Irish Freedom

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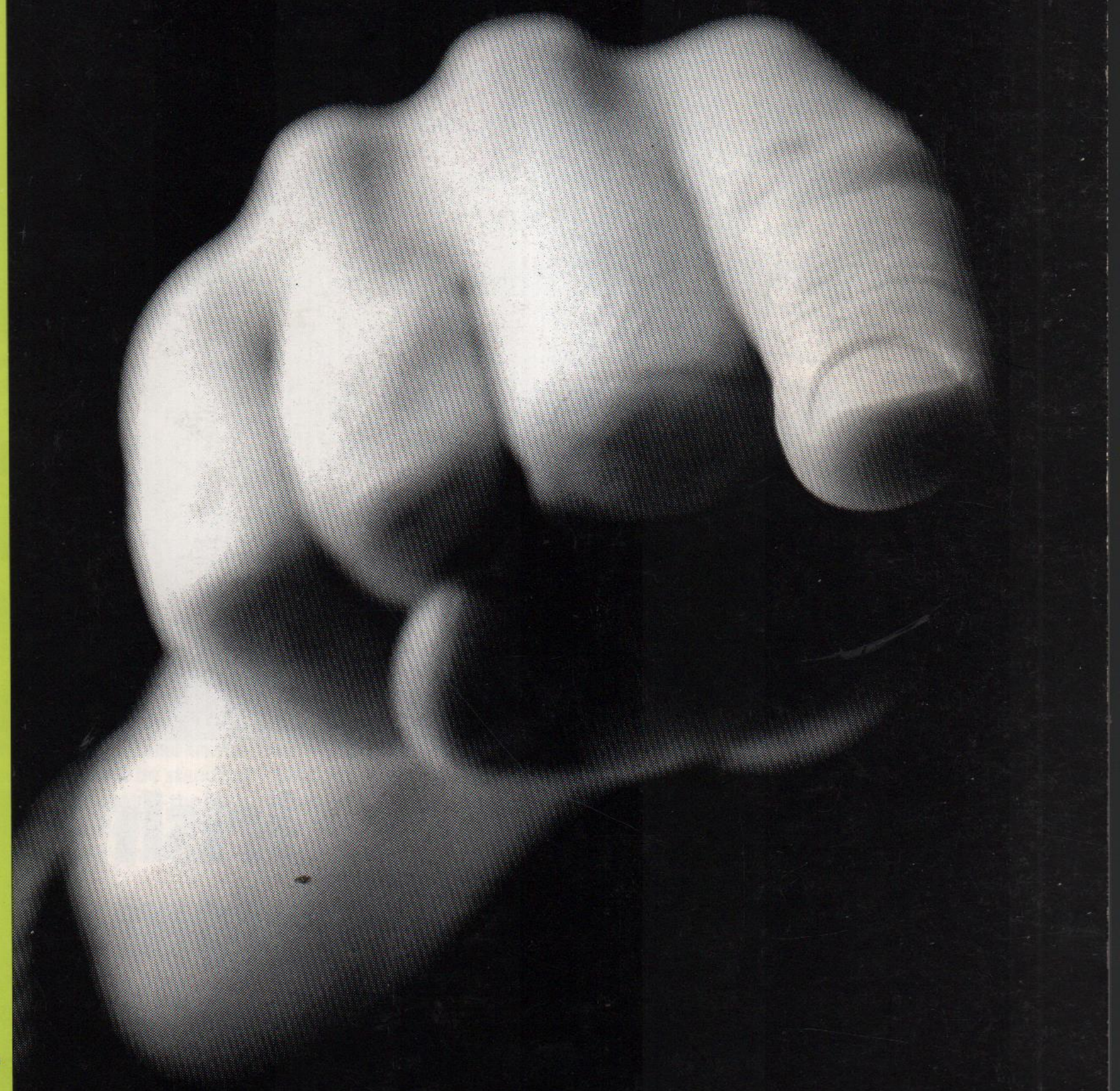
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Ireland

BREAK THE SILENCE



FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

- The Irish War and the British election
- Sinn Fein interview
- The abortion controversy

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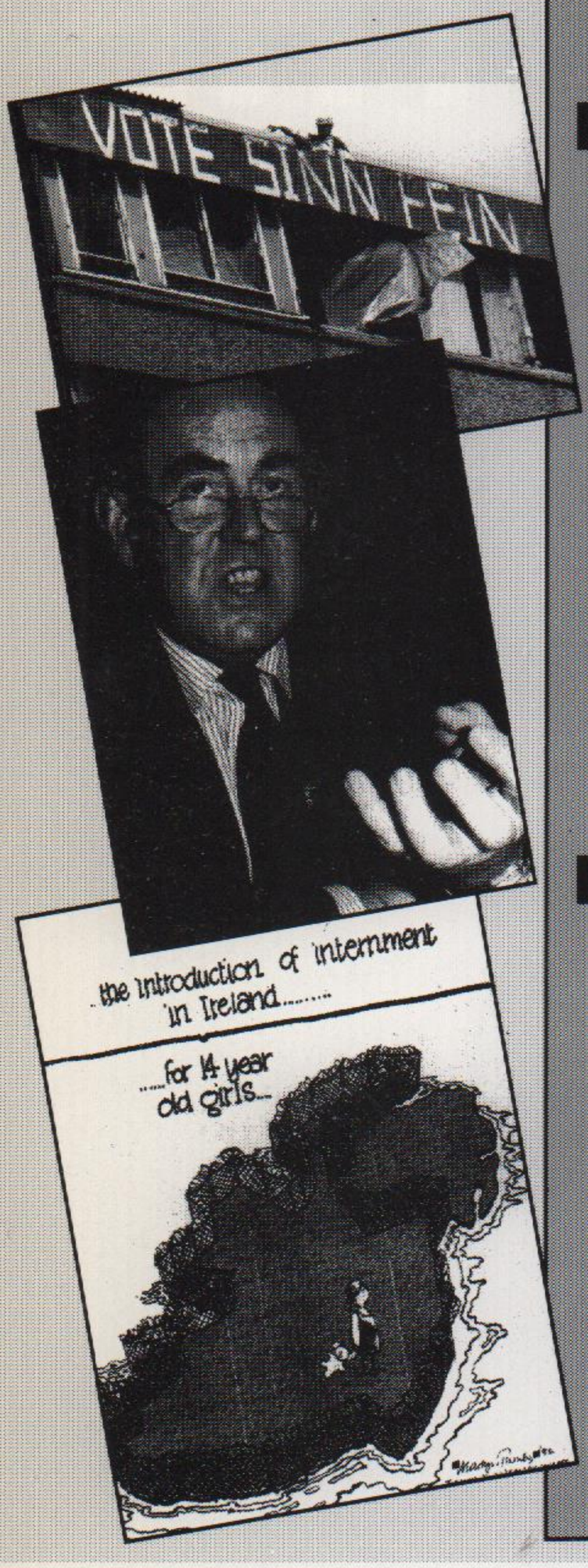
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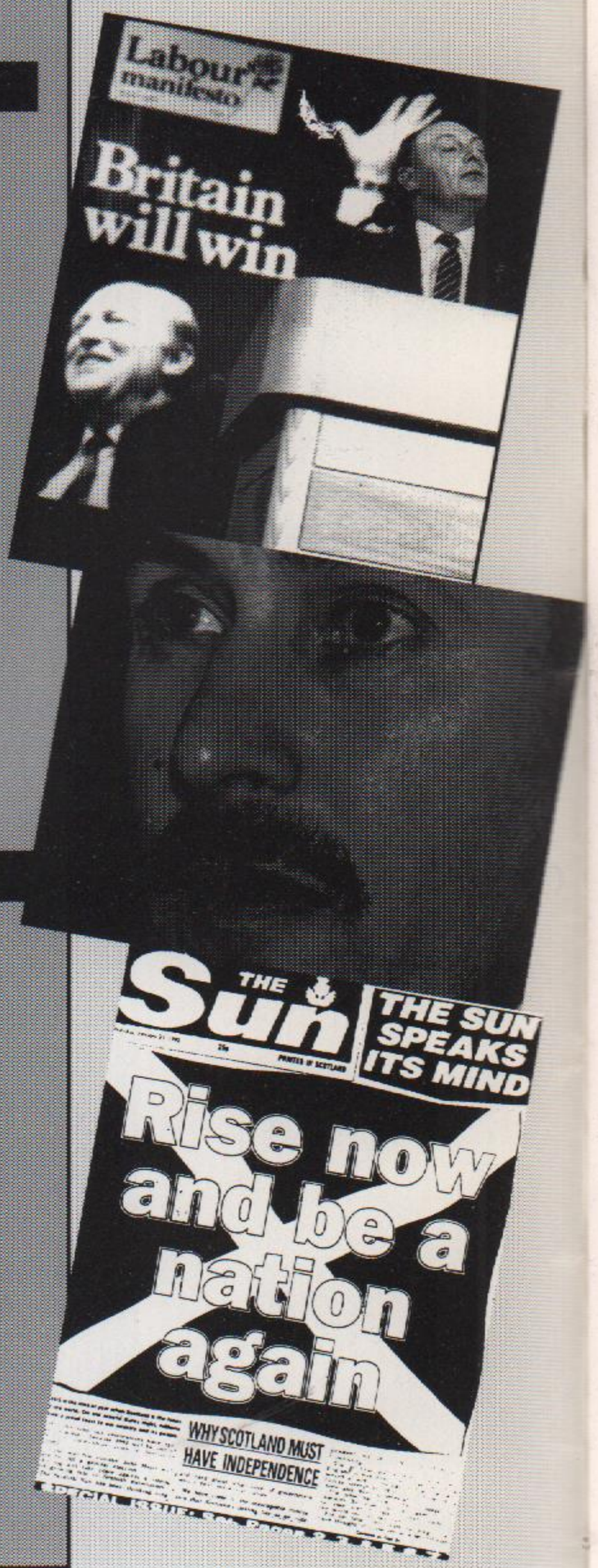
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EDITORIAL



BREAKING THE SILENCE ON BRITAIN'S LONGEST WAR

On 10 April John Major may well discover that he and Norma have to move out of Downing Street. Whoever wins, most people know that nothing much in society is going to change as a result of the general election. Today there is no ideological difference between the Westminster parties and a consensus exists on almost every issue. This consensus is nothing new when it comes to the war in Ireland. And it is a consensus which means they won't even talk about it during the election campaign.

Labour sent the Army into the Six Counties in 1969, introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974, and developed the policy of 'criminalising' republican prisoners of war in the mid-seventies. They have not had much practice at repression since 1979, but they have competed with the Tories to demonstrate their anti-republican credentials.

■

The Irish Freedom Movement (IFM) aims to challenge the consensus that Britain is keeping the peace. In the general election we will be standing up for Irish freedom against the man who has come to epitomise Britain's 'peace-keeping' role in Ireland—Peter Brooke.

As well as being Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke holds the Tory seat for the well-known working class constituency of City of London and Westminster South. Among the residents of the constituency are the Queen, her mother, the prime minister and the residents of the Chelsea barracks!

Peter Brooke, in his role as Northern Ireland secretary, represents the views of all the main parties. British policy in Ireland has never been a matter for party political debate. In the three weeks leading up to the election, the IFM will make sure that Brooke cannot forget the fact that, even though 60 per cent of the voters in his constituency support him, thousands of nationalists in the Six Counties have been prepared to risk their lives to rid themselves of British rule.

■

It is blatantly obvious to most people that the general election has very little to do with 'democracy'. In fact, the posturing and lies of politicians have made many people give up on the electoral process and even the idea of change. The strongest expression of the desire for change today can be seen in nationalist areas like Derry and West Belfast. There, 'great' British institutions like parliament and the legal system, have always been seen for what they are: the acceptable face of a repressive state. Nationalists' struggle to get the troops off their streets is in essence a struggle for democratic rights.

The state of 'Ulster' was established by Britain on the basis of denying Catholics the basic rights that were allowed to British people. In 1969, the demands of the civil rights movement in the Six Counties were not considered revolutionary—they simply asked for the right to vote, to housing and to jobs. And yet those demands challenged the existence of the British state in Ireland. Twenty-three years on little has changed in terms of the discrimination that Catholics face and the daily harassment by the Army and RUC.

■

The climate of debate in the Six Counties is of necessity politicised because of people's everyday experience. The way people vote in the election will not be decided by tax cuts or the national curriculum, but on the candidates stance towards the British occupation. The debates going on between the Westminster parties are of supreme irrelevance to nationalists in the Six Counties, just as they are to most ordinary British people. The Irish Freedom Movement is standing against Peter Brooke to break the silence on Ireland in the general election and use the opportunity to expose every myth that he has helped to promote about the war.

We are planning a high-profile campaign of publicity stunts and controversial debates designed to show that there are people in Britain, as well as in Ireland, who are prepared to stand up to the British state. The united front that politicians present when it comes to Ireland shows their determination to preserve the status quo. It is vital for British people who want to see change to take sides with the nationalists of Northern Ireland against the British state.

■

If you live in the constituency of Westminster South, vote for the Irish Freedom Movement. But if you're not a neighbour of John Major, or the Queen, don't worry, the Irish Freedom Movement's campaign will be coming to a high street near you soon.

If you want to get involved with the campaign get in touch with us at the address below.

Irish Freedom is edited by Fiona Foster, Kevin Kelly and Vicky Rowan. It is written by supporters of the Irish Freedom Movement and is open to anyone interested in advancing solidarity work in Britain. If you would like to help, write to *Irish Freedom*, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX. ■

THE ELECTION

The loyal opposition



PHOTO: PANDORA ANDERSON

Alex Farrell is challenging Northern Ireland secretary Peter Brooke for his Westminster South seat in the elections, calling for a vote against the British presence in Ireland. Below he explains why a vote for Labour is a vote against Irish freedom

Every five years or so, we are given one vote in a general election. Our inalienable right to pick who'll play the frontman for the British establishment and organise the next five years of oppression and exploitation. That happy time is here again.

Tradition has it that the Irish vote goes to Labour. The fledgling Labour Party Irish Society tells us—with some desperation in its voice—that the Irish vote holds the balance in 67 key marginal seats. So should we be campaigning for a Labour victory? Is a Labour vote the lesser evil for supporters of Irish freedom?

For a united Ireland?

Labour's commitment to a united Ireland is about as plausible as the Tories commitment to a 'classless society'. Labour's formula is the oh-so-familiar 'reunification by consent'. Translated into English, this means that having supported the creation of a permanent pro-British majority by force of arms through partition, Labour now asks us to accept the so-called democratic wishes of that artificially created majority over and above the wishes of the majority of people in the island of Ireland.

But that's not even the worst of it. In truth, even if for some obscure reason the majority in the North did choose to give up its privileged position and live in a united Ireland, a Labour government would never break up the 'United Kingdom'.

In 1949, the Attlee government

constitutionally guaranteed the integration of the Six Counties into the British state through its Government of Ireland Act. The cabinet minutes of the debate around the act confirm this; 'it seems unlikely that Great Britain would ever be able to agree to this, even if the people of Northern Ireland desired it'. Labour governments have never shown anything short of a total commitment to defending the integrity of the British state.

The Labour Party of today is even more cringingly patriotic than its predecessors.

Behind the rhetoric

The framework of Labour's Irish policy is three-pronged. In the long term lies unity but only with the consent of the pro-British majority. In the medium term there is the political process and Labour have committed themselves to continuing where Mr Brooke left off. But in the here and now the priority is using all the measures necessary to deal with the 'security problem'. Each element of this strategy is regarded as dependent on the success of the one before.

The 'security problem' is the armed struggle of the IRA and the support it enjoys among a substantial section of the nationalist working class. Labour's policy is to smash the IRA—as its record proves. 'There will be no deviation from a very strict anti-terrorist policy by a Labour government', promised Neil Kinnock on his visit to the Six Counties in December 1991. The defeat of Irish resistance is the precondition for Labour's 'political solution'—the peace of slavery and the grave.

Where then is Labour's approach distinct from that of the Tories? Nowhere. The proof of the pudding lies in Labour's support for the Anglo-Irish deal and the Brooke talks. The function of the Anglo-Irish deal was and is to stem the rise of Sinn Fein, isolate the republican movement and promote the pro-British constitutional nationalists of the SDLP. Not one of the paltry reforms promised in 1985 has materialised. What has materialised is increased cross-border security collaboration, extradition, the assassination of republican activists, and a sectarian murder campaign against any available Catholic. This is the real Anglo-Irish deal that Labour is committed to retaining.

Petty party rivalry in the Westminster play-pen dissolves in the interests of British patriotism. When the amateur folk-singer and direct-ruler Peter Brooke offered his resignation to a tearful House of Commons after his *Late Late Show* performance, politicians of every stripe queued up to beg him to stay. Labour's shadow secretary of state, Kevin McNamara, spoke of Brooke's 'characteristically honest and courageous statement', and Labour 'left winger' Frank Cook praised Brooke as 'one of the few ministers I have respect for'. Pass the sick-bag, why don't you?

Check the sell-by date

The cynical among us are battle-hardened to the wholesale dumping of election pledges by incoming governments. Labour's promise to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) didn't even survive until election day. A shadow cabinet meeting on 19 February changed Labour's position from repeal of the PTA to its reform, just in time for the PTA renewal debate on 24 February.

Under the current provisions of the PTA, police can hold suspects for 48 hours, after which they must apply to the secretary of state for permission to hang on to their victim for a further five days. Under Labour's new, fairer PTA, the police would have to get the OK from a judge! Well, that's put all our minds at rest. As Gerry Conlon said of the British judiciary's evenhandedness outside the Old Bailey: 'If you're Irish, you're guilty.'

Labour's proposed reform of the Diplock court system in the Six Counties is to replace the single Loyalist judge with three Loyalist judges. Would McNamara reinstate jury trials? No, not until it was 'practicable', that is, not until the 'security problem' was solved.

Asked by the *Irish Post* whether or not Labour would proscribe the UDA, Kevin McNamara declined to comment, except to say 'I would just have to listen to the advice of the intelligence services'. So if you're looking for an insight into Labour Irish policy, you know who to ring.

What's left?

Nothing remains of Labour's attempt to save its bacon with the Irish vote, except its promise to ban strip-searching and plastic bullets, and to 'review' the Emergency Provisions Act. There is no evidence to suggest that these commitments would survive Labour's election to government. In fact Labour's record on Ireland while in government is, if anything, worse than the Tories.

From sending the troops in, to bringing in the PTA, to withdrawing political status, to introducing criminalisation, to sending Don Concannon to crow at Bobby Sands' deathbed, there are no more loyal servants of British imperialism than British Labour. This is not simply a matter of Labour and Ireland. In not a single war in its entire history has the Labour Party failed to back Britain.

Facing facts

Many supporters of Irish freedom believe, despite everything, that a Labour government would be more likely than the Tories to set a date for British withdrawal from Ireland. But from the point of view of the British establishment, Britain's control of Ireland through partition is not negotiable.

Unlike any other colony, Ireland has been integrated directly into the British state, as part of the United Kingdom. At a time when British imperialism is weaker than it has ever been in the face of its international rivals, it can least afford to announce its impotence by giving up what it claims to be part of its home territory. Britain will go when Britain is defeated.

The unfortunate truth today is that Britain is not close to defeat. In the Six Counties the republican movement has not been able to expand outside of its traditional areas of support. In the Twenty-Six Counties, there is no mass movement in support of the Northern nationalists. In Britain, there is no significant anti-imperialist movement challenging Britain's right to occupy Ireland.

Conflicts which threaten the very stability of an imperialist state are not negotiable. Such conflicts are settled by force. In all conflicts the outcome of negotiations is determined by the respective strength of the two sides, not by verbal skill or intelligence. Those British pundits who call on Irish nationalists to lay down their arms as a precondition for negotiation, at a time when Britain is in the ascendant, are in effect calling for an Irish surrender. The only outcome of such negotiations would be a modified form of imperialist rule with a new credibility that would secure Britain's oppression of Ireland for decades to come.

The general election

We get one vote every five years or so. Voting, in any case, will not determine the winners and the losers in the Irish War. Victory—in so far as we in Britain can play a role—depends on building a mass 'enemy within' to sabotage the British war effort. To vote for Labour is to vote for warmongers. Vote for any candidate who stands for an Irish victory and a British defeat. Otherwise, save your Xs for your partner. ■

THE ELECTION

The battle for West Belfast

As the general election approaches, the British government and its supporters have initiated a campaign to replace the Sinn Fein MP for West Belfast, Gerry Adams, with a candidate more to their liking. Kevin Kelly considers whether their strategy is likely to succeed

The electoral battle between the Sinn Fein president and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) candidate Dr Joe Hendron will be monitored more closely than any other this April. While in most parts of the Six Counties the SDLP vote is higher than Sinn Fein's, it is a source of continuing annoyance to the British that the people of West Belfast refuse to tow the line, and continue to elect a republican candidate.

As West Belfast Sinn Fein councillor Fra McCann stated in a recent interview with *Irish Freedom*:

'While Gerry Adams and other elected representatives of Sinn Fein are censored and banned from the media, the SDLP and particularly the West Belfast councillor, Joe Hendron, are given open and uncritical press coverage. The British government and the British media have made it clear who their preferred candidate is.'

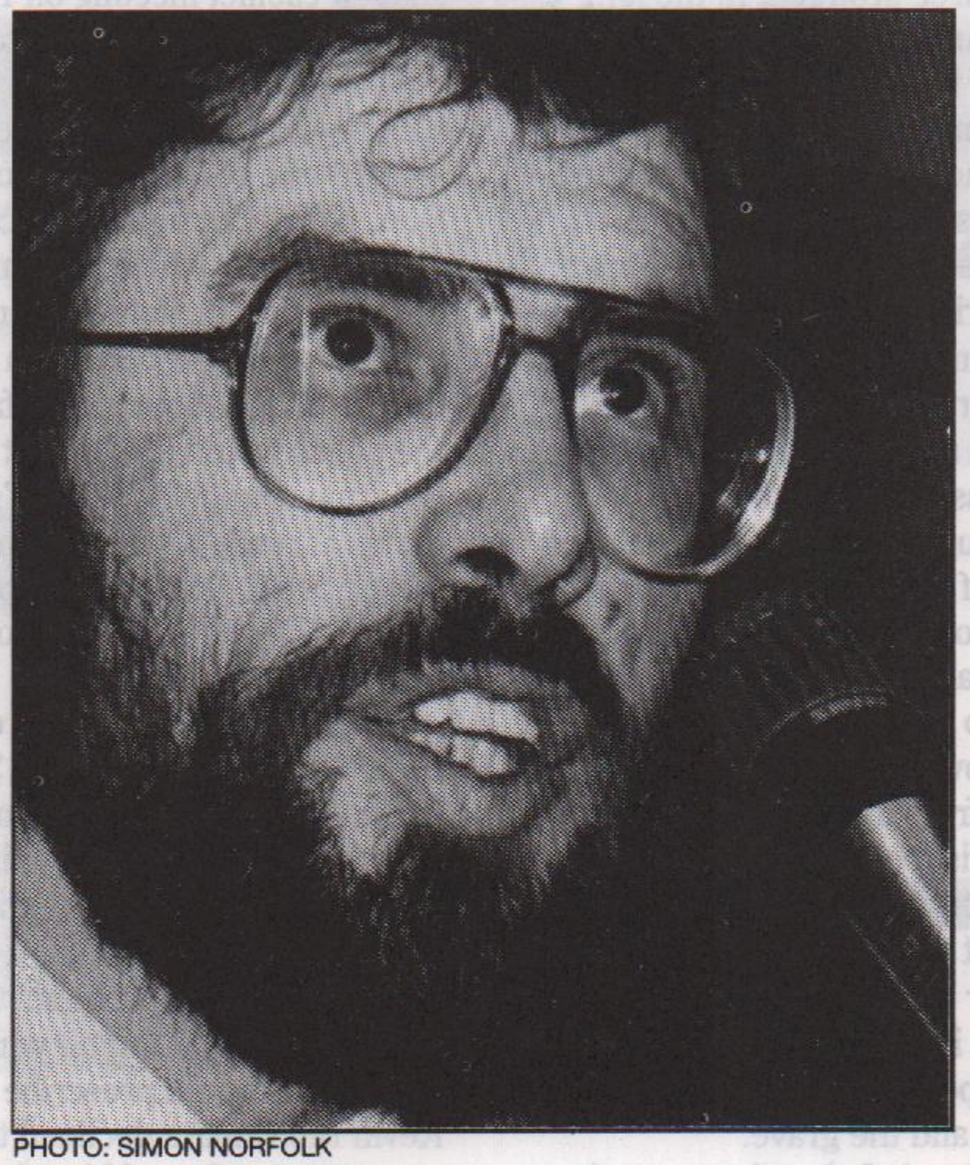


PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

At a time when most British politicians all sound the same, the choice in West Belfast could not be clearer. Throughout the Six Counties, candidates will once again fight the election on Britain's right to govern the North of Ireland. In constituencies where a split Unionist vote would lose the seat to either Sinn Fein or the SDLP, Unionists have agreed on a single candidate. However, in West Belfast the Official Unionist Party are challenged by the Democratic Unionist Party candidate Ian Paisley Jnr for the minority Loyalist vote. While the majority in West Belfast is nationalist, the constituency also includes a large section of the Shankill Road, a famous Loyalist area.

In late January came the unlikely news that the UDA—responsible for at least 16 sectarian deaths in 1991—has called on its supporters to back Joe Hendron. Such is the desire to see Sinn Fein defeated that the SDLP's supporters now include the Catholic church, the British government, the Dublin government, the Unionist parties and the Loyalist paramilitaries. The length to which the Brits and their allies will go to see an anti-republican candidate elected is a measure of their determination to defeat nationalist resistance.

From its inception in 1970, the SDLP has received funds from businessmen in Southern Ireland and Britain. It has also received help from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. The Institute is itself funded by the CIA. Other beneficiaries include pro-US election candidates in Central and South America and right-wing union and student groups in Eastern Europe. The SDLP received almost £500 000 from a London property developer to pay for its new advice centre in West Belfast; as well as £50 000 a year to go towards staff salaries.

The latest electioneering tactic of the SDLP is to announce a government grant of one or two million pounds to various schemes in West Belfast and claim the credit, when they merely chaired the press conference. The way it works is very simple. Whenever money is channelled into West Belfast, government ministers Brian Mawhinney or Richard Needham phone the SDLP. This creates the impression of a hard-working party getting results. Add to this the political vetoing of community groups who do not tow the British line, and you have a situation where the Catholic church and the SDLP appear to control the financial resources pumped into West Belfast. The moral of the story is vote SDLP and we will look favourably at increasing financial assistance to West Belfast. Vote Sinn Fein and we will punish you financially.

Undoubtedly the SDLP have a well-oiled election machine, ably assisted by its full range of anti-republican allies. But the political background to the election is the debacle of the Brooke talks, and six years of the Hillsborough agreement which has changed little for nationalists besides increasing repression. As Hilda

MacThomas, a regular contributor to *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, wrote:

'The SDLP has very little to offer by way of achievements this time round and will probably centre its attacks on the IRA and Sinn Fein. In this the SDLP, the British and the Unionists will speak with one voice.' (20 February 1992)

Whether people support the IRA or not, they know that they are not the problem in West Belfast. They experience their repression from people in British Army and RUC uniforms and will treat SDLP claims that Britain is a neutral force in north-east Ireland with the contempt they deserve.

Commentators frequently talk about the imminent demise of Sinn Fein, and point to a supposedly diminishing base of support. These predictions only appear credible outside nationalist areas like West Belfast. In 1987, against all the predictions, Gerry Adams retained his seat and even increased his majority. A recent series of by-election results in the Six Counties including North Belfast have also seen Sinn Fein increase its vote to the extent that it now holds the second highest number of seats on Belfast city council.

Sinn Fein are quietly confident that they will retain the West Belfast seat. It is clear that the vast majority of young people appearing on the electoral register for the first time will vote Sinn Fein. When asked why they will vote for Gerry Adams the answers vary: 'We want the Brits out of our country', 'we support the IRA', 'we're sick of being harassed by the British Army'.

Nationalist people in West Belfast clearly see Sinn Fein as a reflection of their own views: opposition to British occupation of their country and support for the armed struggle to get them out.

It is clear that since the hunger-strikes of 1981, the British and Dublin governments have thrown many electoral lifelines to the SDLP, while stopping at nothing to smash the republican movement. The Brooke talks are primarily designed to marginalise Sinn Fein from political discussion and promote the SDLP as the alternative nationalist party. However, it seems that no matter how hard the British government push the anti-republican SDLP, where people have direct experience of British repression they continue to support the armed struggle, and vote for Sinn Fein.

The people in West Belfast suffer ever-increasing numbers of British troops and RUC on their streets, more road blocks, house raids and harassment. They have been named 'the terrorist community' by Peter Brooke, they have been lectured at from the pulpits, and they have been murdered by the British Army, RUC and Loyalists, but still they refuse to be broken. It is that spirit of resistance that remains Gerry Adams' constituency. ■



PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

THE ELECTION

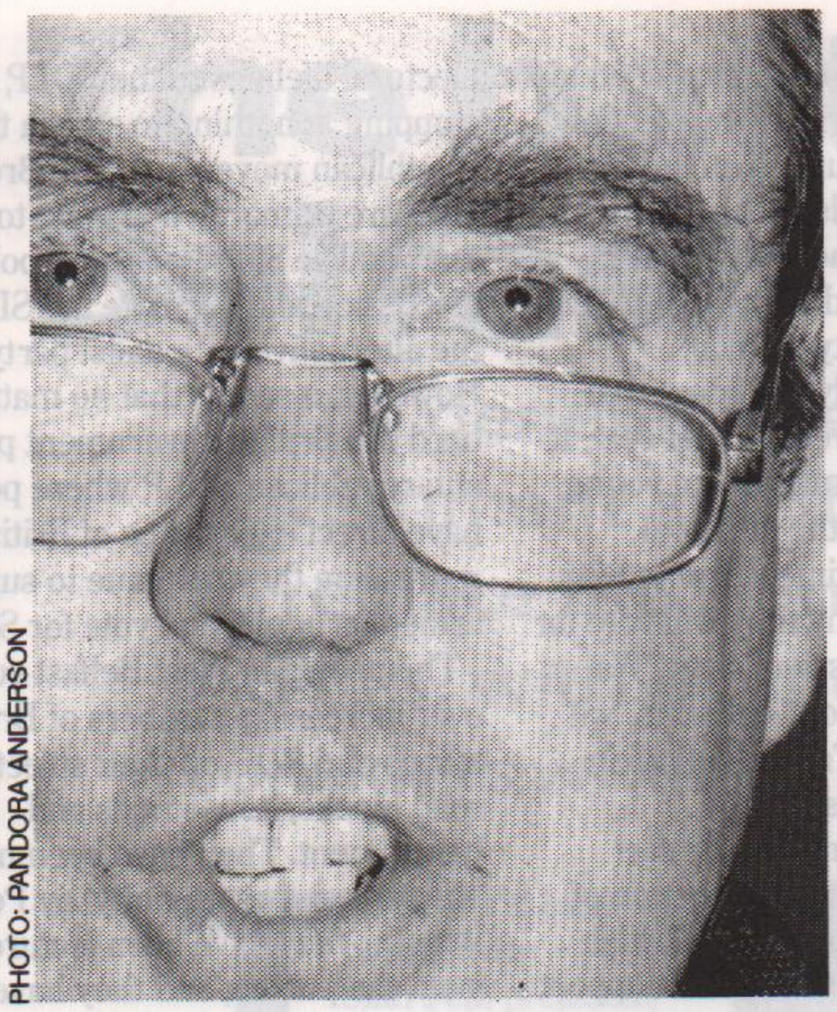


PHOTO: PANDORA ANDERSON

The harmless eccentric who fronts British terror

Stuart Sharp traces the career of the prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate for the constituency of City of London and Westminster South

British MPs from both sides of the House of Commons fell over each other in the rush to heap praise on Northern Ireland secretary Peter Brooke after his imaginative rendition of 'My Darling Clementine' on RTE's *Late Late Show* in January.

Brooke was called on to resign by po-faced Unionists for having the 'insensitivity' to launch his singing career just one day after the IRA had blown-up eight construction workers who had been working for the British security forces. But his friends in the House of Commons ensured that Brooke's political career was saved. In one session at the old piano, Peter had transcended the 'sober, ponderous, solid, honest' image for which he is known and loved.

The other side of the story is that Brooke exposed himself as a bumbling upper class twit who owes his position in public life entirely to an accident of birth.

Spirit of Empire

Brooke was born in March 1934, son of Lord Brooke of Cumnor and Lady Brooke of Ystradfellte. His father has been described by the *Times* as 'the most controversial home secretary since the Second World War', holding the position as he did between 1962 and 1964, when the first restrictions were put on immigration to Britain, and the Profumo affair shook the British establishment.

Peter Brooke was imbued with the spirit of Empire at Marlborough School and Balliol College Oxford, and got his MBA at Harvard Business School. His dynamic character earned him the chairmanship of the Student Christian Movement in 1956; and he was a Camden councillor from 1968 to 1969.

But his big break came when he was hand picked by the Tories to fight the not-at-all closely contested Westminster South by-election in 1977.

Within a year of this historic victory, Brooke was making his mark as a backbencher; in February 1978 he denounced the beleaguered Labour government for unfairly taxing the wealthy (*Times, 22* February 1978). He was made assistant government whip in the new Thatcher Government in 1979, and he helped launch a Mary Whitehouse-style campaign to clamp down on the Soho sex industry, which, he claimed, 'threatens to flood out into surrounding districts'.

'Bizarre' appointment

His appointment by Thatcher to the chairmanship of the Conservative Party in 1987 was described by one Tory backbencher as 'bizarre'. Other MPs were 'dumbfounded' and 'stunned' that Brooke should have been put in charge of selling the policies of the third Thatcher term to the British electorate. Everyone agreed that Peter is 'very nice, very amiable and very worthy' (*Times* , 3 November 1987)...in other words, dull.

Brooke was a staunch defender of the poll tax and he helped to mastermind the Tories' chauvinistic Euro-election campaign in June 1989. Everyone agreed that he lacked the 'necessary public profile and street fighter's mentality' for the chairmanship; but it was precisely this image of Brooke as a harmless old fool that made him the perfect candidate for the Northern Ireland post (*Times*, 25 July 1989).

On the day that John Major became foreign secretary of the Tory government, Thatcher shuffled Brooke to Ireland. At this time, political progress on the Irish question was, according to Brooke's predecessor, Tom King 'virtually non-existent'. It seems that Brooke's brief was to 'keep 'em talking'...and hopefully to send everyone to sleep.

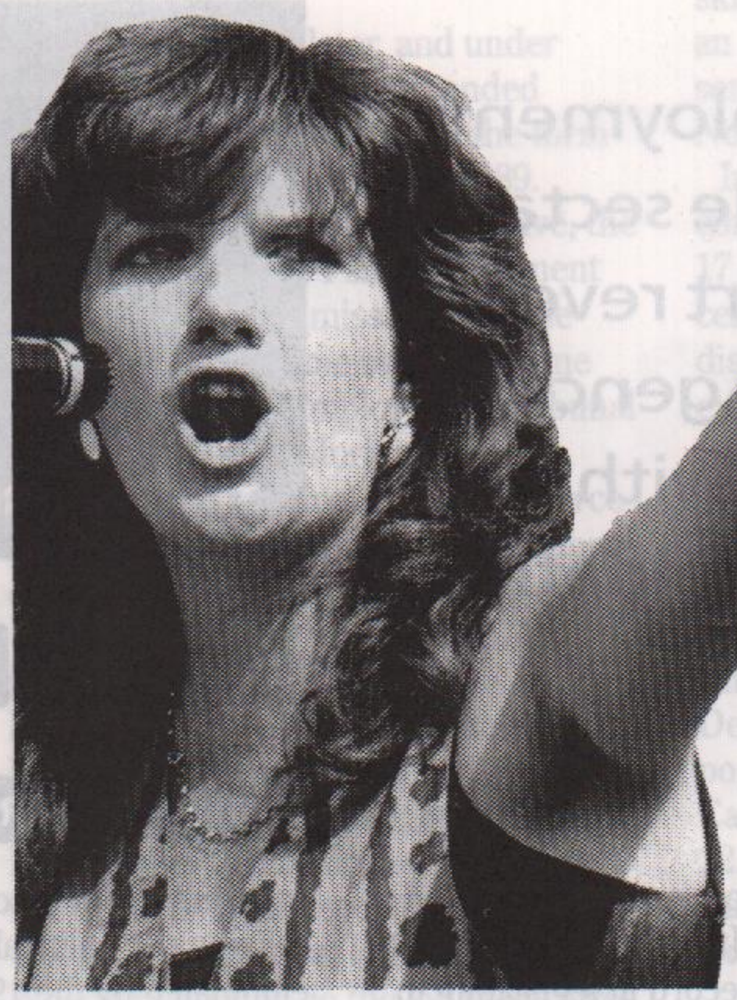
On 1 December 1990, Brooke declared himself 'quietly confident that a breakthrough could be on the cards which is acceptable to the SDLP and Unionists', and six months later, the talks began in earnest. Of course, as we predicted at the time in *Irish Freedom,* nothing of any substance has come out of the now famous 'Brooke talks' for the nationalists. The British establishment, on the other hand, hopes to isolate the republican movement by excluding it from all discussion about a solution to the war. Posing as a neutral, sensible referee, Britain does nothing but talk and talk and talk. And who better than the highly popular, loyal and reliable, dull and worthy Mr Brooke to represent the British as a supposedly reasonable arbiter between the likes of Ian Paisley and constitutional nationalists.

Gentleman butcher

As well as being partial to a bit of a sing-song, Peter Brooke likes churches, conservation, cricket, looking at pictures and planting things. No doubt he loves his children and is very fond of furry animals. But his main role in life is to assist in prosecuting the British establishment's brutal war against the Irish people. Brooke has been very much a part of this establishment since the day he was born; and just in case anyone is taken in by Brooke's boring but loveable image, the IFM has every intention of exposing the butcher behind the British gentleman in the weeks and months to come. ■

OPINION

Fiona Foster



We Brits with our unwritten constitution sometimes find it hard to understand the apparent obsession that the Irish have with their comprehensive document. Recently of course it has become a subject of international discussion because of the ban on abortion. But there's another bit of their constitution that's been provoking a few passionate debates of late, and that's Articles 2 and 3.

Having been forced by the Brits to accept control of only 26 counties rather than the full 32 back in 1921, Ireland's leaders hoped to duck this historic compromise and retain some dignity by asserting their natural right to rule throughout Ireland's territory. Rather than fighting against the Twenty-Six County state, de Valera accepted the legitimacy of this state, entered its political institutions and promptly substituted a territorial claim on the North for an armed struggle to free the North from British rule.

That was in back in 1937, but to this day, de Valera and his successors have used the existence of Articles 2 and 3 to signal their commitment to a united Ireland and, therefore, as their statement that armed struggle is unnecessary.

In reality, of course Ireland's leaders had accepted partition, accepted Britain's control of the North and gone about stabilising their own Twenty-Six County state and ensuring their own survival within it. Articles 2 and 3, by pandering to the strong nationalist sentiment that remained in Ireland, served to win legitimacy for the state in the eyes of the people.

In practical terms, Articles 2 and 3 mean nothing, yet they have become highly symbolic for some Irish nationalists in a nation that no longer sees pandering to nationalism as a wise idea, and is currently toying with the idea of ditching the Articles. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, whom I greatly admire, used her platform at this year's massive Bloody Sunday march in Derry to proclaim that though she has gone through this entire struggle without resorting to arms, the Irish government will remove Articles 2 and 3 over her dead body. And Bernadette is not the only one to express such strong feelings on this issue.

All the major parties in Ireland have stated a willingness to reassess the need for Articles 2 and 3. The thinking is simple, Articles 2 and 3 antagonise the Unionists and encourage the IRA. As the Southern Irish government needs to placate the Unionists as a means of retaining some say in Northern Irish affairs, and as they have every interest in robbing the IRA of any legitimacy it would seem that a little creative thinking about the offending Articles would do them no harm.

Far from joining with those nationalists and republicans who are fighting to keep Articles 2 and 3, all my instincts are to say good riddance—they never meant anything anyway. You see, I see them as a big sham, a big lie. And the sooner the big lie is exposed, the sooner Irish republicans can get on with the business of building a real movement for Irish unity.

The big lie is that Ireland's rulers aspire to a united Ireland. They don't, they dread it and they have gone to great lengths and inordinate expense to harass, censor, imprison and extradite those people fighting to unite Ireland. Former Irish prime minister, Garret FitzGerald's recently published statement that a united Ireland must be avoided at all costs may have raised a few eyebrows for its bluntness, but the Anglo-Irish Agreement which enjoys all-party support clearly reasserts his point—that partition is the name of the game for the foreseeable future.

Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution serve no purpose other than allowing Ireland's pro-British politicians to masquerade as Irish nationalists. Ireland's leaders think they have their nation—it's made up of 26 counties and they're a lot more concerned about hanging on to them than getting a united Ireland in which they have no role. They'll use whatever cynical methods they can to hang on in there. In the past that meant making anti-British statements and parading Articles 2 and 3 as proof of their nationalism. Now their interests may be better served by accommodating the Unionists with a ritual dumping of their claim to the North. Whatever they decide will be based on their interests and not on the plight of Northern nationalists.

Far from fighting to preserve these Articles, supporters of Irish freedom should be using the current debate to expose the Irish establishment for what it really is—the puppet of British imperialism which depends on the British war machine in the North for its survival in the South.

A recent poll revealed that 82 per cent of people in Southern Ireland want a united Ireland. Yet Sinn Fein get less than one per cent of the vote in the South and most people oppose the IRA. This suggests that Irish people still go out to vote for politicians who they believe will one day take them into a united Ireland.

Defending Articles 2 and 3 will only serve to reinforce people's faith in their politicians and can only strengthen the current anti-republican consensus in the Republic.

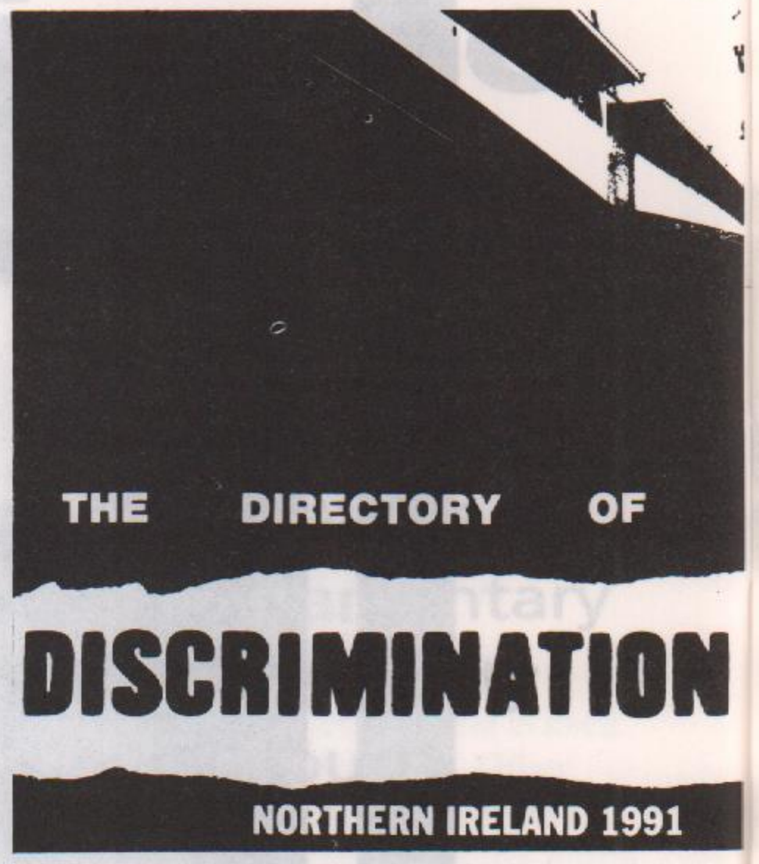
Within hours of his election, Ireland's new Prime Minister Albert Reynolds suggested that dumping Articles 2 and 3 would only leave Northern Irish nationalists feeling abandoned and ignored. Far from welcoming this, supporters of Irish freedom should be out there arguing that, Articles 2 and 3 or no Articles 2 and 3, Northern Irish nationalists have been abandoned and ignored by Twenty-Six County politicians since the creation of that state.

I'll shed no tears over the ditching of Articles 2 and 3, and if it serves to expose the South's pro-British leaders and encourage Irish people to take up the gauntlet of Irish unity themselves, then neither should Irish nationalists. ■

THE NORTH

The sectarian state

Northern Ireland's Fair Employment Agency is supposed to tackle sectarian discrimination. A new report reveals that the Fair Employment Agency has systematically colluded with employers to disguise discrimination in the workplace. Janet Sugden investigates



After 50 years of anti-Catholic discrimination by British-backed Unionist regimes, media images of the deprivation suffered by Northern Ireland's Catholic communities shocked people in Britain in the late sixties. But extensive media coverage of the civil rights movement and the conditions that caused it soon gave way to political censorship when civil rights exploded into a war of liberation from Britain.

With the reality of life for Northern Irish Catholics now rarely a subject of media investigation, British politicians and businessmen have been able to convince British people that years of anti-discrimination legislation and financial investment in Catholic areas have resulted in the elimination of serious discrimination between the Catholic and Protestant communities.

'In the workplace...there are signs that traditional barriers are coming down. Employer discrimination against the Catholic minority, for years the main grievance during Ulster's troubles is clearly on the decline and although much still needs to be done the government is finally coming to grips with the problem.' (*Financial Times*, 26 November 1991)

British politicians intent on robbing the anti-imperialist struggle of the Irish of any legitimacy are keen to peddle the lie that the grievances that may once have forced people into the arms of the IRA no longer exist.

However, a recent report by the Belfast-based Equality Working Group, *The Directory of Discrimination*, has exposed the lie that discrimination is at an end. The report maintains that 'on the contrary its [the British government's] record in legislating to eliminate anti-Catholic discrimination gives no evidence of a commitment to promoting economic equality between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland...the record is one of consistent opposition to taking decisive and effective action essential to the promotion of economic equality'.

Judge and jury

Anti-discrimination legislation has been in Northern Ireland since the Government of Ireland Act 1920 with revisions and amendments throughout the 1970s and 1980s. So why does the Equality Working Group reject the claim made by politicians and business institutions that discrimination is under control?

Decades of systematic discrimination had led to levels of poverty in the Catholic community unknown for years in Britain. The British government had sanctioned the Stormont parliament's institutionalised discrimination as an integral part of Britain's strategy of maintaining Loyalist allegiance.

The explosion of the civil rights movement threw the spotlight on the disgusting record of Stormont and under international pressure to act, the British scrapped Stormont and began to rule Northern Ireland direct from Westminster in 1972. A year later the Northern Ireland Constitution Act included anti-discrimination measures. This made way for the 1976 Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act. The Equality Working Group points out that the radical measures of the 1973 Act whereby the Civil Service and public bodies were made liable to prosecution for discriminating on religious or political grounds, were eliminated by the 1976 Act. The Northern Ireland Civil Service was now both judge and jury on discrimination matters. It drafted the 1976 Act, and wrote the investigation procedures and Code of Employment Practice under which a new Fair Employment Agency (FEA) was to operate.

The FEA would compile statistics and take legal action against employers whose employment practices discriminated on the grounds of religion. The FEA has long been distrusted by Catholics. Instead of exposing discrimination, the FEA was bending over backwards to ignore it. Embarrassing reports were suppressed and even where legal proceedings were initiated they were dropped before reaching the courts.

Not content with ignoring discrimination, the FEA became an apologist for the systematic disadvantage faced by Catholics in employment in the Six Counties. The FEA statement that there is no evidence of 'malpractice or wilful discrimination' is characteristic of its role of whitewashing sectarianism in employment.

Controlling information

Despite its own claims, the FEA found that throughout the history of the Northern Irish state Catholics have been two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than Protestants.

The FEA was set up to give the impression to the world, rather than the people of Northern Ireland, that the British are committed to eliminating discrimination. It was also, however, an effective means of controlling and

suppressing information and maintaining the discrimination necessary to uphold the British state in Northern Ireland.

Fourteen years later, and under pressure from the USA, amended legislation was introduced in the form of the Fair Employment Act 1989. Far from being a radical alternative, the new Act turned the Fair Employment Agency into a Commission with the same structure, same staff and same chairman. A Fair Employment Tribunal and statutory 'monitoring' of the religious composition of the workforce of those organisations with 25 or more employees were introduced.

A grim catalogue

Frustration at the cover-ups and the FEA's 'flaccid, ineffectual and politically influenced' work, and anger at the Fair Employment Commission's decision not to publish the report of its first monitoring exercise, led the Equality Working Group to do the job themselves. *The Directory of Discrimination* is a compilation of statistics from past FEA reports and its own research studies. It is a grim catalogue of a cycle of anti-Catholic discrimination which shows no sign of breaking.

Familiar offenders like Harland & Woolf, the Belfast shipbuilders and Shorts, aircraft and missile manufacturers, are praised in a recent *Financial Times* survey as the flagships of industrial growth in Northern Ireland who despite international recession stay 'happily in the black'. The *Financial Times* fails to mention that this happy state of affairs is down to the massive subsidies given to these companies by successive British governments as a means of ensuring that large numbers of loyal Protestant workers did not find themselves lining up behind Catholics in the dole queues. It also fails to say that these flagship companies have done nothing to tackle the massive disparity between the number of Catholic and Protestant workers they employ. Shorts' workforce is still only 11 per cent Catholic and in Harland and Woolf Catholics represent only 4.8 per cent of employees.

Trade unions collaborated in maintaining Protestant privilege in access to the jobs in heavy industry. Such familiar names as the AEU, GMB, TGWU and the EEPTU, kept lists of unemployed members as reference points for employment. As the *Directory* notes, this practice effectively reserved jobs for Protestants.

The practice over generations of Protestant control of apprentice schemes for the shipbuilding and engineering industries has ensured that few Catholics acquire manufacturing skills. Consequently Catholics still form an inordinately high proportion of semi and unskilled workers in Northern Ireland.

In building societies, insurance companies and banks Catholics form 17 per cent, 27.3 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. These averages can disguise some interesting figures. For example, the Progressive Building Society has only five per cent Catholics. The Northern Bank has 16 per cent Catholic employees with only 11 per cent of managerial staff being Catholic.

The 1987 FEA investigation of the Milk Marketing Board's Dunmanbridge Depot at Cookstown where the working population is divided 50:50 Catholic/Protestant revealed that 22.5 per cent of employees were Catholic with only 9.5 per cent at senior executive level.

Northern Ireland Electricity with a 3.5 per cent Catholic workforce had the sanction of the British government for this disproportionate level when the secretary of state intervened to curtail investigations into discrimination in its employment procedures.

Recession bites

Public sector employment has increased significantly as recession has bitten into the Northern Irish economy and it was estimated in 1990 that 48 per cent of the employable workforce were within the public sector. This increase has been financed by British government grants and investments, and the *Directory* notes that 'government in all its forms is the largest single source of direct or indirect funding in every sector of economic life, with 70 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product originating from the public purse'.

Despite a requirement that councils sign the FEA's Declaration of Principle and Intent on equal opportunities, 17 out of 26 district councils decided that it was not in their interests to bind themselves to a declaration which would fetter their discriminatory employment practices. Better to suffer the resultant slap on the wrist from the FEA. Craigavon Borough Council rejected the FEA's report criticising it for drawing only four per cent of its senior officers from the Catholic community, while 12 per cent of its manual workers are Catholics. Aware of the potential for embarrassment at having its rulings ignored the FEA simply suppressed its most damning reports, like that on Larne District Council in which every single one of its senior officers and staff are classified as 'Protestant and others'. Catholics are employed only in manual grades, with over 60 per cent employed on the lowest grades.

Evolution desired

The controversial report produced by the FEA in 1981 on the religious proportions of employees in the civil service was such an embarrassment to the Northern Irish civil service that it was only published after parts of it had been leaked to the press. It showed that the percentage of the workforce classified as Catholic grew as the salary levels decreased. While 11.9 per cent of the Catholic workforce earned more than £17 000 nearly 40 per cent earned below £5100.

Given this catalogue of anti-Catholic discrimination and the consistent determination of the British government through its agencies of the civil service and the Fair Employment Commission to maintain Protestant privilege, Peter Brooke is fooling nobody when he says Britain has 'no selfish strategic or economic interest' in Northern Ireland (*Financial Times*, 26 November 1991).

Of course, British business institutions are busy trying to persuade everyone that the Northern Irish economy is, if not thriving, well on the way to thwarting the recession. Infamous for transforming Glasgow into a European city of culture, Eddie Friel, the tourist board's new chief executive, predicts that 'Northern Ireland will be a major tourist destination within the next five years'. Attracting tourists to a war zone 'is no different from addressing the perception of a city as an industrial slum' enthuses Mr Friel.

The experience of the Catholic community in the Six Counties and the facts as presented by the Equality Working Group show us the reality of persistent structural discrimination. Despite a desire for peaceful evolution rather than violent revolution in Northern Ireland, the Equality Working Group undercuts its hopes for reform by its objective assessment of the Six Counties. The *Directory* concludes that, 'discrimination was built into the very fabric of the state from its inception...and the exercise of that power has been deemed essential to the survival of the state to the present day'.■

* *The Directory of Discrimination: Northern Ireland 1991,* The Equality Working Group, 108b Andersonstown Road, Belfast.

SIX COUNTIES

Fighting back against discrimination

Banned from the airwaves, banned from its usual venue for its annual conference, Sinn Fein is being demonised by the Irish and British media because of its part in the republican struggle. Fiona Foster met Mitchel McLaughlin, a Derry Sinn Fein councillor and member of the party's national executive

Fiona Foster: Firstly, I'd like to ask about the reality of discrimination against Catholics in the Six Counties. Many British people we meet are under the impression that discrimination against Catholics in housing and jobs is rapidly becoming a thing of the past and that the grievances that may have justified support for the IRA no longer exist. When I was in Derry in January, I couldn't help noticing that housing conditions seemed to have improved. So is discrimination disappearing?

Mitchel McLaughlin: No. In fact the housing waiting list for Catholics is now comparable to the lengthy waiting lists that were one of the motivations for the civil rights movement in the late 1960s and the statistical trends show that things are getting worse rather than better.

No-one would deny that there's been a significant investment in housing over the past 20 years but its effect has only been to mop up the effects of 50 years of neglect and anti-Catholic discrimination from the Unionist government. Now the Tories have decided that they've got enough new-looking houses for them to maintain the cosmetic impression that discrimination against Catholics in housing has been eliminated. The waiting lists contradict that.

FF: Will those who have benefited from new homes think again about accepting British rule?

MM: No. The housing crisis was only ever one element in the dissatisfaction that people felt about life under British rule. The lack of democracy in all areas of life has not been addressed. It's little consolation having a new house if you've got armed British soldiers hanging out in the garden.

FF: Some of the British left claim that the living standards of Protestant workers to a par with Catholics. They argue that this presents new possibilities for uniting nationalists and loyalists. Are you hopeful?

MM: Well, first it's wrong to say that Protestants are in the same position as Catholics. Even British government statistics show that whatever the unemployment rates, and undoubtedly they are worse for Protestants than they used to be, Catholics are still two-and-a-half times more likely to be unemployed than their Protestant counterparts.

Because of the way the Six Counties was set up, Protestant people still cling to a distinction, however spurious, that their Britishness makes them different and marginally more privileged.

FF: So are you saying that the British have no real desire to remove inequality?

MM: Yes. The British have legislated about discrimination but they've specifically precluded any positive action to ensure Catholics can get the jobs and houses preserved for Protestants over the past 70 years. There are long-established discriminatory practices which have not been analysed since direct rule from Britain in 1972.

Discrimination is one of the cornerstones of this little sectarian state and the British government is well aware that, if they were not the architects of what emerged under Unionist government from 1921-72, they were the consultants providing the blueprint for discriminatory practices.

FF: So how can discrimination be tackled within the Six Counties?

MM: Well, we in Sinn Fein have and will continue to demand that discrimination be tackled. But having said that we know that demanding equal rights for Catholics in this artificial state means challenging the fundamental basis of the state. Similarly, successive British governments' refusal to accede to our demands and their insistence that the legislation prevents positive action to deal with decades of discrimination shows that they too are aware of the challenge to the state encapsulated in demands for equality.

FF: Now, Mitchel, I'd like to move on and to ask some more questions about Sinn Fein strategy. 1992 brings us to 23 years of war in Ireland. The British media goes to some lengths to present the source of the conflict in Ireland as the IRA. They say that if the IRA lays down its arms then peace in Ireland is a real prospect. How do you react to that?

MM: Well firstly let me say that I cannot speak for the IRA. But the IRA

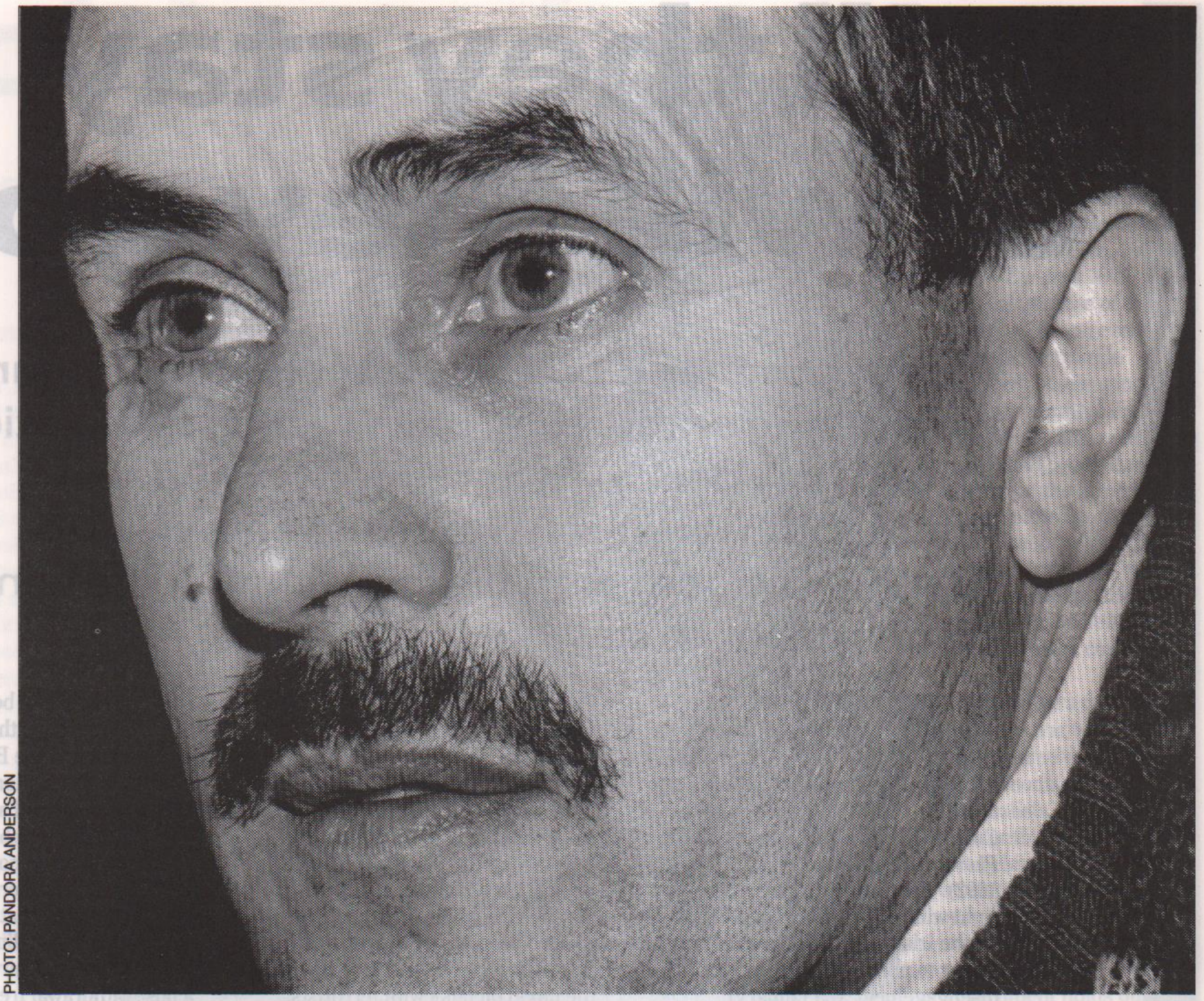


PHOTO: PANDORA ANDERSON

have made their position very clear. Their dispute is with the British state in Ireland and, so long as there's no clear and unambiguous policy to disengage from Ireland, then the IRA campaign will continue.

Having said this, Sinn Fein have advanced our political thinking along the following lines. National self-determination cannot be achieved by reforming the Six County state. Our emphasis now is to point to the failure of partition to provide the conditions which Irish people are entitled to—peace, stability and democracy.

All the main parties in the Twenty-Six Counties stand for election on the basis of a commitment to a united and independent Ireland, so we're pressurising them to say what they have done to achieve this. We're pointing to the opportunities that exist for forming democratic alliances around the right of the Irish nation to exist and to determine its own future.

Even if there remain serious differences in the types of post-withdrawal scenarios that we'd like to see, we are recognising in a pragmatic way the political realities in Ireland. It's a very conservative country and only a small minority would support the kind of socialist system we in Sinn Fein would envisage. So we are compelled to put our energies, first and foremost, into achieving the establishment of an Irish nation.

FF: But how will you convince the Irish establishment, who are ever more anti-republican, that they should work towards a united Ireland?

MM: On the basis that partition has failed everyone. Twenty- three years of counter-insurgency, emergency legislation and a huge military apparatus has not succeeded in suppressing the republican struggle. It's time this thing was ended. If people recognise that, they should also recognise that it's time for new departures and for new issues to be looked at.

FF: To what extent are world events helping or hindering this strategy?

MM: They are helping. While we in Sinn Fein wouldn't be entirely supportive of all the independence movements in Eastern Europe that have emerged since the collapse of Stalinism, we're quite prepared to use the fact that the world media are welcoming these movements as progressive. So we're simply saying, why can't it happen here? If it's OK for Croatia and the Baltics to exercise their rights to self-determination, why not Ireland? We want to exploit world changes to pressurise Britain into acknowledging that the time has come for change.

FF: Finally Mitchel, when I last spoke to you, your emphasis was on mobilising Sinn Fein support and putting it back on the streets as a means of maximising pressure on London and Dublin. Have you abandoned that strategy?

MM: No, certainly not. Our successes in building massive demonstrations around the internment commemoration and this year's twentieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday, and our electoral successes in the Six Counties, show that our base is solid. But, again, the reality is that we will not see a return to the streets like we did in the late 1960s around civil rights or in 1981 around the hunger-strikes unless an issue sparks off the kind of emotion and commitment evident during those periods. ■

BRITISH STRATEGY

Will they stay or will they go?

Recent comments by some establishment figures considering withdrawal have fuelled speculation that Britain may decide to go. Here Vicky Rowan draws some parallels with the events of 1975 to show the danger in underestimating Britain's commitment to stay

Withdrawal from Ireland would be 'a victory for common sense', according to former Lieutenant-Colonel Derek Wilford (quoted in *An Phoblacht/Republican News,* 30 January 1992). The January issue of the right-wing *Spectator* headed an article on the Irish question: 'As good a time as any to ponder the rules of disengagement' (25 January). Statements like these have convinced many people that the government's attitude to withdrawal is changing.

These days news about Ireland often focuses on the endless rounds of talks between Peter Brooke and the so-called constitutional parties of the Six Counties. The talks usually provide an opportunity for the government to condemn 'sectarian' violence and restate its determination never to talk to 'terrorists'. In recent weeks the prospect of Sinn Fein's eventual inclusion in the talks has seemed more likely to liberal commentators.

'Clearly, progress will involve compromise.... The talks will be missing a key player: Sinn Fein. This may lead to more harmony in the board room, but can there be progress if it is not a party to it?' (Carlo Gebler, *Guardian,* 18 January 1992)

A few days later Ronan Bennett argued that 'the starting point for an eventual solution has to be through talks with Sinn Fein' (*Guardian,* 22 January 1992). The idea that the Brooke talks have failed so far to produce a solution and that Britain is under pressure to talk to Sinn Fein has led some opponents of Britain to identify a 'time to go' attitude taking shape.

On 3 March, the press reported that talks had taken place between the leaders of the Ulster Defence Association (the legal front for Loyalist paramilitary groups) and a group of Presbyterian ministers. The tone of the articles was to suggest that this represented an historic break with the taboo on talks with terrorists. The *Guardian* even went so far as to suggest that a repeat of the events of December 1974 might be on the cards. At that time a delegation of leaders from the republican movement talked with prominent churchmen at Feakle, Co Clare, as a prelude to the truce in February 1975.

Deliberate strategy

Whether such a repeat of history will take place remains to be seen. But there are parallels that can be made between the situation today and the mid-seventies, when the view that Britain was about to pull out of Ireland was widespread. In 1975 the Labour government pursued a deliberate strategy of cultivating the idea that it was considering pulling out of Ireland in order to confuse and disorientate the nationalist struggle. This time around the government is allowing unprecedented criticism of the war to be voiced, and is cultivating the notion that they might be prepared to negotiate with Sinn Fein.

A look at the events of 1974-75 shows the danger in taking Britain's 'reasonable' gestures at face value. By 1974 the lack of a consensus for British rule in Ireland had been exposed to the world. Direct rule, the introduction of internment and the Bloody Sunday massacre of 14 nationalists stood as blatant examples of a colonial policy in Ireland. At the republican movement's Ard Fheis (annual conference) in September 1974 there was a genuine belief expressed that Britain was on the brink of conceding a united Ireland. The discussion centred on plans for a post-withdrawal Ireland' and the republican movement's policy document 'Eire Nua', which described in detail governmental structures for the 'new Ireland'.

Britain was looking for ways to find political solutions to dealing with nationalist resistance, since its repressive policies were forcing ever greater numbers to join the armed struggle. They were beginning to concede that a military defeat of the IRA would not be possible. As early as 1971, Tory home secretary Reginald Maudling had said that the republican movement could 'not be defeated, not completely eliminated', but that it could only have 'its violence reduced to an acceptable level'. The British establishment was far from confident of a quick military solution.

Climate of gloom

The autumn of 1974 saw an upsurge in the armed struggle with attacks in Britain and the Six Counties. A climate of gloom dominated all discussion about the war and an announcement of withdrawal seemed imminent. On 2 November 1974, the *Irish Times* reported that 'optimism about the state of British politics in Northern Ireland



has become a rare quality among the English ministers and civil servants'.

However at no point during all this did the British ruling class seriously consider relinquishing control over Ireland. This would have called into question its ability to govern the rest of its 'United Kingdom'. Not least at a time when they were under pressure from British trade unionists, who were enjoying an outbreak of shop-floor militancy, it would have been unthinkable for Britain's rulers to be seen to be forced out of Ireland.

The authority of the ruling classes was already more compromised than they cared for; giving in to the IRA was not a strategy for them.They were simply looking for ways of reasserting control.

Devastating truce

The republican movement, however, was keen to agree to the truce on 12 February 1975, as it firmly believed that Britain was simply waiting for the right moment to pull out.

'The ceasefire has been declared from a position of strength and in the belief that the British are genuinely convinced that the military defeat of the Provos is impossible.... The war, which may be about to end forever, has been very hard, but it has been fought bravely and honourably.'
(*AP/RN*, 14 February 1975)

The truce, which lasted nearly 12 months, had a devastating effect on the republican movement. With hindsight its leaders recognised that 'the wind-down of the armed struggle allowed the British to introduce criminalisation against the most confused background possible' (*AP/RN*, 21 July 1983)

During the ceasefire Britain allowed the IRA to set up 'incident centres' in nationalist areas. Although this did indicate that they recognised the authority of the IRA, the British considered it necessary in order to encourage nationalists to get involved in community politics rather than the armed struggle. In the meantime, Britain reinforced the RUC and set about attempting to portray the war as a 'security problem' of 'small groups of criminals' (Merlyn Rees, House of Commons debate, 14 June 1975). By early 1976, when the real purpose of the truce had been revealed, the armed struggle resumed, challenging the strategy of 'criminalisation'.

Today, the IRA continues to pull off spectacular attacks on the armed forces in the Six Counties, and to keep Ireland in the news in Britain. So why is the government displaying such a relaxed attitude towards media coverage of the war?

It would be a mistake to read it as war weariness or a genuine desire to accommodate to nationalists. There is a danger that what really lies behind it is a subtle attempt to draw the republican movement into negotiations on Britain's terms. If in future the government holds out a welcoming arm to Sinn Fein it will be because it is confident that it can extract concessions and out-manoeuvre the republicans. Britain will never willingly give an inch to nationalists' demands.

Something to prove

In the nineties, Britain probably has a greater resolve to crush resistance to its rule than ever before. The establishment takes every opportunity to reminisce about the 'great days of the Empire' because the reality is that Britain is now insignificant in world affairs and economically subjugated to Germany. Proving its political and military prowess in Ireland now takes on an added importance.

British strategy, shrouded in the conciliatory policy of the 1975 truce, shows the importance of exposing Britain's real intentions in Ireland. It has been said that the bumbling style of Merlyn Rees (Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1974-76) was quite appropriate to the policy of the time. Do not be deceived by the smiling face of Peter Brooke. ■

THE SOUTH

Beyond partition

Eve Anderson explains the lure of Europe for Ireland's politicians, and its limitations as a focus for modernisation

Newly elected Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, thanked the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis by explaining to them that the politics of the Civil War that created their party were over. European unity opened the way for a new resolution of the national question:

> 'The European Community offers a new framework, new possibilities, free of the connotations of the past. It offers a context in which we can build on the assets of this island, free up the human potential of this island, while recognising differences and diversity.'

If the possibility of recognising the 'diversity' between Loyalist domination and the subordination of Catholics in the North seemed difficult, Reynolds had more to offer the delegates:

> 'I welcome the wish of the Unionists' representatives to raise constitutional issues with me. Let them all be on the table. Articles 2 and 3 [the Republic's claim to sovereignty over the whole of Ireland] as well as the Government of Ireland Act, 1920—the one that partitioned this country in the first instance.'

Reynolds appeal is to a popular desire that the political heritage of the past can be swept aside, whether the Irish constitution of 1937, that commits the Republic to a claim on the North, or the original partition of Ireland. It is a hope that only makes sense in the context of European unity.

Since the middle of the eighties, Europe has become a favourite theme of Irish politicians in both the North and the South. Last year, in the midst of the controversy over whether or not to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Easter Rising, one commentator, Fintan O'Toole, argued that the revolutionaries of 1916 were in fact fighting for 'an Irish seat at the European table' (*Irish Times,* 30 March 1991.) That would have come as quite a suprise to James Connolly, Padraig Pearse and other leaders of the Rising if they were alive today. For them the Rising was an attempt to defeat British imperialism and secure Irish freedom. O'Toole went on to add that 'the Rising began with a European conflict and may well end, at long last, with a European integration'. But though James Connolly may be turning in his grave, O'Toole's comments have found a natural audience in today's Irish Republic.

The hope behind all the talk about Europe and 1992 is that the troublesome issue of Ireland's partition will no longer have the capacity to dominate Ireland's domestic politics as it has done over the past 23 years. This hope rests on the idea that since the borders within Europe are tumbling down, to make way for the single European market, then the question of borders between European nations means less to the people living in their midst. Indeed, the very question of what constitutes statehood or a nation state seems to be turning upside down before our eyes. The most graphic illustration of this new dynamic was the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Civil War politics

For the new breed of urban middle class Irish, European union holds out the promise of an end to the politics of the Irish Civil War. In other words, it will mean an end to the monolithic domination of Irish politics by Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, with the former still being identified as the party who held out longer for a united Ireland than the latter, who actually negotiated the partition Treaty. That 70 years after partition, politics should still reflect the national question in this way is a cause of great embarrassment to Irish politicians and the middle classes. They are keen to shed their image as a backward nation troubled by war, and present Ireland as a forward-looking modern democracy deserving a seat at the European table.

The advantage of a united Europe is that Irish nationalism itself can then be relegated to the bottom of the political agenda and the dynamic behind the war in the North can be removed once and for all. After 23 years of bloodshed and conflict, with no other resolution in sight, it is no wonder that the Irish middle class are looking towards Europe.

Even in the North, middle class politicians who have favoured accommodation with Britain, have leapt at the chance that Europe could provide a way out of the national struggle. John Hume, leader of the SDLP, summed up this pro-European sentiment in a recent interview in the *Derry Journal.* The central theme of the interview was his attack on the IRA and his apology for the British occupation. According to Hume, Britain was no longer in Ireland for its own narrow interests because, 'European unity has changed all that'. He went on, 'Britain and Ireland were now sharing sovereignty with France and Spain and eight other European countries'. Furthermore, 'Mr Brooke, the Northern Ireland secretary, has said that Britain is no longer in Ireland defending its own interests' (*Irish Times,* 4 March 1992), and Mr Hume has great respect for Mr Brooke. What becomes clear is that Europeanism is a handy way of undermining and de-legitimising Irish nationalism. Without any evidence whatsoever, one can brashly claim that the national question is redundant, while tugging one forelock to Brussels and the other to British politicians.

Cosmopolitan approach

Europe is attractive for another reason. This new middle class of educated, urbanised professionals, state officials and businessmen, feel constrained by the morals and etiquette of backward Catholic Ireland. They want no part of an Ireland which in front of the world makes women prisoners of their wombs and husbands through the constitutional bans on divorce and abortion. Nor do an increasing constituency among Ireland's disaffected working classes. The election of Mary Robinson to the Irish presidency last year also represents a break with traditional values. Robinson's well-known liberal stance on moral and sexual issues struck a chord in Irish society.

For this constituency, Europe stands for modernisation, liberalisation and a cosmopolitan approach. This is a



ILLUSTRATION: ST JOHN

million miles away from the parochial world of the small rancher, attending mass and Irish language classes, bogged down in the political myopia of the past. Europe is a way of bypassing republican nationalism and its watered down relative, Twenty-Six County nationalism. Both brands have served them ill and both brands seem to be leading to oblivion.

Unfortunately, the single European market and 1992 will not resolve the social and political problems facing Ireland. A bout of Europhilism is not going to magic away the conflict surrounding partition or the occupation of the Six Counties by British troops. It is already clear that rhetoric about the free movement of goods and people within Europe is purely PR from the EC marketing board.

Across Europe the controls on the movement of people, especially immigrants, are being tightened up rather than relaxed. In the case of Ireland, talks between John Major and the new Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, have focused on the need for greater vigilance and cooperation in policing the Border. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, voted on recently at Westminster still includes the power of exclusion , whereby suspects can be banned from one part of Britain and confined to another part of Britain, the Six Counties—so much for an end to borders!

Britain's stranglehold

Bureaucrats and politicians in Brussels can say and write what they like about borders, but that will not change the facts of political life in Ireland. As long as Britain continues to oppress Ireland, it will maintain the mechanism of domination, which is partition. Through partition, Britain has retained a direct stranglehold on the North via the creation of a sectarian statelet. In the South, Britain's influence is wielded indirectly through the Dublin elite, giving the illusion of political independence. This arrangement has allowed Britain to divide any combination of forces that could conceivably unite to challenge Britain's position.

Neither Britain nor the leaders of the Republic are about to dissolve the Border in Ireland. The recent rebuilding and reinforcing of the British Army's military Border checkpoints reflects Britain's determination to maintain this Border by force of arms.

The aspiration for change and yearning for modernisation that grips Irish society could be channelled in a positive direction. But the pro-Europeans have the wrong target in their sights. What holds Ireland back is not the obsession with nationalism, but the fact that Irish national self-determination has never been realised. As long as Ireland remains divided, then it will remain stunted economically, socially and politically. If the Irish want to modernise and liberalise their country they should turn their fire on the force that keeps Ireland divided—the British state. ■

THE SOUTH

The limits to liberalisation

Fiona Foster looks at the background to Ireland's abortion debate

'This is no event from the previous century or from the Romania of Nicolae Ceausescu, or the Iran of the Ayatollahs. No, it is much worse. This unbelievable story comes from the EC member Ireland in the year 1992.'

This report in a German newspaper was typical of the international outrage which met the Irish High Court's ruling banning a 14-year old rape victim from travelling to England for an abortion.

The Dutch government called for Ireland to be ousted from the European Community for its backward laws and the British government joined the chorus of condemnation and warned that Ireland may be breaking international law by restricting the right to travel.

A referendum in Ireland in 1983 succeeded in strengthening existing anti-abortion laws by writing a ban on abortion into the state's constitution. This constitutional ban did nothing to stem the flow of thousands of women who travel to England each year to get the abortions unavailable in their own country.

But this 14-year old's case was brought to the attention of the police and subsequently the Attorney-General by her parents who wanted the cops to get the necessary evidence to prosecute a family friend who raped their daughter.

Rare consensus

An injunction was issued stopping the girl from travelling to get an abortion, although the family were already in England. They were forced to return to Ireland and their appeal to the High Court against the injunction was lost. The case sparked an intense and emotive debate which engulfed the whole of Irish society. Rarely had such a consensus emerged around an issue like abortion. The idea of a 14-year old rape victim being forced to bear a child revolted all but the most fanatical 'pro-life' elements of Irish society.

Far from backing its own constitution, the Irish government paid the costs of the girl's parents to appeal to the Supreme Court which promptly overturned the High Court ruling, sanctioned the girl's right to travel in this case and ruled four-to-one that the dangers to the girl's welfare outweighed the right to life of the fetus. Even the 'pro-life' forces had announced their support for the right to travel, abortion only being murder, it seems, when it takes place on Irish soil.

However they denounced the Supreme Court's ruling on the issue of the mother's welfare being more important than the fetus, claiming this would open the way to abortion in Ireland and was in violation of the 1983 amendment which they had helped to draw up.

No abortion here

The Irish establishment was united in its desire to limit the effects of its own constitution by ensuring that Irish women are not prevented from travelling to get abortions. But, despite this apparent support for abortion in certain circumstances, politicians and the majority of Irish people still baulk at the idea of establishing abortion facilities on the island of Ireland.

An *Irish Times* poll in the aftermath of the crisis showed that though a majority favoured amending the constitution to allow women to travel for abortions, a significant majority rejected the idea of abortion in Ireland—even for victims of rape and incest.

The debate revealed that despite a desire on behalf of Irish politicians to present Ireland internationally as a modern European republic, the economic and social realities of life in the Twenty-Six Counties are proving to be a barrier to any real social progress.

It's not only abortion that's banned in the South. There is also a constitutional ban on divorce, and contraception is only available to over 18-year olds and even then only from GPs or certain pharmacists. All male homosexual acts are illegal. A recent court ruling makes it illegal to publish information about abortion facilities and to offer non-directional abortion counselling. A number of women's health books have been withdrawn from public libraries and last year the government banned an issue of *Company* magazine which included a lengthy feature on abortion. Advertisements for abortion services have had to be withdrawn from British magazines sold in Ireland.

Lip-service liberals

Lip-service is paid by politicians to the need to liberalise Ireland's laws. A new government paper on marital breakdown due out soon is expected to contain certain proposals for limited divorce and Fianna Fail has already attempted to reduce the legal age for buying contraceptives.

These attempts to liberalise Ireland's social laws should be seen in the context of the South's attempts to integrate into the much-heralded united Europe. The election of Mary Robinson, the country's first woman president and known for her liberal views on social issues, reflected the strength of support among Ireland's urban middle classes for a move towards a more open liberal society.

Keen to harness this support, the current Fianna Fail-led coalition government has distanced itself from its traditionally conservative roots and attempted to present itself as the initiator of a liberal crusade in Irish society. But how far can the government go?

Unstable state

Though closer links with Europe have an appeal to Ireland's middle classes, they offer little to working class people. Unemployment in the Twenty-Six Counties is now at its highest level since the creation of the state, with 20 per cent of the workforce on the dole. The world recession has threatened Ireland's traditional safety valve of mass emigration and the



The abortion debate has fuelled anxieties over Ireland's backwardness but excused the cause of that backwardness: Britain

country has a debt that, relative to its gross domestic product, is the most costly to service in the whole world.

The vision of European integration has been a cohering factor for the Irish middle class. But Ireland's leaders, torn between the aspiration to nationhood and the reality of subordination to Britain, have little to offer to a disaffected working class. It is the enforced backwardness of a subject nation which prevents them from making any real moves to dismantle socially conservative laws. These social restrictions have been necessary to stabilise the Southern state since its establishment.

Ever since the British set up the so-called Irish Free State, in 1921, the Irish politicians running it have gone from one crisis to another with governments being toppled at a rate of knots. Aware of the instability of their new state, successive Dublin governments have relied on the conservative influence of the Catholic church to stabilise Southern society and act as a barrier to any wider challenge to their rule.

Breaking the link

Sixteen years after the formation of the Free State, the 1937 constitution was drawn up to include the ban on divorce and to lay down the special role of Irish women in the family as a stabilising force in Irish society. The constitution says: 'The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the nation and the State.'

Much as the integration of church and state seem to set Ireland apart from its more modern European partner Britain, the social backwardness of the republic is a direct consequence of British influence. Partition has relegated the Republic to the position of an exporter of foodstuffs and emigrants, while the industrial north was retained for the Empire. The victory of the pro-Treaty supporters of accommodation to Britain consolidated repression and clerical reaction south of the Border. Overcoming those limits to social liberalisation today means breaking the link with Britain. ■

THE SOUTH

Coming to a sticky end



The Workers' Party are putting the Starry Plough back in its shed.

The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe has claimed many victims throughout world politics. National Communist parties have reconstituted themselves, ensured that they no longer have 'communist' in their titles and embraced capitalism as the natural way of things. In Ireland it is the Workers Party which has torn itself apart, having watched the disappearance of its model for socialism. Phil Conner, a republican from Dublin, charts the background to the recent split in the party and explains why he's shedding no tears

The splintering of bourgeois politics in the Irish Republic took a new twist at the end of February with the split in the Workers Party. A majority of the organisation, led by party president Proinsias de Rossa TD (MP), left the party following their failure to get the two thirds majority needed to rid the party of all reference to 'revolutionary tactics', 'democratic centralism', 'Marxism-Leninism' and the embarrassing spectre of the Official IRA, the party's military, disciplinary and fundraising wing.

Shortly after the failure to win the vote at the emergency Workers Party conference, six of the seven TDs resigned from the party and announced the formation of New Agenda: a new party whose politics will be as innocuous as its title.

What's left of the Workers Party is a rump led by the old, tired and confused Tomas MacGiolla TD, ageing Official IRA figures like Sean Garland and Cathal Goulding, and a collection of mafia-type gangsters based in the North.

The political decline of the Workers Party, which up until the early eighties was known as Official Sinn Fein/ The Workers Party, dates from the party's abandonment of the struggle for national liberation in the late sixties and early seventies. This led to a split in the republican movement and the establishment of the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein who have led the armed resistance to British imperialism to this day.

Stalinist influences on Official Sinn Fein took the form of the idea that a united Ireland would only be achieved in stages. In this 'stages theory', reforming the Northern state came prior to uniting Ireland which came prior to establishing socialism in Ireland. But relying on the British state to initiate reforms to the Northern Irish state meant suspending the armed struggle to allow those reforms to be introduced. The logic of this approach meant that, before long, Official Sinn Fein began to see the armed struggle by the Provisional IRA as a barrier to peaceful reform. The Provisionals were labelled murderers and fascists and anti-republicanism became the hallmark of their party.

For their adhesive Easter-lily badges—more user-friendly than the Provisionals pin-ons—the officials earned the nickname 'stickies'.

When, in 1974, a group of left-wing members of Official Sinn Fein led by Seamus Costello left to form the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the Officials started a bloody feud assassinating Costello in Dublin.

In 1982, in an attempt to further distance themselves from anything republican, the Officials dumped Sinn Fein from their title and became simply the Workers Party. Though few members would admit it, the Official IRA was retained as a fundraising and military wing in the North.

By this stage, the party had accepted partition and therefore the legitimacy of the two states created by it. In the South, the Workers Party became a political force by adapting to the prevailing anti-republican consensus that dominated the Republic's politics. They also capitalised on working class disillusionment with the Irish Labour Party which went into government in an anti-working class coalition with the right-wing Fine Gael party. This combination ensured that the Workers Party won seven seats in the 1989 elections to the Dail, the Irish parliament.

The Workers Party was not just reactionary on the national question. It has combined calls for selective internment and censorship of republicans with attacks on dole 'scroungers' and condemnations of striking workers. Workers Party members gained powerful positions in the trade union bureaucracy and in the media, in particular in RTE. Far from using these positions to advance the cause of workers, they condemned the electricity workers' strike in 1990 and crossed picket lines in the recent RTE dispute.

In the Six Counties, where politics are polarised around the national question, the Workers Party have remained a stagnant and marginalised political grouping. Unpopular with nationalists for their pro-British politics, the mere hint of an association with republicanism meant they held little appeal for the Loyalist working class. They are mainly known for the shady activities of the the Official IRA.

While the collapse of the Eastern regimes had exposed the weakness of the Workers Party's model for socialism, recurrent allegations of the party's links with the Official IRA plagued its electoral advance in the South, as well as embarrassing the younger, upwardly mobile and ambitious TDs. The more successful the Workers Party became in the South, the greater their ambition to get their hands on parliamentary power. Just as it had dumped support for the armed struggle in the early seventies, so the majority of the party now called New Agenda sought to dump any connection with socialism.

The prospects for New Agenda are not clear. On the one hand its anti-republicanism has informed a middle class desire to escape the heritage of Civil War politics. On the other hand, denigrating republicanism has a limited life to it.

What made the Workers Party distinctive was that these former republicans had seen the error of their ways and embraced Stalinism. Now New Agenda has seen the error of the Workers Party's Stalinism and embraced—what? The more success the party has in distancing itself from its origins the less distinctive it becomes. Leading member Eoghan Harris drew out the logic of the Workers Party's race to oblivion by leaving before the split—only to join the conservative Fine Gael. ■

Celtic *jihad*

For over two decades now, the US corporate media have unleashed a relentless pro-Downing Street propaganda barrage at those resisting the British occupation of Northern Ireland. They've fluctuated between describing the IRA as some sort of Roman Catholic Hizbollah, engaged in a Celtic *jihad* with equally intolerant Protestant fundamentalists, and portraying nationalist guerrillas as 'apolitical gangsters'. The gangster label took a serious beating, however, during the 1981 IRA/INLA hunger-strike, since traditionally gangsters aren't big on self-sacrifice.

The British security forces have been portrayed as dedicated, even neo-Ghandian, peace-keepers (albeit with NATO weaponry) doing their level best to keep the eternally warring 'mad dogs from the Bog' separated.

Despite all this, there remains a sizeable segment of the Irish-American community that refuses to get with the program *vis-à-vis* Northern Ireland. The latest example of this obstinacy is manifested in the current San Francisco controversy over the annual St Patrick's day parade. At a meeting in January of the United Irish Societies (UIS), the event's sponsor, Sean Murphy of Irish Northern Aid, nominated Brixton escapees Pearse McAuley and Nessan Quinlivan as Grand Marshals (*in absentia,* naturally). The motion passed unanimously, with about 150 in attendance.

Shortly afterwards, opposition started to build from San Franciscans described variously as 'Irish Uncle Toms', 'Irish Judases' and even 'West Britons' (as collaborating Irish gentry were called in the nineteenth century). The core of this opposition consists of strong supporters of San Francisco mayor Frank Jordan. Ex-police chief Jordan was elected mayor in December on a thinly veiled anti-black, anti-left, anti-gay and especially anti-homeless campaign platform. All too many Irish-American and Irish immigrant supporters of the republican movement enthusiastically backed the second-generation Jordan.

The first attempt to 'shoot down' the fugitive IRA guerillas came (according to Andrew O'Hehir, *San Francisco Weekly,* 26 February 1992) at the 11 February UIS meeting when Penny Kenny moved to rescind the January vote, stating that 'the average citizen is going to look at this and just see two terrorists who shot a guy and stole his car. That isn't a political act or a war act; it's a criminal act'. Kenny's motion was ruled out of order by UIS president Danny Boyle.

Kenny also backed Jordan's veto of a January resolution by San Francisco city supervisor Terence Hallinan honouring Joe Doherty and opposing his extradition to the UK. Hallinan, a prominent criminal defence lawyer, who was a Communist Party youth leader in the 1960s, has moved steadily to the right since then. He successfully defended two San Francisco cops accused of kidnapping and seriously beating a former boyfriend of a sister of one of the cops. Nevertheless, he has remained a vocal opponent of British rule in Ireland.

That veto prompted a picket by several hundred outside a post-election fundraiser for Jordan's campaign debt, with even some of the conservative Provo sympathisers denouncing 'Frank' as a traitor. The final attempt to rescind will be made at the 10 March UIS meeting with both the Jordanites and Northern Irish Aid mobilizing for the showdown.

Local battles over Irish affairs have been primarily verbal, though occasionally a little blood has been shed. A recent instance of 'the continuation of politics by other means' came at the 'America Ireland' banquet on 28 February at SF's posh St Francis Hotel.

In early February, John Rowan, departing Irish Consul-General in San Francisco, had stated in a farewell speech that 'the Brits have killed very few compared to the IRA'. Quite a few people took exception to the expression of such blatant pro-imperialist sentiment. One was Joe O'Neill, Belfast-born (as was Rowan), West Coast correspondent for the New York-based *Irish Echo*. After the banquet, Joe confronted Rowan; one thing led to another, and the distinguished Gaelic diplomat launched an act of 'naked aggression' at O'Neill. (Like Neil Kinnock, Rowan reserves his pacifism for pious platitudes aimed at nationalist guerrillas, not as a credo for his private life!) Subsequently, as they say, a melée ensued.

Other combatants joined both sides of this re-enactment of the Irish Civil War, but this time the forces of reaction suffered a decisive defeat. The *coup de grace* was a nasty kick to the balls of Her Majesty's Local Irishman. After he was able to raise himself to about a Cro-Magnon level, he 'manfully' dismissed his intimate injury as nothing more than a 'Belfast kiss' (*San Francisco Chronicle,* 3 March 1992). Whether or not his replacement will be showered with other such love bites from Irish expatriates remains to be seen.

As the US presidential primaries continue to rumble across the land, there's hardly a mention of Ireland. True, there were two descendants of the 'Auld Sod' in the race, Democrat Senator Bob Kerrey and the Grand Old Party's Pat Buchanan—who describes Generalissimo Francisco Franco, Senator Joe McCarthy and his daddy as the three most influential men in his life. Kerrey, (now out of the race) did issue a cursory statement objecting (somewhat) to the extradition of Joe Doherty, but the ongoing war hasn't captured the imagination of Buchanan. If the republican movement were in the tradition of Duffy's Blueshirt fascists of the 1930s (who enthusiastically backed Franco), Buchanan would suffer chronic hoarseness from shouting 'up the IRA!'. But the IRA reflect the secular nationalist legacy of Pearse and Wolfe Tone, so Pat occasionally frets instead about the possibility of a 'North Sea Cuba' [*sic*]. Good. Hopefully someday his nightmare will come true (and then some).

Stan Woods ■

WAR NEWS

British terrorist, by appointment



PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

The trial of British agent Brian Nelson in January 1992, and revelations about his role in organising British death squads in Ireland were expected to end up as 'the Army's Watergate', according to a statement issued by Army intelligence. Instead the trial turned into a whitewash.

Arrested in January 1990 as part of the Stevens inquiry into collusion between Loyalist paramilitaries and the security forces, Nelson acted as a British Army agent and chief intelligence officer for the UDA. He was responsible for arranging the murder of at least 17 nationalists between 1987 and 1989.

In spite of British intelligence's complicity in the killings, there have been no calls from parliament or the press for cabinet ministers to resign—as followed Peter Brooke's rendition of 'Clementine' on television. In the same week as Nelson's trial, John Major paid a special visit to the Six Counties to 'collude' with trial judge and Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, Brian Hutton.

Rather than exposing military intelligence's complicity in sectarian killings, the media have played down the trial. No chorus of liberal indignation was heard when Nelson's work for the security services was made public. No outcry greeted the judge's attempts to stop the facts of the case from being aired. British liberals reserve their criticism for Britain's *past* injustices like the jailing of the Birmingham Six, or even the deaths on Bloody Sunday. No such criticisms are heard of British terror today.

Brian Nelson joined the Loyalist paramilitary group, the UDA, in the early 1970s. His talents were spotted by British military intelligence when he was jailed for an horrific sectarian attack carried out in March 1973, in which a Catholic man was systematically tortured, beaten and electrocuted. On the basis of this 'courageous' act, and his position in the UDA, Nelson was recruited as an Army agent in the late 1970s. After a brief spell away working in Germany, he was brought back to Belfast in early 1987 to act as the Army's main intelligence link with the UDA.

For this Nelson was paid £200 and received £2000 for a deposit on his house. To aid his new assignment, the British helped him buy a taxi for surveillance operations on republican suspects in 'sensitive' nationalist areas. Nelson then combined this intelligence with the files of suspects, given to him by the Army's Special Military Intelligence Unit based at Knock. The aim was to target selected nationalists for assassination.

Take the case of Terence McDaid, mistaken for his brother Declan and murdered in his North Belfast home in May 1988. Nelson admitted handing over the murder to UDA killer Winkie Dodds after at least five discussions with his Army handlers. Similarly, when nationalist Gerard Slane was murdered, Nelson discussed the target 10 days before with Army intelligence. On the day before the hit, Nelson handed over detailed plans of how the killing was to be carried out.

The British hand picked Brian Nelson to eliminate nationalists on their behalf. This allowed his paymasters to sustain their pose as the peace-keepers and upholders of 'law and order' against the 'sectarian' killers of the IRA. This is why the British authorities did a deal with Nelson before his trial—to avoid having their blood-drenched laundry washed in public. In return for Nelson's plea of guilty, 15 of the 34 charges against him were dropped. These included the two murder charges mentioned above and another four conspiracy to murder charges, including one where the target was a Sinn Fein councillor.

Described by the *Independent* as a 'last-minute legal trade off', the deal cut with Nelson means that he can expect to serve no more than four years and eight months of the 101 years aggregate sentence he received at the trial's end. To further their damage limitation exercise, the British authorities—echoed loyally by the servile media—portrayed Nelson as a courageous hero. Judge Kelly declared that the poor fellow had 'submitted himself to constant danger and intense strain' and commended him for passing on 'life-saving information in respect of 217 threatened individuals'.

The fact that Nelson had passed on over 1000 files to Army intelligence for 'safe-keeping', to avoid detection at the start of the Stevens inquiry, was barely mentioned. Discussing the question of legal guidelines for undercover agents, Nelson's character witness, a Colonel J, gave a lesson in the realities of fighting a war: 'In my opinion the guidelines are more appropriate to the criminal fraternity of the East End of London than paramilitary groups'. This follows a long tradition in counter-insurgency warfare, best expressed by the British Army expert, Brigadier Frank Kitson, in the early 1970s. In a fit of frankness, Kitson described the law as 'little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public'.

The Brian Nelson case shows that far from Britain 'colluding' with Loyalist paramilitaries, the British government actually pays these people to assassinate its political opponents. Without British backing Loyalists like Brian Nelson would remain small-time bigots. The use of the term 'collusion' implies that Loyalism has a dynamic independent from Britain and that, apart from the 'corruption' of the security forces, Britain plays a neutral role in Ireland. The Nelson case demonstrates the reverse: the British have created and sustained Loyalist sectarianism from start to finish.

Tell everyone about Brian Nelson. There is no better exposé of the myth that Britain is keeping the peace in Ireland.

Chris Sweeney ■

THE ELECTION

A nation once again?


THE Sun

PRINTED IN SCOTLAND

THE SUN SPEAKS ITS MIND

Rise now and be a nation again

THIS is the time of year when Scotland is the toast of the world. On and around Burns Night, millions drink a proud toast to our country and its people.

WHY SCOTLAND MUST HAVE INDEPENDENCE

SPECIAL ISSUE: See Pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Kirk Williams asks whether Irish freedom fighters and Scottish nationalists have common cause

The *Sun* newspaper, not known for being anti-British has thrown its lot behind the cause of Scotland's independence, enjoining readers—of its Scottish edition at least—'Rise and be a nation once again'. To many this miraculous conversion is evidence of the growing clamour for independence, if only in so far as it is an appeal to an audience of between 30 and 50 per cent of Scots who want to go it alone.

Many Scots feel intense bitterness towards Westminster parties and politicians. Widespread economic collapse and social decline has left many people unenthusiastic about traditional party politics. The Tories are more likely to be counting lost deposits than votes in the coming general election. Labour, which won a landslide victory of 50 seats in the last election, has been unable to oppose Tory policies north of the border. With no alternative on offer, many Scots seem to be endorsing the idea of independence as an untried option.

Anti-colonial struggle?

The possible role of the Scottish National Party (SNP) at Westminster in the event of a hung parliament has drawn comparisons with Ireland. Specifically, the dramatic rise in the fortunes of Sinn Fein in the post-1918 general election, when it won almost three quarters of the seats campaigning on a platform of independence.

How should supporters of Irish freedom in Britain see the demand for Scottish independence? Should we ally ourselves with it? Is there a common cause? Are the Scots, like the Irish, struggling to free their country from colonial rule?

The Irish War in its present phase has lasted nearly 23 years. Through the ebbs and flows of the conflict one thing has remained constant—both sides know that they are at war. Strategies such as SAS assassinations and internment without trial show that the British state is aware that it is fighting a war against the Irish people.

Very different

The situation in Scotland is very different. As the German newspaper *Die Zeit* commented recently, the demand for independence takes place 'without...demonstrations, without pressure from the street and the threat of disordering the British state. Living in Scotland you are struck by the lack of a popular struggle to transform society. What we have is a passive protest that will only show in the opinion polls, not on the street.

Rights not denied

The absence of a movement of mass protest in Scotland is testimony to the broad and deep cynicism felt towards all political parties, even nationalist ones. But it also reflects the different political and social experience of the Scottish and Irish people in their union with England. The union between England and Ireland was forced, whereas a voluntary agreement was reached between the English state and the Scottish ruling classes. A key reason for the passivity of the opposition to Westminster is that Scots have never been denied any democratic rights.The 1707 Act of Union was a marriage of two capitalist states, Scotland and England. It was a mutually beneficial agreement which the Scots voluntarily walked into. They may have lost a local parliament, but through the union they gained entry into the British Empire. The comparison with Ireland could not be more different, since the 1801 Act of Union was imposed by Britain after putting down the rebellion led by Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen with the slaughter of 50 000 people.

Ireland starves

The political oppression that stemmed from the union in Ireland's case was quickly followed by economic domination. Britain pushed aside tariff controls, allowing British goods free entry into Ireland, all but destroying her industry, apart from Ulster and its immediate environment. Ireland became Britain's market garden while Irish people starved.

The Scottish union with Britain had the opposite effect. Tariffs were removed and Scottish goods were allowed free and unhindered access to England and markets across the Empire. While Ireland, America and India all had popular rebellions against British rule, Scotland stayed loyal. There was never any need to plant loyal settlers as Britain did in Ireland. Confidence in Scotland's loyalty extended to allowing institutions such as the Kirk and the legal and educational systems to continue.

No movement

The difference between the two Acts of Union helps to explain why there has never been a popular movement for independence in Scotland. There is no struggle on the streets, there is no denial of Scottish people's democratic rights, there is no army of occupation, and there is no war of liberation.

Even today, it is striking that the movement for independence takes the form of an assertion of cultural differences, a sense of 'Scottishness', rather than a demand for political change. The opinion polls show that support for constitutional change is way down the list of people's concerns—on a par with housing, below the NHS and the economy. You do not need to ask the question on the Falls Road to know that the answer would be very different.

Celebrating accidents

The growth of Scottish nationalism reflects the alienation that Scots, especially younger Scots feel from society. This rejection is more likely to manifest itself in support for bands like Runrig or Deacon Blue than as support for the SNP. It is a result of the weakening of identification with Britain rather than support for Scottish nationalism. It is not a movement to transform society, but the celebration of an accident of birth and geography.

Republicans and supporters of Irish freedom need to take care whom we ally ourselves with. It is important to remember what kind of party the SNP is. SNP members of parliament like Jim Sillars have never opposed the Prevention of Terrorism Act or called for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. The fact that Sillars' Govan office is in the Glasgow Rangers social club is indicative of his political allegiances.

Orange images

During the Malvinas War, SNP president William Wolfe said that Britain could not be subjected to 'the cruel and ruthless dictatorship of a Roman Catholic state'—drawing on Orange imagery to reinforce his commitment to British imperialism. In Ayrshire and Lothian, the Orange lodges are the dominant force in the SNP.

The SNP have long played a leading role in the campaign to 'save the Scottish regiments' from the Tories' defence cuts. Scottish troops have long been a bulwark of British rule in Ireland. Irish people will not soon forget the 'King's Own Scottish Murderers'. With friends like these, supporters of Irish freedom would not need enemies. ■

WAR DIARY

Compiled by Austin Cameron

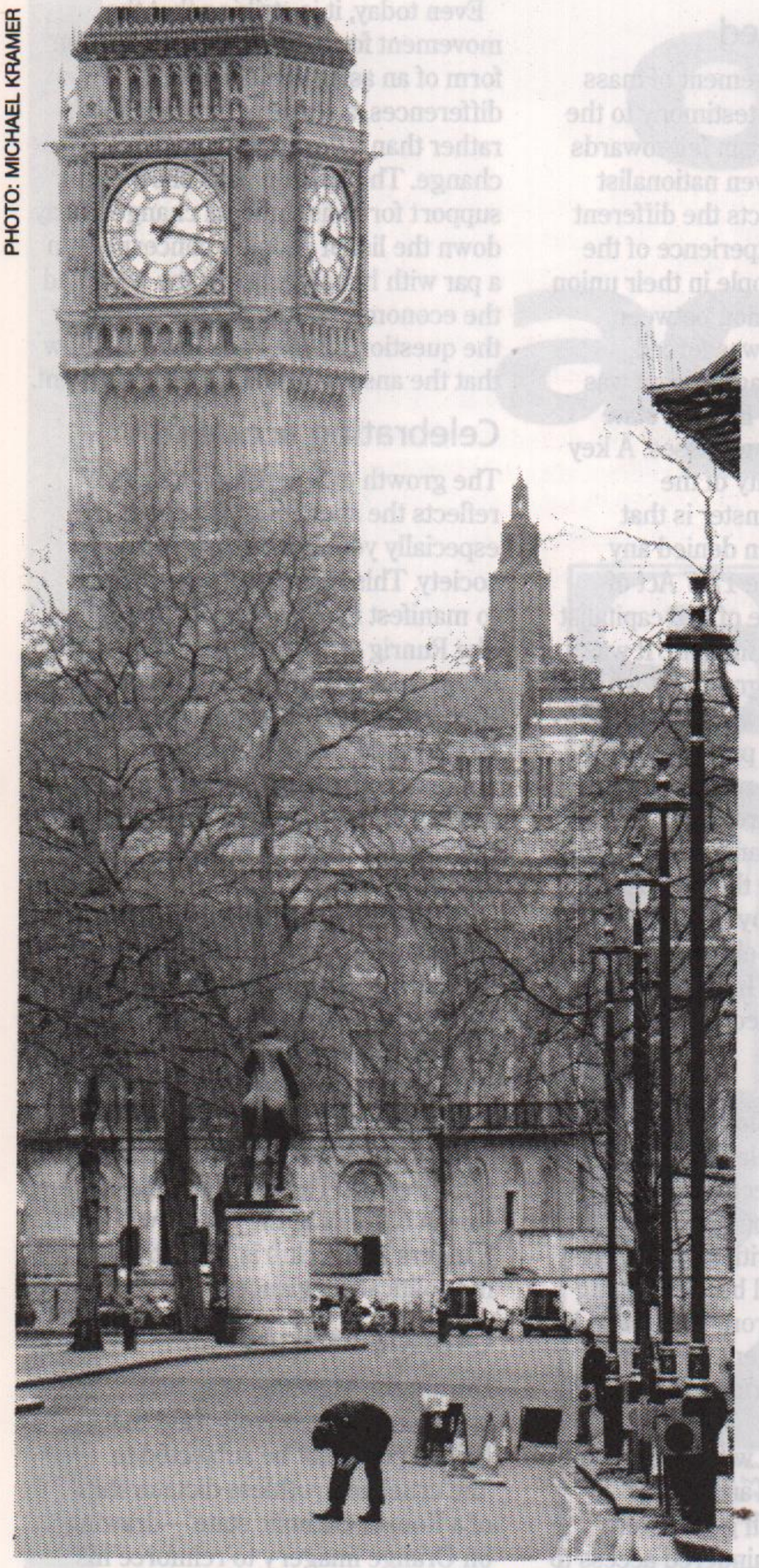


PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

The war in Britain: London at a standstill

Wednesday 1 January IRA volunteers attacked Pomeroy RUC barracks, Co Tyrone, with automatic fire.

Thursday 2 January Incendiary ignited in Textile World store in Belfast. Another found in carpet shop in Newtonards.

Friday 3 January Nationalist Kevin McKearney shot dead by UVF gunman in family butcher's shop in Moy, Co Tyrone. His uncle, John, was seriously wounded. A 10-year old girl in a car outside was also hurt.

Saturday 4 January 5lb bomb dropped on RUC landrover at New Lodge Road, Belfast: several occupants sustained blast injuries. 4lb bomb discovered near Weeton Army barracks, Lancashire.

Sunday 5 January 800lb IRA van bomb devastated Windsor House commercial centre in Bedford Street, Belfast: several RUC personnel sustained minor injuries. IRA volunteers engaged Army foot patrol with 30 rounds of small arms fire in Strabane High Street.

Monday 6 January 500lb IRA bomb caused extensive damage to River House in High Street, Belfast, home of the RUC Police Authority and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

Wednesday 8 January Catholic Philip Campbell shot dead by UDA/UFF gunman while working in his mobile chip van on the M1 near Moira, Co Down.

Thursday 9 January 150lb bomb detonated outside Strand Road RUC barracks in Derry, injuring one soldier.

Saturday 11 January Two people arrested after large arms find in nationalist Westrock area of Belfast.

Sunday 12 January Security forces' 'ring of steel' around Belfast city centre was broken when IRA volunteers placed incendiaries in Next store, causing thousands of pounds worth of damage.
Three men and a woman arrested in Ballymoney, Co Antrim after house searches revealed two rifles, five handguns, several hundred rounds of ammunition, explosives, and timers, believed to belong to Loyalists.
Over 1500lbs of fertilizer-based explosives found in a house in Beechmount area of Belfast.

Monday 13 January IRA's Belfast Brigade attacked covert Army observation post with grenades and gunfire in Twinbrook area of Belfast.
IRA's Tyrone Brigade engaged undercover soldiers with explosives and gunfire in Clogher area.
Catholic Michael Logue was killed by an IRA car bomb in Coalisland, Co Tyrone: the IRA said they had acted on erroneous information.

Thursday 16 January IRA bomb exploded at insurance company in Diamond area of Derry, with a simultaneous explosion at the tax office in Foyle Street. Both caused extensive damage.

Friday 17 January Seven Protestant workers killed and seven injured when the Transit van taking them home from work on the Army's Lisnelly Barracks, Co Tyrone was blown up by an IRA landmine. One of the injured later died in hospital.

Saturday 18 January A West Belfast student was partially crippled when the taxi carrying him was stoned by Loyalists off the Falls Rd, in full view of an Army observation post.
Catholic Ciaran Eliot beaten and hospitalised by a British Army foot patrol in Beechmount, West Belfast.
In Portadown, incendiaries destroyed three stores and seriously damaged two more, causing an estimated £1m worth of damage.

Wednesday 22 January A UDR soldier was shot and injured by IRA volunteers near Castlederg, Co Tyrone.
Two volunteers placed explosives in a bank and a building society in Butcher St, Derry shouting a warning as they left. Both bombs exploded causing damage but no injuries. A third device in a car on the same street exploded 40 minutes later but failed to catch members of Crown forces attending the initial blasts.

Friday 24 January British paratrooper lost a leg in a bomb attack by IRA volunteers in the Falls Road, Belfast.
A 1lb blast incendiary detonated at a branch of Ulster Bank in May Street, Belfast after a warning was shouted by IRA volunteers who placed the device.

Sunday 26 January In Belfast IRA volunteers fired 30 rounds of automatic gunfire at Woodbourne RUC barracks, and 60 rounds at Mountpottinger RUC barracks.
Buses carrying people back from the Bloody Sunday march in Derry were attacked by Loyalists throwing bricks and stones in the city's Waterside area. Several people sustained minor injuries.

Tuesday 28 January The railway line between Belfast's Central Station and Balmoral was closed for days after being damaged by an IRA bomb. Two other bombs caused disruption on the line at Dunmurry.

Wednesday 29 January A UDR man was injured when IRA volunteers scored a direct hit on his vehicle with a horizontal mortar in Lurgan, Co Armagh.
IRA volunteers engaged a joint Army/RUC checkpoint with gunfire in Divis Street, Belfast.

Thursday 30 January Catholic Paul Moran became the fifth nationalist in two years to be killed in Lisburn by Loyalists: he was shot twice with a shotgun on his way to work.

Friday 31 January 500lb bomb detonated outside main post office in Dungannon following a warning.
It was announced that two British soldiers would

face charges for the murder of Fergal Caraher on 30 December 1990 in Cullyhanna.
Incendiaries gutted River Island and Burtons Menswear stores in Belfast.

Saturday 1 February In Belfast two bombs in the Lansdown Court Hotel and two lOOlb car bombs outside the Drumkeen Hotel and Beechlawns Hotel all exploded within 15 minutes of each other.

Sunday 2 February Padraig Cleirigh, a Catholic black cab driver, was shot dead by the UDA/UFF at his home in North Belfast.
A small car bomb exploded outside Dukes Hotel, South Belfast causing minor damage.

Monday 3 February The IRA shot dead Gordon Hamill in Dungannon: he was said to be the UVF finance officer for mid-Ulster.

Brian Nelson, the Army's agent in the UDA/UFF sentenced to 101 years to run concurrently, for a range of offenses. He should serve close on 5 years. Charges of murder had been dropped in exchange for guilty pleas on lesser charges, so avoiding embarrassing revelations in court about the degree of British Army involvement in Nelson's activities in the UDA.

Tuesday 4 February RUC constable, Alan Moore, entered Sinn Fein advice centre in the Lower Falls Road posing as a journalist, and when challenged opened fire with a pump-action shotgun killing three and injuring many others. The UFF claimed responsibility before Moore's body was found in his car in a remote area: he'd died from shotgun wounds. The RUC and press blamed the stress of the job for his actions!

Wednesday 5 February The IRA carried out a grenade attack on H&J Martins building firm on the Ormeau Road, Belfast: despite numerous warnings and attacks, the firm had continued to carry out work for Crown forces. Within minutes of RUC landrovers leaving H&J Martins, two UDA/UFF gunmen entered Sean Grahams bookies over the road and in a five minute period of sustained gunfire killed five men and wounded nine, one critically. They left calmly in a car waiting across the road.
IRA volunteer, Joe MacManus, killed on active service during an attack on an off-duty UDR man near Belleek, Co Fermanagh. The UDR man was injured but returned fire, killing MacManus.
IRA active service unit opened fire on RUC checkpoint in Corporation Street, Belfast.

Friday 7 February An incendiary ignited in the city centre C&A in Belfast: sprinklers caused thousands of pounds worth of damage.

Sunday 9 February The IRA's East Tyrone brigade fired on RUC barracks, Coalisland with assault rifles.
The same brigade fired a horizontal mortar at an armoured vehicle on the outskirts of Dungannon.
In North Antrim, IRA volunteers attacked Portglenone RUC barracks with a mortar.

Monday 10 February It was announced that 600 more troops would be sent to Northern Ireland.
Tuesday 11 February IRA volunteers planted a 5lb bomb in Whitehall on the day John Major met Northern Irish politicians at Downing Street to discuss security: it was defused by Army bomb disposal men.

Friday 14 February In Coleraine, a 31-year old Catholic man was shot and seriously wounded by the UFF while on his way to work.

A 2lb car bomb exploded in Adelaide Street, Belfast. A 300lb bomb in a car nearby only partially exploded, causing injury to 5 RUC officers attending to the first explosion.

Sunday 16 February IRA volunteers Peter Clancy (21), Kevin Barry O'Donnell (21), Sean O'Farrell (22) and Patrick Vincent (20) were shot dead by undercover SAS troops in the churchyard of St Patrick's Chapel, Coalisland as they dismantled a machine gun mounted on a lorry which had earlier been used in an attack on the town's RUC barracks.

Monday 17 February Four RUC members were injured when attacked by IRA volunteers with blast grenades in Belfast's New Lodge area.
The Royal Irish Rangers barracks in Portadown, North Armagh was damaged by a 15lb IRA bomb.
Despite appeals by both Sinn Fein and the IRA that no sectarian retaliation take place after the previous week's slaughter of nationalists, the IPLO shot a 17-year old Protestant, Andrew Johnston, who was working in a video shop.

Wednesday 19 February A Catholic man was shot and injured in the nationalist area of Bawnmore while waiting for a bus to hospital for regular treatment.

A 1200lb IRA van bomb was defused near the courthouse in Banbridge, Co Down following two warnings.

Thursday 20 February Sinn Fein councillor, Gerard McGuigan, his wife and three children escaped unhurt from a UDA/UFF gun and grenade attack on their home in North Belfast.

Friday 21 February A British soldier fired several shots at a car driven by joy-riders as it passed a patrol in Belfast. Although nobody was injured, several bullets passed through windows of nearby houses.

Hoax devices brought Belfast to a virtual standstill, closing a number of railway stations for several hours.

Sunday 23 February In Downpatrick the town centre was brought to a halt after a hoax device was left in a car outside the RUC barracks.

Thursday 27 February A British army checkpoint in Short Strand, Belfast was attacked by IRA volunteers who fired 20 rounds.

Friday 28 February A 2lb bomb exploded in the gents toilet on a platform at London Bridge Station, London injuring 28 commuters, 4 seriously. Claims by security chief, George Churchill-Coleman, that a late and inadequate warning had been received were described by the IRA as 'mischievous'—a 30 minute warning had been given.

Saturday 29 February Oxford St and surrounding areas of London were cordoned off for part of the afternoon following a security alert. Later that day, a small IRA bomb exploded on the steps of the Crown Prosecution Service's office in High Holborn slightly injuring a woman.

Sunday 1 March Early in the morning an IRA bomb was defused on a railway line near White Hart Lane station, London. The Tottenham v Nottingham Forest Rumbelows Cup semi-final was delayed by an hour and a half as police searched the area for other devices.

Whitehall was again subjected to a security alert after an IRA warning of a bomb in the area: it was found in a phonebox and defused.

Monday 2 March The IRA fired 16 rounds at British soldiers as they fortified their base on top of Templer House flats in Belfast's New Lodge.

Wednesday 4 March Catholic lorry driver James Gray shot and killed by UVF gunmen as he returned from delivering stones to a building site near Portadown, Co Armagh.

Thursday 5 March An IRA bomb estimated at around 1000lb devastated the centre of Lurgan, Co Armagh. Several RUC personnel and two women were injured, and several buildings will have to be demolished. Repairs estimated to run into millions.

In Belfast, an IRA bomb damaged an employment agency and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (responsible for all public housing in the North).

Irish Freedom Movement

standing for

Irish Freedom

against

Peter Brooke

BREAKING THE SILENCE

If you live in City of London & Westminster South

VOTE	**ALEX FARRELL**	**IFM**	**X**

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