

anspréach

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Independent non-profit Socialist Republican magazine

THE HUNGERSTRIKES

PIVOTAL MOMENTS IN OUR HISTORY

Where's the Pleasure?

Examining Sexual Morality Under Capitalism

An EU Immigrant

I'm Irish and Pro-Leave

The Craigavon 2

A Miscarriage of Justice

More Than A Beautiful Game

Soccer and Politics

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Dear reader,

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

An Spréach is a not-for-profit magazine which only aims to fund its running costs, including print and associated platforms.

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 dearcaidh luaite anseo agus dearcadh an fhoilseacháin ach is iad dearcaidh 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 alt 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 phíosa le seo a eascú ach déanfar ach an iarrachta an cothromas agus dearcaidh an phíosa 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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“WE ONLY HAVE TO BE LUCKY ONCE”

Brighton - the bomb that shook an Empire.

1 984 was a year that saw the British Conservative government, led by Margaret Thatcher, step up its war in Ireland. Britain's counter-gangs, the paramilitary organisations of the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force, continued their campaign of sectarian murder and blood-letting, whilst paid perjurers were used to round up Irish citizens in what can only be described as internment.

It was also a year in which the IRA were to respond in kind.

At approximately 2:54 am on 12 October, as the top tier of the British government settled into their beds in Brighton's 'Grand Hotel', a long-delay timer attached to a 20lb gellignite bomb developed by the IRA's engineering department, initiated.

Understood to be hidden inside the frame of a bath within room 629 in the weeks previous to the Conservative party conference, the device was positioned just five floors above where the British Prime Minister would be settling down and preparing for her next days work. As Thatcher rehearsed a speech she had planned, the blast took hold.

Tearing through the framework of the old Victorian building, five tons of brickwork in the form of an old chimney stack, fell from the height of the structure, down through each floor and into the basement. Amidst the smoke, dust and debris, a massive gaping hole gave view to the internals of the Grand Hotel, which were now exposed to the dark Brighton sky.

'They Missed Her By Two Minutes', cried the headlines as it became clear that the IRA had almost wiped out many members of the British Cabinet, including Thatcher herself. The blast severely damaged part of Thatcher's hotel suite which she was in at the time, though she and her husband escaped and were led out through the wreckage to safety.

Five people died in the blast, including Tory MP Sir Anthony

Berry, Deputy Chief Whip for the Conservative Party. Amongst the injured were several notable figures including Conservative politician Sir Walter Clegg who's bedroom was directly above the blast, and Baron Norman Tebbit, then a member of the Conservative governments Cabinet, and who, when asked by hospital staff in the immediate aftermath of the incident if he had any allergies, is said to have replied, "yes, bombs."

Thatcher went on to say that the attack was "an attempt to cripple Her Majesty's democratically elected Government".

The IRA's response was forthright:

"Mrs. Thatcher will now realise that Britain cannot occupy our country and torture our prisoners and shoot our people in their own streets and get away with it. Today we were unlucky, but remember we only have to be lucky once. You will have to be lucky always.

Give Ireland peace and there will be no more war."

Republican ex-Prisoner Patrick Magee, who served a sentence for his role in the IRA Active Service Unit who conducted the operation, and oftentimes referred to by the media as 'The Brighton Bomber', said that the British Government's strategy at the time was to depict the IRA as mere criminals, and to contain the war to the Six Counties.

"As long as the war was kept in that context", he said, "they could sustain the years of attrition. But in the early 1980s we succeeded in destroying both strategies. The hunger strike destroyed the notion of criminalisation and the Brighton bombing destroyed the notion of containment. After Brighton, anything was possible and the British for the first time began to look very differently at us; even the IRA itself, I believe, began to fully accept the priority of the campaign in England." •

Since the formation of football there has been a raging, continuous argument: Should politics be kept separate from football?

Some would argue that the political reality can involve offence, division and sometimes even violence, it's important that politics must be distinguished from the game. However football, and sport in general, has helped to change the political landscape of their day by highlighting the underlying problems in society and giving a voice to those on the fringes.

The reality is, football and politics can never be separated and never should be. In the modern football era of steroid capitalist environment, we can clearly see that football clubs are no longer seen as an ambassador at a local level but rather a brand to sell - with the exception of a few clubs such as Sankt Pauli, Livorno and smaller clubs like Clapton CFC.

Football's governing bodies, mainly FIFA and UEFA established a set of rules and regulations that Football Associations and clubs must follow. They state that equipment "must not have any political, religious, or personal slogans, statements or images" - this is extended to supporters also.

Opposing this can have huge detriment to a club and often results in astronomical fines and in the worst case scenario, fans banned from attending or the game played behind closed doors. However there is football clubs that challenge the regulatory boundaries such as F.C Barcelona.

Since Franco's dictatorship the Catalan language and cultural traditions have been heavily suppressed, and the club's role has not changed - Barca are effectively perceived within the region as a national team for an oppressed stateless people.

In 2018 the Catalan government declared independence and scheduled a referendum. The state deployed the army and

fascist cop units onto the streets, they arrested several high-ranking Catalan officials, they seized millions of voting slips and they beat Catalan supporters.

Barcelona responded with a statement that not only condemned the acts of the fascist government but more importantly it thrust its weight behind the Catalan movement:

"FC Barcelona, in remaining faithful to its historic commitment to the defence of the nation, to democracy, to freedom of speech, and to self-determination, condemns any act that may impede the free exercise of these rights. Therefore, FC Barcelona publicly expresses its support for all people, entities, and institutions that work to guarantee these rights. This further proves that politics and football cannot be separated, however it is not just clubs that have married both together.

In 1995 there was a long dispute between Liverpool dock workers and their employers, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. The conflict began when workers refused to cross a picket in a show of solidarity with another group of dockers who had been sacked by a different company. The 500 men who had shown support for fellow workers were accused of acting in breach of their contracts and were sacked. Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler famously displayed a t-shirt underneath his jersey showing support and solidarity to the dockers and was subsequently fined by UEFA, but also banned on talking about the issue by Liverpool.

Politics is often contested among fans in the terraces, with power struggles that divide club support. Dainton Connell was no exception, he became a famous and respected leader of the Arsenal FC hooligan firm. At the time the fascist National Front was infiltrating football fans in London (with huge success e.g. Chelsea Headhunters, Millwall and West Ham's ICF), he proactively confronted paper sellers at games and set up counter demonstrations when the NF organised and rallied.

In 2017 the Football Lads Alliance (FLA) was founded. The movement claimed it was "anti-extremist" but has entrenched itself in far right politics and aligned with other extremist groups. The

group quickly fell apart and a splinter group was formed, The Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA). In 2018 around 6,000 people marched through London at a DFLA march, outnumbering Antifa by around twenty to one. Spotted in the crowd were members of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), the Racial Volunteer Force, Combat 18, EDL and Generation Identity.

The event was billed as a day of free speech however this was not the case. The group incited racial hatred, Islamophobia and fascist slogans. In response to these events the Football Lads & Lasses against Fascism was established. A broad front to combat and challenge the DFLA, it was attracted over 10,000 members. The group covers DFLA material, leaflets football grounds and expose members of the DFLA. Their main objective is to stop DFLA building a fascist street movement and organising at any club. They want to build anti-racist and anti-fascist cultures at football grounds and hope to rebuild a counter-culture on the terraces that challenges the far right and corporatism in football.

I have long believed that the relationship between football and politics is a reservoir of opportunity and a platform for social change. Albeit in previous generations, it was the norm for politicians to be more accustomed to Twickenham and cricket rather than Celtic Park or Anfield. However the new kid on the block is the one who wants their club to remain "their" club. For clubs to allow fans to voice their opinions and express their political beliefs with persecutions, to stay as grass roots as possible and more importantly put the fans first.

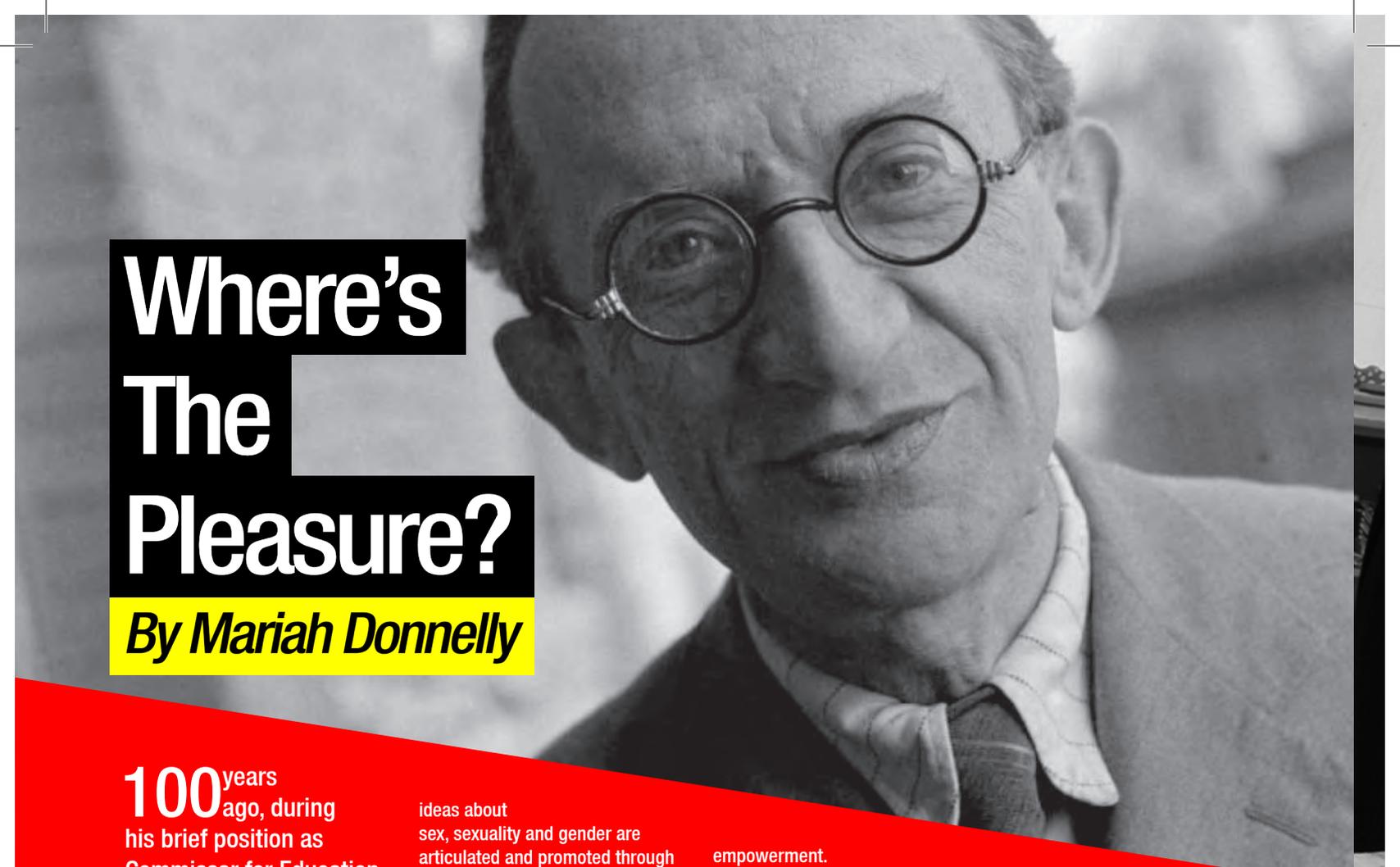
"It was like beating a country, not a football team.... This was our revenge, it was... recovering a part of the Malvinas. We all said beforehand that we shouldn't mix the two things but that was a lie. A lie!"

Diego Maradona's words shook footballing aristocracy, just as James McLean has, and just as Celtic FC supporters have with their unwavering support for the plight of the Palestinian people. This is tangible evidence that football remains a battering ram for social change and a way to proudly demonstrate political beliefs. •

MORE THAN A BEAUTIFUL GAME

By Aindriú Mac Ruaidhrí





Where's The Pleasure?

By Mariah Donnelly

100 years ago, during his brief position as Commissar for Education and Culture in the Bolshevik Belakun regime in Hungary, Georg Lukacs denounced the Christian moralism of capitalist society and inaugurated a radical sex education programme.

The programme promoted free love and called on youths to remove their chains of sexual repression imbued within them through strict conservative religious education on sex and sexuality. Similarly, Alexandra Kollontai following the Russian Revolution in 1917 inaugurated a movement of sexual liberation asserting that love and sexuality should be removed from economic considerations.

Later on, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Czechoslovakian sexologists were dedicated to understanding the importance of the female orgasm as instrumental in achieving gender equality. Such practices radically contrasted the trends in the West where ideas of sex and sexuality were dominated by religious bourgeois sexual moralism and conservatism.

In Ireland, as in most countries,

ideas about sex, sexuality and gender are articulated and promoted through sex education programmes. In the North, 92% of schools are controlled by religious division, while in the Republic, roughly 1% of secondary schools are controlled by non-religious institution. Sex education in Ireland is an intensely contested concept.

In the North, it continues to be taught in the same way as it did in the 1980s when it was first introduced in schools, while in the Republic little movement has occurred with regards to the Sex Education Bill, introduced in 2018. Subsequently, sex education takes the overwhelming form of 'abstinence-only,' where fearmongering tactics are religiously utilised, with videos such as *The Silent Scream* depicting abortion strictly as murder and indoctrination shown to adolescent teenagers in religion classes. The use of Pam Stenzel videos is another resource that is commonly deployed by schools, where 'virginity' and sex are portrayed through the metaphor of cello tape, once used it loses its worth.

These anti-sex, fear and scare-mongering approaches to sex education have long been refuted due to their negative impact on youth development, as well as the detrimental impact on individuals emotional development and sexual

empowerment.

However, despite substantial evidence and scholarship reporting the importance of removing religious affiliation and school-based religious bias from school sex education curricula, sex education in Ireland - especially the North - remains fixated within the realm of religious conservative moralism.

As currently practiced, sex education programmes in Ireland are fuelled by bourgeois religious sexual moralism ultimately preparing us to basque in the fears of Catholic Guilt. As a result, adolescents, particularly working-class students, are vulnerable to the practices and language fixated on victimisation, teenage pregnancy, and the dangers of sex.

Additionally, sex education programmes embed into the fabric of everyday life pre-designed ideals of gender relations - solely viewed in terms of heterosexuality - which underpin patriarchal society. Such programmes are actively disempowering and harming the students they apparently seek to 'protect.'

The pre-designed ideals of gender relations that are channeled through religious sex education programmes create a platform for young women to be indoctrinated to perform certain models of

femininity which is characterised by motherhood over womanhood, purity, and chastity, with their bodies being controlled by the performative bourgeois ideology of religious sexual morality. The effect? A pervasive culture of silence, shame, guilt and bodily fear.

In these classes, women are positioned as the gatekeepers of sex, solely responsible to discourage any activity, instincts or urges that may potentially lead to sex. From my experience, 'sex education' was far more concerned with teaching young girls that it was their responsibility to tell boys that they didn't want to have sex and that they must always resist the passes that boys will make. As would be predicted, sex and sexuality is narrowly defined within a heterosexual-patriarchal framework where male urges were accepted as normal and even encouraged through such teaching, whereas women's urges were portrayed as unnatural and something to be immediately suppressed.

Problematically, when young girls are taught to 'be strong' and 'resist' when boys will inevitably try to have sex with them, it does not come from a concern of consent.



Rather, it was to emphasise the protection of female innocence and 'moral value' of the virginal woman. Women are viewed solely as the recipients of sex with the end-point being male pleasure.

In 1988 Michelle Fine, an academic at Harvard University, published a short article entitled 'Sexuality, Schooling and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourses of Desire.' The article inaugurates a movement dedicated to the introduction of pleasure as a critical and instrumental approach to sex education programmes. Since the publication of Fine's article, a growing body of research has scrutinised and problematised the call for the inclusion of pleasure discourses within sex education.

This is because the sexual empowerment of young women has long been a battleground for feminist scholars, and "empowerment" has always been a vital concept for feminists. On one hand, scholars call for young women to be given the tools to express feelings of sexual desire, pleasure, and agency. On the other hand, feminist scholars argue that it is

vital to protect young women from objectifying and misogynistic versions of female sexual expression.

Rather than dichotomously situating the two positions of sexual empowerment against each other, a more meaningful and realistic approach would be to explore the negative and positive aspects of sexual empowerment and development in an intimate relationship.

Regardless however of what position one takes, what is clear is that we need to radically overhaul sex education provisions in Ireland that remove religious and school-ethos' from influencing the curriculum and practice of sex education in schools. It's time that schools shook themselves from the chains of sexual repression and embraced a culture of sexual liberation where sex education is framed from a critical rights-based framework advocating the inclusion of pleasure and sexual development as a requirement rather than an option. Within a capitalist society, however, radical transformation of sex education and ideals

of sexuality more broadly have proven incompatible and incoherent.

As most recently shown in England, attempts to reform sex education to be more sexually-inclusive and the development of sexual empowerment have been vehemently opposed by conservative politicians (it's no shock that every DUP MP voted against the reform). The Sex Education Bill, to be introduced in 2020, has the guise of progressiveness, however, it is still confined by a limited and narrow perception of the power of sex education. Faith schools will continue to teach within the tenets of their faith, while academies and free schools (which constitute the majority of secondary education in England) do not have to follow the National Curriculum, and parents remain in complete control of whether their child can attend sex education classes. 'Reform' therefore, in capitalist society, will always be limited, incomplete, and reductive.

The reformation of sex education

programmes in the North of Ireland are undoubtedly long-overdue. While the people of Ireland (and indeed, the world) cheer on with the recent announcement that abortion rights and equal marriage will be introduced if Stormont is not up and running by the 21st October, we still have a long way to go with regards to women's rights. I think sex education is a major part of this, however, it continues to be overlooked or undermined. Sex education has the opportunity to be incredibly radical and demonstrate a critical approach to ideas of pleasure, sexuality, gender ideals and be a LGBTQ+ inclusive space. Sex education can and must be powerful and radical. If it does not incorporate these vital issues, it will continue to fall short. Activism has produced a remarkable victory for women's rights, and I believe activism will bring about radical and crucial change in the area of sex education too. •



“I’M AN EU IMMIGRANT, I’M IRISH AND I’M PRO-LEAVE...”

By **Seán Shirley-Smith**

I’m a first-generation EU immigrant to the UK. Born in the Republic of Ireland, raised for the first five years of my life in Germany, and with a wealth of Irish, German, English, Scottish and Polish ancestry within the last three or four generations of my family. There is little more my family could have done to create a truly European child. Why then, have I supported leaving the European Union since before the referendum?

I am a socialist, not out of some moralistic duty to make the world a better place, but ultimately as a consequence of my material conditions. That socialism is incompatible with the EU, it has been explained in depth by sharper minds than mine exactly how socialist economic policy directly contravenes EU law on state aid and competition within the single market, as well as how the customs union acts as a neo-imperialist bulwark against developing economies. It is no secret that the EU cannot be reformed from its inherently capitalist nature, but must instead be torn down.

The EU did not prevent my family from living in poverty as the Tories slashed welfare, ensuring that there were plenty of times we survived on a day to day basis,

skipping meals on the regular even before June 2016. The claim from so-called ‘People’s Voters’, who did not care then, that they support remaining out of compassion for those of us at the bottom is a blatant lie. Nor did the EU did not prevent the vile xenophobia we have faced as EU immigrants. I’m ‘fortunate’; my name is not particularly ‘foreign’, I have an English accent, and I’m white. But my early childhood was one of xenophobic ‘jokes’ about my origins, and as I do not shy away from being proud of my origins, I face bigoted remarks regularly.

My mother is less fortunate, with a clear accent that ensures she is subject to xenophobia. My sister meanwhile chooses not to mention her German background, instead proudly asserting she is English. A bastion for successful integration then? No. A consequence of a xenophobic culture that existed alongside EU membership for over a decade before 2016. The way to combat that is to address the material conditions that give rise to bigotry, not scapegoat a societal phenomenon on a single vote; particularly when the overwhelming majority of the 17.4 million are not responsible for such bigotry.

A common question I’m asked is that of taking away the rights of millions to travel, work and live in other European countries, when my multiple citizenships mean I retain that right. But what right is there for the millions who cannot afford to do so to begin

with? My own family were able to move here in spite of our financial circumstances by having friends and family already rooted in the UK who could help us when we were technically homeless. Most working-class people don’t have such opportunities, unless they are imported as cheap labour in exploitative manoeuvres by businesses and corporations seeking to depress wages.

Freedom of movement has never been a right for the majority, it is instead a tool for the capitalist class to move capital, goods, services and labour to benefit them – not us. Those who can afford to travel abroad for their holidays, or to move permanently, can afford to pay the cost of a visa and to wait slightly longer in a queue at border control. Freedom of movement has always existed for the wealthy, the idea that the EU extends it to working class people is a myth built to sustain exploitation and a capitalist market.

Another question I am repeatedly forced to confront is that of the British border in Ireland. I am an open Irish republican who supports the Good Friday Agreement and fears a return to the violence of the Troubles. How then can I support leaving the EU? The border is a British creation, one that I believe must be ended through a United Ireland. I firmly believe in the self-determination of the Irish people, and that means respecting the right of the north of Ireland to at least have special status in regard

to single market and customs union membership; to prevent a hard border with the Republic, and in the medium term having a border poll to bring about a democratic and peaceful United Ireland. That is not incompatible with believing that the will of the British people must be respected, that we must leave the European Union and fight to establish socialism for the working class of this country. Ireland too in the long term should and must have this fight, but it is not for Britain to decide when and how this happens.

So yes, I’m an EU immigrant and an Irish republican. But I’m also working-class to my core, and a socialist. That means I will always support leaving the EU, and try to raise awareness of a left-wing case for it, such as when I co-chaired ‘A Left View of Brexit’ for the Cambridge Socialist Society with speakers Robert Griffiths; General Secretary of the Communist Party, Lara McNeill; Youth Representative on Labour’s National Executive Committee, Sarah Cundy; Youth Representative on Labour’s South East Regional Board, and Dr Lee Jones; co-founder of The Full Brexit and a Reader in International Politics at Queen Mary, University of London.

As socialists, Irish republicans, and members of the working class, I believe we all have a duty to do the same, rather than allowing both sides of any debate be dominated by liberals and reactionaries who care little for our lives. •

In the late 1960s the civil rights movement in Ireland came to prominence. The need for a mass movement that militantly advocated and fought for civil rights was necessary in order to tackle the inequality between the impoverished population and the business class, and to challenge the misrepresentation by the ruling class and the unionist junta in the allocation of jobs and housing.

Since the betrayal by the Free State Pro-Treatyites and the establishment of the Orange state, the unionist junta had at its disposal the Special Powers Act, its own paramilitary police force in the name of the RUC and its own militia, the B Specials. The Orange state was never going to allow its power to be threatened by peaceful protest and therefore through its militias and loyalist mobs it attacked civil rights activists engaged in squats, invaded demonstrations in Coalisland and Burntollet, wrecked the Bogside and burnt down Bombay St.

The result of letting these gangs loose was the sectarian murders of many innocent civilians, one of them being 9 year old Patrick Rooney who was shot through the head as he lay sleeping in his bed in Divis flats. He was shot by a .30 calibre round from a Browning machine gun mounted onto the back of an armoured jeep, a weapon for use in open warfare and not enclosed urban areas. The round cut through his bedroom wall and hit him in the head.

These events triggered the most recent conflict in Ireland. Almost 30 years of bombings, shootings, imprisonments and killings. The conflict was concluded by the Good Friday Treaty that ultimately led to the surrender, decommissioning

and disbandment of one of the most efficient and effective guerrilla armies of their time. A humiliating defeat for those betrayed by their leaders who orchestrated the surrender to appease paymasters in London and Washington.

20 years on from that Treaty we still live in an Orange state that is impoverished and controlled by the business class. The religious and community makeup of the ruling class may have changed, giving a false sense of progress, but they do not represent or act in the interest of the majority.

The Irish working class of all religions and none continue to be squeezed economically by a class that literally has money to burn. The unionist junta has been replaced by a unionist/nationalist coalition that has the same powers at their disposal.

The Special Powers Act may be gone but any person who actively objects to the status quo and fights for social justice can expect to be threatened, harassed or detained under the Terrorism Act. These laws are enforced by the new face of the RUC, the PSNI, which has been widely supported and endorsed by the pro-treatyites.

Today, in the Orange state there remains massive inequalities in relation to a good standard of education, jobs, employment and housing. We continue to be fooled into voting along the same sectarian lines at each election, to the same failed institutions, in the hope that at some point, somehow, something must change.

This will never be the case. The only thing that ever threatened the ruling class was the mobilisation of the largest and most powerful base in the country, the Irish working class. And only when we organise can we finally overthrow the junta that keeps us in the ghettos. •

BEFORE THE WAR

By Éamonn Ó Cleirigh



IRISH REPUBLICAN ABSTENTIONISM

A VERY SHORT HISTORY

By Dieter Reinisch

Abstentionism is arguably the most influential and, at the same time, the most contested policy of the political wing(s) of the Republican Movement throughout the 20th century. It was, after all, the tactic of abstentionism that established the First Dáil Éireann. Or is it a strategy? A principle?

What role abstentionism performs within the political programme of the Republican Movement has been widely discussed. To be sure, there is no other policy that shaped the modern Republican Movement in any way similar to abstentionism. The debates around abstentionism split the movement several times, most notably in 1926 and 1969, and most recently in 1986.

Some of the more traditional advocates of Republicanism would argue that abstentionism is a core principle of the Irish version of Republicanism, together with the recognition of the Second Dáil Éireann, the de-jure existence of the All-Ireland Republic as established in 1916, the right to maintain armed struggle, the understanding that Ireland is one nation, among several other principles. On the contrary, abstentionism is not a foundation of modern Irish Republicanism.

The founding figures of Irish Republicanism in the 1780/90s were certainly not abstentionists.

Before I run you through key moments in the Irish Republican abstentionism debate, let me acknowledge that I am fully aware that one doesn't write an article about a political concept without defining it. However, as the contributions in this issue of *An Spréach* reflect, what Irish Republican abstentionism is and how it can be defined is contested. Hence, I will refrain from defining it myself here for, as we shall see, the understanding of abstentionism by Republicans themselves is fluid and subject to change over time.

The origins of abstentionism in Ireland go back to the Young Irelander movement in 1845. Thomas Davis proposed a motion to abstain from parliament during a Repeal Association meeting in that year. William Smith O'Brien was eventually the first to refuse to take his seat in Westminster, which resulted in his imprisonment in London.

It was only two decades later that the Irish Republican Brotherhood reconsidered abstentionism. In 1870, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and John Mitchel both won by-elections on an abstentionist ticket in Co Tipperary. However, constitutional Nationalism still

dominated the then political landscape.

The publication of Arthur Griffith's "The Resurrection of Hungary" in 1904 was another key stepping stone for abstentionism. In this book, Griffith calls for the boycott of all British institutions and the establishment of a national council in Ireland. Although Griffith was no Republican, this tactic became Sinn Féin policy after the 1916-Rising.

Joseph McGuinness was the first Sinn Féin candidate to be successfully elected on an abstentionist ticket at the Longford South by-election on 9 May 1917. Subsequently, the general election manifesto of 1918 stated that Sinn Féin plans "to remove the Irish presence from the British parliament". Sinn Féin held their promise, and following the landslide victory of Republican candidates, the First Dáil Éireann was established in Mansion House, Dublin, in January 1919.

After the War of Independence and the defeat of the Republican forces in the civil war that had followed, Sinn Féin reorganised as an abstentionist party but soon, in 1926, the majority of their members followed Eamonn de Valera into his new, anti-abstentionist Fianna Fáil. Among those who left the movement were prominent Republicans such as

Constance Markiewicz.

Despite these setbacks, Republicans remained loyal to the Second Dáil. In 1938, the seven surviving members of the Second Dáil handed over the government authority of the All-Ireland Republic to the IRA Army Council. Among them was General Tom Maguire. This event is not directly linked to abstentionism, yet it had a major impact on some of the later events to come.

In April 1964, the General Headquarters of Óglaigh na hÉireann published a detailed statement on the expulsion of Patrick McLogan and the resignation of Tony Magan from the Republican Movement. This statement is a first outline of the interpretation of modern Irish Republican history by the movement itself. The document was a blueprint for pro-abstentionist voices during the 1969 and 1986 splits. I would suggest that it served as the basis for the book "Dílseácht", a historical defence of abstentionism by the late Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, former president of (Provisional) Sinn Féin and later founder of Republican Sinn Féin (RSF).

Merely six years later, the movement split between Provisionals and Officials and abstentionism was once again among the key political factors. A



motion to abandon abstentionism was proposed as early as the General Army Convention of 1965; a large majority of delegates defeated it then. In 1969, a similar proposal was successful. Coming back to the 1938-statement, Tom Maguire declared the Provisional Army Council as the inheritor of the Second Dáil. The Provisionals remained abstentionists.

Nonetheless, not too long afterwards, a renewed debate on abstentionism re-emerged. A group of younger, Northern volunteers climbed up the hierarchy of the movement. Among them was a young Gerry Adams. From the cages of Long Kesh, he penned articles under the name "Brownie". One of these articles, "Active Abstentionism", suggested a re-interpretation of the policy, sparking a debate that eventually led to another split in 1986.

The debate gained momentum following the electoral victories during the 1981 hunger strikes. One crucial event in the road from revolutionary politics to parliamentarism followed another in those years. First came the "Armalite and the Ballot Box", and then the dropping of the federal Éire Nua policy which led Ruairí Ó Brádaigh to stand down as president of Sinn Féin; he was succeeded by Gerry Adams in 1983. The electoral debates heated up during the 1984 EEC

election campaign.

While many Volunteers put little interest in Sinn Féin during these years, the significance of the debate shall not be underestimated. To give an example, the debates within the Portlaoise Prison Sinn Féin Cumann almost entirely focused on electoral politics between 1983 and 1985, as it becomes evident in the minutes.

The movement eventually split at the Ard-Fheis in 1986. Led by the former president Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, a group of traditionalists mainly from the 26 Counties, walked out after the motion to drop abstentionism to Leinster House was passed with 429 to 161 votes. They reconstituted as RSF, making abstentionism one of their core principles. Again, Tom Maguire declared, as it was later announced, the Continuity Army Council as the lawful reincarnation of the Second Dáil.

However, many opposed to the discontinuation of abstentionism remained within the Provisional Republican Movement. One episode is particularly telling: One delegate who was also an IRA-Volunteer and particularly close to Jim Lynagh remembers a conversation outside the hall just after the vote: "I said to Jim [that] they have taken over, what shall we do? And Jim said to me: I don't

agree with that, but we cannot walk away. If we leave now, we cannot continue as the IRA. We have to work from within and try to revise this move." Lynagh was later killed in the Loughgall Ambush; the other Volunteer followed Michael McKevitt into the Real IRA in 1997.

Twelve years after the dropping of abstentionism to Leinster House, on 10 May 1998, 331 of 350 delegates supported a motion drafted by the Sinn Féin Ard-Chomhairle to take the seats at Stormont. In November 1999, Ó Brádaigh, now president of RSF, commented on Sinn Féin: "It is a short step from the entry to Stormont to the complete absorption into the British system."

RSF remained small and, over the past three decades, a largely isolated force in Irish politics. Nonetheless, the 1986-split established a lasting schism within Republicanism. Over the following decades, numerous groups emerged at one stage or another from the Provisional movement. Some of these groups openly support an abstentionist policy, some not, others have no formulated elections policy.

It is interesting to observe a recent growth of support for abstentionism among sections of Republicans despite the recent

electoral success of independent Republican candidates throughout the 6 Counties, particularly in Derry/Strabane. In addition to RSF, new groups such as Anti-Imperialist Action Ireland and Saoradh emerged, openly advocating abstentionism, though for different reasons. This issue of *An Spréach* is a welcome addition to these debates, reflecting the growing interest in electoral policies among Republicans, both abstentionist and anti-abstentionist.

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin nominally maintains its abstentionist stance on Westminster. In reality, Sinn Féin members of the British parliament make full use of the funds and facilities available in London. Their abstentionism is nothing but an empty shell. The sole historical lineage to the Revolutionary abstentionism from 1918 is that Sinn Féin members shy away from attending plenary sessions. This understanding of 2019-abstentionism of Sinn Féin is a far cry from the "withdrawal of all Irish delegates from British institutions" as declared by Sinn Féin in 1918. •

anspréach: Further discussion on abstentionism and electoralism can be found on pages 20-23.



COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

A TRULY GREEN MOVEMENT
IS THE DEEPEST SHADE OF RED

By David Swanson

The effects of climate change remain a common discussion point in today's society, as all forms of broadcasting continually highlight that we must be mindful that our current routines are ruining the planet as we know it. This is something the left should celebrate; forcing climate change deniers to retreat into sectarian cluster groups that bear little relevance or influence upon society is a victory that should not be taken lightly and positively celebrated. However, we should also remain acutely aware that there is a need to continually agitate and organise towards the vanguard position on all matters concerning climate change.

Capitalism has obscured the debate, with many prominent figures in media, employment and electoral capacities attempting to reduce our horizons to the level of the individual, advocating personal responsibility and detail as the most effective solution to solve such a crisis. Marxists should unapologetically combat this narrative, remaining insistent that individual action must be linked to a wider movement that collectively tackles the structure and overarching framework of the capitalist mode of production itself in the battle to freeze or reverse the terrifying prospect that now faces humanity.

This is particularly apparent in the strategy towards curbing the influence of plastic within our society. Many environmental documentaries and indeed state media channels have devoted countless amounts of hours towards producing harrowing footage of natural habitats facing destruction beyond repair, the extinction of exotic wildlife and indeed the devastation of indigenous homelands because of global carelessness regarding single-use plastic and other products. This is undoubtedly true, but a continuing view that we must simply boycott plastic straws, cups and cutlery and replace them with more environmental alternatives is simply a sticking plaster rather than an antidote.

There is much to be said for purchasing a reusable coffee cup or a bamboo toothbrush to negate an individual's 'plastic footprint,' but unless it is linked to a wider consciousness about how it is actually produced in the first place we have little hope of solving the issue. Multi-million corporations of the cosmetic, pharmaceutical and food industries produce endless amounts of plastic packaging on an annual basis, incentivised by cheaply assembling products to maximise profits and perpetually push towards becoming the market leader within their sphere of influence.

More still, as society continues to succumb to the influence of free market politics, in which production falls within the jaws of the anarchic world market and produced for the sake of financial reward rather than human need, an endless stream of single use plastic

will continue to blight humanity, no matter how effective the boycott.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and without a democratically planned mode of production that is managed and controlled by workers, we have little hope of reversing the plastic statistics that are currently blighting our surroundings. Marxists should continue to lead campaigns on this issue, publicly articulating that placing the burden of responsibility squarely upon the shoulders of consumers within the conditions of late capitalism is a farce, and that we must challenge the perceived untouchability of high-flying capitalist oligarchs and collectively seize the means of production to democratically control not just the production of plastic, but of all the basic needs and services that humanity requires.

The idea that individual reasoning should remain an integral foundation of all campaigns against climate change also deflects attention away from the fact that our current surroundings are a product of careless decisions on the part of the ruling class, and not the wider population at large. There is a huge amount of truth in the claim that everyone has a duty to provide an acceptable level of surroundings for future generations, but without examining how society has managed to arrive at such a sharp crossroads that threatens the entire future of humanity would be a grave mistake that cannot negate the potential of further environmental errors in the future.

The planet is in a state of crisis because the



production of true sustainability is not profitable; the big businesses that monopolise energy facilities, fuel consumption and transport services knowingly produce and encourage the use of fossil fuels that are continually pushing the world's temperature to record heights for the simple reason that a saturated world market and crisis-ridden global economy will financially reward them for doing so.

The subsequent profit that is literally killing the planet sits idly in off-shore bank accounts and lucrative hedge funds until such time that a further investment opportunity arises, creating a hamster wheel of arbitrary production that is slowly strangling humanity and suffocating our natural surroundings. Only one hundred companies are responsible for over 70% of the world's greenhouse emissions since the early 1970's, each vying competitively with each other to produce energy supplies for the sake of financially rewarding a select few bosses, bankers and big businessmen. It is time to take the money out of their hands and pockets, and instead of trying to encourage capitalists to invest in new, green technology and energy emission programs that go against their own interests, all major companies and banks should be immediately nationalised and placed under democratic workers' control, as part of a wider strategy to not only tackle the erroneous decisions that are harming the planet, but to uproot the conditions of the capitalist mode of production itself.

Marxists should remain unambiguously clear that the international working class should not

have to shoulder the responsibility or the blame for the poor decisions of those who privately hoard the means of production, and that an organised assault of labour can overhaul the system that is destroying the planet, subsequently allowing workers to plan sustainable energy programs that will place the use of fossil fuels into the dustbin of forgotten history.

It is also extremely clear that the ongoing social pattern that divides the international working class along arbitrary nationalist lines is another extremely dangerous factor in a world hurtling towards climate disaster.

Creating an individualised approach that prioritises strengthening the nation state over humanity's future is not only holding back our cooperative potential, but hindering all aspects of our existence to the direct detriment of our environmental surroundings. As much as the market economy of late capitalism continues to become more globalised in modern times, the absence of a truly binding international code of conduct has encouraged state governments and their national advisors to continually engage in an ongoing feud for material resources and the protection of national tariffs, leading to the obscure situation that both production and trade remain uncontrolled whilst a lack of actual planning of resources leads the planet into endless wars of competition between states and their governments.

This ironic but inevitable repercussion of the capitalist mode of production is inflicting continual damage to the planet; the arbitrary

production of weapons that forms an ugly side effect of the competitive nature of material distribution is not only inherently wasteful and rooted in nationalist doctrine, but their incessant use is creating a planet earth that is quite simply sweating its way to oblivion.

The environmental aspects of this are already affecting social conditions; unusual weather patterns that are leading to unexplained forest fires and tsunamis across the globe are affecting the lives and routines of millions, and subsequently creating an insular environment that heightens the role of national immigration programs that refuse to cooperate with those outside their lines of division. It is more profitable to criminalise, jail and deport those who are affected by climate disaster in our current conditions, with financial rewards and profitable bonuses the direct result of outsourcing and privatising national immigration offices that are steeped in the very racism and division that capitalism thrives upon.

If the ongoing pull of nationalism propped up by capitalism continues to divide humanity amidst a climate crisis, the horrific consequences will include not only an ongoing epidemic of working class murder as the international capitalist class continually uses the lure of flags in their lust to war for resources, but divide humanity to such an extent that we will literally prefer to watch our international brethren burn and drown into extinction rather than intervene appropriately. As Marxists, we must vociferously call for an end to the endless nationalist rhetoric that is dividing the...

**CONDEMN ME,
IT DOES
NOT MATTER.**





**HISTORY
WILL ABSOLVE ME.**



Bickharts

...human race, opposing all forms of capitalist war that send the international working class to fight for causes that are not their own, whilst organising towards a socialist revolution in national states that can be exported at the first opportunity to strengthen the international fight for socialism and topple the system that is sending the planet to an early grave.

It is also abundantly clear that we should warn against those who advocate individualist solutions to climate change in the sphere of electoral politics. The mainstream green movement fails because it continues to deny that climate change is a collective, and ultimately class issue that requires a radical overhaul of our current surroundings to halt its despotic influence. Electoral representatives of international Green Parties continue to peddle a dangerous line that insists that the continuing growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) statistics under a Keynesian style economic approach is the most effective way of halting climate change, and ultimately reform society as a result.

This is a dangerous message; the idea that state governments should intervene more authoritatively in the management of market production, redirecting capitalist profits towards the public purse and subsequently reforming the system rather than overthrowing it entirely, is a strategy that will only delay the worst aspects of climate disaster rather than eradicate their impending prominence. The natural world continues to suffer because of unchecked GDP growth and a succumbing to market dominance, and the idea that capitalists are interested in anything but profitable markets is pie in the sky. With or without state intervention, big businessmen under the capitalist mode of production will continue to destroy the world's natural habits that act as sustainable cooling mechanisms in the pursuit of profitable opportunities, and a strategy that encourages society to cross an electoral box in favour of reformism is simply treating workers as individualised voting opportunities to effectively and insidiously preserve the capitalist system that destroys the planet on a daily basis.

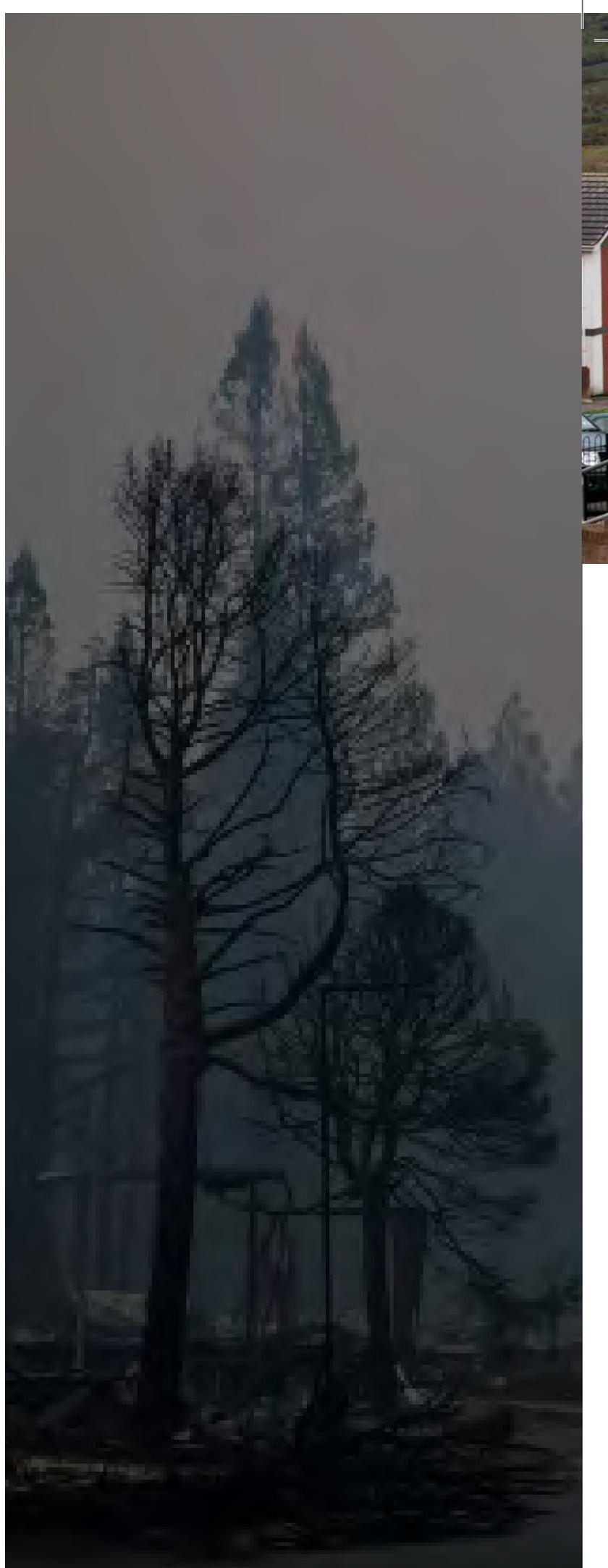
As international green parties continue to stubbornly propose ineffectively reformist, electoral strategies that promote individual reasoning as the groundwork to tackle climate change, Marxists must be resolutely determined in the challenge to call out their careerist opportunism. We must link the overall fight against climate change with the ongoing campaign to collectively liberate the international working class; the class antagonisms that are so visibly exposed in the attempt to preserve the capitalist mode of production by reformist and neo-liberal advocates must be ruthlessly challenged and expropriated, creating space for not only socialism to blossom, but the shoots of natural life that will save the planet from total destruction.

In short, the international working class must seize the means of production to truly guarantee the ongoing preservation and survival of our planet. Linking climate change to a campaign that endorses the logic of individual reasoning over collective action is simply not enough to halt its despotic consequences, and Marxists should remain resolutely determined to agitate and organise in pursuit of linking climate change to anti-capitalist action, positively reinforcing that the protection of our natural surroundings is just as much a class issue as any other.

No strategy that links halting the planet's demise to the capitalist mode of production can be successful; combatting climate change requires a green movement that is the deepest shade of red, and we ultimately need to implement lasting international socialism to truly save the planet from total destruction.

It is time for workers everywhere to unite and fight towards these conditions, breaking national lines to create a sense of solidarity that will truly link climate change protests to their rightful place of development at the heart of production.

We need system change, not climate change – and the planet's future lies in the collective hands of the international communist movement. •



The Craigavon 2

A Modern Day Miscarriage of Justice

By John-Paul Wootton



In 2009 the state had some reason to worry. Failure of the Stormont regime to deliver many of the desires of the 'Nationalist' community was feeding into a seemingly resurgent armed Republicanism. A number of 'successful' attacks by various Republican organisations, was exposing a fragile political process to the world. In order to appear on top of things, the state had to act. So, arrests were made and people were put before courts - many on the flimsiest of grounds.

Fast forward to almost three years and I found myself on trial for the shooting dead of Steven Carroll, a member of the PSNI, by the Continuity IRA. By this stage it had already been determined that I would be afforded the normal judicial process. Instead of a trial by jury, a single judge would decide my fate. Instead of being able to cross-examine witnesses, many were given anonymity, screened from the court and could only be asked certain questions. And, instead of disclosing evidence the states own lawyers had assessed as helping the defence, what are known as Public Interest Immunity Certificates were used to keep it secret.

It is worth noting how the context had developed at the time. The state was still seeking victories against its opponents and my trial took place in the wake of two other high-profile cases which, from the states perspective, had ended as failures. Two UVF Supergrasses had been exposed as liars and a large number of men walked free from court. Just before this a high-profile Republican was acquitted of involvement in a gun attack that killed two British soldiers. The pressure was on: the state needed a win.

And so, with all this stacked against us, my co-accused and I were duly convicted and

sentenced to life in prison. Frankly we didn't stand a chance. But we weren't prepared to give up.

Immediately we applied to appeal against our conviction. It was some time though before it would get to court. Originally we were scheduled to appear in court in April 2013. However, just before it could go ahead, the PSNI arrested a key defence witness. Of course, there were no charges and the man was released. But that wasn't the point. Their intent was intimidation and sabotage. And so the appeal was deferred until the states actions would be examined. It was rescheduled for September 2013.

September came, the appeal opened and the hearings went ahead. The court was packed with people offering their support and acting as observers. The hearings went well from our perspective. The states case was torn to shreds and the prosecution made some dramatic concessions. They accepted they could not prove beyond reasonable doubt that I removed either a weapon or people from the scene and it had already been accepted previously that I was not alleged to be the gunman. And so, you might ask, what role did I play? The state couldn't answer this and simply argued that I must have done something.

We emerged from the appeal positive and optimistic. All who had observed agreed that we had won and the states case couldn't stand. We simply had to wait as the judge had reserved judgement.

May 2014 came and the date was set for us to go back to court to find out our fate. There were high expectations from many quarters, although I was upbeat, I knew the system and so made sure I stayed realistic. And so when the judges declared that our convictions were to be upheld, a lot of people were shocked. I personally was more angry than shocked. It was like scoring 4 goals at a football match, conceding none but being told afterwards that

we had lost nonetheless.

To make matters worse, the prosecutors put forward an argument to extend the minimum amount of time I would have to spend in prison. The judges accepted and increased this from 14 to 18 years. I would now have to spend more time in prison that I had been alive at the time of my arrest.

So I was returned to my prison cell. I was not beaten however. We began preparing for the next stage of our fight. This was the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, they didn't even entertain us and rejected our application, despite the fact that our application had the support of the Court of Appeal!

And so, again we moved on. This time it was the Criminal Case Review Commission, who are a state body who investigate miscarriages of justice and can refer cases back to the courts. At present we are waiting on their report.

The difficulty is that once a trial has happened, things are no longer about whether the correct people were imprisoned. It is simply about legal technicalities. It doesn't matter about injustice as long as it occurred in a legal way.

We find ourselves in a situation where, even though many people can see and indeed acknowledge the unfairness of what's happened, there is no process to correct it on that basis. The state requires that we provide something new.

And so we struggle on. Previous miscarriages of justice have shown that with enough pressure on those in power, the legal difficulties can be overcome. If it suits, the state will release me. The challenge is the build public concern about the case and utilise people power to demand justice.

This is what we will do. •



JULY - SEPTEMBER 1969

The fifth in our series of '50', chronicling history from five decades ago. This issue deals with the period of July to September 1969, and continues coverage of the mounting conflict in Ireland, the fight for civil rights in the US and topics relevant to international Socialism, including the imperialist intervention in Vietnam.

14th July - First Death of the Conflict: Francis McCloskey (aged 67), a Catholic civilian, died one day after being hit on the head with a baton by an officer of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) during street disturbances in Dungiven, County Derry.

17th July - Samuel Devenny (42) died as a result of injuries he received when he was severely beaten by RUC officers using batons. The attack took place in Devenny's home in William Street, Bogside, Derry,

17th July - The 'New Left and Extremist Movements' from the FBI surfaced, revealing Reagan's plans to repress the militant student activism on California's campuses through 'psychological warfare'.

1st August - A huge protest rally over events in the North of Ireland was held outside the General Post Office, Dublin. The crowd demanded that the Irish Army cross the border.

5th August - The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) planted a bomb which damaged the Radio Telefis Éireann (RTÉ) headquarters in Donnybrook. This was the first bomb attack by the UVF in the south of Ireland and marked the start of a bombing campaign by loyalist paramilitaries.

12th August - The Battle of the Bogside: As the annual Apprentice Boys parade passed close to the Bogside area of Derry serious rioting erupted.

The RUC, using armoured cars and water cannons, invaded the Bogside, in an attempt to end the rioting. The RUC were closely followed and supported by a loyalist crowd. The residents of the Bogside forced the police and the loyalists back out of the area. The RUC used CS gas to again enter the Bogside area. The battle lasted for two days and led to the erection of barricades with the area inside being called 'Free Derry'.

14th August - British Army Troops Deployed – Beginning of Operation Banner: After two days of continuous battle, and with the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) exhausted, the Stormont government asked the British government for permission to allow British troops to be deployed on the streets of Northern Ireland. Late in the afternoon troops entered the centre of Derry.

John Gallagher, a Catholic civilian, was shot dead by the Ulster Special Constabulary ('B-Specials') during street disturbances on the Cathedral Road in Armagh.

In Belfast vicious sectarian riots erupted and continued the following day. In Divis Street the RUC fired a number of shots, from a heavy Browning machine-gun mounted on an armoured car, into the Divis Flats and Towers. One of the shots killed a young Catholic boy while he lay in bed.

14th–17th August - Northern

Ireland riots of August 1969 – in response to events in Derry, nationalists and Republicans held protests throughout the North. In Belfast, loyalists responded by attacking nationalist districts. Rioting also erupted in Newry, Armagh, Crossmaglen, Dungannon, Coalisland and Dungiven. Six Catholics and two Protestants were shot dead and at least 133 were treated for gunshot wounds. Scores of houses and businesses were burnt out, most of them owned by Catholics. Thousands of families, mostly Catholics, were forced to flee their homes and refugee camps were set up in the South

17th August – members of the Garda Síochána clashed with protesters on O'Connell Street, Dublin, as a march in solidarity with those attacked in the North headed for the British embassy

19th August - Representatives of the British and Unionist governments held a meeting in London lasting two days. A Communique and Declaration was issued at the end of the first day. The declaration affirmed that there would be no change in the constitutional status of the occupied six counties without the consent of Stormont.

30th August - A two-day 'Liberation Fleadh' ceol was held in 'Free Derry'. It was organised by Eamon McCann and Mary Holland and was held on the weekend of the 30th and 31st August 1969. Many well known

Irish musicians came to Derry to take part, including The Dubliners.

1st September - King Idris of Libya is in Turkey for medical treatment. Military officers led by Captain Muammar al-Gaddafi take power. Gaddafi is a socialist and will proclaim Libya to be ruled by the people.

2nd September - The president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, dies

8th September - Members of the Stormont Administration held a meeting with the N.I Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions at Stormont. A joint statement was issued following the meeting – which partially called for the dismantling of barricades and compliance with the security forces

9th September - 'Peace Line' Constructed: Chichester-Clark, Prime Minister of the Stormont administration, announced that the British Army would erect a temporary 'peace-line' between Catholic and Protestant areas of Belfast to try to prevent rioting. This segregation exists today.

11th September - President Nixon wants to encourage the North Vietnamese to settle the war to his liking. He resumes bombing in North Vietnam

24th September - Known for their anti-Vietnam War protests, the trial of 'The Chicago Eight' begins.

NOTES FOR REVOLUTIONARIES

"The rich will always belong to the poor"

~ Henry Joe McCracken

"A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous.

A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another."

~ Mao Tse-tung

Imperialism is a system of exploitation that occurs not only in the brutal form of those who come with guns to conquer territory. Imperialism often occurs in more subtle forms, a loan, food aid, blackmail.

We are fighting this system that allows a handful of men on Earth to rule all of humanity

~ Thomas Sankara

"I want to burden the conscience of the affluent with all the suffering and all the hidden, bitter tears"

~ Rosa Luxemburg

"Capitalism has outlived its usefulness. It has brought about a system that takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes"

~ Martin Luther King Jr

"We have not come to do the work of political parties, but we have come here in the cause of labour"

~ Eleanor Marx

"In today's world no one is innocent, no one a neutral. A man is either with the oppressed or he is with the oppressors. He who takes no interest in politics gives his blessing to the prevailing order, that of the ruling classes and exploiting forces."

~ George Habash

"What is fascism but colonialism at the very heart of traditionally colonialist countries"

~ Frantz Fanon

"Feminism for decades has been a feminist of the Hillary Clinton's and the Sheryl Sandbergs, which is basically breaking the glass ceiling while the vast majority of women are in the basement cleaning up the glass"

~ Tithi Bhattacharya

"In bourgeois society, living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour. In Communist society, accumulated labour is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the labourer"

~ Marx & Engels

"It is the oppressor that pushes the oppressed until he has no choice but to fight"

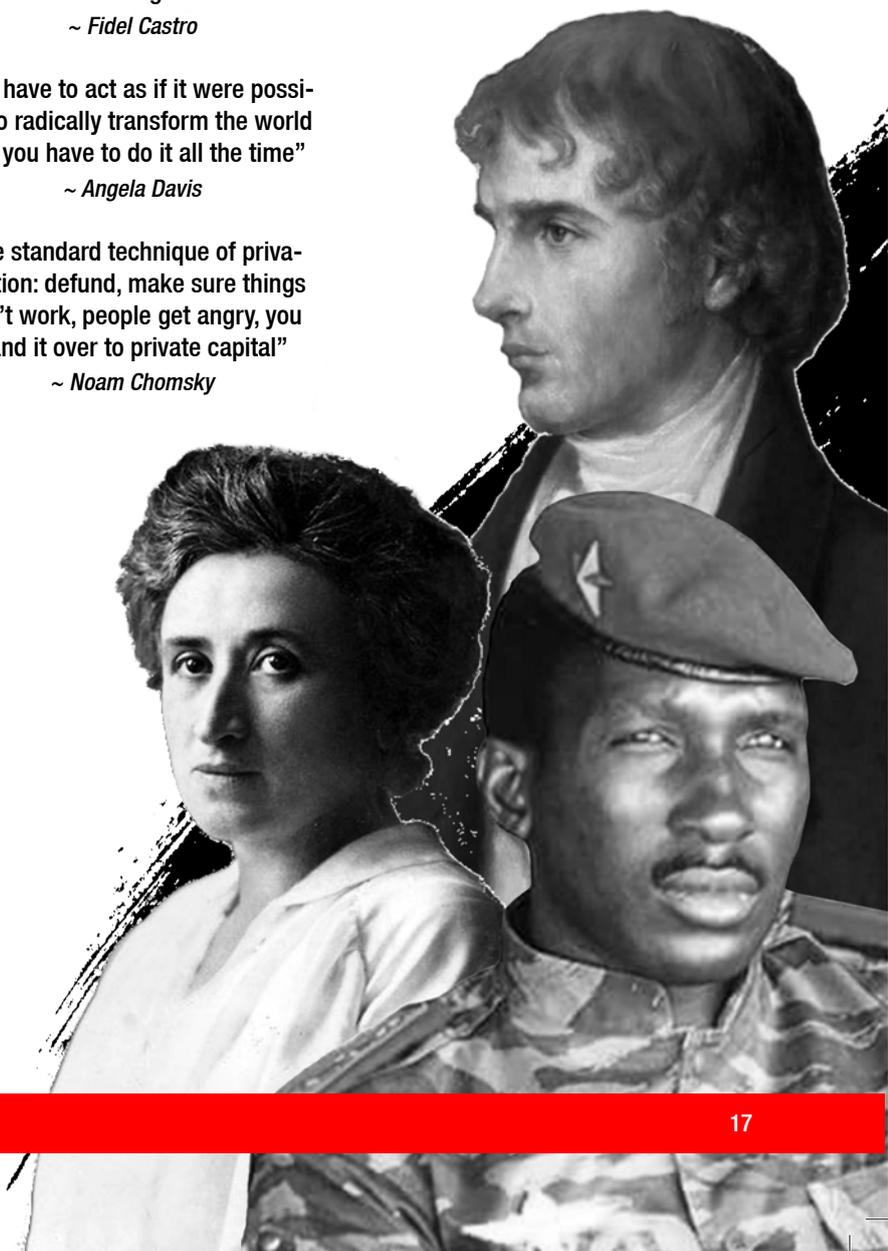
~ Fidel Castro

"You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world and you have to do it all the time"

~ Angela Davis

"the standard technique of privatisation: defund, make sure things don't work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital"

~ Noam Chomsky





THE HUNGERSTRIKES

PIVOTAL MOMENTS IN HISTORY

By Pádraic Mac Coitir

Growing up my parents encouraged me to read books and when I was about 9 or 10 I joined the local library in Andersonstown. Some of the books that were in the house didn't excite me although I had a bit of an interest in history books. I was always fascinated by hunger strikes and little did I know that when I got older I would get to know some men who would die on hunger strike in 1981.

My father, Pat McCotter, didn't speak a lot about his time in prison but I remember him telling me about the 45 days he was on hunger strike in Crumlin Road gaol, Belfast. Hunger strikes had been a weapon of resistance used by Irish republican prisoners in previous campaigns as they fought for political status. The British always tried to criminalise our struggle and when men and women found themselves imprisoned different forms of protest took place - either by refusing to do prison work or wear prison clothes. The first prisoner to pay the ultimate price was Thomas Ashe who died after being force-fed in September 1917. His funeral in Dublin was the biggest seen since that of O'Donovan Rossa in August 1915 and it was a turning point in mobilising the Irish Volunteers and more importantly the IRB who were still intent on continuing the struggle to rid Ireland of the British empire.

In the 1920s more men were to die on hunger strike, some of whom died whilst imprisoned by the Free Staters. (Michael Fitzgerald, Terence McSwiney, Joseph Murphy, Joe Witty, Dennis Barry, Andy O'Sullivan.)

My father was a comrade of Seán McCaughey having been imprisoned with him in Arbor Hill prison in Dublin. After their release they reported

back to the IRA and they maintained regular contact. The last time they would have met was 1940 shortly before my father's capture in South Armagh. McCaughey himself was captured in 1941 after the informer, Stephen Hayes, escaped from the IRA and ran to a local garda station in Ballsbridge Dublin. Hayes was the Chief-of Staff of the IRA but some of his comrades suspected him of being an informer and they arrested him. After a number of weeks he escaped and when the special branch, known as the 'Broy Harriers', went to the house a gun battle ensued and a number of men were shot and captured. They appeared in front of a military tribunal and were sentenced to life imprisonment. Whilst in Portlaoise they refused to do prison work or wear a uniform so they embarked on a blanket protest. McCaughey went on hunger and thirst strike and died in May 1946 after 23 days. My father told me morale in Crumlin Road gaol was as low as it had been when Tom Williams was executed in September 1942. Others who died in the 1940s were Tony Darcy and Jack McNeela.

As I got older I went to many protests, some of which were held in support of hunger strikers here and in England. One such protest that had a profound effect on me was in Andersonstown and some people on the platform were doing a reenactment of force feeding. This was in response to prisoners being force-fed when they were on hunger strike demanding they be transferred to prisons in Ireland. One of those prisoners, Michael Gaughan, died in March 1974 in Parkhurst prison. His comrade and fellow Mayo man Frank Stagg died in Wakefield gaol in February 1976. Later that year I was imprisoned in Crumlin Road and it was there I met Bobby Sands, Raymond McCreesh and Joe McDonnell. The following year we ended up on the blanket protest and we saw each other every Sunday at mass. Like other generations of political prisoners we were on protest because we were never going to accept being treated as criminals.



Conditions were very bad and they were to get worse when we embarked on a no-wash protest. There was no end in sight and it was inevitable the next step would be a hunger strike.

Shortly before my release in July 1979 we were asked by the camp staff to discuss our next move. It was very difficult for me to give my opinion because I knew I would be due for release before any decision taken by the men would be enacted. And therefore I did not take part in the decision to go on hunger strike because I knew I wouldn't be there.

When I was out a hunger strike began in October 1980. I knew some of the men on it and whenever I attended protests I was asked to speak publicly but I was reluctant to do so as I didn't wish to draw attention to myself. That hunger strike ended after 53 days and when news came through we were ecstatic because we believed a resolution to the protest had been reached. However, within days we were told the British government had reneged on an agreement.

The following March Bobby Sands embarked on another hunger strike and unfortunately he died on May 5th. Another nine were to die, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh, Patsy O'Hara, Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Tom McIlwee and Micky Devine, in the H-Blocks. Much has been written about those turbulent days and how much they have impacted on the struggle. Without a doubt it was one of the most pivotal events in our long history of struggle against British imperialism. It led to many people getting involved in politics and I would argue it changed the course of history. Republicanism was at its strongest in generations and in my opinion it was the closest we got to achieving a Socialist Republic. •



A LETTER TO THE 22

You have not gone away. You are in the hearts
and on the lips of your people.

The old speak of you with knowing tongue The middle
aged, as those who walked beside you.

The young men and women with a passion not unlike your own.
Your names can be heard on the wind taken from the mouths
of men who tend their flocks on

Slieve Gullion, Cnoc Phádraig, Glenshane.

They echo in the small graveyards in

Cork, Kerry, Galway, Mayo, Tyrone, Antrim, Derry and Armagh.

They are heard among your people at the mass gate on
Sunday, in the crowd at the hurling game, around the hearth when
the bottle is cracked and song is sung. Your image can be seen
on the faces of happy smiling children for whose freedom you gave
your all.

You are in our prayers, you have not gone away, you never will.

MISE LE MEAS,
Colum Mac Giolla Bhéin, 2006

ABSTENTIONISM

The Lifeblood of Irish Republicanism

By Peter A Rogers

The age-old argument about abstentionism, that has split the Republican Movement so many times over the past 100 years, has again raised its ugly head in discussions between Republican activists. The policy of not partaking in the two subservient parliaments on this island, Stormont in Belfast (House of Commons of Northern Ireland) and Leinster House in Dublin (House of Commons of Southern Ireland) that were set up by the British Act of Parliament, The Government of Ireland Act 1920, has been the policy of faithful Irish Republicans since the Act was unveiled.

In fact, the policy has been in place a lot longer than that, it has been there since the commitment was given by Sinn Féin to the Irish electorate not to enter Westminster if elected during the all-Ireland General Election of December 1918. As we all know, the elected Sinn Féin MP's of 1918 chose instead to set up their own Irish National Parliament at a sitting in the Mansion House, Dublin, on the 21st January 1919.

The Sinn Féin MP's also invited all other elected Irish MP's to join with them in the new National Parliament, but unfortunately, none took up the invitation. Things may well have turned out differently if they had.

Over the past 100 years, this argument over abstentionism has blighted the Republican Movement, becoming like a vicious disease reoccurring to ravage the Movement almost every decade since. The disease began with the first split within Republican Movement over the signing of the so-called Anglo-Irish Treaty and the establishment of the new 26-County Free State. Following the defeat of the anti-Treaty forces in the war in defence of the Republic (civil war), the disease continued to fester and cause division. Some within the anti-Treaty Sinn Féin leadership, led by Eamon de Valera, began rethinking their position culminating in a second split within a few years with the formation of Fianna Fáil in 1926.

This party broke ranks with their Sinn Féin abstentionist past and entered Leinster House, eventually becoming the largest political party in the 26 Counties for decades. Unfortunately, just like their predecessors in government, Cumann na nGaedheal, Fianna Fáil soon became emersed in the "self-preservation system" of the 26 County Free State and soon were executing former IRA comrades for opposing the continued British occupation of our country.

Hoping for the same type of political success in the Free State, the former Chief of Staff of the IRA, Sean McBride, formed another political party, Clann na Poblachta, to embark on the same political direction, taking their seats in Leinster House during the 1950s. Initially, they too had some political success, getting enough seats to go into a coalition government with Fine Gael, but their political success was short-lived and eventually, within a decade they became defunct. It seems that some really good

people become 'delusional' enough to believe that somehow there is an avenue to further the Republican objective of ending partition and gaining total independence from Britain through entering these parliaments, but as Liam Mellows stated, "you will never get the Republic through a shackled Free State".

He was absolutely correct because the two self-preservation systems on this island will go to any lengths to maintain themselves no matter what. The unfortunate facts are, all those who become emersed into that same constitutional system, even those who went in with the best of intentions, become poisoned with the self-preservation mentality and ultimately become enemies of the true all-Ireland Republic proclaimed in 1916.

After the border campaign of 1956/62, the rot set in again with the same question being asked within the ranks of the Republican Movement - should the IRA drop its policy of abstaining from entering the two parliaments? This we know ended in yet another split between the Officials and the Provisionals in 1970.

Again, some very politically astute and dedicated individuals within the IRA leadership were to take the leap into the fairyland of constitutionalism, somehow thinking it would help to end the British presence. In fact, they were prepared to relinquish their "right of the legitimacy of The Republic" in doing so. What on earth were they thinking after what had gone before?

Over the next two decades, the Officials also became ravaged by splits which ultimately progressed them to irrelevancy within the political systems both north and south.

History has proven to all, except the wilfully blind, that for any Republican to enter into the poisonous "self-preservation system" of constitutional politics within a partitioned Ireland, the advancement is fatal.



Since the last split in 1986 when the Provisionals broke away and decided to enter Stormont and Leinster House, we have seen them have some electoral success both north and south of the border, but nothing to the extent they had envisaged, and certainly not as much as they promised their blind supporters. Just like in times gone by whenever former Republicans enter the constitutional path and initially make some electoral gains, we also see in parallel the decline in support for the loyal Republican groupings like Republican Sinn Féin and the 32-County Sovereignty Movement, but this is only a temporary phenomenon. The Provisionals may even make some further electoral gains at some point in the future but they will never deliver on the all-Ireland Republic. They will not even come close as the “self-preservation system” they are now locked into, and especially with the Good Friday Agreement not permitting it anyway. Eventually, the Provisionals will play themselves out within the constitutional system and progress themselves into political insignificance like all the others.

With a new resurgence in the same failed argument, the pattern has always been the same. This argument pops up every time Republicanism has had a major setback but Republicans must be steadfast in their position, because, the “self-preservation system” will falter at some point in the future. Republicans’ must be ready, and what’s most important we must be ready to play a leading role in guiding our people to freedom. Those who now think there is some advancement of “the cause” by entering these two poisonous hell-holes should reflect on where they are most likely to end up if they go down that God forsaken road. When we look at Irish Republican revolutionary politics over the past 100 years, it is plain to see what has preserved Irish Republicanism over that period - its belief in reinstating the true all-Ireland Republic has been constant, its opposition to the British occupation of our country has also been constant, never wavering. Since the partition of Ireland in 1922 only abstentionist Republicans have continued to resist the British presence in Ireland, while all the rest have capitulated and accepted it. In fact, those who have capitulated have all turned their wrath on the true Republican. This is why abstaining from these two subservient parliaments is so important to the lifeblood of Irish Republicanism. As Ruairí Ó Brádaigh stated, “entering Leinster House is not a revolutionary act”, and it never will be.

The British presence in Ireland must continue to be opposed if Ireland is ever to regain its full independence, as, in the past, only abstentionist revolutionary Irish Republican activists will ever have the mentality and courage to do so. Promoters of the argument to drop the policy of abstentionism are saying that the policy is now out-dated and has outlived its usefulness in progressing Irish Republicanism, but they are totally missing the point. The constitutional road can never deliver on the all-Ireland Republic. This is because both the failed States on this island were set up by the British government to exist in total defiance of the true all-Ireland Republic, so to achieve the 32-County Republic by these means is absolutely impossible. Resistance to British rule in Ireland can never be outdated, it must continue through the safeguard of the policy of abstentionism, which defines our loyalty to the reestablishment of the all-Ireland Republic, as declared in 1916 and ratified by the First Dáil Éireann. •

ELECTORALISM

ITS GROWTH AND ITS LIMITATIONS

By Breandán Ó Conchubhair

Twenty one years after the signing of the Good Friday agreement and the end of the IRA's armed campaign with the 1997 ceasefire marked a turning point for all republican groups as the political reality in the north was changed dramatically.

With electoral politics taking on a more central role especially for mainstream republicans, an examination of the limitations of focusing on electoral politics is worthwhile as the limits of electoralism have long been known to republicans. While some groups have attempted to continue

armed campaigns in increasingly unsuitable conditions, unquestionably electoral politics have come to play a large role in the broader republican movement since the 1990s. To be clear I am not saying that any republican group has become an entirely electoral movement, but from Sinn Fein's emergence electorally north and south (minor setbacks notwithstanding) to non Good Friday agreement republicans continuing to stand for council elections it is undeniable that electoral politics are more prominent today than at other phases of the struggle.

Participation in elections has proven to be a worthwhile strategy for republicans since the early 80s and the elections of Bobby Sands and Kieran Doherty while on hunger strike. Since then republicans have used elections as part of the broader struggle. However, the end of the IRA's armed campaign and the emergence of power sharing has meant that in the absence of armed resistance electoral politics risks becoming an almost singular focus.

I recognise that many republicans oppose the Good Friday agreement, however the impact of the end of the armed campaign on the political landscape in which republicans operate is undeniable regardless of their views on the Good Friday Agreement. The agreed aim of all republicans regardless of their position of power sharing and the Good Friday Agreement, a 32 county socialist republic is not something which can be delivered through the ballot box alone, nor has any republican ever believed that it can be. Republicans have always been well aware that the what is needed to create a socialist republic is not only a political but also eco-

Criminalisation continues to crumb

THE ELECTION to the Free State parliament of two IRA Volunteers imprisoned in the H-Blocks, after Bobby Sands' watershed victory in Fermanagh and South Down, has again made it virtually impossible for the government to defend with reason its case that support in the community' had been successful could criminalisation be made logical! The British right to using Irish political prisoners into the British political active pursuit of

Parents along with nobody

conomic
and
social
revolution.

While the current conditions in the north mean that an armed campaign on the scale of the 70s, 80s, and 90s no longer exists, and the electoral strategy of Sinn Féin has undoubtedly advanced the prospect of a united Ireland, although at a slower pace than any republican would like. The possibility of electoral politics to deliver the political revolution required for a united Ireland is a real one, however the question remains how to deliver the economic and social revolutions also required.

To do so republicans need to be actively organising within trade unions and community groups, and this activity ought to be given the same priority as any electoral strategy. This is not to say that republicans should disregard electoralism for some moralistic concern with purity, no it is to recognise the totality of the transformation needed to create a 32 county socialist republic.

In Ireland the political movement towards a united Ireland has increased with wider discussions on a united Ireland beginning to take place, and while there is still much more work to be done to achieve this the discourse has indelibly shifted in favour of republicans. While at the same time the economic situation has regressed with attacks on the welfare state and trade unions, meaning that paradoxically while a united Ireland is on the horizon, the concept of a socialist state is not.

Connolly's summarised this need when he said "If you remove the English Army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle., unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts will be in vain." Here I suggest that as republicans we examine just what this organization of a socialist republic would look like in an Ireland where economic neoliberalism and anglophone cultural dominance are so deeply embedded north and south.

The question for republicans then becomes how to avoid a united Ireland simply becoming the 26 counties writ large. Sinn Fein vision for a united Ireland is a new republic, however the systematic changes in sectors such as healthcare, education, and the economy require organisation at all levels and building robust movements that are capable of transforming society but also defending any revolutionary gains from inevitable attacks by counter revolutionaries.

This isn't an easy question to answer, and I don't claim to have such an answer but a discussion this topic is needed. International examples such as the experiences of the com-

munes
in
Bolivarian
revolution
show such
socio economic
transformation can
prove much more
difficult than political
revolution but a political
strategy which ignores
these communal struggles
cannot bring about full econom-
ic and social transformation.

The citizen army played a central role in the 1916 rising, and organised labour shaped the democratic programme of the first Dáil, were key components of the success of republican movement in the war of independence. Similarly the emergence of trade unionists for a united Ireland ensures that republican aspirations for a socialist republic are not reduced to simply accepting a united Ireland, while also ensure that trade unions embrace their role in the republican movement and no longer shy away from the national question as they have done since partition. As we have Seen Sinn Fein in the Dáil have helped ensure import pieces of legislation for the trade union movement became law and republicans have historically supported strike actions by workers. This mutually beneficial relationship must be strengthened through active cooperation if a socialist republic is to become a reality. Socialist theorists such as Lenin to Fanon have highlighted the role of imperialism in capitalism, as such the need to 'decolonise our minds' exists in Ireland as much as any other colony. Máirtín Ó Cadhain has expressed this concept in an Irish context, he like many earlier republicans was well aware of the need for Irish culture to be protected and promoted as part of the fight against British imperialism. Beyond the need to fully decolonise Irish society, strong cultural organisations help ensure more organised communities . Which are needed if we are to counter the pervasive individualism of

ne-
olib-
eral-
ism, and
the lack of
solidarity that
this creates.
As I have said
the struggle for a
32 county socialist
republic is one that
requires transformations
beyond what can be
achieved electorally, but like-
wise a revolution cannot happen
without republicans wielding
political power. In the current condi-
tions republicans need to continue to be
active in advancing political economic and
social demands through ensuring as far as
possible the organisation of movements at the
grassroots level that are capable of delivering
on these demands. •

NO HOPE ON 'HOPE STREET'

By Aylisha Hogan

Larne is a seaport town on the coast of County Antrim. It is for this reason, perhaps, that in 2011 it was chosen as the site for the only immigration detention centre in the six counties of the north of Ireland. Situated at the back of Larne PSNI station, on a street ironically named 'Hope Street', is the refurbished police custody suite called Larne House Short-Term Holding Facility (STHF). The facility can hold up to 21 male and female detainees for a maximum of seven days before they are either released or transferred to an immigration detention centre in Britain.

People held in immigration detention are subject to immigration control and are held in custody whilst they wait for permission to enter the country or are removed. Immigration is said to be administrative, not a criminal procedure but detention centres are staffed by guards, movement and access is restricted, strict rules are enforced and people held in centres are referred to as 'detainees'. There are no time limits on how long someone can be detained – even custodial sentences have an end date.

Larne House STHF has been run on behalf of the British Home Office by private multinational corporations since it opened. Between 2011 and 2018 by Tascor, and since 2018 by Mitie. Making a name for themselves as a cleaning company, Mitie now provides a range of outsourcing services to government most notoriously immigration detention centres. Mitie have been awarded a 10-year contract worth £525million to provide immigration services to the Home Office including deportation and detention facilities. Mitie are the largest supplier of immigration services to the Home Office despite having faced accusations of cost-cutting and abuse.

Nearly 4000 people have been detained in Larne House STHF since it opened, many are taken to immigration detention centres in Britain and held for weeks or months before being returned to the north of Ireland. People are detained in Larne House STHF most often when travelling between Dublin and Belfast being unaware that they have crossed a border. Racial profiling is a tactic used by both the PSNI and Gardaí to identify people potentially liable for detention travelling on public transport. People are also detained in bus stations, airports, ports, and even on the street using the same tactics.

Shamefully, some people who are detained in Larne are deported. However, most people who pass through Larne House are eventually released. Imprisoned indefinitely without having committed a crime, held without charge with no prospect of a trial, only to be released as if nothing had happened. What was the point of this ordeal? People who are imprisoned suffer mental ill-health whilst they are in detention and also experience depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder after they are released. Migrants already suffer higher levels of mental ill-health and it is clear that immigration detention only serves to cause them further distress.

Immigration detention must be abolished, it is an unnecessary and cruel practice run for profit to serve only the interests of the capitalist and fascist fortress EUrope. In a borderless world there would be no need for immigration detention centres. Even in a world where borders exist there are alternatives, for example granting temporary visas or imposing reporting requirements. But specifically in the context of the north of Ireland, we must reject the existence of Larne House and refuse to participate in the British Government's hostile environment regime. When demanding free movement of people throughout the island of Ireland, we must demand it for ALL people living on the island. •



IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

The 'St Patricks Battalion' & Anti-Imperialism

By Christian Noakes

While the dominant narrative of the “Irish experience” in the U.S. is often reduced to little more than a fairytale of hard-working immigrants grateful for a stake in the “land of opportunity”, the grim reality for Irish people in America was, for centuries, characterized by inequality, exclusion, and exploitation. As was and is the case with British oppression, the Irish often rebelled in response to American cruelty.

St. Patrick's Battalion, or San Patricios, was a predominantly Irish unit that fought alongside the Mexican Army in the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. Many of the members had deserted the U.S. forces in part due to harsh treatment and discrimination at the hands of Anglo-American “superiors.” These brave soldiers were also drawn to the cause of the Mexican people by the parallels between British and U.S. imperialism. The San Patricios are a prime example not only of the rebellious character of many oppressed Irish people in the U.S. but of the capacity to stand in international solidarity against imperialism more broadly.

As Tom Hayden points out in *Irish on the Inside*, the erasure of this radical history has been essential in assimilating Irish Americans into the dominant Anglo culture and enlisting many in the violent upkeep of racial inequality. By supporting the very system that oppressed

their ancestors, Irish Americans have been afforded what W.E.B. Du Bois called *wages of whiteness* - the largely symbolic power that encourages consent of white segments of the working-class and its participation in reinforcing structural racism. In the England of his time, Marx observed a similar dynamic in which the Irish were on the receiving end:

In relation to the Irish worker [the English worker] regards himself as a member of the ruling nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself... This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power.

The same social relations play out in the U.S. with many people that claim Irish heritage playing the part of the English (or in this case white) worker. Therefore, the reactionary tendencies among Irish Americans amount to buying in to whiteness at the cost of Irishness. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey was well aware of this betrayal when she compared Irish Americans to Orangemen. While there have always been those of us that saw the support of immigrants and colonized people as essential to honoring the struggles of our ancestors, there have been too many Father Coughlins and [Paul] Ryans, too few Haydens and Berrigans. To right this wrong requires collectively reconsidering what

it means to be Irish American and trying to reorganize our communities in a manner that both honors our ancestors and lends itself to the continued struggle for human rights throughout the world.

As Republicans have known for generations, the struggle for Irish self-determination is part of a bigger struggle against capitalism and imperialism. Likewise, members of the diaspora shouldn't just be vocal supporters of Irish independence but dedicated activists and organizers for the international struggle of working and oppressed peoples. Irish Americans in particular have a unique responsibility to oppose inequality along lines of class, ethnicity, place of origin, and religion due to our position within the core of the global imperialist system. To combat dispossession, exploitation, and oppression in the U.S. is to strike at the belly of the very beast that has fed for centuries on the bodies of colonized people.

Promoting class consciousness and international solidarity within our families and communities is the task of revolutionary segments of the diaspora. Following Connolly's example, we should use Irish history and culture to encourage Irish Americans to join the socialist cause and to connect the Irish struggle to those of other colonized or oppressed people. We cannot afford to sit back as people around the world fight for their lives against the capitalist mammon on the verge of consuming the planet. •



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