeezed into the already badly over-crowded homes of relatives. Other families, usually those with a Palestinian political activist, were loaded into trucks and taken to exile in a town in the heart of the Sinai Desert, then controlled by Israel."



As Reeves reported, the devastation of Beach Camp was far from the exception. "In August 1971 alone, troops under Mr Sharon's command destroyed some 2,000 homes in the Gaza Strip, uprooting 16,000 people for the



second time in their lives. Hundreds of young Palestinian men were arrested and deported to Jordan and Lebanon. Six hundred relatives of suspected guerrillas were exiled to Sinai. In the second half of 1971, 104 guerrillas were assassinated. 'The policy at that time was not to arrest suspects, but to assassinate them', said Raji Sourani, director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza City".

In 1981 Sharon, then minister of defense, paid a visit to Israel's good friend, President Mobutu of Zaire. Lunching on Mobutu's yacht the Israeli party was asked by their host to use their good offices to get the US Congress to be more forthcoming with aid. This the Israelis managed to accomplish. As a quid pro quo, Mobutu reestablished diplomatic relations with Israel.

As defense minister in Menachem Begin's second government, Sharon was the commander who led the full dress 1982 assault on Lebanon, with the express design of destroying the PLO, driving as many Palestinians as possible to Jordan and making Lebanon a client state of Israel. It was a war plan that cost untold suffering, around 20,000 Palestinian and Lebanese lives, and also the deaths of over one thousand Israeli soldiers. The Israelis bombed civilian populations at will. Sharon also oversaw the infamous massacres at Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. The Lebanese government counted 762 bodies recovered and a further 1,200 buried privately by relatives. However, the Middle East may have been spared worse, thanks to

Menachem Begin. Just as the '82 war was getting under way, Sharon approached Begin, then Prime Minister, and suggested that Begin cede control over Israel's nuclear trigger to him. Begin had just enough sense to refuse.

The slaughter in the two contiguous camps at Sabra and Shatilla took place from 6:00 at night on 16 September, 1982 until 8:00 in the morning on 18 September, 1982, in an area under the control of the Israel Defense Forces. The perpetrators were members of the Phalange militia, the Lebanese force that was armed by and closely allied with Israel since the onset of Lebanon's civil war in 1975. The victims during the 62-hour rampage included infants, children, women (including pregnant women), and the elderly, some of whom were mutilated or disemboweled before or after they were killed.

An official Israeli commission of inquiry - chaired by Yitzhak Kahan, president of Israel's Supreme Court - investigated the massacre, and in February 1983 publicly released its findings (without Appendix B, which remains secret until now).

Amid desperate attempts to cover up the evidence of direct knowledge of what was going on by Israeli military personnel, the Kahan Commission found itself compelled to find that Ariel Sharon, among other Israelis, had responsibility for the massacre. The commission's report stated: "It is our view that responsibility is to be imputed to the Minister of Defense for having disregarded the danger of acts of vengeance and bloodshed by the Phalangists against the population of the refugee camps, and having failed [i.e. "eagerly taken this into consideration"] to take this danger into account when he decided to have the Phalangists enter the camps. In addition, responsibility is to be imputed to the Minister of Defense for not ordering appropriate measures for preventing or reducing the danger of massacre as a condition for the Phalangists' entry into the camps. These blunders constitute the non-fulfillment of a duty with which the Defense Minister was charged".

Sharon refused to resign. Finally, on 14 February, 1983, he was relieved of his duties as defense minister, though he remained in the cabinet as minister without portfolio.

Sharon's career was in eclipse, but he continued to burnish his credentials as a Likud ultra. Sharon has always been against any sort of peace deal, unless on terms entirely impossible for Palestinians to accept. As Nehemia Strasler outlined in Ha'aretz on 18 January of this year, in 1979, as a member of Begin's cabinet, he voted against a peace treaty with Egypt. In 1985 he voted against the withdrawal of Israeli troops to the so-called security zone in Southern Lebanon. In 1991 he opposed Israel's participation in the Madrid peace conference. In 1993 he voted No in the Knesset on the Oslo agreement.

The following year he abstained in the Knesset on a vote over a peace treaty with Jordan. He voted against the Hebron agreement in 1997 and objected to the way in which the withdrawal from southern Lebanon was conducted.

As Begin's minister of agriculture in the late 1970s he established many of the West Bank settlements that are now a major obstruction to any peace deal. His present position? Not another square inch of land for Palestinians on the West Bank. He will agree to a Palestinian state on the existing areas presently under either total or partial Palestinian control, amounting to merely 42 per cent of the West Bank. Israel will retain control of the highways across the West Bank and the water sources. All settlements will stay in place with access by the IDF to them. Jerusalem will remain under Israeli sovereignty and he plans to continue building around the city. The Golan heights would remain under Israel's control.



It can be strongly argued that Sharon represents the long-term policy of all Israeli governments, without any obscuring fluff or verbal embroidery. For example: Ben-Gurion approved the terror missions of Unit 101. Every Israeli government has condoned settlements and building around Jerusalem. It was Labor's Ehud Barak who okayed the military escort for Sharon on his provocative sortie that sparked the second Intifada and Barak who has overseen the lethal military repression of recent months. But that doesn't diminish Sharon's sinister shadow across the past half century. That shadow is better evoked by Palestinians and Lebanese grieving for the dead, the maimed, the displaced, or by a young Israeli woman, Ilil Komey, 16, who confronted Sharon recently when he visited her agricultural high school outside Beersheva. "I think you sent my father into Lebanon", Ilil said.

"Ariel Sharon, I accuse you of having made me suffer for 16 some odd years. I accuse you of having made my father suffer for over 16 years. I accuse you of a lot of things that made a lot of people suffer in this country. I don't think that you can now be elected as prime minister".

Ilil was wrong. He's there. And now the bloodbath will begin.  Spark

# A view of the PEACE PROCESS

## Confusions of the GFA

There is huge confusion around the Peace Process. Some people see the Good Friday Agreement as similar to the Treaty, back in 1921 and they ask is that what we settled up for? Was it for this that so many died?

The answer is, no. Of course it's not. The GFA is not the end of a road. It is more like a beginning. It's an opportunity to build political strength: for the people, all across the 32 counties to make the objectives of the conflict of the last 30 years a reality.

Does building political strength mean electoral strength?

No, again. Electoral strength is only one measure, or reflection of how far you have got in building political strength and support.

Support for what?

Republican Objectives.

Building support for the objectives of Republicanism.

And what are they?

What they always were.

Back in 1798, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or in the language of the Sinn Féin constitution, a 32-county democratic socialist republic, or in everyday language, equality and democracy. Just that.

You can no more have democracy without equality, than you can have equality without democracy. They are two sides of the same coin. 'Democracy' means power lies with all of the people. Not some of the people, still less some people who live in another

country and have conquered, suppressed your people, and imposed a system of government which enshrines the 'rights' of the 'propertied classes' over the rights of those without property, as James Connolly put it a century ago.

How does the GFA bring us anyway forward towards this objective?

In many ways. Here's an example.

## Working the Equality Agenda

Central to the Good Friday Agreement is the equality agenda. This equality agenda, enshrined in law, enables nationalists, all over the 6 counties, to contest the discrimination, the inequality of the status quo in the 6 county statelet, which British Imperialism has established.

This is important in the context of the risen people. The people, who after 30 years of armed struggle will not lie down and submit again to that inequality, or assume the role designed for them of the second class citizens. This means the dismantling of that state which was there to stop equality, to stop democracy.

Political struggle is after all about changing the quality of people's lives. The equality agenda provides the framework for people to take what the British establishment would not give, and what the armed force of that establishment was there to 'defend', through 'judicial' murder.

Because that is what the



## POWER

**However curtailed and limited this is, Martin McGuinness, rumoured by the gutter press as an ex-IRA leader, IS the Minister of Education. That is a hard pill, for those who believe the gutter press, to swallow**

British Army's shoot to kill, or counter-insurgency strategies of Shankill Butchers, assassinations, of the so-called pipe bombs are - judicial murder. Murder protected by the State - the RUC.

The GFA doesn't itself make the state accountable, but it provides the opportunity for the people to do so. The GFA does not enshrine human rights, but it opens the possibility to fight for a state that respects human rights, the equality of people before the law.

## North and South

And the GFA offers just the

same opportunities in the 26 counties. The opportunity to fight for the human rights that the 26-county statelet has denied to people, in this travesty of the Republic that men and women fought for back in 1916.

Here is the two-tier, apartheid health system, the state institutionalised discrimination against travellers, against refugees, against the homeless, against young people who have no equal access to education. This squalid statelet, riddled with corruption in power, has progressively identified value with materialism and consumerism; has robbed the dreams of life in the rat race to



get everyone to work to pay the mortgage.

The GFA opens the door to people in the 26 Counties too, to take up the fight for an equality agenda — because it requires the Free State government too to draw up its Bill of Rights and establish an Equality Commission.

Those who negotiated the Good Friday Agreement were foresighted indeed.

### Two Stormont Ministers

Did anyone think that these 30 years of conflict were in order to win two ministers in Stormont? What could they achieve? England still rules a part of Ireland. British Imperialism is not yet confined to the dustbin of history. Two ministers at Stormont don't mean very much in terms of changing our unequal discriminatory society. But...

The GFA offers the opportunity for republicans to have (a little) power. However curtailed and limited this is, Martin McGuinness, rumoured by the gutter press as an ex-IRA leader, IS the Minister of Education. That is a hard pill, for those who believe the gutter press, to swallow. But this 'power' is not judged by what Minister McGuinness can implement in order to bring about, top down, a 32-county democratic Republic.

### Taking power to use Power

Take a real example. The 11+. Everyone knows that Sinn Féin wants the 11+ abolished. Why didn't the Minister of Education do that, at least, right away?

This question misunderstands the political impact of the peace process and the very nature of what the GFA offers republicans. Martin McGuinness didn't end the 11+, or declare it ended. He set about a process of consultation, of discussion amongst the widest sections of the community, parents, teachers, students and academics. Everyone, throughout the 6 counties is invited to address, to discuss the issue. What are they discussing? Equality. This is using 'power' to build political strength for the Republican objective - equality.

Equality cannot be given, top down, it has to be taken by the people who are increasingly empowered to do so. That is building political strength. That is advancement towards the republican objectives of equality and democracy. Who after all can stand against the risen people? This is the stuff of revolution. It was always about, simply, peoples' lives.

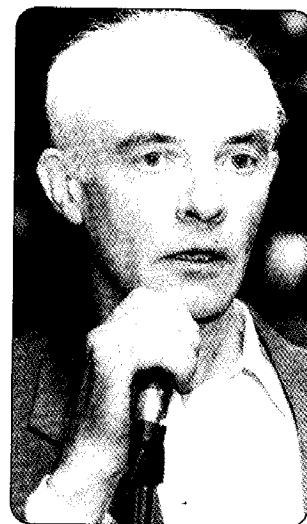
### Stage of Struggle

This is why Republicans talk of the Peace Process as a stage of struggle. The GFA was not "the solution" of the conflict.

The GFA opened up a front, or set of fronts for struggle to advance that agenda.

The republican agenda is about empowering the people to implement human rights and the equality agenda. A political party cannot do this from the top down, but it can use those positions to strengthen the irrefragable demand for that revolutionary outcome.

As republicans walked back in triumph after Gerry Adams' election, they sung the song, "So Strong...So Strong". "We'll do it anyway." It was a small step to revolution: to equality and democracy.  Spark



"Don't be afraid of the phase we are in. This phase will either be successful, or it will be over. The Good Friday Agreement will either stand or fall...The revolution can never be over until we have our country, until we have British imperialism where it belongs - in the dustbin of history."

— Brian Keenan, republican former POW

## REVOLUTION



**DOES ANYONE REALLY THINK THE REVOLUTIONARIES ARE GONE AWAY?**

# What are they at up there in Stormont?

**NIAMH RUSSELL** takes us through the issues that Sinn Féin have been active on recently in the Six-County Assembly.

**10 JANUARY**

The Sinn Féin Vice-President, Pat Doherty and chairperson of the Six-County Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee, welcomed the announcement by 26-County minister Mary O'Rourke of plans to create a single all-Ireland energy market. Doherty said that this is an excellent opportunity for the people of Ireland, with the development of an interconnected gas line and renewable energy.



Also on 10 January, the Six-County Minister for Education, Martin McGuinness, announced plans to end the publication of the School Performance Tables

after speaking with educational organisations, teachers unions, teachers, schools and parents. The tables, which have been published since 1993, have been subject to continued criticism, especially from some schools and teachers unions. Reaching his decision, McGuinness took into account the 1036 responses from parents, teachers, the board of governors and the views put to him at a meeting with the Six-County Education Committee. The options to replace the tables were; to retain publishing the tables; individual schools provide information to parents. The Minister decided to introduce Option 2 with immediate effect and therefore the School Performance Tables will not be published this year.

**24 JANUARY**

Bairbre de Brún met with Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Sinn Féin TD for Cavan/Monaghan and members of the North Eastern Health Broad to discuss cross border health care. She said that: *"increased co-operation has the potential to improve the overall level of healthcare of all people throughout the island"*.



**31 JANUARY**

Announcement of a new programme by Bairbre de Brún, following the publication of a document last November, Investing for Health. The aims of Investing for Health are to improve the health of the population by strengthening the sources of good health and combating health inequalities. The programmes begin with an evening for young people in Armagh to help them talk about important health issues including smoking, drugs, alcohol, local health services, youths rights and sexual health.

**13 FEBRUARY**



Bairbre de Brún released a statement on the retention of human organs. She announced a package of steps to investigate past practices, help the families affected and ensure a firmly built principle of consent for the future.

A total of 376 children's organs were reported to be retained and another investigation revealed that even adult organs were being retained. The establishment of an inquiry will review past and current methods.



**24 JANUARY**

Minister Martin McGuinness officially opened Naíscoil na Gaslainne, a new Irish-medium playgroup in Derry. Naíscoil na Gaslainne is a voluntary playgroup that was allocated 10 funded places under the Assembly's Pre-school Education Expansion Programme from September 2000, by the Western Education and Library Board Pre-school Education Advisory Group. The Pre-school Education Expansion Programme is creating 9,000 new pre-school places over a four year period.

**19 FEBRUARY**

Sinn Féin Equality Spokesperson, Conor Murphy, Newry & Armagh, welcomed back the protection of rights for Asylum Seekers. Mr Murphy said that *"the detention of Asylum Seekers in prison, along with convicted criminals, for up to 11 months without charge or trial is nothing less than internment."*



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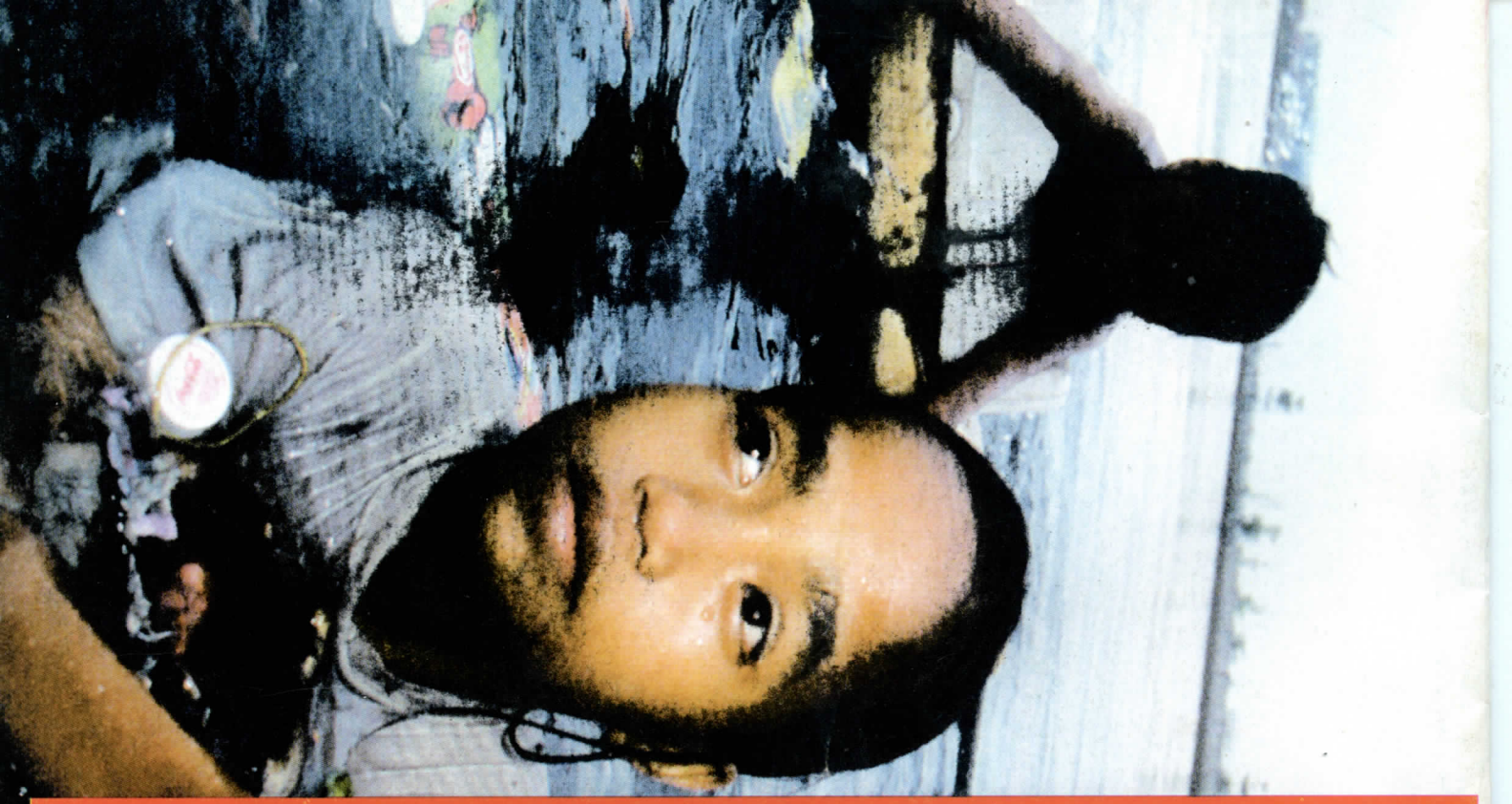
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*Viva la Revolution*

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