

anspréach

Issue 2 Oct-Dec 2018 £2.50/€3.00

Independent non-profit Socialist Republican magazine

WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

DOES 'PEACE' REALLY MEAN
THE ABSENCE OF VIOLENCE?

Cuba

A Cuban citizen
discusses reforms

Tír gan teanga

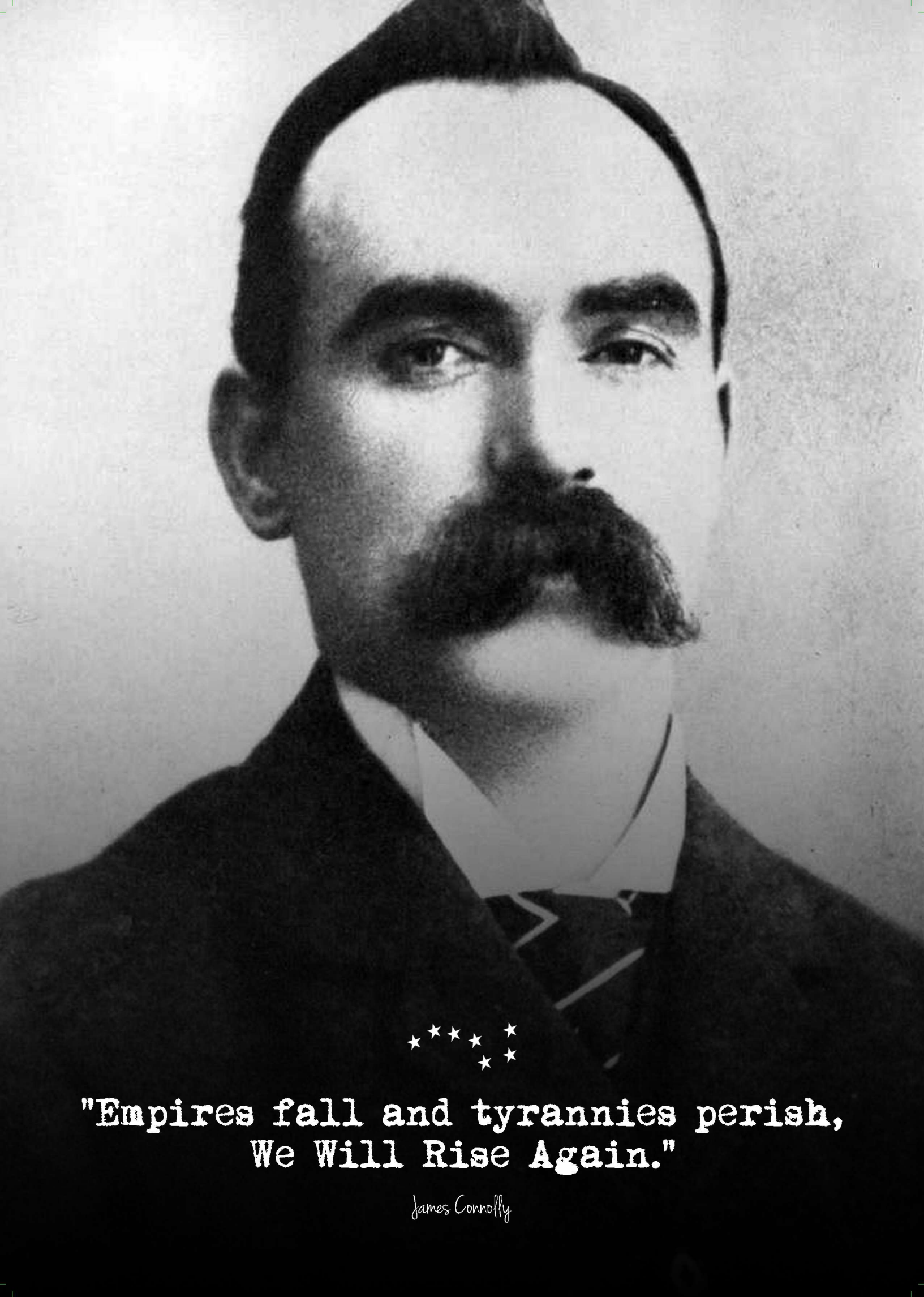
Tír gan anam!

Guerilla Parliamentarianism

In Defence of Costello's Vision

RUC Special Branch Remains Largely Intact

They haven't gone away you know...



"Empires fall and tyrannies perish,
We Will Rise Again."

James Connolly

Contents

Is iris poblachtach sóisialta í **An Spréach** curtha le chéile ag roinnt gníomhaithe polaitiúla.

An aidhm atá leis ná tuilleadh léargais agus dearchtaí ón phobal poblachtach sóisialta a chur i do láthair mar léitheoir, ábhar nach mbaineann amháin leis an troid shaortha shóisialta náisiúnta in Éirinn agus idirnáisiúnta. Ní hionann na dearcadh luaite anseo agus dearcadh an fhoilseacháin ach is iad dearcadh de chuid an údair iad.

Cuirfear fáilte roimh gach gníomhaí polaitiúil ábhar a chur ar fáil, ailt tuairimíochta, litreacha, anailís stairiúil agus gach aon ábhar cuí san áireamh. Tá sé de cheart ag an eagarthóir ailt clúmhillteach nó ionsaitheach a fhágáil ar lár.

Caithfear ainmneacha iomlána agus fíor ainmneacha a bheith ar fáil, go fiú nuair a úsáidtear ainm cleite, sonraí teagmhála ábhartha san áireamh. Ná déantar dearmad, tá seans ann go n-iarrfar ort eagar a chur ar do shaothar sa dóigh is go bhféadaimis an spás leathanaigh a líonadh mar is ceart. Tá seans ann ar a bharr sin go ndéanfar coiriú ar phársa le seo a eascú ach déanfar ach an iarrachta an cothromas agus dearcadh an phársa sin a thabhairt, gan claonadh.

Is iris neamhbhrabúis í 'An Spréach' a sholáthraíonn airgead maidir le costais reatha amháin, costais clódóireachta agus tairisí atá bainteach léi.

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- p2 **Remember Narrow Water** IRA ambush at Warrenpoint
- p3 **Stormont Isn't Working** Sectarian project of a Sectarian state
- p4 **What is Violence?** Does 'the Peace Process' really mean peace?
- p5 **Scumbag of the Quarter** Mickey Mouse and his rack-renting clubhouse!
- p6 **The Orange Order** Subverting Class Unity
- p8 **RUC Special Branch Remains Largely Intact** They haven't gone away you know. . .
- p9 **Greetings from Cuba** A Cuban citizen discusses reforms
- p10 **50** The second in our series chronicling five decades of history.
- p11 **The GAA** Roots in Rebellion
- p12 **No Trans Liberation Without Socialism**
- p14 **TÍR GAN TEANGA TÍR GAN ANAM**
- p15 Connolly Article
- p16 **Fortress Europe?** The real side of Europe's anti-migrant regime
- p18 **Notes For Revolutionaries**
- p19 **MAD FRA** Or a devout psychohistory of Irish Catholicism
- p20 **Guerrilla Parliamentarianism** In Defence of Costello's Vision
- p22 **Rainbow in the Rising** 1916
- p24 **Forgotten Women of Republicanism** Helena Molony
- p26 **ACORN** The tenants united will never be defeated
- p28 **Profile** Syria

An Spréach is an independent Socialist Republican magazine formed by a collective of political activists.

It aims to bring you, the reader, a broad swathe of opinion from within the Irish Socialist Republican political sphere, including, but not exclusive to, the fight for national liberation and socialism in Ireland and internationally.

The views expressed herein, do not necessarily represent the views of the publication and are purely those of the author.

We welcome contributions from all political activists, including opinion pieces, letters, historical analyses and other relevant material.

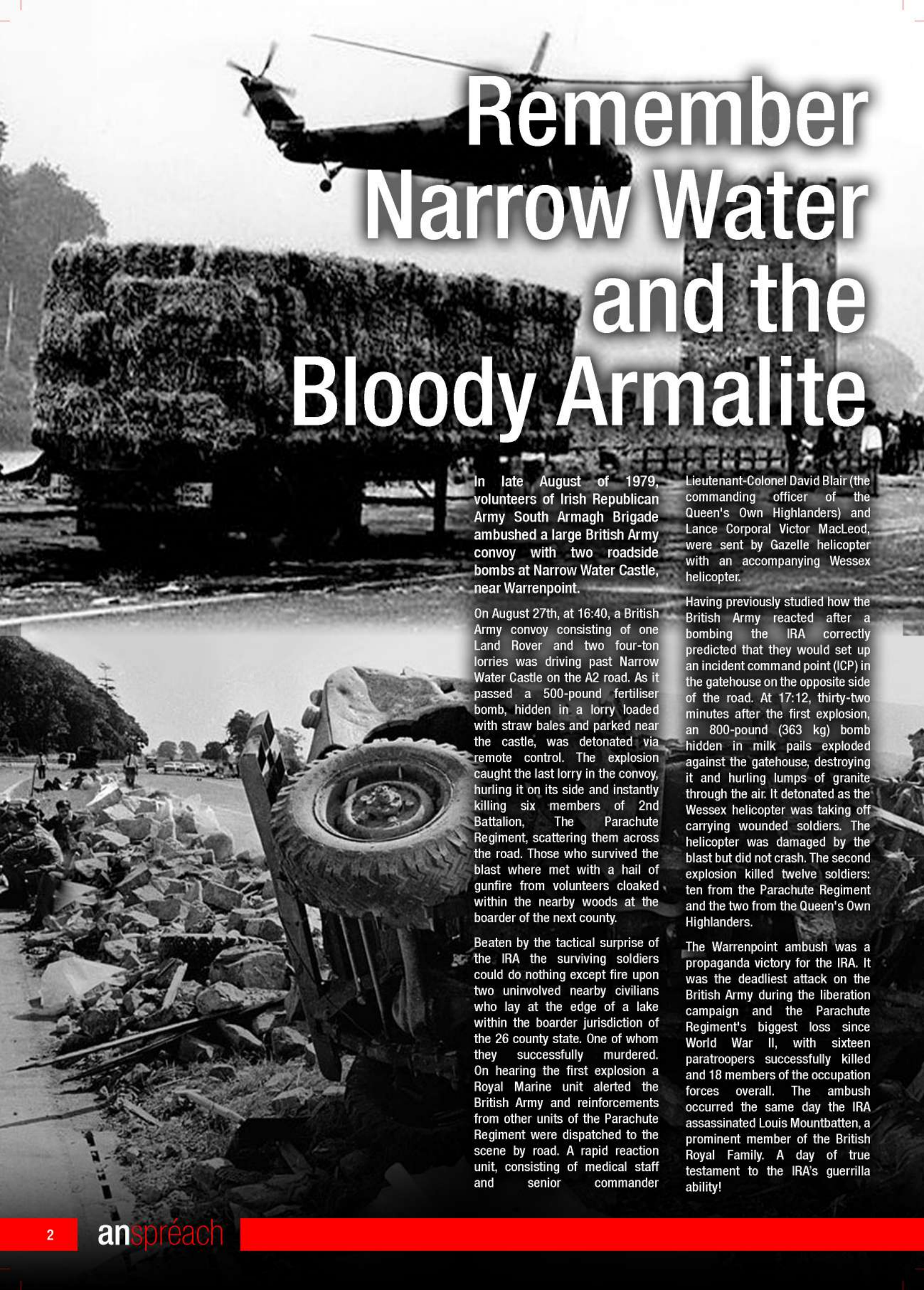
The editor reserves the right to exclude or omit any articles that may be deemed defamatory or abusive.

Full and real names must be provided, even in instances where a pseudonym is used, including relevant contact details. Please bear in mind that you may be asked to shorten material if necessary, and where we may be required to edit a piece to fit within these pages, all efforts will be made to retain its balance and opinion, without bias.

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Remember Narrow Water and the Bloody Armalite

In late August of 1979, volunteers of Irish Republican Army South Armagh Brigade ambushed a large British Army convoy with two roadside bombs at Narrow Water Castle, near Warrenpoint.

On August 27th, at 16:40, a British Army convoy consisting of one Land Rover and two four-ton lorries was driving past Narrow Water Castle on the A2 road. As it passed a 500-pound fertiliser bomb, hidden in a lorry loaded with straw bales and parked near the castle, was detonated via remote control. The explosion caught the last lorry in the convoy, hurling it on its side and instantly killing six members of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, scattering them across the road. Those who survived the blast were met with a hail of gunfire from volunteers cloaked within the nearby woods at the boarder of the next county.

Beaten by the tactical surprise of the IRA the surviving soldiers could do nothing except fire upon two uninvolved nearby civilians who lay at the edge of a lake within the boarder jurisdiction of the 26 county state. One of whom they successfully murdered. On hearing the first explosion a Royal Marine unit alerted the British Army and reinforcements from other units of the Parachute Regiment were dispatched to the scene by road. A rapid reaction unit, consisting of medical staff and senior commander

Lieutenant-Colonel David Blair (the commanding officer of the Queen's Own Highlanders) and Lance Corporal Victor MacLeod, were sent by Gazelle helicopter with an accompanying Wessex helicopter.

Having previously studied how the British Army reacted after a bombing the IRA correctly predicted that they would set up an incident command point (ICP) in the gatehouse on the opposite side of the road. At 17:12, thirty-two minutes after the first explosion, an 800-pound (363 kg) bomb hidden in milk pails exploded against the gatehouse, destroying it and hurling lumps of granite through the air. It detonated as the Wessex helicopter was taking off carrying wounded soldiers. The helicopter was damaged by the blast but did not crash. The second explosion killed twelve soldiers: ten from the Parachute Regiment and the two from the Queen's Own Highlanders.

The Warrenpoint ambush was a propaganda victory for the IRA. It was the deadliest attack on the British Army during the liberation campaign and the Parachute Regiment's biggest loss since World War II, with sixteen paratroopers successfully killed and 18 members of the occupation forces overall. The ambush occurred the same day the IRA assassinated Louis Mountbatten, a prominent member of the British Royal Family. A day of true testament to the IRA's guerrilla ability!

STORMONT ISN'T WORKING!

By É. Ó Cleirigh

The society in which we all should live, or at least aspire to live, is one where all our basic rights are enshrined, we have the freedom to live, love and grow and we have an input into the decisions that have an effect on our lives and one in which we can effectively hold the legislators to account.

A society where the profits of industry and multi-national corporations don't go overseas to off shore tax havens and into the pockets of the few but remain in control of a proper government and distributed into public services, schools, hospitals, transport, homes etc. for the benefit of the people. A society where a home and security of tenure is a guarantee and employment, that pays, is accessible for all. A society with a health service fit for purpose and free from the point of use.

A society where equality is not an issue and language, sexuality and bodily rights are all enshrined in law. A society where the forces of Imperialism don't have its bloody grip and a justice and policing system that serves the interests of the people rather than the interests of imperialism, neo colonialism and the corrupt. This society is not a pipe dream and every small victory is a step closer to making this a reality.

Stormont has provided an effective smokescreen for the British government, distracting the masses from where the real power lies, in the working class and their communities. The root cause of our society's ills is Imperialism and Capitalism and their interests are administered and implemented through Stormont at the request of their paymasters in London. Because of its artificial makeup and the pillars of sectarianism that it is built upon, Stormont is always doomed for failure as shown in the most recent collapse almost two years ago.

Since the foundation of the Orange state in occupied Ireland, following partition, the puppet administration in Stormont buildings has always been a corrupt puppet parliament that have never served the interests of the majority of the population in Ireland, the Irish working class. From its inception the Assembly was built upon inherent sectarianism and inequality as 'a protestant parliament for a protestant people'. Despite the changing of the guard the Assembly have delivered scandal after scandal and failure after failure as they serve their masters in London.

At the time of writing the administration in Stormont has not sat as an Assembly for almost two years. Despite this MLAs continue to draw down their basic £49,500 a year salaries at an expense of over £10 million, and growing, to the tax payer. As a reward

for this their paymasters will cut their wage by just 20%, and after tax just £25 per week in monetary terms, from October 2018. This is just one of many scandals from the puppet Assembly at a time when poverty is rife, we are in the midst of a housing crisis and mass homelessness, welfare reform, austerity and a health service at breaking point.

This shambles is no surprise as the administration in Stormont has never been any more than a farce, a smokescreen and a distraction. With sectarianism deeply imbedded within the institution, Stormont has always been inherently doomed. It has never had any real authoritative or decision making powers and has always sided with the side of their paymasters.

The recent collapse of Stormont was a result of the RHI scandal which has the potential cost of £500 million to tax payers. In recent years Stormont has also brought us the Red Sky scandal, a housing crisis, a health service crisis, essential services crisis, welfare reform, Universal Credit and has shown its inability to agree on legacy and equality issues such as state collusion, Irish language rights and LGBT rights.

However, in Britain's closest colony, there is an alternative. Ultimately the only solution to Ireland's societal ills is the establishment of a 32 county Socialist Republic, one that serves the interests of all

the people of the island and not that of Capital and Imperialism. In the mean time we need to remove the levers of power, from Britain, Stormont and big business. Power has always been in the hands of the working class, we just need to empower ourselves, organise and use that power. Communities should continue to organise and agitate for social justice on issues that they deem relevant, continue to win small victories and to show Stormont for the farce that it is. We should educate and encourage others to join in this fight.

Rather than decisions made on the hill, power should be transferred directly to the people, within communities and decision making assemblies established. Areas should have a degree of autonomy to decide what is needed in their own area. In the interim we should be seeking ways to create our own decision making institutions at a local level, some already exist, and seek ways to established alter native power structures within those same communities.

We need to break the shackles that enslave us and Stormont is one of the links the occupier uses to enslave and distract. Not only is Stormont not working, it doesn't work and it never will and the sooner we all realise that the better.

Another world is possible and it is worth the fight! •



WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

DOES 'THE PEACE PROCESS' REALLY MEAN PEACE?

By Pól Torbóid

A little over two decades ago, news-screens around the world projected the images of Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams, among others, deep in conversation as they walked the paths of some British government compound or other, strategizing the next steps they might take in the 'process' that had begun some years earlier.

These were the days of 'peace', and within weeks they had produced a document referred to by many as 'The Good Friday Agreement'.

The following years saw the implementation of that agreement which would massively reduce the presence of British troops on our streets. Though confined to barracks, the British government retained all structures, weaponry and control within the Six Counties.

In contrast, these years also bore witness to the complete dismantling of military structures whose intention was the liberation of our island, alongside the destruction of a weapons arsenal amassed over many decades and intended for the defence of a people, by those that it had been intended to defend against.

All of this guaranteed erstwhile Republicans a seat at the Stormont government table - whenever it functioned.

The dawn of a new era and the absence of 'violence', they said. This was 'The Peace Process'.

Republican districts across Belfast, Derry and every where in between did not know it then, but soon they would face a new 'violence', visited upon them by the political parties and government institutions of Stormont and Westminster. As 'normality' seeped in through the cracks, the onslaught of Capital would begin, and imperialism was given free rein to do as it pleased.

Indeed, recent figures show that, in the two decades since, over a quarter of children in The Six Counties still live in poverty.

Across this whole island there are over 200,000 empty houses whilst over 129,000 families lie on housing waiting lists.

Working class communities across this failed state are experiencing the incremental onslaught of hard drugs like crack and heroin.

And suicide levels have skyrocketed since the mid 90's. Indeed, far more have died from suicide (4,500+) since the most recent liberation campaign, than died during it (3,600+). A recent Samaritans report found that the number of men taking their own lives in The Six Counties per 100,000 of the population had increased by 82 per cent from 1985 to 2015. 'Peace', they call this, but are these deaths not indeed violent?

When our daughters and sons end their lives by means of a rope, tied tight around a bannister and wrapped around their neck as their feet kick at a floor they cannot reach, is this not indeed a violent act?

Is the ingestion of 100 paracetamol tablets, and the onset of excruciating pain within the bodies of our children until their organs give out, not indeed a violent act?

And what of those children who suffered but did not die? When violence visited them, wrapped in the brown paper of a dole letter posted through the letter-box of their private-rental, and told them that they would get less money, and consequently less to eat, from now on; is this not indeed a violent act?

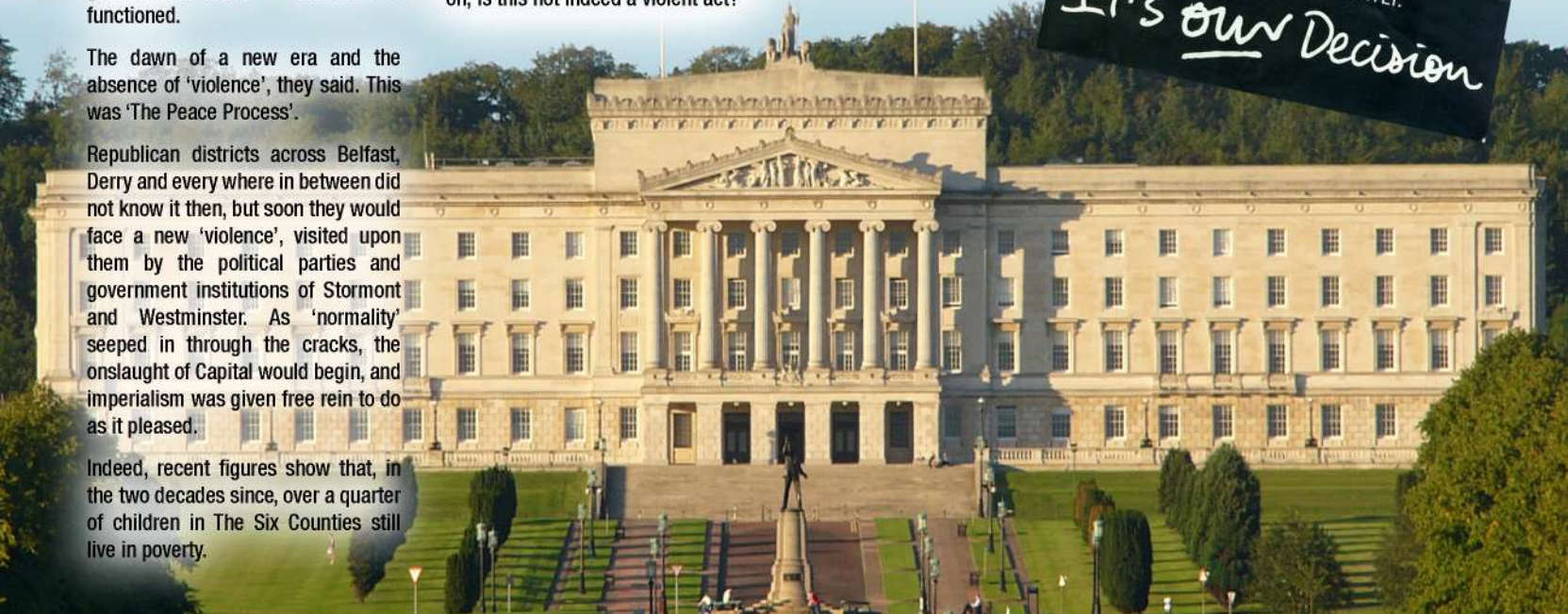
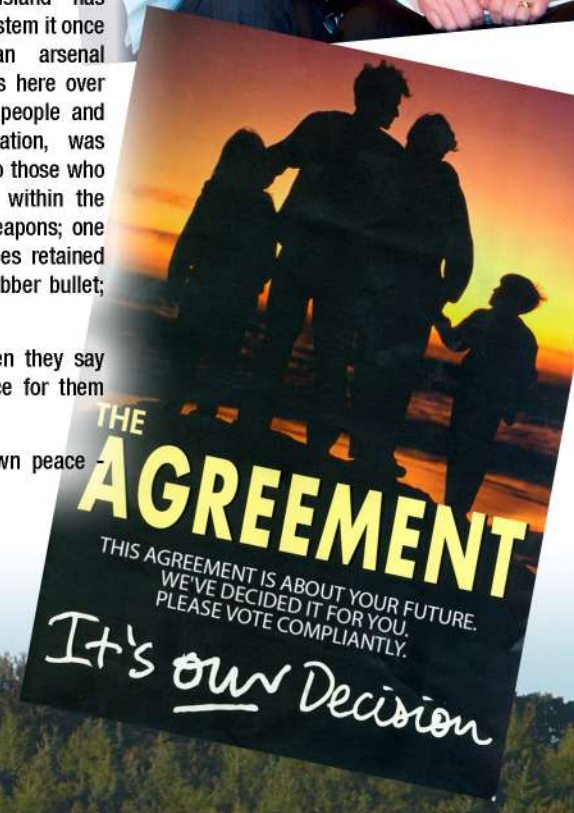
Our 'peace' is not the absence of violence. Violent acts are ending the lives of our daughters and our sons every other day. Where is their peace agreement?

If we accept that we are surrounded by violence, indeed undeniably so, surely then it is fair to say that 'peace' does not exist? And in the absence of that peace, what then do we call the 'process' we have endured this past two decades?

For that process has been largely unconcerned with the major issues affecting the Irish people, beyond the need to pacify the population. Indeed, it has been a Pacification Process; one where the largest 'Republican' organisation on the island has conformed to the very system it once fought; one where an arsenal amassed by rebel forces here over decades to defend our people and bring about our liberation, was handed over en masse to those who once found themselves within the sights of those same weapons; one where our mortal enemies retained every rifle, round and rubber bullet; and we did not.

So, remember that, when they say 'peace' they mean peace for them and not for us;

for we have never known peace - only violence. •



A big congratulations to our first prize winner 'Micky' McMahon!

Micky is a proud slumlord and owner of M&M Property Services who is hard at work providing hundreds of extortionate, low quality houses to students and families across the university area of Belfast. Controlling a range of front companies under various names relating to student accommodation poor Micky owns over 200 properties that we know of! Must be a stressful life.

Don't worry however folks, it's not all work in the McMahon household, sometimes our Micky gets a relaxing reprieve from all that rack-renting by walking in unannounced on his young female tenants. Particularly during shower time, but we're confident this is unintentional.

Equally he must be able to take a fair few holidays on all them tax-free illegal administration & application fees he charges students, so we doubt his hair is falling out.

So here's to Micky folks!

If any kind reader could send us Micky's correct home address, because we know he has many, we'd love to be able to mail him his prize. We in the An Spréach team are booming with excitement for him to open it.

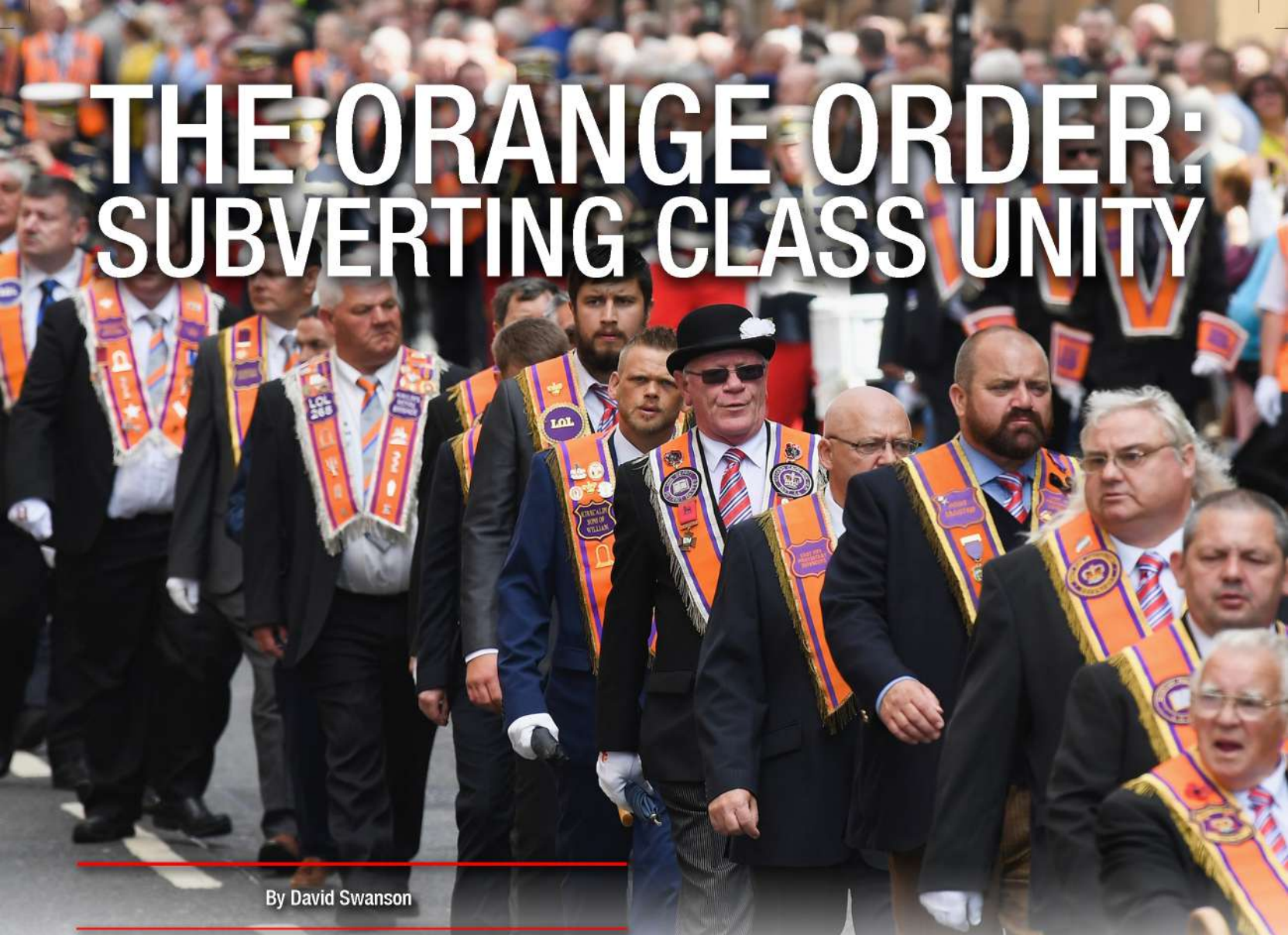
Do you have a scumbag in mind? Notify us at info@anspreach.org so we can award them the credit they deserve!

...AND THE SCUMBAG OF THE QUARTER AWARD GOES TO...

A new quarterly feature of An Spréach dedicated to giving attention to the lowlifes, parasites and scumbags within our communities whose naughty behaviour goes unpublished...



THE ORANGE ORDER: SUBVERTING CLASS UNITY



By David Swanson

The Orange Order marching season is an extremely challenging annual fixture for Scotland for obvious reasons – principally, it ignites tribal loyalties which often split communities and occasionally even families into polarised sub-groupings. Most Scots correctly identify the Orange Order as being a protestant institution originating across the Irish sea, but less known is the reason for their foundations and how directly this ties into working class struggle.

The organisation was officially formed in Ireland 1795 by a ruling class of conservative elites intent on preventing Protestant workers from identifying with their Catholic neighbours and in direct opposition to the Theobald Wolfe Tone's socialist image for Ireland's future. Since then, the organisation has always appealed to sectarian allegiances in an attempt to divide the working class. The banners, bonfires and regalia furiously demand the same question of every Protestant: which

side are you on? The politics of identity were placed at the forefront as people who joined were initially rewarded with property rights and opportunities to meet landlords and prestigious employers. The message – 'buy into our right to rule and we will reward you with the life you wish to lead' – isn't miles away from that employed in fascist regimes during the 20th century.

Protestants who rejected their sectarian calling were discriminated against, labelled traitors and 'Catholic sympathisers'. Indeed, the Orange Order's success in splitting the working class through sectarian loyalties was one of the key reasons Wolfe Tone's socialist campaign failed. Appealing to Protestants by bestowing them with civil and religious liberties provided a sense of false community and gave many reason to question why they should fight for a better future for everyone when they now could obtain security for themselves through concessions from a dominant bourgeois elite. This was the epitome of divide and rule – institutions like Orange Order divided the Irish working class at a vital time and deterred a majority from

embracing socialist thought. To this day, it remains a key parliamentary asset for the ruling class.

Their success prompted an emergence of the same tactics around the globe as the British Empire began to realise the way to successfully uproot capital and maintain their imperialist ambitions was to divide populations based on sectarian allegiances to nullify socialist theory from taking root. The Orange Order itself was shipped to Scotland directly after Wolfe Tone's 1798 rebellion. Scottish soldiers who had assisted in the British effort to maintain bourgeois control came home with stories of the division which had been sown among the Irish.

Its growth in sections of Scottish society has become arguably even more enthusiastic than that in Ireland; membership could achieve similar rewards as those who had joined the ranks in Ulster, which has culminated to today's staggering totals of over 800 Scottish lodges and 50,000 members across the country. A false sense of fulfilment, achievement and opportunity has

even led us to the point where there are more Orange marches in Scotland than in Ireland. Increasingly, members of Scottish lodges even eclipse the numbers of local residents participating in parades in Ireland's traditional hotspots.

What are the lessons we can draw? First and foremost, building a resistance to the Orange Order is crucial to building working class solidarity in Scotland. The alternative that needs to be built is a common identity between Protestant and Catholic workers which asserts their class position to successfully tackle issues relevant to both communities. Zero hour contracts, rising private rents due to a society driven by competition, the continuing pressure of underfunding key public institutions like the NHS, and the continuing cuts to local council budgets to improve community leisure facilities are as relevant to the Protestant community as they are to Catholics. They affect Celtic supporters and Rangers supporters. They affect those who line the Orange parades in Bridgeton, Kinning Park and the working class towns of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire.

And these grievances will continue as long as we cling to sectarian identities that emphasise these divisions – and that goes for all of us. Stirring the sectarian pot nullifies the effect of trade unions and other worker solidarity groups. It allows the ruling class to intensify austerity measures whilst tension arise among the working class throughout this period of the year. Such tactics have been employed in Scotland for a century and beyond: it's no accident that an Orange and Protestant political party was well publicised by Motherwell and Wishaw local media in 1923 while a Communist held a seat in the area. It's no accident either that the Bridgeton 'Billy Boys' were rewarded for their role in breaking up Glasgow's general strike movement in 1926. It's a useful distraction for politicians to this day – cuts to public services fall off the news agenda when the fifes and drums of the lodges are being dusted off and assembled for another year.

More than that, though, we must recognise that these parades aren't just an emblem of an outdated and

bigoted culture; they are a reactionary effect of the posing austerity Scotland so visibly faces. As wages crunch and bills soar, people actively demand scapegoats. Orange Order parades have become an intimidating outlet for protestants to voice angers and frustrations against supposed villains for the daily troubles faced by their community. In a society built on competition and individual success rather than community spirit, there's a sense of identity in affiliating with the Orange Lodge and labelling immigrants as welfare-cheats, depicting Muslims as 'invaders' hell-bent on destroying the 'way of life' in Scotland and displaying racist opposition to the change of demographic in Scottish society.

The Orange Order is in many ways an all-class alliance – in the past this led to concessions for those down the pecking order but these have not been enough to assure working class protestants, hence the escalated racism and scapegoating of others in recent marching seasons. Again, this hasn't gone by the ruling elite of this

country. Politicians now proudly join Orange Marches safe in the knowledge that xenophobic right wing sentiment is being whipped up in sections of the Scottish print media. Support for the Orange Order is labelled as 'Protestant culture' as a means of continuing the effort to divide communities and capitalise on sectarian division.

Socialists must remain wise to this campaign and expose the truth; the Orange Order is not a cultural organisation. History shows it can be described as nothing more than nakedly sectarian. It's not an organisation has not been established to represent a marginalised working class group but to maintain the powers of others, specifically elites. In a country where a mere 0.025% of Scotland's population owns 67% of the nation's land, the Orange Order's sectarian ethos presents an even more profitable asset for a ruling class elite here than in Ireland to maintain such a gulf in equality.

Opposing the marching season is not anti-Protestant but positively

anti-sectarian. The purpose of the Orange Order is to manipulate Protestants into becoming an insular community so as to nullify socialist thought; asserting sectarian unity destabilises community solidarity and actively harms a worker's fight for progressive change. We must remain secure in our opposition to the organisation on the premise that class-conscious politics are the only way to give confidence to every person who looks at today's intimidating global situation with despair and trepidation.

Stigmatising working class loyalists is not the answer, but it's essential we appeal to them through unions and by using the language of class politics. If we truly want to create a better society, we must put aside sectarian loyalties and create genuine people-power movements which pressurise those who slash and burn our public services. We need to be prepared to fight and get our hands dirty. Let's tackle sectarianism head on and unite under one banner of class solidarity to influence the society we want to see. •



RUC SPECIAL BRANCH REMAINS LARGELY INTACT



'A new era' and 'a police force for all' were the buzzwords of the year, when the PSNI was formally constituted in 2001. Their inception was accompanied by a huge public relations exercise designed to sell the force to the republican and nationalist community.

17 years later, with so-called positive recruitment campaigns and other initiatives, the question must be asked, just how much of the Royal Ulster Constabulary still remains?

The legislation that founded the PSNI, the 'Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000', states quite bluntly that 'The body of constables known as the Royal Ulster Constabulary shall continue in being...' and that 'The body of constables...shall be styled for operational purposes the "Police Service of Northern Ireland"'.

When we dispose of the legal jargon, this means that the RUC were never disbanded, as was the core republican demand in years previous, but simply rebranded as the PSNI. And, just like the RUC, its much despised 'Special Branch' did not go away either. The same public relations exercise was applied and it, just like the RUC, was rebranded and reformed into what is now known as 'C3 Intelligence Branch'.

Its responsibilities include intelligence gathering by undercover operatives, the infiltration of Republican political organisations for the aim of disruption and intelligence gathering, and the recruitment and running of Covert Human Intelligence Sources. That's 'touts' to you and me.

Well known amongst Republican political activists in the Six Counties and working hand in glove with C3 Intelligence Branch are the PSNI's 'Tactical Support Group' [TSG]. Trained in 'specialist tactics', its duties include search, method of entry, 'counter terrorism' and surveillance amongst others.

Trained to use specialist tools and equipment to gain entry to premises, they plan, manage, and advise on all search activity conducted by the PSNI in relation to 'counter terrorism'. Their 'Specialist Counter Terrorist' patrols are intelligence led and provide 'security' in areas that they deem a 'specific threat'. TSG patrols support operational colleagues including C3 Intelligence Branch, The National Crime Agency and other intelligence agencies including Mi5.

These two agencies, C3 and the TSG, provide the basis of a rebranded RUC Special Branch. They use the same tactics and methods as the Special Branch, and for the same purpose. And it is not only the political, tactical and methodical approach to 'policing' that has remained the same, their religious balance stands in stark contrast to the PSNI's broader statistics and that of the Six Counties as a whole. A 2016 'Labour Force Survey' indicated that, of the working age population in 'Northern Ireland', 44% were Catholic and 40% were Protestant.

But according to recent statistics published by the PSNI, their religious make-up as a whole, comprises 67% perceived as 'Protestant' and 32% perceived as 'Catholic'. A dismal representation of the society they purport to represent.

Compare this with the C3 Intelligence Branch, a huge 79% of which are Protestant personnel, of which 92% are former RUC officers.

In 2013 the PSNI stated that '...the average length of total Police service for Regular Police who are currently attached to C3 Intelligence is 19 ½ years. There are prerequisites to transfer into C3 Intelligence Branch based on qualifications and other factors. Therefore the 50/50 recruitment since...2001 will not have had a major effect on Community Background in C3 Intelligence Branch'.

Indeed, many years of a 50/50 recruitment policy has done little to impact the makeup of the new Special Branch. It remains almost 80% Protestant, a dim representation of a population that is almost 50% Catholic.

Little wonder then that, employing the same modus operandi, the same political direction and indeed the same workforce, we have the same outcomes.

The dirty hand of C3 Intelligence Branch can be seen in the recruitment of informants in the Six Counties. Few have been brave enough to make it publicly known about their interaction with the sinister group. One who has, highlighted in August 2017 that C3 members attempted to coerce him into becoming an informer by suggesting that they would release information that indicated he had already been working with them, a lie which if believed, no doubt posed a serious risk to the individuals' life.

This revelation came just days after Police Ombudsman Dr Michael Maguire launched an investigation into the activities of some officers attached to the undercover police unit amid claims that they were working for a suspected drug dealer.

Covert recordings of the C3 officers trying to recruit an informer give an indication of the tactics of the force and their willingness to break the very 'laws' that they are supposedly tasked to implement.

Those officers detailed that, in return for intelligence on a specific individual, they would wipe the potential informers' information from the PSNI computer database, as well as cover his expenses and supply thousands of pounds in cash, whilst also giving him free reign to continue his alleged drug dealing activities. More worrying was their apparent willingness on the recordings to implicate at least two other innocent men for the work of the potential informer. These events and more, all well publicised, give a stark reminder of the activities of RUC Special Branch. They also expose the myth that is a police service representative of the whole of the Six Counties. The reality on the ground is that the PSNI are no more trusted by the Republican & Nationalist community than were the RUC, particularly in working class areas. The continued use of draconian stop & search legislation such as the Justice & Security Act, and the deployment of weaponry here such as plastic bullets, unused in other parts of the 'United Kingdom', give truth to the lie of a reformed state, never mind a reformed 'Police Service'. •

GREETINGS FROM CUBA

Frank Fernando González Herrera,
Bachelor of International Relations
at the Diplomatic College of Cuba
"Raúl Roa García".

On August 13 of this year, the debate and popular consultation of the Draft Constitution began in the Republic of Cuba. With this demonstration of legitimate participatory democracy, the Cuban State advances in the process of updating its socialist political system, inspired by the ideas of José Martí, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Marx and Lenin.

However, the ideological opponents of the Cuban Revolution develop media campaigns of disinformation to hide and distort the reality of Cuba. For this reason, this article tries to answer a series of very important questions about the Draft Constitution: Why is a Constitutional reform necessary? What aspects does it propose to change? Will the principles of our Revolution change?

The Constitutional Reform has as one of its main objectives to incorporate into the Constitution the economical and social transformations discussed and approved in the VI and VII Conferences of the Communist Party from Cuba and, later, in the Sessions of the National Assembly for its implementation.

The current Cuban Constitution dates from 1976, and from then until now the international system and the correlation of forces have changed, and not precisely for the good of humanity, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

These historical events impacted negatively on the Cuban economy because the countries of the socialist camp were our main trading partners, and we can add the increase in US hostility against Cuba with the approval of new laws in the US Congress such as the Torricelli Law and the Helms-Burton Law.

Given this situation, the Cuban government has made economical and social modifications since the 1990s to preserve the social achievements of our political project. And these modifications must be reflected in the Constitution, which will be submitted to national Referendum.

The recognition of other forms of property (The socialist State will remain the owner of the main means of production and strategic natural resources for the development of the country), the incorporation into the constitutional text of some contents of international treaties and protocols signed by Cuba in recent years, the legalization of

marriage between 2 peoples of the same sex, and the delimitation of the number of presidential mandates to 2 periods of 5 years each one are issues that Cuban citizens will discuss in the neighborhood assemblies during the next months.

Finally, the answer to the most important question: Will the principles of our Revolution change?

With the triumph of the Rebel Army led by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro on January 1, 1959, Cuba began a new phase of its history that meant breaking the chains of economical and political dependence that the United States had imposed on our territory. The principles of social justice, humanism, anti-imperialism, internationalism, anti-colonialism, solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world will always be elements that identify to the Cuban revolutionaries.

Hasta la Victoria Siempre!





OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1968

The second in our series of '50', chronicling history from five decades ago, in what could be argued is one of recent histories most tumultuous periods. In this edition, we have given particular focus to a number of the headlines of the period, including, the imperialist aggression in Vietnam, Black liberation movements in the America's and the rise of the Civil Rights movement in Ireland.

1st October - The Apprentice Boys of Derry announced its intention to hold an 'annual' march along the same proposed route of the Civil Rights demonstration, on the same day and at the same time. This particular tactic had been used on several occasions before and many times after the Derry March. It provided the excuse needed to ban the march.



2nd October - Tlatelolco Massacre: Mexican armed forces open fired upon civilians who had gathered to demand freedom for political prisoners, respect for university autonomy, and to condemn the authoritarian government of Gustavo Diaz Ordaz. The exact number of people massacred is still unknown.

5th October - Civil rights activists defy the ban and are attacked by the RUC. Over 100 people are injured, including a number of MPs. This sparked two days of serious rioting in Derry between Catholics and the RUC.



9th October - Near 2,000 students from Queen's University Belfast tried to march to Belfast City Hall in protest against police brutality on the 5th October in Derry. The march was blocked by loyalists led by Ian Paisley. After the demonstration, a student civil rights group 'People's Democracy' was formed.

9th October - The Derry Citizen's Action Committee (DCAC) was formed from five protest organisations which had been active in the city.

12th October - The Summer Olympic Games open in Mexico City. The games have been boycotted by 32 African nations in protest of South Africa's participation.

16th October - Kingston, Jamaica is rocked by the 'Rodney Riots' after the banning of Walter Rodney from the country.



17th Oct 1968 - American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their gloved fists in a black power salute during the playing of the American national anthem.



31st October William X. O'Brien dies - prominent Irish trade unionist.

14th November - "National Burn Your Draft Card Day", in protest to Vietnam War and conscription.

15th November - Operation Commando Hunt is initiated to interdict men and supplies on the Ho Chi Minh Trail from Laos into South Vietnam. The U.S drop 3 million tons worth of bombs on Laos, slowing but ultimately not seriously disrupting trial operations.

15th November - Operation Commando Hunt is initiated to interdict men and supplies on the Ho Chi Minh Trail from Laos into South Vietnam. The U.S drop 3 million tons worth of bombs on Laos, slowing but ultimately not seriously disrupting trial operations.



16th November 1968 - The Derry Citizens Action Committee (DCAC) defied a ban on marches in Derry by marching to the Diamond area of the city. An estimated 15,000 people took part in the subsequent sit-down demonstration in the Diamond area of Derry.

22nd December - Mao Zedong advocates that privileged urban youth in China be sent to the countryside for re-education, marking the beginning of the 'Up to the mountains and down to the villages' movement.



26th December - Two PFLP militants attack an Israeli El Al plane in Athens, Greece.



28th December - Israeli Occupation forces attack Lebanese airport in Beirut.

THE GAA: ROOTS IN REBELLION

By Pádraic Mac Coitir

The GAA, which was founded in 1884 in Thurles County Tipperary, is probably the biggest sporting organisation in Ireland. It is also played in other countries where there is a strong Irish community. It was set up at a time when many people, mostly Republicans, saw the need to revive our culture which was almost wiped out by the British.

Since the 1798 United Irishmen rebellion and the Act of Union in 1801 Britain tried even more to suppress opposition to its rule. Draconian laws were brought in to suppress all things Irish such as making it illegal for schools to teach the language and other things Irish.

An Gorta Mór had a massive affect on our people with many dying of hunger and millions forced to emigrate. This was deliberate policy and it had a devastating affect. Irish Republicans and others knew that to counter the British they had to set up structures with the view of rebellion. Among the number of organisations formed was the GAA and although some of the founders were opposed to armed actions others saw the potential in its growth. Although there were conservative elements such as catholic church people it was driven by women and men who had a clear vision about how to get thousands involved in politics.

Some may argue the British weren't concerned about this revival but they weren't to know that behind the scenes revolutionaries involved in the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) were discussing armed rebellion. This came to be the case with the Easter Rising in 1916. Most of those involved in the Rising were members of the GAA and within a few short years clubs started to spring up named after those executed.

The GAA went on to become a thriving organisation with every county setting up clubs and competitions such as the All-Ireland football, hurling and camogie championships attracting massive crowds. Soccer, rugby and other sports were also becoming popular and the GAA banned their players from participating in them. They also prohibited foreign games being played at grounds and banned

members of the RUC and the British army from joining. For years this was supported by most GAA members and supporters but to appease Unionists they lifted those bans.

The GAA in the Six Counties faced many challenges with members being killed, harassed on their way to games and grounds destroyed. These attacks were carried out by unionist gangs supported by the British establishment. The British army occupied GAA grounds such as Casement Park in Belfast and Crossmaglen in South Armagh. This didn't deter people from playing the games.

Hurling, football, camogie and handball are played by amateurs and there are debates about whether they should go professional. Many argue that if this happened it would seriously affect the games at grass-root level. In recent years we have seen Sky tv buying some games and if this was to continue it would mean that some counties would benefit while the majority would find it hard to survive.

What is the future for the GAA? It has the potential to grow even stronger but the hierarchy need to consult its members before it makes big decisions such as the refurbishment of Casement Park in Belfast. This is an issue that has been going on for four years and as I write there is still no sign of it being resolved. •

Lost In Words

Like Malcolm we didn't land on the Rock, it landed on us
Or to be precise like a tablet of stone it was shoved
Down our throats
It made us choke
Until all that was left was a hallow joke
Wrenched from the words
Wrenched from the land
Slipping away like grains of sand
No drills no beds no hawthorn hedge
No Léim an Mhadaidh just Limavady
Lost in space, lost in time, devoid of meaning in the mind
The seed of the planter plays a different game
Not out of the hand yet something the same
Till he pulls on his shirt and all is revealed
He has put a new name on these long lived in fields
Not a curse to be heard No poet's chimes
A bright coloured bird because he thinks it rhymes
No Finn and the Fianna no Maeve or Ferdia
No Battle of the Bulls Cruac Aei
No Baile na mallachtaí just Ballinamallard.
Lost in space lost in time devoid of meaning in the mind

Colum Mac Giolla Bhéin
July 2016



NO TRANS

LIBERATION

Liberal politicians will often focus on a small minority of headline grabbing issues affecting the LGBT+ community with the aim of portraying themselves as our allies; often ones which offer little to no material benefit for the community. Same sex marriage is often raised, especially in the North, as a clear indicator of whether or not a politician or political party is 'on our side'.

The same is true for the trans community. While we are often ignored in wider discussions about the LGBT+ community, when politicians are questioned on trans issues they will often cite their support for gender recognition reform as a reason to trust them or see them as our allies. Theresa May has attempted to rebrand herself as a pro-trans figurehead using this issue, alongside senior figures of Fine Gael including Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and other right wing zealots and centrist liberals.

This narrow focus on a liberal reform masks the more material and radical needs and demands of the trans community. There is consensus within the community that the provision of healthcare to trans people is entirely unfit for purpose. Whether to reform or to demolish (I'm in favour of the latter), most if not all trans people agree that things need to change. The waiting list for the only gender identity clinic (GIC) in the North is around 2 to 3 years. Those who get in, eventually, face incessant, invasive and often disgusting and creepy questions about themselves, their relationship with their bodies,

their sex life, trauma, among other topics which healthcare gatekeepers have no right to coerce out of vulnerable trans people simply seeking to further their transition in a way which makes them comfortable. Healthcare delivered based on informed consent, delivered by and for the trans community, delivered without the gatekeeping of cis clinicians is the only way in which trans people will truly have their healthcare needs met; Simon Harris' "review" into healthcare provision to trans people likely will not challenge the clear power imbalance between medical gatekeepers and the trans community, and will not deliver this ideal model of healthcare provision. Even when liberal politicians do pay attention to this issue - which occurs once in a blue moon - they do so in a way which maintains trans peoples' status as an oppressed class, and ensures that we are below them and their allies in the power hierarchy they are determined to maintain.

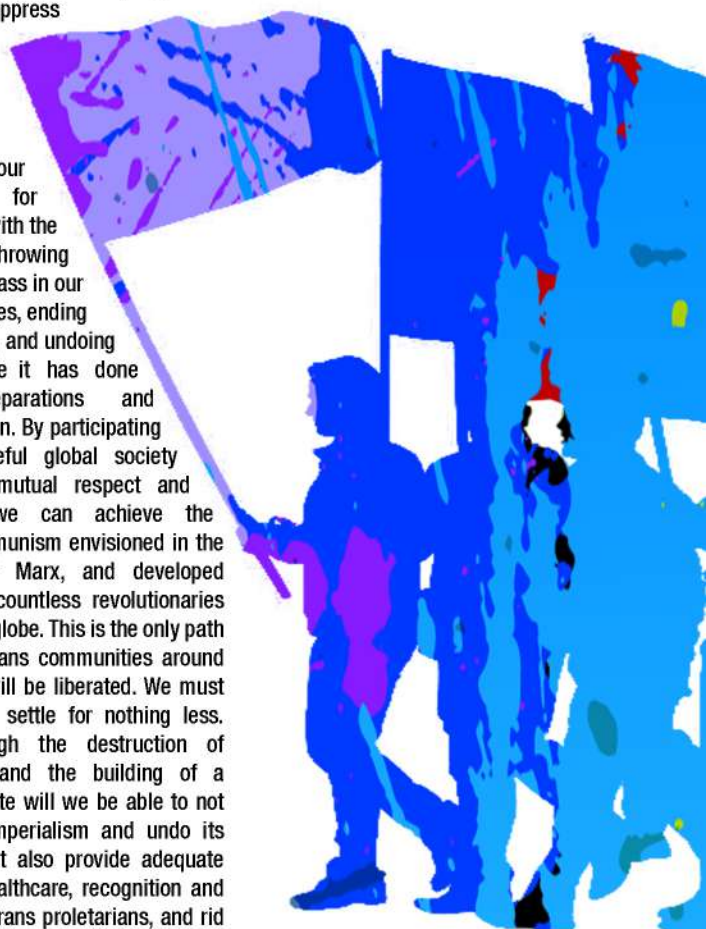
But even this, as huge an issue it is, isn't alone the key to trans liberation. Both of these issues, gender recognition and provision of healthcare, are merely two of countless facing trans people and communities - especially trans proletarians, trans working class people, trans people of colour, etc. The oppressive nature of capitalism targets and attacks trans proletarians with pinpoint precision; rampant homelessness, poverty, employment discrimination, and exploitation plague the community as a direct result of capitalist oppression. Reform isn't an option; capitalism cannot be reformed to not be exploitative as it, in its nature,

demands the creation and maintenance of an oppressed class and an oppressive class. Even if, by chance, trans communities are elevated within capitalism to the position of the oppressors, would we be liberated? Or merely assimilated into the oppressive structures, ready and willing to marginalise those below us? We cannot demand more trans CEOs, more trans bourgeoisie or more trans cops as what we would be demanding is more trans people in a position to oppress others. That is not liberation.

We must be adamant in our demand for socialism, with the aim of overthrowing the ruling class in our own countries, ending imperialism, and undoing the damage it has done through reparations and reconciliation. By participating in a peaceful global society built on mutual respect and solidarity, we can achieve the global communism envisioned in the writings of Marx, and developed further by countless revolutionaries around the globe. This is the only path by which trans communities around the world will be liberated. We must accept and settle for nothing less. Only through the destruction of capitalism and the building of a socialist state will we be able to not only end imperialism and undo its damage, but also provide adequate housing, healthcare, recognition and support to trans proletarians, and rid ourselves of the necessity for the

oppressed class and the oppressor class, thus delivering liberation and emancipation not just to trans communities but to all marginalised and oppressed communities.

Our fight for liberation must show solidarity with all oppressed people, not just in Ireland but around the world, especially those in already existing or those transitioning to socialist states, and those who are victims of targeted imperialist



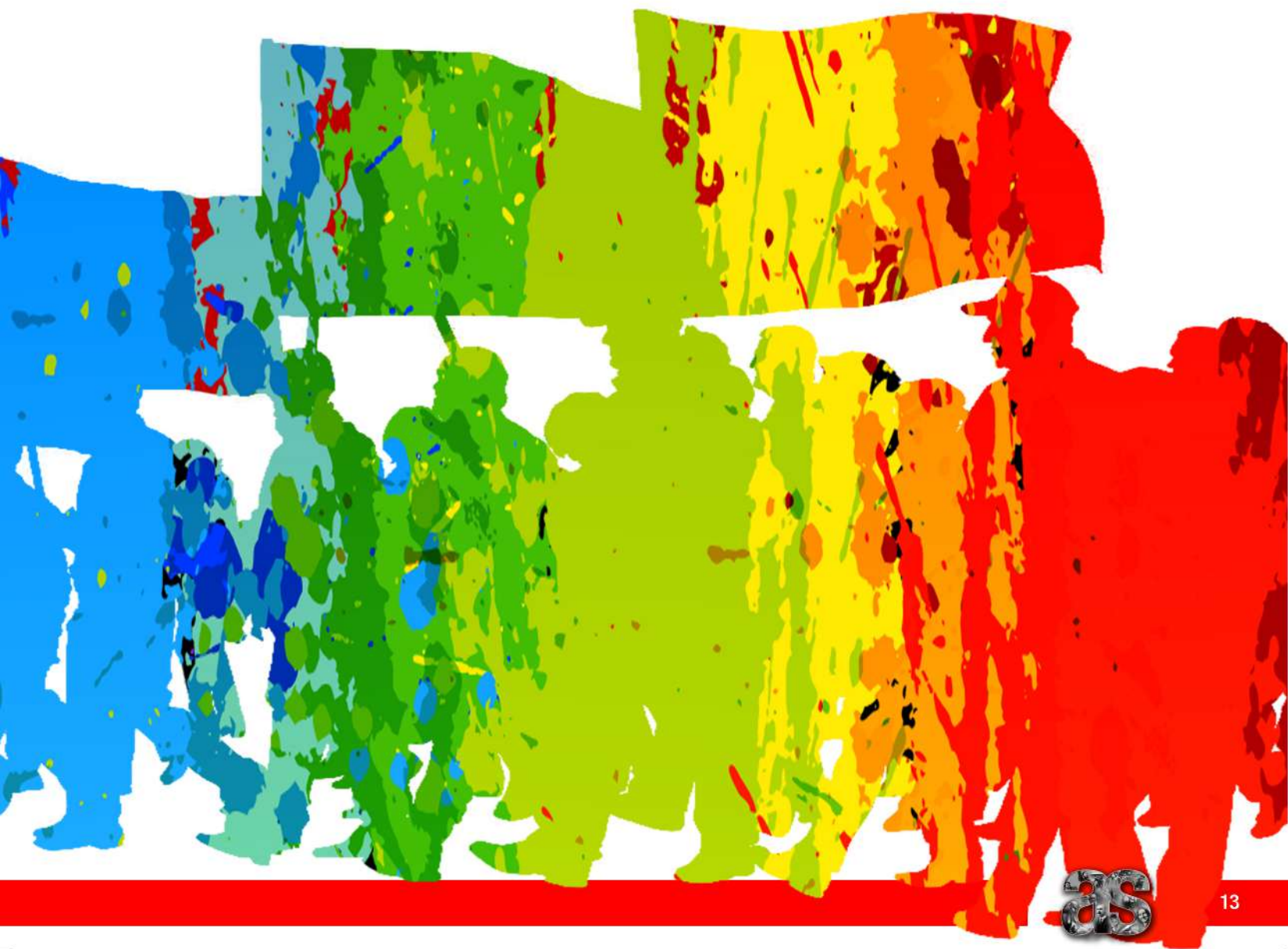
WITHOUT SOCIALISM

By Alexa Moore

aggression. We must stand in solidarity with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has been fighting against imperialist oppression since its inception. We must show solidarity with Cuba, the People's Republic of China, Venezuela, Palestine and all nations struggling against imperialism. We can do this by countering the lies and propaganda spread about them, rather than fueling it by criticising these societies and states as "not real socialism" - only through the destruction of the imperialist powers attempting to eradicate them will trans and LGBT+ communities within these states be

able to grow, thrive and achieve full liberation, and fuelling the imperial propaganda against them does nothing but harm. We must support them, while fighting our own revolution against capitalism and for socialism.

Ultimately, we as activists must make a choice between actual liberation and assimilation into the oppressor class. We must make a choice between actual solidarity and fuelling war efforts against victims of imperialist aggression. We must make a choice between socialist liberation and capitalist persecution, and we must make the right one.





TÍR GAN TEANGA

TÍR GAN ANAM

By Pádraig O'Deorain

It was a dark night in the New Lodge and myself, and a comrade, were dissecting the events of a rather dull, listless and, quite frankly pointless, Cumann meeting as we walked home again. After yet another unsuccessful attempt on my part to impose a Gaeilge language program within the Cumann, I was feeling rather angry and frustrated, part of the frustration being my own inability to learn the language in retrospect.

My comrade ended the conversation abruptly by pointing out that we shared the ambition to live in a Republic, whereas the height of the ambition of those we were surrounded with was quite simply to be a Republican.

Not long after, my comrade left the organisation and the writing was on the wall for myself and a few other comrades of the same disposition. In the years after, I've since achieved a decent level of fluency in the Irish language, although I aspire to achieve more. Which leaves me to ask the question again, what is the point in fighting for Liberation when the people here will still, essentially, be English with an Irish accent? Although that is a harsh assessment, it's not necessarily an unfair one.

We, as a collective people, live a very consumerist, globalist life style. Our preference is to over indulge. We binge eat and binge drink cheap, poorly produced products on the fly

instead of coming together to share the experience. We are taught to be individual at the expense of the community as opposed to living as an individual who is integral to the community. We have adopted into our culture a lot of the mannerisms from the USA and the huge influence it holds across the Globe. We support English soccer teams, we watch English television, and American television, we read English papers, absorb English news, we listen to English music, better still, we sing songs of Irish Freedom in the English language. Not very Irish is it? All very true sadly.

What has struck me the most is the sheer and utter reticence amongst some sections of Irish Republicanism to endorse, or even engage, with the language and culture. We never received support for the Irish classes we ran several times. Attempts to hold Ceili dances instead of the normal Glasgow Celtic centric evening were thwarted every occasion because Ceili dances were "a thing of the past".

Attempts to start Republican book clubs were shut down, attempts to replicate the Basque "Txoko" were also ignored. Instead, meetings were held to discuss how much we hated the British/Police, how much drugs shouldn't be tolerated, how so and so in Sinn Féin was a tout because of some arbitrary reason. Week in, week out, the same conversation, and invariably, everyone was home for a cup of tay and Eastenders. No positive development in terms of the

Cumann, and in my honest opinion, no personal development on any level for anyone involved. It was always an inevitability that entropy would set in and people would drift away realising the utter futility of the whole exercise.

That isn't to say that the exercise is a waste of time, far from it. There is a failure within the wider Republican family to see that the current stage of struggle is now a Cultural war. The British Imperialism we find ourselves fighting now is Cultural, not the physical imperialism of the past. The provisions are there now for the people here to re-engage with the Language. People should be encouraged to join the GAA as opposed to lambasting the wider organisation over the actions of a handful of self-interested parties at its top level. The GAA is as much a cultural manifestation of the Irish people's psyche as the Irish Language.

Tommy McKearney wrote in his book of how the Provisional leadership failed to harness the energy of the mass movement which formed out of the H Block struggles. Arguably, the generation before failed to harness the mass movement of the Civil Rights campaign. We now stand at the start of the next mass movement in Ireland, the Irish Language movement, and we will have to be involved in driving the movement forward.

The reality of the situation is that Republicanism, outside of Sinn Féin, is dying away. It is becoming more and

more irrelevant with every passing day. Republicans themselves need to take a very honest assessment and decide if they are going to commit to the removal of British Cultural Imperialism or if they want to maintain the status quo in return accepting some form of reverence fused with fear from their community as unelected demagogues.

The lines of demarcation have now been set. Stagnate with a dying dialectic or engage with the language and culture of our homeland.

In the coming weeks, I will be teaching Irish Lessons, teaching Irish guitar and, with any luck, will be starting an Irish "Txoko", an Irish language culinary club. The aim is to help give people the tools to disengage from the Cultural imperialism, offering them the opportunity to express themselves as Irish men and women. Republicans will be able to see personal development, collective development and will not fear retaliation, nor will they criminalise the struggle.

The current Republican dialectic must develop beyond constitutionalism and armed struggle to disengagement from the British State in the altogether.

As the old proverb says, "Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam". •



Recent weeks across the island of Ireland have laid bare the barbarity of the land-lording class and their attitude to the welfare of poor tenants. No more pertinent an example in recent memory of how similar the occupied-6 and 26-county state are in class character fits than the recent co-operation of Garda state forces and a Loyalist 'security' gang at the Fredrick Street eviction in Dublin.

Tenants across Ireland are being met with violence and intimidation by the hands of private security and debt-collecting thugs sent out by their landlords to steal what they feel they're owed. There is no border when it comes to the housing crisis in Ireland.

Either by bats and sledgehammers, or by dampness, cold or the decision to go hungry in an attempt to heat your home: the Irish people are being visited with violence due to the greed of the land-lording class.

Turn no longer to your politicians who are themselves rack-renting slumlords. Instead look towards Tenants Unions.

Landlords be warned that the violence they visit upon us will no longer go unanswered, and in turn they shall be met with great resistance. Moves must be made to ostracise these parasites from their communities. No longer should they be able to confidently walk the streets to their properties and demand the impossible from its occupants.

LET US FREE IRELAND

Let us free Ireland! Never mind such base, carnal thoughts as concern work and wages, healthy homes, or lives unclouded by poverty.

Let us free Ireland! The rackrenting landlord; is he not also an Irishman, and wherefore should we hate him? Nay, let us not speak harshly of our brother – yea, even when he raises our rent.

Let us free Ireland! The profit-grinding capitalist, who robs us of three-fourths of the fruits of our labour, who sucks the very marrow of our bones when we are young, and then throws us out in the street, like a worn-out tool when we are grown prematurely old in his service, is he not an Irishman, and mayhap a patriot, and wherefore should we think harshly of him?

Let us free Ireland! "The land that bred and bore us." And the landlord who makes us pay for permission to live upon it. Whoop it up for liberty!

"Let us free Ireland," says the patriot who won't touch Socialism. Let us all join together and cr-r-rush the br-r-rutal Saxon. Let us all join together, says he, all classes and creeds. And, says the town worker, after we have crushed the Saxon and freed Ireland, what will we do? Oh, then you can go back to your slums, same as before. Whoop it up for liberty!

And, says the agricultural workers, after we have freed Ireland, what then? Oh, then you can go scraping around for the landlord's rent or the money-lenders' interest same as before. Whoop it up for liberty!

After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch socialism, we will protect all classes, and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party, under command of the sheriff, will wear green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic. Now, isn't that worth fighting for?

And when you cannot find employment, and, giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the poorhouse door to the tune of St. Patrick's Day. Oh! It will be nice to live in those days!

"With the Green Flag floating o'er us" and an ever-increasing army of unemployed workers walking about under the Green Flag, wishing they had something to eat. Same as now! Whoop it up for liberty!

Now, my friend, I also am Irish, but I'm a bit more logical. The capitalist, I say, is a parasite on industry; as useless in the present stage of our industrial development as any other parasite in the animal or vegetable world is to the life of the animal or vegetable upon which it feeds.

The working class is the victim of this parasite – this human leech, and it is the duty and interest of the working class to use every means in its power to oust this parasite class from the position which enables it to thus prey upon the vitals of labour.

Therefore, I say, let us organise as a class to meet our masters and destroy their mastership; organise to drive them from their hold upon public life through their political power; organise to wrench from their robber clutch the land and workshops on and in which they enslave us; organise to cleanse our social life from the stain of social cannibalism, from the preying of man upon his fellow man.

Organise for a full, free and happy life FOR ALL OR FOR NONE





FORTRESS EUROPE

By Aylisha Hogan

There are over 68.5 million people forcibly displaced worldwide. 21.3 million are refugees, over half are children. The emotional, harrowing stories, of people's journeys and lives lost, told through media and popular culture remind us of the reality of the desperate situation facing these people. The approach to dealing with displacement crises are wholly ineffective. The traditional UN definition of a refugee focuses on 'persecution' and fails to consider the three main underlying

consider the three main underlying factors which contribute to displacement today; intrastate conflict, poor governance and political instability, and environmental factors. Migrants fleeing war are no more human than those migrants seeking to escape economic inequality, they are no more deserving of safety and sanctuary. To even try and comprehend the scale of suffering is impossible. Mental health and suicide, the struggle to assimilate, humiliation by the authorities, and dreadful experiences of refugee camps are all symptomatic of the displaced persons experience.

Contrary to what we are told, this crisis is not new, and Europe is not

overwhelmed with refugees. The world's poorest countries have been bearing the brunt of refugee crisis for decades, it was only in 2014 when the most recent wave of refugees began arriving in Europe, and public pressure grew, did the governments of Europe acknowledge this long standing global issue.

Powerful and emotive speeches made by European leaders reaffirmed commitment to the international legal protections inspired by the horrors of WWII, creating a rhetoric of welcome, tolerance, and moral superiority. At the same time Europe strengthened its peripheral borders; Ceuta and Melilla to the south, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine to the east, using

advanced, expensive and high-tech equipment to do so. In 2004, to cope with the widening of the EU and Schengen area, Frontex was created to provide additional technical support to EU countries facing increased migratory pressure. In addition, Frontex works with several 'third country partners'. The EU has struck deals with Greece, Turkey, and north African countries to prevent migrants accessing the continent. In exchange these countries get financial and development aid or visas for their own residents to enter Europe.

These deals have created a bottle neck; they have forced migrants into overcrowded refugee camps and detention centres where they remain incarcerated indeterminately in horrendous conditions facing serious human rights abuses. Due to lack of legal routes, migrants are forced to try and access Europe by sea. They rely on smugglers and human traffickers who have no regard for their safety, many drowning in the process. They are forced, often at gunpoint, onto overcrowded dinghies wearing lifejackets which do not float, bought and sold on the black market. The criminals who the EU claims their harsh border policies punish, are profiting from the vulnerability and desperation of displaced people trapped by the same policies.

The EU is often accused of being a fortress. However, the phrase





Fortress Europe is misleading, it ignores the myriad of internal borders and stressors designed to manage migrants who enter without permission, it also ignores the permeability of the fortress to migrants deemed 'desirable'.

In Calais, displaced people have been on the move for months or even years with the hope of finding sanctuary. I've been travelling back and forward to Calais for over a year to research and volunteer. Volunteers on the ground work tirelessly to the detriment of their own health and wellbeing to support hundreds of destitute displaced people. By order of the French State, there is no access to clean drinking water, food is provided only by NGOs, there are no showers; the local swimming pool requires you to present a passport to use their facilities – even if you have money to pay the entrance fee. The level of state violence is incomprehensible and relentless.

Almost daily, riot police raid people's sleeping areas confiscating sleeping bags, coats, even gloves, using excessive force when doing so. Children are not excused from this treatment. I've washed tear gas from children's eyes at the side of the motorway, how un-phased they were by yet another attack like this was truly disturbing. I've driven children with broken bones to hospital, injuries sustained trying to jump in the back of moving lorries with the hope of reaching Britain. These horrors are just what lays on the surface dig a little deeper and an underworld of smuggling, black market trading, substance abuse, self-harm, and sexual exploitation is exposed, on occasion involving people posing as volunteers. This entire situation has been created in the name of defending borders and 'remaining tough' on immigration. The absence of support for refugees in Calais from state actors is not accidental, it is part of a series of deliberate tactics of exhaustion whereby people are forced into

destitution and their being destitute is criminalised and anyone providing aid to refugees is also criminalised. The point where humanitarian actors, the volunteers running NGOs and supporting migrants in Calais, become activists is blurred. However, as their humanitarian actions are increasingly and more violently disrupted and criminalised, the delivery of aid becomes inherently a political act of resistance and defiance. Volunteers on the ground transition not only deliver aid, but they monitor and report human rights violations. They in turn disrupt the wishes of the French state to disperse and remove refugees who pose a threat to the sanctity of the Calais-Dover border. Through social media, these humanitarians turned activists publicly share and document human rights violations in a raw and unedited way, meaning we as activists, don't have to be on the ground to understand and act on what is happening.

The treatment of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants across Europe has led me to conclude that whilst hard borders exist at the peripheries,

the fortress moves with the 'undesirable' migrants. It creates a barrier between 'us' and 'them'. It constricts their freedom to live as part of our society. When displaced people reach their country of 'asylum' the controls and stressors manifest themselves in the form of; dispersal, substandard housing, enforced destitution, enforced poverty, denial of working rights, limited access to health care, and the ongoing threat of detention and deportation seek to manage and control the behaviour of unwanted migrants.

At the external borders, we have a tangible enemy, a point of opposition. At the internal borders our target becomes more blurred, the sites of control are varied and intertwined. Unexpected actors become part of the immigration control regime; doctors pass information to immigration officials, employers report undocumented workers, private contractors become responsible for managing immigration detention centres, racism and fear become the method of control. On the one hand, the complexity and sheer size and power of the immigration estate is terrifying, particularly in places like Calais where violent actions by state police go relatively unchallenged. However, as activists we can take hope from the fact that because immigration control is so intertwined with our everyday lives, so too is our ability to resist it. Where the immigration control regime is operated by everyday people; estate agents, bank tellers, and teachers, grassroots resistance can more easily target and disrupt it. In cases like Calais, where people are still 'in-flight' as it were, we can work with humanitarian activists on the ground to monitor human rights abuses and take upon a responsibility ourselves to disseminate this information, bypassing and resisting mass media sources and the narratives created by European Governments and the far right. •



NOTES FOR REVOLUTIONARIES

Capitalism is but a gentlemen's method of slavery

- Kwame Nkrumah

Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.

- Oscar Wilde

In colonial conquest, language did to the mind what the sword did to the bodies of the colonised.

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

We don't see armed struggle in the classic sense of previous guerrilla wars, that is, as the only way and the only all-powerful truth around which everything is organized. In a war, the decisive thing is not the military confrontation but the politics at stake in the confrontation. We didn't go to war to kill or be killed. We went to war in order to be heard.

- Subcomandante Marcos

By what standard of morality can the violence used by the slave to break his chains be considered the same as the violence of a slave master?

- Walter Rodney

If a white man wants to lynch me, that's his problem. If he's got the power to lynch me, that's my problem. Racism is not a question of attitude; it's a question of power. Racism gets its power from capitalism. Thus, if you're anti-racist, whether you know it or not, you must be anti-capitalist. The power for racism, the power for sexism, comes from capitalism, not an attitude.

- Stokely Carmichael

A riot is the language of the unheard.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Labour is the only force that can save labour. Rally then to save labour from its encircling enemies, and know that in saving labour you save the most effective force for the redemption of Ireland.

- James Connolly

no private right to property is good against the public right of the nation

- P. H. Pearse

Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains, and under capitalism is bound to remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor.

- V. I. Lenin

They said I was ruthless, daring, savage, blood thirsty, even heartless. The clergy called me and my comrades murderers but the British were met with their own weapons. They had gone in the mire to destroy us and our nation and down after them we had to go.

- Tom Barry

'Real' socialism, it's argued, would be controlled by the workers themselves through direct participation instead of being run by Leninists, 'Stalinists', 'Castroites' or other ill-willed evil leaders and bureaucrats who betray revolutions, we hear. Well unfortunately this 'pure' socialism view is profoundly ahistorical and non-falsifiable; by that I mean it remains untestable against the actualities of history, it compares an ideal against an imperfect reality. The 'pure' socialist ideological anticipations remain untainted by existing practice, they don't explain how a complex revolutionary society could be built and secured, how priorities would be set, how survival could be achieved by just having the workers own and control everything. How do you expropriate enough surplus value to build an army to defend yourself against the invasion that comes? It's no surprise that the 'pure' socialists support every revolution except the ones that succeed.

The 'pure' socialists usually blame the Left for every defeat by the Left, 'they weren't vigorous enough, they weren't resourceful enough, they didn't mobilise the people enough, they didn't do this enough, they didn't do that enough.' They presume to know better than those engaging in the actual struggles and it's unfortunate that they haven't found time to apply their own brilliant insights and leadership genius to producing a successful mass revolutionary movement in our country."

- Michael Parenti



The Irish language

It is gone from the hill and the glen—
The strong speech of our sires;
It is sunk in the mire and the fen

Of our nameless desires:

We have bartered the speech of the Gael

For a tongue that would pay,
And we stand with the lips of us pale
And all bloodless today;

We have bartered the birthright of men

That our sons should be liars.

It is gone from the hill and the glen
The strong speech of our sires.

Like the flicker of gold on the whin

That the Spring breath unites,

It is deep in our hearts and shall win
Into flame where it smites:

It is there with the blood in our veins,

With the stream in the glen,

With the hill and the heath and the weans

They shall think it again;

It shall surge to their lips and shall win

The high road to our rights—

Like the flicker of gold on the whin

That the sun-burst unites.

- Roger Casement



MAD FRA

or, a Devout Psychohistory of Irish Catholicism



SHOULD WE TELL HIM WE'VE MOVED ON?

NAH.


The Age of Heresy
Anno Domini
XXIVXX

The Age of Fear
IT'S GRAND!
1925-1961

Averting Disaster
c.1916

The Good
oul' Days,
sure!

.DUBLIN ZOO.
.2018.

A portrait of Seamus Costello, a man with dark hair, wearing a suit and tie, looking slightly to the left. The background is dark and out of focus, with some text visible on the left side, including "OIN" and "I.R.S.". The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

...I favour guerilla
tactics in parliament,
the same as I do in
many other
respects... and I see
no reason why with a
few TDs or a few MPs
of the right calibre,
pursuing the right
policies, why they
cannot destroy the
confidence of the
people in these
institutions and bring
them tumbling down
in ruin...

- *Seamus Costello*

GUERRILLA PARLIAMENTARIANISM IN DEFENCE OF COSTELLO'S VISION

By Lar Ó Tuama

Although much has changed in the political, economic and social landscape of Ireland since Séamus Costello was gunned down by counter-revolutionaries 41 years ago, the aforementioned quote still carries much weight today. At a time where republicanism, and more specifically socialist-republicanism, is at a rather low ebb with arguably no real immediate prospects for progression of a mass movement. Where the Irish people have, for a large part, lost all faith in the ability of their so-called elected representatives to actually represent them. And where the old guard of the political establishment remain cemented in their positions of power and wholly confident of forwarding the cause of Capital and Empire. At such dire times as these, there's a lot to be said for seeking out those of the "right calibre" to enter the fray in defence of the cause of Labour and the working class!

Firstly, I have to put down my uncompromising belief that electioneering is not and can never be a mechanism for revolutionary change by itself. To paraphrase James Connolly, our governments are but committees of the rich propped up to do their bidding. By this understanding I accept and assert that Leinster House, Stormont and even Westminster are not the theatres wherewithin our revolutionary Republic shall be borne. But by all means, it is within these bleak chambers of imperial power, capitalist greed and chauvanistic corruption that the seeds of revolution can be sewn to bring these institutions "tumbling down in ruin". Therefore, as a tactical endeavour in line with a much larger mass political and social movement, contesting elections and taking seats in parliaments and councils can be a very revolutionary act when done within the frames of an ideological goal.

There are many within the broad ideological school of socialist-republicanism who would argue, and with some validity, that taking seats in parliaments set-up to suppress the revolutionary Cead Dail Éireann is an inexcusable act of betrayal. A "selling-out" of those whos struggle we continue today. Whereas there is undoubtedly some merit to this argument, given that a degree of compromise would be necessary, it is however an argument generally steeped in puritanical thought and one blinded by a fundamental zeal. Though it may be a hard pill for many republicans to swallow, the fact of the matter is, the Republic proclaimed in 1916 was

suppressed and defeated and the Free State unfortunately won through in the end. That is not to say our ideological goal has been defeated, but rather the curtains have closed on that particular revolutionary act. Moreover, our struggle occupies a much grander stage, where "everyone, Republican or otherwise has their own particular part to play", and our ability to re-evaluate our position and adapt, instead of clinging to the deeds of others, is a vital trait for the revolutionary movement. And no amount of historical fetishism can negate from that fact. We honour those who came before us by picking up their torch to light the path of our own revolutionary journey. By contesting elections within a strategic and ideological framework, we as socialist-republicans can utilise a powerful weapon which we have used to our advantage many times before. Comrades of the "right calibre" taking seats in any parliament or council, regardless of how regressive the institution, can serve to benefit our cause without fear of being "sell-outs".

However, it is also essential that these comrades do not get too comfortable in their position and lose sight of the part they were chosen to play. TDs expenses, pensions, salaries and the many other perks of the job can potentially lead to some people "settling in", and shows the necessity for candidates of unquestionable character and commitment in relation to their politics.

For any socialist-republican candidate to be successful, whether as part of a larger political/social movement or as an independent activist, they would of course need to be unwavering in their commitment to their ideology. As Costello pointed out, they would need to be of the "right calibre", and our broad movement is abundant with such people of integrity, commitment and honour. Though I am not advocating running candidates in every election, in every constituency purely for the sake of electioneering and lack of strategy, I am saying the right person, at the right time, with the right vision has the real potential to further our cause.

Anyone who doubts the benefit of having a few elected reps of the right calibre, then bare in mind when a young Bernadette Devlin walked across the floor of West Minister and punched the then British Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, in the face for defending the actions of the British Army's bloodletting the day prior when they massacred 14 Irish civilians in the Bogside of Derry on Bloody Sunday. Ever the stalwart, when a reporter asked her if she intended to apologise for her actions, her response

was that of a true representative of the people who voted for her – "I'm just sorry I didn't get him by the throat". Of course the business of parliaments consists of more than protest actions, but giving our movement and communities a voice within these institutions has proven to be advantageous, as can be seen with the likes of Mícheál Mac Giolla Easbuig in Donegal and Gary Donnelly in Derry, and many other councilors and TDs around the country. This is what I believe Costello was referring to by "guerilla tactics", and this is how standing in elections has the potential to benefit our movement. Not careerist politicians or political movements based entirely around electioneering and getting into government, but a "few TDs or a few MPs of the right calibre, pursuing the right policies" working to "destroy the confidence of the people in these institutions and bring them tumbling down in ruin". This is guerilla parliamentarianism.

Although elections are a valuable tactic when appropriate, they should never be viewed as the go-to option, and the decision to run candidates should be done so from an ideological and strategic vantage point. Election campaigns are extremely costly, not only financially but mentally and emotionally. Therefore elections should not be contested on the back of an individual's ego or a false collective sense of worth. Neither should elections be contested purely to give a party or politician a platform and media access otherwise denied to them. Elections should only be contested when the candidate has a real fighting chance of taking a seat and furthering their work in parliament. Otherwise the exhausting nature of election campaigns can deflate a movement's momentum and leave those not so well seasoned in politics gravely disheartened and dejected should their efforts not prove fruitful. There are many examples of movements here jumping blindly and pre-maturely into elections, only to be almost entirely derailed as a result. We need to learn from these mistakes.

Elections have always been, and will no doubt remain, contentious topics within republicanism, and our movement has been fragmented many times in the past due to this. Therefore, it's safe to say, this is not something that all socialist-republicans will come to an overall agreed view on. Though believe I have set down a decent contribution to the argument, which I hope will spark some comradely debate. Conversation is healthy comrades, and all of us should allow room for our own pre-existing ideas to be challenged and further developed. •

RAINBOW



RAIN THE RISING

Continuing our theme of the unsung heroes of 1916, we turn to focus on the brave volunteers whose sexual identity often goes unmentioned. May they serve as further inspiration for us all, and in particular our fellow Republican activists within the LGBTQ community.

Kathleen Lynn & Madeleine ffrench-Mullen

Born in Mayo in 1874, Kathleen Lynn was one of the first female qualified doctors in Ireland. She was both a socialist and feminist, who come the rising would assume the role of chief medical officer. Her partner, born in Malta in 1880, was Madeleine ffrench-Mullen, the daughter of a British Naval Officer.

The pair first met through Inghinidhe na hÉireann during the 1913 Lock Out. A period during which ffrench-Mullen organised soup kitchens whilst Lynn offered first aid education and free medical assistance to striking workers and their families. Both women joined the Irish Citizen Army (ffrench-Mullen a lieutenant) and would perform integral life-saving roles during the Rising.

On Easter Monday the pair would find themselves at separate posts, with Lynn being based at City Hall (which backs onto Dublin Castle, HQ of the British Army), whilst ffrench-Mullen was ordered to College Green to assume command of the fifteen Citizen Army women who set up a medical station and field kitchen. Kathleen Lynn would amazingly take the rank of commanding officer inside City Hall after the death of Sean Connolly. Under her leadership the sixteen men and nine women inside managed to hold the building for a single day, which given the close proximity of City Hall to British army headquarters was no small feat.

Imprisoned together within Kilmainham gaol, ffrench-Mullen would write that "as long as we are left together, prison was somewhat bearable". When separated following her transfer to Mountjoy gaol, Lynn recorded that despite the improved conditions of her new cell: "I would give £10,000 to be back in Kilmainham with Madeleine." After many more decades of activism, the two would live together in Rathmines until ffrench-Mullen's death in 1944.



Helena Molony

Another female Republican hero, who for this issue requires no further introduction, Helena Molony is unsung bisexual hero of this band of rebels. Molony throughout her life had a number of relationships with different men, but it was with psychiatrist Evelyn O'Brien that she spent her last 20 years loving. Feminist historian and author Marie Mulholland cites that the minute evidence of their relationship is a result of O'Brien's family destroying all of Evelyn's personal papers after her death in effort to hide their relationship which of course would have been actively persecuted during the time.

Roger Casement

Undoubtedly the most renowned member of the 1916 queer pantheon is Roger Casement, whose very sexuality was weaponised against him and ultimately the reason he too would be executed for his role in the rising. Being held in high esteem within the Empire, he was regarded as the father of 20th century human rights investigations for his reports on the treatment of the indigenous people of the Congo and Peru, work that would earn him a knighthood.

It would take the publication of the 'Black diaries' by the British government to silence efforts to have his death sentence commuted. These diaries contained personal accounts by Casement of his sexual encounters with men during periods of his life.

Criminalised for his sexuality and his actions in supplying weapons to the brave men and women of 1916, Casement was hanged in Pentonville Prison, London, on the 3rd August 1916.



Elizabeth O'Farrell & Julia Grenan

Childhood friends, both O'Farrell and Grenan were born in Dublin in 1884 and would mature alongside one another both politically and personally all their lives. Strong Republicans and gaeilgeoirs they joined the various organisations in Dublin such as the Gaelic League, the Irish Women's Franchise League and the Irish Women Workers' Union. Together in 1906 they joined Inghinidhe na hÉireann, and went on to become volunteers of the Inghinidhe branch of Cumann na mBan soon after its creation in 1914. They were involved in major campaigns of action against British Army recruitment drives in Ireland, and under Markievicz were trained in the use of firearms. Like many other brave women they would find themselves deeply embroiled in the battle against the bosses during the 1913 Dublin Lock-out.

During the rising they acted as both dispatchers and nurses, being sent around the bullet-torn streets of Dublin during the week with despatches, food and ammunition hidden in their long skirts to stations at Boland's Mill, Powers' Distillery, Jacobs' Factory, St. Stephen's Green and the Four Courts. They administered aid to a wounded James Connolly, and alongside Winifred Carney refused to evacuate the GPO following Pearse's orders that Friday that all women and wounded leave.

Present within Moore Street, it was O'Farrell that was chosen to seek the terms of surrender from the British. Grenan watched from the doorway as O'Farrell emerged into a street burdened by British gunfire. She was taken to Brigadier General William Lowe who sent her back to Pearse with the demand for unconditional surrender. Pearse agreed and, accompanied by O'Farrell, surrendered in person to General Lowe. Arguably O'Farrell's most famous moment, it would become victim to the counter-revolutionaries of the 'saor stat's historical revisionism, with the iconic photo later popularised with O'Farrell's feet airbrushed from the image to show Pearse alone.

Imprisoned for their part, both women upon their own respected release resumed their lives and activism together. Struggling against British occupation and patriarchal oppression within the 26-county state until their deaths. Julia Grenan and Elizabeth O'Farrell are buried together in Glasnevin Cemetery.



FORGOTTEN WOMEN OF REPUBLICANISM

HELENA MOLONY

Born in 1883 and orphaned early in her life, Molony was a radical committed to the intersectional causes of feminism, the labour movement and national liberation. Her political awakening began at the age of nineteen: "I was a young girl dreaming about Ireland when I saw and heard Maud Gonne speaking by the Custom House in Dublin one August evening in 1903 . . . She electrified me and filled me with some of her own spirit"

It was from then that she joined Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland), a radical Republican women's organisation led by Maud Gonne that was prolific for its anti-recruitment campaigns against

the British Army.

In 1908 she established Ireland's first nationalist-feminist journal publishing *Bean na hÉireann*, a monthly magazine that advocated 'militancy, separatism and feminism'. It was intended to revive Gaelic pride and counter encroaching British colonial values, covering topics of fashion, labour, cookery, fiction, poetry and of course politics. *Bean na hÉireann* was "the woman's paper that all the young men buy" and considered the most aggressive paper of its time.

Molony is responsible for bringing many into the movement, particularly Constance Markievicz and Dr Kathleen Lynn. It was even inside Molony's home on Lower Camden Street in Dublin that Na Fianna

Éireann, the cadet body of the Irish Volunteers, was founded by Constance Markievicz on August 16th 1909.

In 1911 she earned the distinction of being the first Irish political prisoner of her generation after vandalising a portrait of George V during his visit to Ireland. She was bailed out, but was overjoyed when she was rearrested for calling the monarch a scoundrel. "That was marvellous; I felt myself in the same company as Wolfe Tone," she later said of her brief detention.

A prominent member of the 1913 Dublin Lockout, she worked in Liberty Hall's food kitchen and addressed strike meetings. An actor by profession, she drew on her theatrical experience to outwit state forces, once disguising Jim Larkin as an

elderly clergyman to facilitate his famous appearance on the balcony of the Imperial Hotel. For Molony the lockout 'profoundly affected the whole country', producing a 'social and intellectual revolution'. In November 1915 Connolly appointed her secretary of the Irish Women Workers' Union, which had been formed during the strike at Jacob's Biscuit Factory amid the lockout. Molony presided over the union's shirt factory in Liberty Hall, established in order to give employment to the strikers forced out of work and blacklisted after the strike.

Molony equally played an enthusiastic role in the 1916 Easter Rising. During the first few months of 1916, Helena was sent to London to smuggle guns back to Ireland,

These were to be transported in her suitcase and then brought home by ferry. She had travelled to London numerous times with the Abbey as an actress and was confident that she was up to the job. On her way to Euston Station, she met a young Army recruit who offered to carry her suitcase for her. She, of course, let him, and the British recruit inadvertently carried the guns all the way to the train!

Weeks prior to the rising Molony alongside James Connolly would even defend the workers' co-operative printing press adjoining Liberty Hall from an RIC raiding party.

The press operator Christopher Brady recorded at the time: "Connolly came down quickly, walked quietly to the counter with drawn gun

in his hand. A few feet away Miss Molony was already covering the police with her automatic. Connolly looked sternly at the police and gave his command to them: "Drop these papers or I will drop you" . . . With this they beat a quick retreat."

The workers' co-operate from then until the rising became her home, sleeping on a pile of coats inside the office with a revolver under her pillow. It was Helena Molony who was trusted to guard the completed proclamations once they were printed.

During the rising itself she was involved in a daring raid on Dublin Castle before her capture in City Hall and incarceration at Ship Street barracks. She was then moved to Kilmainham Gaol where she was

traumatised by the executions of the Rising's leaders, particularly Connolly's. After a failed but valiant attempt to dig her way out with a spoon, she became one of only five women to be transferred to a decrepit gaol in England alongside her 2500 male comrades.

During the War for Independence Molony would work with Contance Markievicz in the Ministry of Labour. She would also become an aide to Michael Collins and Liam Mellows whilst also serving as a District Justice in the republican courts in Rathmines. Staying true to the vision of the 1916 she would remain within the Republican camp, opposing the treaty during the Civil War.

Molony would continue for years to struggle against the repressive

26-county state, remaining active within the Women's Prisoner's Defence League and the People's Rights Association during the 1930s. In 1931 with Frank Ryan, she helped found Saor Éire, a radical socialist republican organisation that was immensely opposed by the powerful clergy and later outlawed by Fianna Fáil. In 1937 she was elected president of the Irish Trade Union Congress, becoming only the second woman to hold the office.

Helena Molony died of pneumonia in Dublin on the 29th January 1967. She is buried in the Republican Plot in Glasnevin Cemetery.





IS THE
 TENANTS
 UNITED
 WILL
 NEVER
 BE
 DEFEATED

ACORN

By Tom Crosher

How do you start to organise a group of people made up of both the elderly and students, low income earners and rich yuppies, that has potential members from all across our society, whose only similarity was they all paid a part of their income every month to live in a home owned by someone else?

This was the big question we were asking ourselves in Manchester back in January of this year, when we were about to launch ACORN Tenants' Union Manchester, the 5th UK branch of the Association of Community Organisers for Reform Now. Nine months on, we've found the passion around the awfulness of the renting situation in the UK has made this job a lot easier than we had expected. However, we have found that some methods and techniques work better than others. Here's our experience of what has worked and what hasn't setting up a renters' union in Manchester.

So how do you go about organising a community of very disparate people? Where do you find these people? With workplace organising it's a simple answer, you go to their place of work.

“...holding weekly street stalls in the early days bagged us some of our most committed organisers.

With tenants, it's not so easy, especially as most of the time these tenants will not share a landlord. For one of our paid organisers, who went to Sheffield completely alone to build the now 300 person strong union there, it was all about getting yourself out there. Jonny stood at an ACORN stall in Sheffield town centre for weeks, talking to people about their experiences and agitating to get people interested in setting up a group of like-minded renters. It's been a tactic that has worked in Manchester too, holding weekly street stalls in the early days bagged us some of our most committed organisers.

Many people are just waiting for the chance to get involved in community organising, and all you have to do is ask! Will, our current

Communications officer, was recruited through a street stall:

“All my experiences with renting have been shaky to say the least, and having just gone through the ordeal of moving into a new flat (the constant back and forth emails, apathetic staff and extortionate admin fees), I was more than willing to jump on any opportunity to kick back at that system. I was also interested in getting involved in activism again after a long break, but hadn't quite crossed that bridge to start actively looking for groups to join.

“When I was asked by a bloke with a clipboard if I was a private renter, I needed no more convincing than the initial two minute conversation. Now,



as an ACORN organiser, I've had that same experience speaking to people on the street; tackling the imbalance of power we face as renters is an easy sell, but not something many would think of or actively look for. Social media has its benefits for sure, but by far the biggest contributor to our membership is grabbing five minutes of someone's time on a stall.”

Once we had the people, the next stage was retaining them. Volunteer organisations like ours can only survive on goodwill for so long, keeping the energy and motivation of our organisers and supporters up is vital. By far the greatest motivator we've found is through member defence - backing a member with the full force of the union in disputes with their landlord makes organisers feel great, it's what we've set this union up to do and it provides tangible results and some great press. Having a steady stream of winnable and emotive member defence cases has boosted our energy and motivation more than anything else. We've also found that running fun and sociable events brings people in who wouldn't bother turning up to boring business

meetings or doorknocking in the rain - our banner making event brought in members who had never been to any other meeting! Getting members to check in with each other, even just a text the night before a meeting, also helps to retain a wide net of organisers and avoid the pitfall of a committed but small group of organisers doing all the work and burning out.

“...be prepared to ask questions and work with other organisations, sharing knowledge, events and experiences.

All of this of course is specific to our experience in Manchester. Ask any of our sister organisations across the country and you'll be given different tips and advice about what has worked and what hasn't.

This is the final aspect to creating a strong renters' union - be prepared to ask questions of and work with other organisations, sharing knowledge, events and experiences.

Our communications with other left-leaning and campaigning organisations around Manchester have helped us immensely to get us to where we are today. Only when all of us wanting a better future can join forces and support one another will we be able to command the power we need to reform the broken and unjust society we live in.



POLITICAL PROFILE: SYRIA

WHILST WESTERN IMPERIALISM CONTINUES TO BEAT IT'S WAR DRUM ALONGSIDE THE CHANTS OF 'DICTATORSHIP' AND 'DEMOCRACY', WE WONDERED DO THOSE ON THE 'LEFT' WHO WOULD JOIN THEIR CHORUS REALLY KNOW THE CONDITIONS OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SYRIA?

Name: Syrian Arab Republic (independence from France 1948)

Regime type: Republic

Leader: Bashar al-Assad (President since 2000)

Prime Minister: Imad Khamis (since 2016)

Legal system: Constitutional

Suffrage: Right to vote in presidential, assembly and local elections extended to all Syrian citizens (Syrian, Art.59, 2012)

Religion: Secular Republic (whilst stipulating that "Islamic jurisprudence shall be a major source of legislation" Article 3 of Syrian constitution also guarantees religious liberty for all) (Ibid)

Constitutional Reform:

In 2012 President Assad announced that a newly drafted constitution would be put to the Syrian people via referenda. The new constitution was approved by 89% of the vote, although only 57% of eligible voters participated. Amongst the 14 new and 47 amended articles of the new constitution the most prominent changes included:

- Introduction of a multi-party or plural system via Article 8 (Syrian Constitution, 2012)
- Presidential terms restricted to 7 years with only a single successive term permitted (Art.88, Ibid)

These reforms marked what commenters believed to be the end of the Baathist Party monopoly in Syria that had been entrenched by the previous constitution. The Syrian opposition have dismissed the reforms as "meaningless", believing them to be a further step in what western critics have alleged to be Assad's project to 'modernise authoritarianism' in Syria.

Executive Organisation:

In accordance with the newly ratified Syrian constitution in 2012 the President and Prime Minister exercise the maximum executive authority granted to them within the parameters of constitutional law (Art.83, Ibid). However the President possesses distinct roles and powers of patronage, such as their position as commander in chief of national forces and ability



to appoint and dismiss ministers, that indicates a predominate position (Chapter 2, Section 1, Ibid).

President: Bashar al-Assad

As previously mentioned the Syrian President retains significant power and influence, enjoying the ability to:

- Pass or reject laws approved by the People's Assembly (Syrian Constitution, Art.100, 2012)
- Rule by decree in accordance with law (Art.101, Ibid)
- Declare a state of emergency (Art.103, Ibid)
- Dissolve the People's Assembly (Art.111, Ibid)

Additionally article 114 could be interpreted to allow significant unchecked decrees by the President in the name of national security.

Prime Minister: Imad Khamis (since 2016)

Executive bodies: Council of Ministers - consisting of the Prime Minister, his deputies and departmental ministers the Council of Ministers acts like any other executive cabinet within a republic. Chosen by the President, ministers of the council complete the supervision of all state institutions, along with ensuring the implementation of public policy with regards their respected departments (Art. 118-22, Ibid). Currently there are 32 respected ministries after Assad's latest government reshuffle in July '16.

Elections: The most recent Presidential election of 2014 seen Assad returned as President with 88.7% of the vote. With a voter turnout of 73.42% the election was Syria's first multi-candidate election. Assad's previous elections had occurred under a yes-no single candidate ballot. In consistent fashion however the major powers of the West dismissed the legitimacy of the election despite appraisal from international observers.



Judiciary:

Supreme Judicial Council: headed by the President, the council was established to protect the independence of local judicial authorities and ensure their only regulative authority is the law (Syrian Constitution, Art.133-34, 2012).

Supreme Constitutional Court: the highest judicial authority within Syria it controls the constitutionality of all laws, decrees and government action. Whilst its President is chosen by Assad, the members of the court aren't accountable to him and ultimately exist as a check upon his authority (Section 4, Ibid).

Civil Representation:

People's Assembly (Unicameral): Publicly elected for 4-year terms, the P.A is expected to assume legislative authority and additionally act as a watchdog upon the executive. Following the 2016 elections the National Progressive Front (consisting of Assad's Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and other left-wing parties) won 200 of the 250 seats available. Interestingly half of the assembly is constitutionally required to consist of workers and farmers (Syrian Constitution, Art.60.1, 2012).

Local councils: Whilst the constitution stipulates that council members will be elected and tasked with decentralising government authority and responsibilities, the ongoing conflict centred in Syria has meant a more complex reality for local council authority (Art.131, Ibid). Councils within rebel opposition areas have assumed a far more centralised role in governing, organising in defiance to the authorities in Damascus.

Political Opposition:

The ongoing hot conflict within Syria makes the question of opposition a very complex question. Whilst the official opposition within the People's Assembly stands at 50 seats alongside the

scrutiny offered by competing factions within the National Progressive Front, the most formidable opposition to Assad's government lies external to parliament. Assad is currently facing down tremendous waves of opposition, ranging from the alternative government of 'The Syrian National Coalition' and its western bankrolled armies, to Islamic State and other Jihadi militias.

State Policy and Recent Reform:

Education and Health: the state guarantees the right to education free at all levels, alongside providing for the health and social security for its workers (Syrian Constitution, Art.29 & 40, 2012).

Economy: In recent decades the Syrian economy has undergone a process of liberalisation from its traditional state orientated economy. The current constitution still provides for state ownership of major industries and national resources, however the Syrian economy has made larger strides towards 'economic pluralism' (Syrian Constitution, Art.14, 2012). Alongside the devastation of war, Syria's economy is under threat from economic sanctions from the West.

Foreign Policy:

Like many Arab states Syria's foreign policy has traditionally been dominated by its relations with Israel and the imperial West. The preamble of the Syrian constitution itself gives direct reference to Syrian commitment to opposing Zionism and resisting colonialism.

Syrian-Israeli relations remain heated and have continuously been intensified by Israel's ongoing illegal occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights.



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