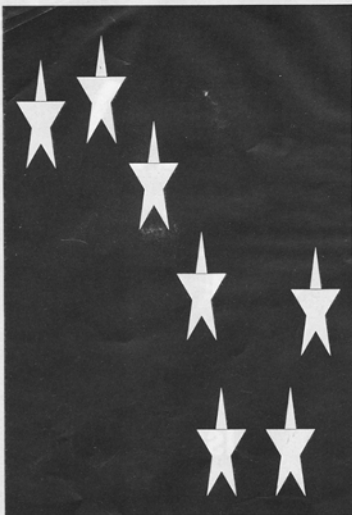


AN CAMCHÉACHTA
**THE STARRY
PLOUGH**

**Volume 1
Issue 2**

***The Theoretical
Magazine of the
Republican
Struggle***





THEME: Protestantism, Unionism & Loyalism

RULES

1. The editor reserves the right to amend contributions where space dictates and to make comments.
2. Pen names may be used so that material can be considered on its own merits rather than on the reputation of the writer. The writer's name must be supplied.
3. Material can be in Irish or in English.
4. Letters must not be longer than two pages of type.
5. Articles not to be longer than four pages of type.
6. Material must be relevant to the theme of the magazine.

Material should be sent to the
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44 Parnell Square,
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AN CAMCHÉACHTA THE STARRY PLOUGH

"Education is an important element in the struggle for human rights. It is the means to help our children and our people rediscover their identity and thereby increase their self-respect. Education is our passport to the future for tomorrow belongs only to those who prepare for it today." — Malcolm X

CHANGING SOCIETY IS A TALL ORDER; changing Irish society with its political, economic, social and cultural structures set in the concrete of partition is a daunting task.

Republicans and other anti-imperialists have measured up to the task they have faced over the last 23 years with fortitude and ingenuity.

The corner-stone of resistance has been our ability to move the struggle onto new terrain, to outmanoeuvre our opponents, to plan ahead and take advantage of situations created by ourselves or unwittingly by our opponents.

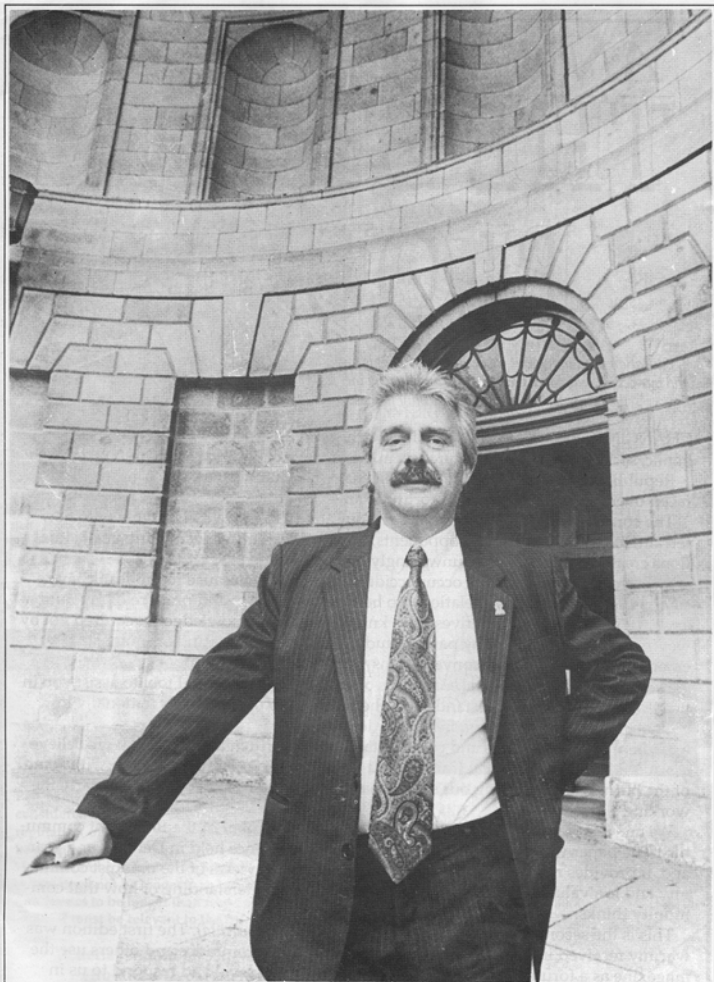
Such imagination does not occur accidentally. It arises because republicans have a clear understanding of the relationship between the theory and practice of revolutionary struggle. That theory derives from knowledge. That knowledge is acquired not by waving a magic wand but by patient study of history, politics and economics. It emerges from debates and conversations with comrades and supporters.

The Starry Plough, (An Camchéachta), is offered as an educational tool to assist you in developing a deeper understanding of the methods to use locally or nationally in advancing towards liberation in its broadest sense.

In this edition comrades and commentators have written articles which we believe assist the process of political training and understanding. The articles deal with some of the burning issues facing our struggle and facing the Irish people, particularly the working classes.

We are very happy to carry a contribution from a member of the Protestant community. The paper was given to a private Sinn Féin conference held in Derry over a year ago. It provides republicans with a rare insight into the views of the unionist community and is a valuable contribution to deepening our understanding of how that community thinks.

This is the second issue of *The Starry Plough (An Camchéachta)*. The first edition was warmly received inside and outside the party. We hope comrades and others use the magazine as a forum for ongoing discussion at cumann level and respond to us in writing.



● Larry O'Toole at the Four Courts in Dublin for the hearing of his challenge to Section 31 censorship of his views as chairperson of the Gateaux striking workers

STARRY PLOUGH INTERVIEW WITH LARRY O'TOOLE: SINN FÉIN, COMMUNITY AND TRADE UNION ACTIVIST

LARRY O'TOOLE has many years behind him of service to the community. He has lived with his wife Anne and three children in Darndale since the estate was built in 1975. Since then he has been involved in a wide variety of work to improve the quality of life in the area, particularly for youth.

He has been to the fore in organising summer projects, community fortnights, and sports activities for groups including Darndale Gaels GAA club. He is Public Relations Officer of the Reopen Darndale/Belcamp Social Club Committee. Larry has been active in Sinn Féin since 1984.

For 24 years a member of the Bakers Union and its executive, Larry was the chairperson of the Gateaux Workers Strike Committee during the four-month strike opposing management wage-cuts and redundancy plans. The courageous fight by the Gateaux workers won widespread sympathy but the callousness of management and the refusal of the government to intervene to save the factory led to its closure.

STARRY PLOUGH: WHAT DID BEING A REPUBLICAN MEAN TO YOU WHEN YOU JOINED SINN FÉIN?

LARRY O'TOOLE: I joined Sinn Féin in 1984 when there was a drive to build Sinn Féin in the 26 Counties. At that time I was still thinking of republicanism as something to do with the Six Counties. Locally I was involved in community work, working with people, not so much protesting as running functions and organising football teams and I was also involved in the Bakers Union. Until I joined Sinn Féin, I never tied in the social and economic issues with the national struggle. But when I joined it became very clear that the struggle had many facets, one of which was the British occupation of the Six Counties, but equally important was the social and economic injustices which affected the people in the 26 Counties which are a direct result of the partition of our country.

SP: WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PROBLEMS WE ENCOUNTER AS REPUBLICANS IN THE 26 COUNTIES?

LOT: I think the main problem we have is getting people to see us as relevant in the 26 Counties. We are doing community work in my area, and people do see this as being relevant but it just seems as though we are more identified with the struggle in the Six Counties. I think this is a problem.

Another problem I found in the local elections was that people were saying that they were going to vote for Larry O'Toole, not Sinn Féin and I thought what happens if there is no Larry O'Toole next election? We have got to get people thinking about the whole struggle. Most people are trying to survive each day, they are not as interested as we are in what is going on in Belfast or even Cork. All they hear is the media putting down the struggle so they don't understand and it's hard for them to understand because they have

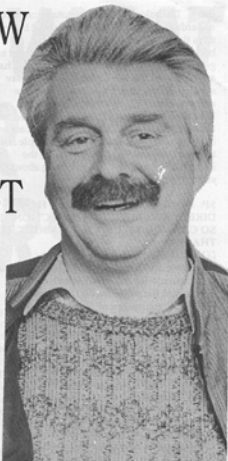


● Larry stood as Sinn Féin candidate in the Arlone constituency in the Local Elections

their own problems. There is a 70-80% unemployment rate in Darndale at the moment so you can understand why people find it difficult to think beyond their immediate problems.

SP: YOU PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE GATEAUX STRIKE — WHAT WERE THE ISSUES?

LOT: It was the last big bakery that was unionised, all the rest of the bakeries had no union or their unions were not really effective, so my opinion was that the management wanted a dispute. They thought that if the dispute went on for a while some people would come back to work and thus water down the union a bit by getting unskilled



workers in. But no one broke.

SP: WHY DO YOU THINK THE WORKERS WERE SO STRONG?

LOT: When a struggle starts you can really pick the committed people out. There were some shop stewards who were great when times were good and they only had to do menial things, but when the strike started they were absolutely useless, they just went sick and never came back. But then some people came forward who had never been active in the union. People organised finance who had never done anything like that before in their lives, people wrote out leaflets, organised marches, dealt with the media etc all these people who had never thought of becoming shop stewards in their life. So in the end it was people who genuinely wanted to keep their jobs that took part in the struggle.

SP: WHAT IS THE SITUATION WITH THE WORKERS NOW SINCE THE FACTORY CLOSED?

LOT: I spoke to some of the stronger workers when I knew the closure was imminent and we were going to be paid off, and I encouraged the ones who had shown their strength during the strike not to just go back to doing nothing again. I wasn't pointing them towards Sinn Féin. Even if they just got involved in tenants associations, unemployed groups, some form of political work but unfortunately this didn't happen at all. What happened was that most of them just drifted away and are really not involved in anything at all. I know of one of them who got heavily involved in a strike that went on in Finglas industrial estate some time after, and at least that was something.

SP: DID YOU GET ANY BACKING FROM THE CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS?

LOT: This was the saddest part of the whole

thing. The bakers' union was totally negative towards the whole strike. After about three days they were kind of bending over backwards to find any kind of a settlement to get us back to work. None of the workers had any confidence in the Congress. They were sending people in to try to undermine the strikers, to do little deals etc. Gateaux got an injunction against picketing which turned out to be useless, the gardai wouldn't even act on it, no one was arrested. But many people felt that the Congress used the excuse of the injunction being there to do nothing about the strike.

SP: DURING THE STRIKE YOU HAD DIRECT EXPERIENCE WITH SECTION 31, SO CAN YOU TELL ME A BIT ABOUT THAT?

LOT: I was elected chair of the strike committee and people saw my job as being a spokesperson for the strike, which early on only meant the paper media. But later on when RTE got interested in the strike and began to do interviews, that's when I was censored under Section 31 because of my membership of Sinn Féin.

SP: DID THE WORKERS SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR RIGHT TO BE THEIR SPOKESPERSON?

LOT: That never became an issue, because there were other people acting as spokespersons. Different radio stations were using specific strikers to do interviews. However, it educated the strikers on the reality of censorship in this part of the country. Recently on *Capital* radio there was a phone in on censorship, and a woman who worked in Gateaux rang in and said that she used to work in Gateaux during the strike and that our views were not put across because of Section 31. I don't think the workers thought about it at the time but at least now if they hear the term Section 31 they know what it means.

SP: MOVING AWAY FROM THE GATEAUX STRIKE, WHAT OTHER ISSUES ARE SINN FÉIN INVOLVED IN IN YOUR AREA?

LOT: Well Darndale is neglected, like all working-class areas. The issues are bad housing, high unemployment, drugs, crime. We are agitating at the moment on the housing refurbishing programme, which is going to take years unless there is a campaign to push Dublin Corporation to complete the work.

SP: RECENTLY SINN FÉIN CONTESTED THE LOCAL ELECTION IN THE 26 COUNTIES. WE INCREASED THE VOTE IN YOUR AREA. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE REASONS FOR THIS ARE?

LOT: The election team was excellent. Without any great talk about it, the whole team just seemed to come together. There was a buzz about the whole thing. We had built up to the election with small campaigns and community work etc. In Darndale the fact that the Corporation was planning to build more houses in the area — which is already a high density area — and we were the ones who exposed this, helped. I worked in Darndale most of the time during the elections but I had a team doing community work etc. in other areas and tying in with me all the time.

SP: SO IN ORDER TO BUILD SINN FÉIN IN THE 26 COUNTIES, DO YOU FEEL WE NEED TO HAVE GOOD LOCAL



● Larry reading a press statement after a meeting of the Gateaux workers strike committee in July 1990 — the strike educated the workers on the reality of censorship

COMMUNITY REPS, WHO ARE RELEVANT TO THE PEOPLE AND HAVE A TEAM AROUND THEM?

LOT: Yes definitely.

SP: DURING THE ELECTIONS DID YOU GET ANY RESPONSE FROM THE PEOPLE AT THE DOORS ABOUT THE NATIONAL QUESTION?

LOT: No. This may seem very negative, but the response we got was, 'Ok, you're doing a great job, I know you've got your views on the North and everything, but we'll put that aside'. People separated the local issues from the national struggle.

SP: HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAN LINK THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC ISSUES WITH THE BRITISH OCCUPATION IN THE SIX COUNTIES?

LOT: There are ways. We need an exchange of views between working-class people in Ballymurphy, Darndale and other areas. So cross-border delegations where people see for themselves what conditions people have to live with, will build real links between working-class people. We also need to highlight the repressive nature of the British occupation by bringing victims of British injustice to my area and other working class areas.

SP: DO YOU THINK WE ARE DOING ENOUGH TO TIE IN THE LOCAL ECONOMIC ISSUES IN WITH THE NATIONAL QUESTION?

LOT: I am worried that we are separating the two issues because it is the easiest thing to do. We do good community work, we work on republican issues like extradition, but we are still unable to tie in the two struggles.

SP: THE PEOPLE WHO VOTED FOR YOU, WOULD YOU SAY THEY WOULD COME OUT ON AN EXTRADITION MARCH NOW OR BUY A/PRN?

LOT: No they wouldn't.

For a while, before Dessie was handed over to the Brits, we had two pickets nearly every night in Artane and in Darndale, but the pickets were only attended by republicans, some of whom might have been republicans already, but no massive turn out of local people. You see that's the problem there, even paper sales didn't work after the election, there was no raise in the sales, like I normally leave ten papers in the local shop in Darndale and after the elections there was no change in that amount. So there is something there, a division. People didn't see the link between voting for me and buying the A/PRN. We need to look at ways of bringing these things together. I don't know if I can throw any light on this, I think that is up to the party, but I do see that by being relevant to people in the 26 Counties you can make gains. Like in the long term people are voting for Sinn Féin — they might be voting for Larry O'Toole, but they are still voting for Sinn Féin.

On the positive side at least they have stepped over that far, before they would have never voted for us but now they're voting for someone who the media portrays as being the 'POLITICAL WING OF THE IRA', so that's a major step for people to make. But still those people didn't show any interest in buying A/PRN. I didn't really mind about that because at least they took the step of voting for us, and if they are willing to go that far, maybe they will be willing to go a little bit further.

Sinn Féin must be seen as a party on the move. People like to support a winner.

PARTITION — WHAT IT MEANS FOR IRISH WORKERS

BY
SEAN
O MEARTHAILE

"In order to defend the legitimacy and the practical advantages of Irish unity, republicans and other socialists need to oppose the campaign to remove Articles 2 & 3 of the Constitution. But that is not enough. We have to present an alternative vision of a united Ireland which will not be dominated by the Catholic or any other church or run by the cabal of crooked and corrupt politicians and businessmen (they are all men) which has been exposed by recent scandals."

Given the conservative ethos of the Irish constitution with its promotion of the rights of private property and its ban on divorce, it is not surprising that many Irish workers would not be up in arms against proposals to change it. And republicans would be among the first to agree that the 1937 Constitution is outdated and a new modern constitution is needed for a new modern Ireland. However, the plans being promoted to change Articles 2 & 3 represent an attack on the very concept of uniting the Irish people and need to be very carefully examined by all who wish to build a new progressive democratic socialist society in Ireland. It may be argued that Articles 2 & 3 are irrelevant to Irish workers in this ongoing economic crisis. But, is the opposite not the case? Is the whole tragic history of the past 70 years, North and South, with mass unemployment, poverty and emigration and social and economic backwardness not a vindication of James Connolly's warnings when partition was mooted in 1914?

CONNOLLY'S PREDICTIONS

Partition was first proposed, against the wishes of both unionists and nationalists, by British Prime Minister Asquith in 1914. Connolly wasted no time in attacking the proposal and wrote in *Forwards* in March 1914: "Such a scheme would destroy the Labour movement by disrupting it. It would perpetuate in a form aggravated in evil the discords now prevalent, and help the Home Rule and Orange capitalists and clerics to keep their rallying cries before the public as the political watchwords of the day. In short, it would make division more intense and the confusion of ideas and parties more confounded."

He dismissed the support for partition by Home Rule MPs Redmond and Devlin (the 1914 equivalents of Haughey and Hume), as the "depths of betrayal" in the *Irish Worker* of March 14th 1914.

Connolly did not relent there. He went on to write a longer piece in *Forwards* of April 11th in which he made clear his fear that partition would be a disastrous setback for the cause of democracy and: "the effect of such exclusion upon labour in Ireland would be at least equally, and probably more, disastrous. All hopes of uniting the workers, irrespective of religion or old battle cries will be shattered and through North and South the issue of Home Rule will be used to cover the iniquities of the capitalist and landlord class."

Just like today, the then establishment, through the press which they controlled, continued to push their partition proposal as the "price of peace" which Connolly angrily termed an outrageous falsehood.

Unfortunately after Connolly's death the labour leadership did not heed his warnings and advice and the labour movement failed to take a clear stand against the partition imposed under threat of "immediate and terrible war" in 1921.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It is not necessary here to go into a long critique of the failed economic entities that are the Six and 26-County states today. The basic facts are depressingly familiar: over 400,000 unemployed, well over one million living in poverty and another million in economic exile. The pertinent question is: did partition have any difference in these dismal statistics and would an end to partition make any difference?

Clearly some of the disadvantages of the Irish economies are directly attributable to the division of the country. These include reduced markets North and South (a CII study this year (6) found that 75,000 extra jobs could be created over five years by more North/South trade alone); duplication of support bureaucrats (IDA/IDB, Bord Fáilte/NITB, etc); the decline of the border areas and of course the hundreds of millions wasted on "border security" every year. Even the New Ireland Forum which was set up to halt the increase in support for Sinn Féin admitted: "The division of the island has been a source of continuing costs, especially for trade and development in border areas, but in general also to the two separate administrations which have been pursuing separate economic policies on a small island with shared problems and resources. The North was not a natural economic or administrative unit and its separation from the rest of the island, resulting in separate approaches rather than a single policy for each sector, without provision even for joint planning or capital investment programmes, had heavy economic penalties. In addition, there has been duplication of effort at official and private level and an absence of economies of scale in the transport, tourism and energy sectors and in the health and education services."

But the broader effects of the southern state's lack of full independence and its dependency syndrome are even more debilitating. Viable taxpayers' money, which should have been used to develop Irish industry, was used to entice foreign multinationals into setting up plants here. As predicted by many socialists and republicans (with some notable exceptions), these multinationals did not transfer modern technology into the Irish economy, but gobbled up grants and tax breaks to set up mainly



● Cahal Daly — has openly called for the removal of Articles 2 & 3

assembly production units and used transfer pricing to create large profits, which were then siphoned out of Ireland. These exported profits, when added to the capital invested abroad by Irish business and interest repayments on the foreign debt, have totalled £4 billion per year for the past three years, which is one fifth of our GNP. If even a fraction of this exported wealth (which is generated by Irish workers) was reinvested in Ireland, it would make a massive difference to our levels of unemployment, emigration and poverty. But this is unlikely to happen while the present partitionist regime with its neo-colonial mentality of dependence on multinationals and the EC handouts remain in control.

It is true that a united Ireland would not necessarily do things differently but it is impossible to envisage any effective challenge to the present right-wing establishments, North and South, as long as partition persists and the working class remains divided. As Ronnie Munck and Douglas Hamilton put it: "Continuation of present trends will almost certainly not meet people's needs in either Irish state. An evolutionary and co-operative reunification by consent would produce tangible, if limited economic benefits. However, reunification on its own is simply not enough and some kind of democratic transformation of the economy would need to occur. The presently underused and misused resources of the Irish economy, North and South, could be unlocked."

SOCIAL PROGRESS?

Has the social development of the two partitioned states in Ireland been any better than their economic performance? Again we do not have to look far for the answer. In the South, divorce is banned,

information on abortion is banned, homosexuality is banned and even non-medical contraceptive sales are limited despite the "new liberalism" of Fianna Fáil and the PDs. There is still much clerical control of education and health with Catholic "ethics committees" in hospitals banning and restricting certain medical procedures such as sterilisation and hysterectomies.

In the North social backwardness also prevails. A current example is the row over the proposal to open a Brook (no relation) Advisory Clinic in Belfast. An unsavoury alliance of SPUC, SDLP, DUP, the Catholic Church and the Free Presbyterian Church is opposing this sex advisory service for young people. Add in the "Save Ulster from Sodomy", in the late 70s early 80s, the censorship of films like *The Life of Brian* and the ban on playgrounds opening on Sundays and it is clear that Connelly's predicted "carnival of reaction" is in full swing on both sides of the border.

The question is: would this situation change if partition was ended? One way of answering this is to look at the most reactionary elements in Ireland and their stance on Articles 2&3. The most conservative leaders in the Catholic Church such as Cahal Daly and Bishop Newmann have made it clear that they wish to preserve their little Catholic-dominated state in the South. Daly has openly called for an end to Articles 2 & 3 as have the Jesuits who play a major role in preserving social and economic inequality in the south with their exclusive private schools. They are supported by the most right-wing politicians in the South like Pat Cooney and Brendan McGahon, who have been leading opponents of social liberalisation, republicanism and socialism. In the North the same link exists between anti-republicanism and social reaction with Paisley and his party and the conservative Catholic wing of the SDLP as represented by Eddie McGrady being prime examples.

In a divided Ireland where the Catholic Church dominates in the South and Protestant fundamentalism flourishes in the North, there is little chance of social progress. But in a united country the Catholic Church would not be in the same dominant position (if only because of the one million Protestants and the fact that a large portion of northern nationalists do not heed Catholic clerics preaching) and

new Ireland would be genuinely secular. Protestant fears, which provide a fertile ground for fundamentalism, should be greatly reduced. Robert Heatley forecasts that: "new political alliances would develop in a United Ireland. Social and class lines would develop and this, if it was to be true to its nature, would mean a huge stride forward in terms of democratisation. The tens of thousands of dispossessed, North and South, Protestants and Catholics, the jobless, the low paid and the emigrants could at last begin to get their democratic rights as citizens. This new situation would release the long suppressed radical potential of the Protestant people."

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS?

Most socialists, trade unionists and other progressive people would agree that there has been many restrictions on democratic and human rights in Ireland over the past 70 years and there are numerous Amnesty International reports to verify that.

In the North there has been a constant "State of Emergency" since 1921 when the B-Specials backed pogroms against Catholic residents and workers. This continued on and off up to the start of the civil rights campaign in 1968 when the RUC again led vicious assaults on defenceless marchers. The catalogue of repression since then is a long one, a small sample of which includes the RUC-led pogroms in 1969, internment, Bloody Sunday, plastic bullets, police torture, shoot-to-kill and British forces collusion with loyalist death squads (which is reminiscent of South Africa and El Salvador). It has been argued that these acts of repression are only a response to the IRA's armed campaign but it should be remembered that in early 1969, 69-year-old Samuel Devenerney was battered to death in his own home in Derry

and 65-year-old Francis McCloskey was beaten to death at his front door in Dungiven. These were the first victims of the "troubles" and were perpetrated by the RUC long before the IRA fired a shot. This restarted the cycle of repression and resistance which is unlikely to end while partition continues.

The South is no great bastion of human rights observance either. As in the North there has been "emergency legislation" on the statute books since 1921. One element of this legislation, Section 30 of the Offences Against the State Act, is used to stop, search and arrest anyone the police chooses. It has been used against Birmingham Six protestors, anti-Ronald Reagan demonstrators and to falsely imprison innocent people like Nicky Kelly, Oscar Breathnach and Brian McNally. Another element, Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act, has been used to ban elected politicians, elected trade union and strike committee spokespersons and to jail and sack journalists. As a result, a whole ethos of censorship has evolved which prevents most people in the South from hearing about much of the routine repression in the North. When we include the discrimination against women and Travellers, the banning of "immoral" books and films, the removal of pages from imported women's magazines and the prosecution of record stores for selling of condoms, it is clear that civil liberties are also restricted in southern Ireland. Again, it is not possible to "prove" that, if partition had not been imposed, there would be more democratic and less repressive ethos but it is clear that much of the violations of human rights derive from the artificiality and insecurity of both partitioned states.

Of course, the imposition of partition against the wishes of a majority of the Irish people was itself a denial of democracy. Those trying to get rid of Articles 2&3 claim that the unionists are a majority in a part of Ireland so the Six counties should be partitioned. But why these six counties? Why can the nationalist majority in Fermanagh and Tyrone (or West Belfast, Derry, South Armagh or South Down) not also be allowed to self-determination? The logical extension of partition is repartition but this would be such an economic and political nonsense that no one, except Conor Cruise O'Brien, would propose it as a solution. And the arguments put in favour of dropping Articles 2 & 3 are the same as those put by the far right in South Africa in favour of partition there.

CONCLUSIONS

Republicans do not claim that a united Ireland would automatically lead to an improvement in the economic, social and democratic life of the Irish workers. On the contrary, we would be opposed to simply "joining Northern Ireland with the Republic" as it is often put in the opinion polls, to form a 32 county Free State with the same discredited system that rules the South today. What republicans are very definitely saying is that an end to the artificial division of the country is a necessary prerequisite to the radical transformation of Irish society that is needed to give hope to the jobless, the poor, the emigrants, women and all those who are marginalised and disadvantaged by the present failed system. Even the New Ireland Forum, which was set up to oppose Sinn Féin had to conclude: "Partition and its failure to provide political stability have resulted in extra costs in many sectors and have inhibited the socio-economic development of Ireland, especially in the North. Division has had an adverse effect on the general ethos of society and has contributed to a limiting of perspective, North and South. Had the division not taken place ... the people of the whole island would be in a much better position to benefit from its resources and to meet the challenges that face Irish society, North and South, towards the end of the 20th Century."

Over the past year there has been a concerted effort by



● The 26 Counties is no great bastion of human rights — 'emergency' legislation is used routinely to stop, search and arrest anyone the police chooses

conservatives and some who claim to be on the left of the political spectrum to get Articles 2 & 3 deleted or amended. It is perfectly understandable why those with wealth, power and influence in the present set-up should try to maintain their relative privileges by copper-fastening partition. What is perplexing is why self-proclaimed socialists should try to maintain a system which has resulted in so much poverty, misery and division for working people, North and South. This paradox is well described by Andrew Boyd: "The political entity known officially as Northern Ireland was created by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act which partitioned Ireland, leaving the six north-eastern counties under an Ulster Unionist government. That this so-called experiment in devolution has been a failure economically, politically and constitutionally has been admitted even by British Cabinet Ministers and senior civil servants, but it would be virtually impossible to get many trade union members in Northern Ireland to admit likewise... yet the partition of Ireland, apart from its many other undesirable consequences, has been a most serious obstacle in the way of trade union progress and development."

In order to defend the legitimacy and the practical advantages of Irish unity, republicans and other socialists need to oppose the campaign to remove Articles 2 & 3 of the Constitution. But that is not enough. We have to present an alternative vision of a united Ireland which will not be dominated by the Catholic or any other church or run by the cable of crooked and corrupt politicians and businessmen (they are all men) which has been exposed by recent scandals. This new vision should be based on the principles of maximum decentralisation of power, economic equality and 'freedom of information and should incorporate a Charter of Human Rights based on the UN charter. Republicans must also listen to the views of all genuine progressive groups and individuals on how best to achieve this democratic socialist republic.

REACTIONS TO SINN FÉIN POLICIES IN THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY

The purpose of this short paper is to discuss some issues related to the impact of Sinn Féin policies and strategies in the Protestant community. It is partly based on a study during 1986-1988 of a loyalist community on the east bank of Derry or Londonderry as they prefer it to be known, and partly on my general perception of unionist thinking. Before dealing with specific issues I want to make three general points.

Firstly, one can be interested in the views of opponents for two reasons. One is to understand in order to take their views into account. The other is to understand only enough to deal with their oppression or to find ways of undermining their position. Sinn Féin itself has been treated in this way, and knows what it feels like. In writing this short paper I am mindful of both these possible interests of the reader. I have written it for those who genuinely want to understand, and do not see it as part of my task to give an account which undermines Protestants' positions. It is in any case a doubtful tactic to strip away opponents' arguments and take advantage of their weaknesses, because any attempt to undermine a group may provoke a much more aggressive reaction. Peter Marris in his book *Loss and Change* makes the point that "The more nakedly people are exposed to the anxieties of change, the more uncompromisingly they will try to erect protective barriers."

Secondly, there are severe limitations on Sinn Féin's ability to influence the perception of their policies and strategies by Protestants. Firstly they do not distinguish different strains of nationalist thinking, often lumping together Sinn Féin and the SDLP. The way Protestants view Sinn Féin's statements and actions are determined by their existing assumptions about Sinn Féin, and in so far as they can think about the implications of new Sinn Féin initiatives, they come to an understanding of what it means through interaction and sharing of views within the Protestant community. In this context, usually the only opinion expressed is the prevailing traditional one that

"Protestants feel they belong in Ireland, though they also feel that their sense of belonging is challenged by Republican rhetoric which does not take account of them. They do not want to leave, but they also fear being submerged in a Catholic state."



● The Protestants of Derry are acutely aware of their minority position in the city

Sinn Féin is the enemy of the Protestant community. Sinn Féin do not have ready access to the community to express their policies formally with Protestants groups. Statements in the newspapers and on radio and television are too impersonal, even if they were not operating under the media ban restrictions. The most powerful evidence of Sinn Féin policies for the Protestant community are the actions of the Irish Republican Army. Whatever the intention behind their military campaign, for Protestants it makes a simple and striking statement about their attitude to Protestants. It is a blunt statement which cannot communicate all aspects of the thinking behind the campaign, and may not in fact represent Sinn Féin strategy but Protestants are satisfied that it does.

Thirdly it may be hard to have sympathy for the concerns of Protestants if you are a member of the majority community in Derry which feels that wrongs have been done to it by the Protestant minority. This paper is not an attempt to try to justify the past actions of Protestants which may have limited the opportunities available to Catholics, but aims to understand the concerns of

Protestants which explains their behaviour in the past and still influences how they view the present situation. It is also necessary to remember that many of the current leadership of the Protestant community state that they too were excluded under the old County Borough authority, and do not accept responsibility for its actions.

PROTESTANT CONCERNS

Protestants are predictably concerned about security issues, employment and material well-being. But an underlying feature of their thinking since the 17th Century has been the fear of being overwhelmed by the Catholic community, so that they would lose their specific characteristics and culture. This has been especially strong in the Derry area because of the important symbol of the Siege of Derry, which promotes the idea that one has to defend one's beliefs against a hostile world. In addition Protestants in Derry have been aware of their minority position, especially since Catholics became the majority in the city in the 19th Century. For some this has a religious dimension because they feel the maintenance of Protestantism is essential for the religious

instruction and eternal welfare of their descendants. For most it is more simply a concern to maintain the future of themselves and their group.

This outlook is not exclusive to the Protestant community, and probably occurs in any situation where two or more groups are in conflict. It means that many Protestants have found it difficult to pay attention to the concerns of the other section of the community in the same way as the grievances of the Catholic majority have made it difficult for some of them to take note of the feelings of Protestants. This explains the significance attached to the name of the city. It is not just a question of Protestants wanting to have their own way. While the Catholic population wanted to reassert the Gaelic roots of the city in reverting to the name Derry, for Protestants it appeared to symbolise a wish to remove them from the city. Protestants said if they take the London out of Londonderry, do they want to take the Protestants out as well?

Protestants feel they belong in Ireland, though they also feel that their sense of belonging is challenged by republican rhetoric which does not take account of them. They do not want to leave, but they also fear being submerged in a Catholic state.

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS FOR PROTESTANTS

For Protestants the last 20 years have been a period of retreat and withdrawal. They do not visit the city and take part in activities there very much, though perhaps they cross the bridge more than they admit. There are few Protestants left living on the Cityside, apart from the small Fountain estate. Many feel they were forced out, either physically or psychologically. Many of the rest feel that they were offered no part in the life of the community and went elsewhere. This last point is quite important as many Catholics do not understand why Protestants feel excluded. They say Protestants are welcome but they too have to make an effort to get involved. However, being ignored is as demoralising as being attacked.

The withdrawal from the life of the city, is paralleled by the loss of political power. The parliamentary seat is now solidly in the hands of the SDLP, and the Unionist parties hold only one third of the City Council seats. While the present system more accurately reflects the population of the constituency, one should not underestimate the concerns and worries which motivate Protestants to try to keep control, and which now make them fearful of their place in the city in the future.

These fears were compounded by the Anglo-Irish Agreement which seemed farther to erode Protestant influence and increase the influence of the Dublin government. The loss of Protestant privileges and status may seem minimal to unemployed members of the Catholic community, but to Protestants they seem very substantial shifts in influence. Many government spokespersons and other commentators and politicians tried to reassure Protestants that they had been offered guarantees, and that their material position had not been affected. But these comments miss the reason for Protestant concerns, which are more to do with losing control of their situation. This explains why in the past they always tried to guarantee their position by retaining in their own hands control over their situation. This reassured even those Protestants who



● The Guildhall, Derry

themselves had no influence or power.

The loss of power has been reinforced by the inability of Protestants to be able to change the situation. Because they relied on maintaining control, they have little experience of methods of cooperation and persuasion in dealing with opponents. When they lost their power they mainly persisted using the traditional tactics and were unsuccessful. One exception in Derry was the willingness of some unionist councillors to enter into power-sharing arrangements in the 1970s and from the middle of the 1980s. But many Protestants have been unhappy with such cooperative tactics and it is important to understand why. They fear that they would become token representatives of the Protestant community with no actual influence. It does not matter if the council has a unionist, or indeed a Sinn Féin Mayor, as the SDLP can always outvote the other parties if it wishes. Even more worrying is the danger that in cooperating one will make compromises and deny one's traditions so that they are gradually eroded and the community as a distinctive community will be marginalised or even disappear. This concern is common in other similar situations and it means that any effective system of cooperation must include mechanisms which protect adequately the basic rights of all interests.

However, the more common reaction to the loss of power has been confrontational. There has been a rejection of politics, most dramatically demonstrated in the boycott of the council from 1985. But at the same time there was an awareness that withdrawal meant that

Protestant interests were not being looked after. For some this was the necessary price to be paid for demonstrating their separateness and their rejection of the present system. The public demonstrations and protests were also part of the strategy. Some were directed against members of their own community such as the Independent Unionist councillors, who were seen as traitors splitting unionist unity. Most widespread were the protests against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is worth noting that the terms of the Public Order legislation in 1987 did not provoke much concern in the community, but the fact that it was seen as a product of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and Dublin influence became the basis for the protests. It may seem that all these forms of protest were unlikely to succeed, but the impact of their failure has been quite profound and has left Protestants feeling even more threatened and insecure.

Given the insecurity it has not been easy for Protestants to reassess what their interests are, and they have maintained their traditional commitment to the United Kingdom as their best defence, but they have been forced to reassess how they can look after their interests. It is too early to say yet if the experience of cooperation in the council, or the participation in the political talks will confirm for them that there is nothing to fear from accommodation and cooperation, and that these are more effective ways to project their interests. If the talks break down in acrimony it is likely they will fall back on more intransigent positions which will be a block to other development in the

near future. It therefore follows that Protestant involvement is preferable to the prospect of their complete withdrawal. This must create a dilemma for Sinn Féin since at one level they will not want the talks to achieve a new internal settlement, but it may be helpful if Protestants' representatives have a positive experience of negotiating with representatives of the Catholic community.

IMPACT OF SINN FÉIN

The developments discussed in the last section are the most significant issues for Protestants, and this means that the policies, statements and actions of Sinn Féin on social and economic issues are of only secondary importance for them, apart from how they affect the basic Protestant concerns. In so far as Protestants take account of republican thinking and the armed struggle, it confirms that the most common Protestant analysis is correct: that the aim is to remove Protestants from Ireland, and the only possible response is to resist. There seems to be three main interpretations. One is that republicans are evil terrorists who do not believe in law and order, but seek to undermine the stability of society. In so far as republicans say they want to overthrow the present state in Northern Ireland and revolutionise the Irish state, they give support to such a view. The destruction of property and businesses, and the killing of the representatives of the forces of law and order are seen in that light. The nature of the guerrilla campaign means that attacks can only be made by ambush, often when the targeted individuals are off duty. While republican supporters are aware of the risks involved, from a Protestant perspective the attackers are seen as cowardly and there is no respect for them as brave idealists. Many would support a shoot to kill policy, and there is little sympathy when IRA members are killed by the army or police in the course of an operation.

A second interpretation is that republicans are actively hostile to Protestants. In this regard the killings of policemen increase the resistance of the Protestant community. It does not matter how clearly the IRA say that the reason policemen are legitimate targets is



● A loyalist protestor outside the Hillsborough summit

because they are representatives of the security forces, the individuals concerned are part of networks of kin and family who could never see them as part of an oppressive military machine. Attacks on British soldiers do not always cause the same sense of personal attack, but nonetheless they are seen as attacks on protectors of the community.

The third explanation is that republicans do not care about Protestants. Accidental killings are seen as avoidable. Apologies cause anger because the possibility of an accident should have been foreseen. Most Protestants are not aware of the republican analysis of the situation which sees the removal of Britain from Ireland as the priority, and argues that Protestants cannot analyse the situation correctly because of the British presence. This position does ignore the views and concerns of Protestants and they are acutely aware of a sense that the republicans do not care about them, especially as they are a target of the military campaign.

So the armed struggle increases the opposition and determination to resist, and increases the pressure on the British government not to give way to republican demands.

Paradoxically, the strategy of trying to obtain British withdrawal without reference to

the Protestants increases Protestant pressure on the British to stay. The armed struggle also provides a justification for Protestant violence. The level of support for Protestant violence shifts with the prevailing situation and many people are quite ambivalent about it in the same way as there is ambivalence in the Catholic community towards republican violence, but certainly republican violence increases support for reprisal attacks.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SINN FÉIN

What are the implications of all this for Sinn Féin? It should be clear that the Protestant community has major concerns about which Sinn Féin can do little. The move to a more just and equal society is a painful process for the Protestants because they lose both political and economic advantages. As a result they resist change and are worried that the balance will tip the other way so that they become irrelevant and discriminated against. The difficulty is partly that people may not want to help the Protestants to adjust. It can be argued that they were not very concerned about the Catholic population in the past. It has already been suggested that such an attitude may not only be unfair to Protestants but is also not very helpful to progress, because Protestants may not be able to stop the process of change but they can frustrate attempts to create a more united community.

So republicans have to decide if they are genuinely interested in cooperating with Protestants. If they are interested, there are two other problems for republicans. The first is making their voice heard over the noise of the armed struggle and in the context of the established assumptions that Republicans are opposed to Protestants. Any attempt at accommodation needs direct communication, and the present opportunities are limited, though one should not underestimate the influence of debate in the Councils. After unionists returned to the Council, one unionist councillor said during one meeting that he could not understand the Sinn Féin members' position. He expected them to be taking a traditional anti-unionist line and they were not doing this. He assumed they were playing some kind of subtle game. Regular contact of this kind would provide an opportunity to test out the meaning of Sinn Féin strategies.

The third difficulty is that co-operation involves respecting the other group. To conclude with another quotation from Peter Maris, "even the most honourable intentions can be profoundly alienating if they assume the identity of those they seek to help and tell them what their lives should mean. The presumption is, I think, more intimately threatening than indifference or hostility, and is bitterly resented. To be told the meaning of your life by others which are not yours, implies that your existence does not matter to them." Republicans have been treated in this way and have "bitterly resented it". This may help them to be sensitive to the possibility that they might treat Protestants in the same way, yet in any experiences of contact between the Republican Movement and Protestants the impression has been left that the republican participants were trying to tell the Protestants what they should think or to understand how they might influence Protestants to see things their way. What Protestants need is for their views to be taken seriously and incorporated in any solution. Is the Republican Movement willing to do this?



● Sinn Féin statements and actions on social and economic issues are only of secondary importance to Protestants

A DERRY PROTESTANT

PROTESTANTISM, UNIONISM AND LOYALISM



"The republican quarrel is with the British state in Ireland and the truth is that we cannot and should not ever try to coerce the Protestant people into a united Ireland, we must convince them of the rightness of our cause and the benefits accruing to them from advocacy of our cause."

● The unionist people of the Six Counties have a sneaking fear that Britain has subtly and deceitfully initiated a withdrawal timetable

Since the signing of the Hillsborough Accord, Unionists have been confused, resentful and fearful. Despite all the claims from British ministers that the union is now guaranteed in perpetuity, the unionist people in the Six Counties have a sneaking horror that fine though these words may be, that there is a secret scenario, that in reality Britain has subtly and deceitfully initiated a withdrawal timetable.

There are those within the Protestant community who accept that they have been sold short as a people by their historic dependence on Britain. As a people who for 50 years did not have to justify their actions to anyone they now find themselves wracked with fear and self-doubt, feverishly seeking solace in the old certainties of the past while wildly looking all round them for any or some means of asserting their validity as a nation. Witness their latest searches among Irish pre-history for sagas and stories to prove their own separateness as a people; they are the 'Cruithin', the original inhabitants of Ireland. They, and not the native Irish, are now the 'Dispossessed'.

The historical ambivalence points up a contemporary ambiguity between unionism and loyalism. Are they one and the same or is one an unacceptable version of the other? It is too simplistic, indeed it is simply wrong to define

militant grassroots loyalism as a lower-class populist Protestantism. Over recent years we have seen the involvement of 'respectable' sections of the Protestant population in the procurement of arms and the organisation of armed groups. Vanguard, Tara, the Third Force, Ulster Resistance are all examples of the Protestant people of 'property' in action.

Why then do substantial proportions of any community seek solutions in arms? Traditionally, Irish nationalists and republicans have sought to assert their Irishness, their independence, and their separateness in armed struggle with the British. Ironically, in this century, it was the unionists who first defied the might of the British empire with the formation of the UVF, and Carson was the first to show that the British government were amenable to force while intransigent to dialogue. After the creation of the Six-County statelet, unionists did not have any great necessity to resort to arms in a thorough going extra-legal fashion. All the coercion that was needed to keep the nationalists cowed was supplied by the regime in Stormont.

The rise of the Civil Rights Movement, and the reemergence of militant republicanism, shattered the myth of the unionist monolith and after the fall of Stormont in 1972 the whole edifice flew apart in all its contradictory fragments. Paradoxically, Britain's more public, sustained and open involvement in Irish politics, the introduction of Direct Rule, sent the unionist people into a paroxysm of panic. A people who had, for almost 50 years, employed every repressive discriminatory, and dehumanising method to ensure their total domination of the state, became with the

flourish of a British politician's pen, a beleaguered community, surrounded by a sea of Rebellion, militant Catholicism, and even Marxism. The nationalist population, for decades the wretched of the North, were portrayed as an awful threat to the stability and prosperity of British 'Ulster'. Unionism's inability to come to terms with what was happening led inexorably to the onslaught of a loyalist sectarian slaughter that has been an unchanging feature of life here for the past 20 years.

It is a myth, and a myth much bandied about by people who should and do know better, that loyalist violence is a direct result of republican violence. Loyalism may on occasion respond to outside pressure but to deny loyalism a life and a virulent life of its own at that, is to deeply misunderstand the nature of the beast. From the foundation of the northern statelet, loyalist gangs have asserted themselves in the only way they know how. From the massacre of families in the '20s to the massacre of families in the '90s there is little difference to be seen. The Shankill Butchers were not inspired by any supposed IRA operations, and neither were they the mindless psychopaths that many liberals in Ireland would so describe them. The mutilation of corpses strikes as one of the most primitive beliefs in humankind and the terror that such actions would induce was very much understood by the gang and its leaders. As Farrell has pointed out, referring to the emergence of sectarian strife after the creation of the Six Counties: "Unionist leaders were finding that, having used discrimination and loyalist supremacism to establish their state, they could not dispense with them

overnight. Orangeism and Loyalism had developed a dynamic of their own and Craig wasn't prepared to challenge them. It would not be the last time an Orange backlash would wreck attempts to stabilise the northern statelet by concessions to the northern minority, or to the South."

Since partition, loyalist sectarian campaigns have been a recurrent feature of life in the North. These campaigns have often been mistakenly described as 'Tit for tat' but that is seldom the case. It may be a convenient label for lazy politicians and commentators but it contributes to the general lack of understanding of loyalism and posits a spurious *raison d'être* for the death squads. History teaches us that loyalist military action is never solely a direct response to IRA actions. On occasion there may be an overlap but in general it is fair to say that loyalism has its own agenda and that the main items on that agenda are the terrorising of the Catholic community and the sending of violent signals to the British government not to tamper with the union. There is little doubt that present-day loyalist gangs have become much more professional, more politicised and more durable. They do have better access to official intelligence files and have obviously spent a number of years deliberately modelling their military organisations on the IRA.

This should not be seen as either a startling or a radical advance. To ascribe this professionalism solely to the shadowy influence of British Intelligence is however incorrect. Loyalist gangs have, on occasion, been infiltrated and directed by agents of the British state. And there is little doubt that they have been aided periodically by supporters in the South African Intelligence services. As far back as the early 1970s we have evidence of that collusion — from Ginger Baker and the Military Reaction Force episodes to the Brian Nelson case and the later instances involving the supply of sophisticated missile technology to South Africa. The recent admission by the loyalist gangs that they are receiving a steady flow of secret information from the British Army, UDR, and the RUC, should come as no great surprise to anyone who examines the methodologies of these gangs. The RUC and the UDR are overwhelmingly recruited from the Protestant community and see themselves not so much as preserving peace and order as preserving the community with which they equate stability. British Intelligence can provide information, can facilitate operations, and can create conditions in which British government strategies can be introduced, be they further oppressive measures or 'political initiatives', without any great examination of their wider implications.

While the control of loyalist gangs may be of assistance to the British and has been a constant in British policy here, there is ample evidence that the British cannot fully control the monster that they have created. They can oversee selected operations against identified republicans and nationalists, as has been exposed time and time again, but they have no ability to dampen down the sectarian rampages when loyalists fuelled with religious hatred stalk the streets and lanes of the Six Counties.

There have been occasional forays into the 26-County state, but these have tended to be sporadic, either British-inspired and directed, with very specific purposes, eg the Dublin/Monaghan bombings in the early 1970s, or very discriminative, such as the assassination of Eddie Fullerton, an act

designed to show their military prowess. There is every indication that loyalist groups may attempt to resurrect that cross-border campaign but there are politicians within loyalist ranks who are aware that such attacks may in fact be counter-productive, alienating the support they are now enjoying in constitutional nationalist establishment circles.

In a document presented to a Sinn Féin conference by a Derry Protestant who sought to explain the rationale of unionist thinking, it is stated, "These fears (of the Protestant community) were compounded by the Anglo-Irish Agreement which seemed further to erode Protestant influence and increase the influence of the Dublin government. The loss of Protestant privileges and status may seem minimal to unemployed members of the Catholic community, but to Protestants they seem very substantial shifts in influence. Many government spokespersons and other commentators and politicians tried to reassure Protestants that they had been offered guarantees, and that their material position had not been affected. But these comments miss the reason for Protestant concerns, which are more to do with losing control of their situation — the loss of power has been reinforced by the inability of Protestants to be able to change the situation. Because they relied on maintaining control, they have little experience of methods of cooperation and persuasion in dealing with opponents."

Some would claim that such considered arguments are merely a coded response to those who would claim that the unionists have brought all their woes on themselves, that their violence, their discrimination, their racism and their intransigence have created the situation in the North and that as instigators they not only are responsible but in many ways deserve what is now happening to them — the 'rub it up them' approach to politics that is evident not only in republican circles but in the wider nationalist community on this island. But that attitude does nothing to resolve the problem and in effect helps to prolong it.

We republicans must ask (and answer) the question, 'What are unionists afraid of?' The unionists

for their part have provided clear indications that they would say catholicism, republicanism and nationalism, in that order. There is also the understandable if seldom expressed fear that they will be treated in any new arrangement in just as cavalier a fashion as the unionists have treated the nationalist minority. In this they do not differentiate between Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the various southern parties. The unionists quite correctly demand civil and religious liberty, yet have done their best to extinguish it in political and social life in the North, just as their reactionary counterparts in the South have done.

The unionists now talk as if they have been a persecuted, misunderstood people whose



● EDDIE FULLERTON

only desire was to live in peace with its neighbours. They have distorted history and made their sectarian little statelet the butt of ridicule and shame. And yet, tragically, given the role created for them by Westminster there was very little else that they could have done or believed. Prisoners of a history made behind their backs in committee rooms in Westminster and in the great drawing rooms of Empire, they behaved exactly as an artificially created imperial bulwark would behave. So it is that present day unionists of every shade of opinion blame the IRA for all their ills, and have little difficulty in seeing the defeat of the IRA, and, by implication, that of the Catholic population, as a far more important consideration than any attempt at peaceful reconciliation within the island of Ireland.

In a perceptive and illuminating essay, *Intellectuals and Political Culture: A Unionist-Nationalist comparison*, Liam O'Dowd points out that "to outsiders the inability of unionists and nationalists in Ireland to engage in constructive political dialogue is mystifying. One of the explanations most frequently advanced is the existence of political violence. Yet the rejection of dialogue preceded the 'troubles'. Over 40 years were to elapse before the prime ministers of both parts of Ireland met. And it is now a comical footnote to Irish history that in all the 50 years of one-party rule at Stormont the only act proposed by the nationalist opposition and agreed upon by unionists was the Wild Bird Act.

To facilitate the development of even the most cursory understanding of the history and present reality of the Protestant/Unionist community it is our duty as republicans to help dispel many of the myths that cling most costly to the Catholic/Nationalist tradition and recognise that we are as much victims of a distorted image of those same myths as our Protestant neighbours. Empathy and understanding are not the antithesis of rigorous political and self-analysis. There is nothing weak or contradictory in Republicans facing up to that fact.

When people say that if we are all to live on this tiny island it must be in harmony with our Protestant brothers and sisters, some militant republicans are only too eager to dismiss such statements as facile, mindless, heart-tugging liberal nonsense. And so they are when presented in a context where British involvement in our affairs is ignored or glossed over. However, we will have a future after British



● Loyalist protesting on the first anniversary of the signing of the Hillsborough Treaty

Photograph courtesy of the Hillsborough Treaty Commission

withdrawal and if we are to live together in a 'Britless' Ireland then republicans and nationalists have got to reach an equitable arrangement with the Protestant community, and that arrangement must guarantee equal rights for all. No privileges, no perks, no special relationship and no religious or economic favouritism for anyone or any organisation.

In the document presented by a Protestant academic to a Sinn Féin Conference, referred to earlier, the author presents us with three interpretations of Republican armed struggle that most Protestants hold:

● Republicans are evil terrorists who do not believe in law and order, but seek to undermine the stability of society;

● Republicans are actively hostile to Protestants. In this regard the killings of policemen increase the resistance of the Protestant community;

● Republicans do not care about Protestants. Accidental killings are seen as avoidable. Apologies cause anger because the possibility of an accident should have been foreseen.

In conclusion the author writes, "What Protestants need is for their views to be taken seriously and incorporated in any solution. Is the Republican Movement willing to do this?"

If we are to ever resolve the situation in Ireland, if we are ever to have real and lasting peace on this island, there must be a rapprochement with the Protestant community in the North. And before there can be that rapprochement we, as republicans, must seek to understand and empathise with the Protestant community. Of course a prerequisite of peace is a British withdrawal but we must be realistic enough to accept that even after a British withdrawal part of this island will still be inhabited by more than 900,000 people whose whole history, aspirations, culture and sense of stability, have been formed, nurtured and reinforced within a British political, intellectual and emotional environment. Despite the accumulated angers and resentments of the centuries, we must open our minds to the ideology, the fears and the beliefs of a community that has been

part of our oppression. Of course, a reciprocal desire for peace and understanding is required from the Protestants in the North but we have repeatedly stated that in a post-British Ireland and in the negotiations that would precede such an arrangement, republicans would be generous. That generosity would certainly be needed because someone, somewhere, will have to take that first step towards breaking the cycle of hatred and misunderstanding that has poisoned Irish society.

Irish republicanism prides itself on its historical linking of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter. The founders of republicanism espoused the rights and the essential unity of all Irish men and women freed from British domination. It dates its very existence, its philosophy and its universality to the United Irish movement of the 1790s. Every rebellion, rising and social movement since 1798 has had, we are told, its share of Protestant involvement and leadership. From Emmet to the Young Irelanders, from the Fenians to the Land League, from the Irish Renaissance to the East Rising, Catholic, Protestant and Atheist Irish men and women have played a formative role. But partition ended all that all embracing radicalism. It is no exaggeration to say that since the ending of the Civil War in Ireland the Protestant population has had only a minimal part to play in the ongoing debates and struggles for the creation of a united, democratic country.

What happened? How did a vibrant, radical nonconformist virtually disappear? Republicans have been partly to blame. When you look at the post-partition development of the Republican Movement it is clear that time and time again we have rejected that dissenting voice because of our fear of the Catholic hierarchy. When the Protestant workers from the Shankill were belaboured by good 'sound' republicans in 1934 for attempting to march at Bodenstown, who were they trying to impress? — certainly not the people of no property in Ireland and certainly not the Protestant workers in the North. They were proving that they were good Catholics as their appointed leaders in Maynooth and Leinster

House. Until we face up to those truths we are still living in a dream of history. One objective reality which must be faced by republicans even if it is unpalatable is that many IRA activities from the northern Protestant perspective are perceived to be sectarian. It is therefore undoubtedly true that the differences between the two communities which have historically existed have become even wider as a result. This is the truth which must be recognised by republicans and accommodated in any analysis of militant loyalism. I can think of occasions when some IRA operations displayed insensitivity to the feelings of ordinary Protestants and although the IRA campaign is clearly not sectarian (even when RUC and UDR personnel are the targets) nonetheless, there remains an unconscious insensitivity in some areas of the movement which must be removed. Republicans still play lip-service to the dicta of Wolfe Tone, without in any way attempting to examine honestly, without the past's baggage, the fact that the Irish independence struggle is now virtually the sole preserve of Catholics. By claiming that it is the republican objective to realise the aspirations of Wolfe Tone without considering the absence of any appeal in any relevant fashion to the Protestant community, republicans are refusing to accept reality and while our aims and statements may be admirable in themselves they do not help advance the argument, nor do they offer hope to Protestants.

Unpalatable it may be, but there has always been an element within the Republican Movement and on the island of Ireland itself who secretly believe that the Protestant population could be coerced into accepting Irish unity and independence. That is not acceptable. Neither is it possible, as Republicans should know, because all the might of Britain could not and cannot, suppress the Irish resistance.

The republican quarrel is with the British state in Ireland and the truth is that we cannot and should not every try to coerce the Protestant people into a united Ireland. We must convince them of the rightness of our cause and of the benefits accruing to them from advocacy of our cause. We, as republicans, have choices to make, we can continue paying lip-service to anti-sectarianism while denying the reality of sectarian elements in our movement, or we can actively seek to connect with Protestantism at every level. There is great animosity and misunderstanding on both sides and our joint histories are littered with atrocity and shame. While we offer the hand of friendship to our Protestant neighbours we cannot expect them to read our palms to discover our intentions. We, as they, must be ready to talk and apologise and unite, and the only way that can be achieved is through understanding. Are we ready for that painful experience? If we are not then we consign the people of this island to endless war.



● If we are to have lasting peace on this island there must be a rapprochement with the Protestant community of the Six Counties



MITCHEL MCLAUGHLIN

ALICE WALKER



She say, My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and I cried and I run all round the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happen, you can't miss it.

Engineering a New Consensus

(British strategy criminalisation and the demonising of republicans)



● It was British minister Douglas Hurd, seen here being interviewed at Stormont Castle, who introduced the media ban on Sinn Féin and others sympathetic to the republican position

"The time is now ripe for republicans to clearly analyse the nature of the anti-republican crusade and to develop an aggressive and consistent strategy for facing it down and challenging it."

In October 1988 the then British Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd enacted a media ban on interviews with members of Sinn Féin and on others who espoused the republican position or who were critical of British policies in Ireland. His move came on the back of ever more sweeping legal changes, which added to emergency laws, was to be a sign of things to come; a signal that the policy of isolating, marginalising and demonising republicans was well and truly in place and was to become a central weapon in Britain's strategy for defeating the republican struggle.

Early in the following year a new man arrived to head up Britain's administration in the Six Counties Peter Brooke, who was to launch and oversee a major British initiative, was appointed to his post in July 1989 and his arrival completed a new line up of British political and military heads which saw guardianship of the NIO, the British Army and the RUC all in the hands of new Westminster appointees. These changes were quickly to be reflected in the political and military operations of Britain's administration and forces in the Six Counties.

Mapping out the public position Brooke, in his by now famous 100-day speech, talked of British neutrality and seemed to hold out the prospect that Britain was eventually realising the impossibility of defeating the republican struggle and coming to terms with the inevitability of future talks with republicans. Central to the speech, however, and behind all the conciliatory terminology, lay a different message altogether. Republicans were being given one last chance to abandon the armed struggle, in return for a period where they could 'rehabilitate' themselves with an eventual view to involvement in the 'democratic process'.

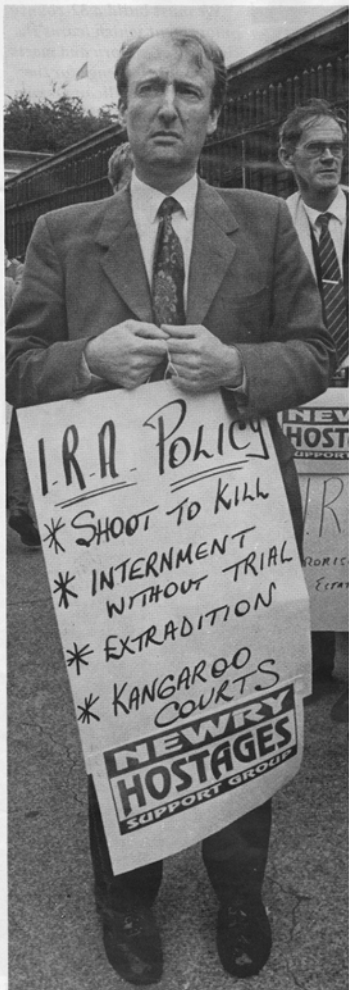
Brooke's key phrase was that: "At some stage a debate could start within the terrorist community, in which they would ask themselves how much they have really achieved in terms of their specific objectives in the last 20 years."

The reference to a 'terrorist' community contained in the speech was a clear indication that any nationalist who didn't broadly support or at least not actively oppose Britain's coming 'peace initiative' was to be placed beyond the pale and denied any legitimacy. The 'terrorist community' was, by definition, to be shunned, vilified and opposed by all 'right-thinking people'. Underpinning the speech as well was a clear determination to 'actively encourage a debate within the terrorist community'. This debate would be 'encouraged' by selling the notion that to resist British rule was futile and meaningless and by drumming home the message of stalemate to the nationalist community.

What in effect was underway was a major revamping of Britain's policy of criminalising the republican struggle. To this end, an ever more compliant media, who in many instances had by now become almost indistinguishable from state publicity officers, were to be used to encourage the forging of a virulently anti-republican alliance which would take as its principal role the doctrine that it was the resistance of the oppressed and not the existence of oppression which was the core of the problem.

The strategy is only the latest refinement of a policy which goes right back to the mid 1970s. Then the British began to employ terminology such as gangsters, mafia-style gunmen, racketeers and criminals when referring to the IRA to prepare the way for a major demonisation of the republican struggle which was to culminate in the attempted criminalisation of prisoners in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Alongside the propaganda onslaught the British fostered, with massive media assistance, a so-called peace movement, which only flourished because of its blatant refusal to tackle the issue of British violence and repression.

In recent years the 'peace offensive' or more accurately the British and media exploitation of a genuine desire for peace, has tended to address itself to people in more subtle forms, with heavy emphasis being placed on the 'futility of violence' doctrine. The underlying



● The pseudo peace groups ignore all violence which doesn't stem from republicans

premise, however, is unchanged and it is only the resistance of the oppressed which is classified as violence.

This false 'peace' doctrine, which ignores all violence which doesn't stem from republicans, has in recent years given birth to a whole series of pseudo groups: 'The Peace Train', 'New Consensus', 'FAIT', 'STOP', and the 'Newry Hostages Committee', to name but a few. These groups, many of whom are sponsored by political parties or politically interested groups of individuals seize upon genuine public objections to certain IRA actions and attempt to mobilise protests, all of which are aimed at Sinn Féin. In many cases crowds, often as small as 40 people, are made up in large measure by individuals who are bussed in to give the impression of spontaneous protests. What also shouldn't be ignored is the seeming propensity of the IRA to deliver their opponents sticks with which they themselves will inevitably be beaten.

From their handling of the media and their semi-professionalism it is clear that many of these pseudo groups have substantial financial and political sponsorship. For a time republicans seemed unsure of how to deal with them other than to attempt to expose the groups' one-sidedness, a task not made easy by active media promotion of all and any anti-republican groups or individuals who sought or agreed to publicly vent their spleen on Sinn Féin. Augmenting the plethora of groups has been the so-called constitutional nationalists and their Dublin partners as well as the leaders of all the main churches in Ireland, principally, Cahal Daly of the Catholic Church. These agencies have been used to add moral and political authority to the biased and anti-republican propaganda deluge aimed at undermining republican support and demonising republicans.

Dublin and the SDLP have also been used to sell the notion of British neutrality and to stifle concern and protest at British actions by using the Hillsborough/Maryfield cop-out whereby there is very muted response or absolutely no public censure by the Irish establishment for British repression or murderous British actions.

The anti-republican crusade and its self-appointed spokesperson Cahal Daly, suffered a temporary setback with the fiasco of the Newry duo who sought sanctuary in the local cathedral after being ordered to leave Ireland for alleged involvement in criminal activity.

FAIT and New Consensus, along with a designer group calling itself the Newry Hostages Committee, ran into all-too-open arms of a media virtually unable to contain itself. Local republicans faced with a Workers' Party sponsored protest march initially sought to ignore the situation and refused to emerge from the local Sinn Féin centre, which was the focus for a bizarre protest which had more media than protesters in attendance. Buoyed by what they saw as success, the organisers scheduled a second protest for the Sinn Féin centre which was hastily rerouted due to a several-hundred strong crowd of local people and Sinn Féin activists who were mounting a counter-demonstration. The organisers of the anti-republican protests, with an eye to the media then decided to stage a publicity stunt in which two of those facing expulsion would 'seek sanctuary' in Newry Cathedral.

As the entire episode unfolded, even the media's best efforts couldn't hide the fact that the pair had no local support outside of their immediate families, and that the whole affair was being orchestrated by people whose only concern was attacking republicans.

The intervention in the fiasco by Cahal Daly, who visited the area and endorsed the 'sanctuary stunt' breathed life into the affair for several more days, but gave great affront to a large section of the nationalist community and led directly to a number of similar sit-ins aimed at highlighting British repression.

By the end of the affair when the pair had to ingloriously retreat from the cathedral amid recrimination among their sponsors and the local Catholic clergy, it was clear that Daly and others had badly miscalculated the incident. They were, however, down and not out.

The lessons learned from that episode have signalled that the time is now ripe for republicans to clearly analyse the nature of the anti-republican crusade and to develop an aggressive and consistent strategy for facing it down and challenging it.

Central to our approach should be consistent and accurate research and collation of the partisan attitude and actions and the political bias of the groups involved in this anti-republican crusade. This approach should be underscored by a commitment to face head on any exploitation of people's genuine desire for peace.

— K. HILLICK



• The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre which has been constantly under threat of closure as a result of government under-funding

CRISIS IN WOMEN'S FUNDING — LESSONS FOR THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

"We must build a 32-county movement which learns the lessons of history and meets the real challenge for the '90s. For republican women that means starting the debate on partition."

THE fragmentation of the women's movement over the last ten years has left the women's groups lobbying separately for the little money governments are prepared to grant to women's essential services. It is time to build a united women's movement to put these issues on the political agenda. Any emerging women's movement in the '90s must learn from the past and put the issue of partition top of the agenda in order to create any fundamental change in the position of women in Irish society. How can this be done?

The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre recently highlighted the crisis in funding for women's services in the 26 Counties. The centre has run a successful lobbying campaign in the last few years which has educated people on the vital work of the Rape Crisis Centre. The government in the 26 Counties (in this years budget, 1991) allocated £35,000 to the Centre as a result of public pressure.

However, this is only a fraction of the money that the centre needs to operate and recently the Rape Crisis Centre was on the verge of closure and again the centre lobbied for money to keep its doors open. The doors of the Dublin centre might be open for another while, but what about other women's services? What about the gaps in rural areas where there is no Rape Crisis Centres or women's refuges? The case of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre raises fundamental issues for the women's movement. Why is a service which is vital for women's health not funded by the state? I would argue that the fragmentation of the women's movement has led to a dilution of the power of the movement. Why has this happened? I think there are three reasons.

RESPONDING TO WOMEN'S NEEDS

In the '80s the women's movement became fragmented because women were forced to organise essential services in response to women's needs; family planning clinics, counselling services on rape, sexual assault, contraception, mental health, support groups for single parents, shelters for women who have been battered. These groups are continually attempting to provide a service to more and



● The Irish banner 'International Women's Day' which was used by crown forces as a pretext to ban West Belfast women from marching in their own city centre

more women, to maintain the existing services, to run education programmes and to fundraise all at the same time. They are in competition for the little money that is available. They are providing services that should be funded in total by the state. Women should be coming together as a united women's movement to put these issues on the political agenda.

FAILED TO EXPAND ITS BASE OF SUPPORT

The women's movement in the '70s challenged the existing role of women in the 26-County state. Equality legislation in employment, welfare rights, contraception are all a direct result of the hard work done by the women's movement which benefited all women. However, in order to develop, the movement had to expand its base of support. It failed to do this. The movement was made up of middle-class women so its agenda was narrow. In order to develop and attract support from working-class women it had to be relevant to the socio-economic situation of these women. It had to tackle issues like women's poverty and expand its ranks to remain a vibrant living movement.

PARTITION

The women's movement did not address the effects of partition on women's lives. The issues that were born in the civil rights struggle in the late '60s in the Six Counties and the issues that stemmed from the re-occupation of the British army and occupation were never addressed by the women's movement in the 26 Counties. The failure of the women's movement to develop is related to its failure to recognise the centrality of partition in our oppression.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE SIX COUNTIES

The history of the women's movement in the Six Counties is the history of women who live in a British colony. Nationalist women have to contend with the socio-economic problems that women face in the 26 Counties together with all the problems that stem from having an army of occupation on the streets. Because the Northern Ireland state was founded on sectarianism there has never been the opportunity for the emergence of a strong women's movement in the Six Counties. There has never been any major mobilisation of nationalist and loyalist women together on any issue. However, women did campaign on the issues facing them in their own communities so a women's movement developed in two ways:

1. It developed out of the resistance of republican women to British occupation. Because of the role women were forced to play in the struggle they were politicised about their oppression and brought this politicisation into the Republican Movement.

2. There have been over the years the emergence of autonomous women's groups like rape crisis women's shelters and other women's self-help groups who responded to the needs of women just like in the 26 Counties. They operated in their own areas and have the same problems of funding as women in the 26-Counties. However, women's groups in nationalist areas also have to contend with political vetting from the British government. In her recent book on the history of the women's movement in Northern Ireland, Eileen Evason, argues that many women in Northern

Ireland are looking for a women's movement. There are lots of groups but no centre. She says, "the movement has come to resemble a wheel with spokes and a rim with no centre. For the 1990's we need a core to revitalise feminist debate and politics in Northern Ireland". I would agree with her definition of the wheel with no centre but I think the debate on how to revitalise feminist debate should not have a narrow focus and limit itself to the Six Counties. We must engage in debate across the border and address the real issues for women in this country. We must build a 32-County movement which learns the lessons of history and meets the real challenge for the '90s. For republican women that means starting the debate on partition.

LESSONS OF HISTORY

The women's movement has been at its strongest at times when the movement on the national question was the forefront: the late '60s, early '70s and in the early part of this century. It is important in this year that marks the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising that we reflect on women's involvement at the time. Women's stories from this period can inform our understanding of nationalism and feminism. The 1916 Proclamation promised equal citizenship and equal opportunities to women. This commitment to equality expressed in the Proclamation was, not because the male leaders of the Rising thought it was the right thing to do, even though some of them might have, but because the women's movement at that time was a social force which as it became organised radicalised those in the national and particularly in the labour movement who saw its potential as an ally and this influence is reflected in the Proclamation.

Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, feminist, nationalist and socialist, is often quoted by feminists today as the woman with the real feminist credentials at the time because of the primary role that she played in the campaign for votes for women. However, it is important to remember that Hanna linked women's freedom with national freedom. She was against the treaty in 1922. She knew that it was a betrayal of the Irish republic and that it would be a set back for women's rights. On the treaty she said at the time: "There is a regular stampede for it of all the moderate and the safe people with the stakes in the country, women in the main are against it and as a result, there is great bitterness against us all just now..."

Hanna continued to link women's freedom with national freedom throughout her life. She refused to accept partition. In the 1930s she was served with an exclusion order from the Six Counties because of her political record. She refused to obey the order and crossed the border. She was arrested and imprisoned in Armagh Jail. She said: "As an Irish Republican I stand for an unpartitioned Independent Ireland of 32 counties." Hanna insisted all of her life that women's rights were a central part of the struggle and that any revolution would be incomplete if they were set aside. It is important that we build a women's movement in the '90s that once again links women's freedom with national freedom.

CELEBRATING THE GAINS — ADDRESSING THE GAPS

This time last year a conference was held in Belfast titled 'Celebrating the gains — addressing the gaps', the conference was well attend-

ed and had a broad range of speakers. One of the speakers, Nonkululeko Woko from the ANC women's section in her opening statement to the conference said: "This is my first visit to Ireland and I see a lot in common with my own country, South Africa. I see armoured cars, the armed police and soldiers on your streets. I find women living in deprivation and enduring discrimination and I think I feel at home in Ireland." She went on to speak about the struggle in South Africa and how Black women in her country link women's freedom with the national struggle for rights and democracy. She was well received at the conference.

Last March on International Women's Day, women marched from West Belfast to celebrate International Women's Day and to highlight a number of issues of concern to women. The march was scheduled to go to Belfast city centre but was stopped by British crown forces under the pretext that a banner that stated International Women's Day in Irish was offensive. Women organised subsequent marches to highlight that women in West Belfast were denied basic civil liberties, the right to march in their own streets. The Belfast Rape Crisis Centre supported this action. It was one of the few women's groups to do so. Some groups may not have attended because they feared they might lose their funding. This, in effect, is self-censorship. Where were the women who loudly clapped Nonkululeko Woko the previous November? A lot of feminists from both sides of the border are very comfortable discussing women in South Africa, but they put blinkers on when it comes to their own country. They refuse to address the fact that women are suffering daily under an army of occupation. It takes a woman from South Africa to make the connection instantly on her first visit to Ireland. The next conference I hope will put this gap on the agenda.

CHALLENGE FOR WOMEN IN THE '90S

"There can be no true democracy where there is not complete economic and political freedom for the entire nation, both men and women."

— Hanna Sheehy Skeffington.

In the long term we need to build a women's movement which has a broad base of support which draws from the experience of feminism in the early part of the century and links women's freedom with national freedom.

In the short term we need to have a analysis of the current situation facing women. We need to start the debate. We need more conferences which bring women together from the 32 Counties to discuss the past, present and future of the women's movement.

We need to encourage cross border visits where women can exchange information and can view first hand the day to day reality for women.

Republican women are ready for debate and dialogue.



MAIREAD KEANE



Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1890-1964), labour organiser, feminist, and advocate of constitutional freedoms. Born to Irish-American socialist parents, Flynn never forgot the poverty she saw in New England mill towns and New York City as she grew up. Her career as a spellbinding speaker began at age 16, when she was arrested during a soapbox speech in New York City. As a travelling organiser for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Flynn helped lead textile strikes and free speech fights and she worked in defence of Sacco and Vanzetti in the '20s. Flynn joined the Communist Party in 1926, and at age 71 she became the party's first woman national chairperson. In 1942 she ran for Congress in New York state, basing her campaign on women's issues. In addition to urging women working in war production plants to unionise, she advocated the establishment of public daycare centres. Flynn was jailed many times, last during the McCarthy era for violating the Smith Act. In *The Rebel Girl* she recounts her life experiences.

“We believe that a struggle like ours is impossible without ideology... Our desire to develop our country with social justice and power in the hands of the people is our ideological basis... What we must do is to modify, to radically transform, the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of our people.”

AMILCAR CABRAL



“... The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.”

STEVE BIKO



“Progress affects few. Only revolution can affect many.”

ALICE WALKER



“...The British will not use British arguments to cloak their actions but Irish ones.”

LIAM MELLOWS



“She say, my first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quietly and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and I cried and I run all round the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happen, you can't miss it.”

ALICE WALKER



“To educate a man is to educate an individual... To educate a woman is to educate a nation.”

MALCOLM X