

# an pobal éirithe

No 3



MAIREAD FARRELL



DANNY McCANN



SEAN SAVAGE



Paddy Hill



Hugh Callaghan



Brian Mullin



Martin Harte



Gerard Harte



Dick McIlkenny



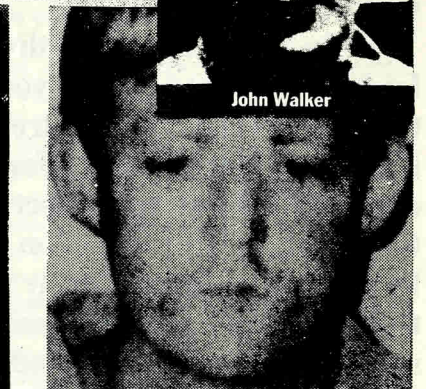
Bill Power



FINBAR CULLEN



MARTINA SHANAHAN



JOHN McCANN



John Walker



Gerry Hunter



Patrick Armstrong



Carole Richardson



Paul Hill



Gerard Conlon

British justice?



# Príomhált

The first three-quarters of 1988 showed it to be a very significant year for the Irish. Beginning with the Stalker affair and the refusal of the Appeal Court to free the Birmingham Six, it continued with the murder of Aidan McAnespie, the freeing of convicted murderer, British soldier Ian Thain, the murders of Mairéad Farrell, Danny McCann and Seán Savage by the SAS, the attack on their funeral resulting in the deaths of three mourners, the provocative presence of two plain-clothes British soldiers at the funeral of one of the dead mourners which led to their deaths on the Andersonstown Road, the killing of IRA members Brian Mullin and Martin and Gerard Harte, again by the SAS, the extradition of Irish prisoners by Haughey to the system which holds the innocent Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, the freeing of Aiden McAnespie's killer, David Holden, the Gibraltar inquest, the banning of Sinn Féin from TV and radio, the removal of the right to silence and the sentencing of Martina Shanahan, Finbar Cullen and John McCann to 25 years on the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence. At the same time IRA activity increased significantly in comparison with recent years.

All in all, 1988 was a dreadful year for the Irish and, indeed, for anyone who cares about the relationship between Ireland and Britain. It is easy to lose heart, to feel that nothing that can be done has any effect. And yet, through the injustice, the repression and the deaths, can be seen ever more clearly the true nature of that relationship. Even those who don't want to see are being forced to admit that Britain is fighting a war. Once again, the British government has been found guilty of breaching the European Convention on Human Rights and in

its derogation from the Convention, permissible only "in time of war or public emergency threatening the life of the nation", it is openly admitting the reality of the situation. Britain lost far more of its security personnel last year than would be acceptable in a peace-time situation. The criminalisation policy of the British government is in shreds with a 6% increase in the numbers of troops in the statelet between 1985 and 1987. The argument that the troops are a stabilising, peace-keeping force becomes more and more ridiculous to all but the most naive or blinkered.

Every act of repression perpetrated by the British government brings closer the day when British rule in Ireland is ended. Each murder, each denial of justice speeds the time when that rule will be incontrovertibly exposed to the Irish and British peoples as the colonial imperialism that it is. The blatant refusal of justice by the British jurisdiction to any Irish person accused of a political offence forced the Irish government to the realisation that it could not with any credibility hand Father Ryan over to the British, despite the fact that the extradition arrangements were less than a year old.

The British government itself will ensure the destruction of its last colonial foothold. The task of the Irish in Britain in that context is to accelerate the process by ensuring that the truth breaks through the web of lies, distortion and propaganda. Our job is to maintain and increase the time and effort we put into campaigning for British withdrawal, publicising the true nature of the British presence in the six counties and dismantling the crumbling arguments put forward to 'justify' that presence. The heartbreak of 1988 could be the hour before the dawn.

## Editorial Committee:

Diarmuid Breatnach, Gearóid MacGearailt, Virginia Moyles, Pat Reynolds. Regional correspondent: Bernadette Hyland.

The editorial board reserves the right to edit journalistic articles and to refuse to print articles.

## Equal Opportunities Policy

The editorial board respects and upholds the rights of all people and will especially promote the rights of all Irish people including heterosexual women and men, lesbians and gay men, travellers and settled dwellers regardless of class, religion, race, colour, ethnic group, nationality, citizenship, place of birth, age and disability.

Any article which contravenes this policy will be rejected.

## Published by:

An Pobal Éirithe, 52 Victoria Park Road, London E9 7NB.

## Typeset by:

Bread 'n Roses. Phone 01-582 7286

## Printed by:

Aldgate Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London N1. Phone 01-247 3015.

February 1989



# Civil Rights and the Irish Community in Britain

In this twentieth anniversary year, Padraig McRannall analyses the part played by the Irish in Britain in the struggle for civil rights.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the birth of the Civil Rights Movement in the north of Ireland. The Irish Community in Britain through its then leading Irish organisation (the Connolly Association) created some of the inspiration for those events and supported them wholeheartedly. In 1962 the Connolly Association published its pamphlet *Our Plan to end Partition* and in 1964 had sought pledges from MPs in the British General Election to seek democratic reform in the north of Ireland. A conference in 1965 led to the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster led by Paul Rose and Fenner Brockway. The first meeting of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) took place on April 1st 1967 and its first AGM was held in February 1968. For the first 18 months of its existence it acted as a pressure group. NICRA's five point demand was:

- To defend the basic freedom of all citizens;
- To protect the rights of the individual;
- To highlight all possible abuses of power;
- To demand guarantees of freedom of speech, assembly and association;
- To inform the public of their lawful rights.

In June 1968 NICRA took direct action in squatting a house in Caledon, Co. Tyrone.

A number of factors and groups led to the setting up of the Civil Rights Movement. The 1916 celebrations held in 1966 (which drew 20,000 people in Belfast in an expression of unity), the earlier work done by the Wolfe Tone Society set up in 1963, the Republican Club set up in 1965, the Dungannon Social Justice Campaign, the Connolly Association's Campaign for Democracy (with whom Kevin McNamara worked), the Vietnam war, the Civil Rights Movement of the Black community in America and student agitation all gave rise to a belief that pressure could change systems which were unjust.

The first Civil Rights march over housing allocations took place on August 14th 1968 from Coalisland to Dungannon. However, it was the march in Derry on 5th October 1968 that sparked off the statelet's counter challenge to put down the movement when police attacked the march. On 9th October students from Queen's University held a 3 hour sit down protest and made further demands:

- one person, one vote;
- repeal of the Special Powers Act, the Public Order Act and the Flags and Emblems Act;
- introduction of a Parliamentary Commissioner;

- a Human Rights Bill;
- a points system for housing allocation;
- electoral boundaries to be redrawn;
- an impartial enquiry into the police brutality in Derry;
- jobs to be given on ability.

These demands were adopted by the People's Democracy led by Michael Farrell and Bernadette Devlin. In London the Connolly Association led a march against police brutality in Derry. The Civil Rights Movement were now in direct conflict with the 'Northern Ireland' statelet and the rest is history. In 1969 a British section of NICRA was set up and demonstrations were held at the Ulster Office and the Irish Embassy. Money was collected in Britain for relief work in the north of Ireland and large marches to Trafalgar Square took place. Groups involved in NICRA in England included the Connolly Association, the United Ireland Association, the IRA (then legal!) which split into two groups, the Irish Solidarity Campaign, the Irish National Liberation Front, the Campaign for Social Justice and the Campaign for Democracy. In 1971 after internment the Anti-Internment League led large demonstrations in Britain against internment while in the north of Ireland NICRA led a 'no rates, no rent' strike which was a effective mass campaign.

## What are the lessons of the Civil Rights Movement?

What are the implications for the Irish in Britain? The first point to note is that the 5 million strong Irish community this side of the Irish Sea lives under British colonial rule within the British state itself. We experience similar socio-economic oppression to that of the nationalist people of the north of Ireland but do not suffer the military oppression which is part of their everyday lives. Yet the Irish community in Britain is closest to our sisters and brothers in the north of Ireland in many respects. Many of our community were driven out of the Free State or the north of Ireland by economic, political or social pressure and were thus dispossessed of our homeland by a divided economy and colonial oppression. Thus an analysis of the 'Northern Ireland' statelet should include an analysis of those driven out by the politics of that statelet and those of the neo-colonial Free State. The lack of such an analysis and a strategy to advance the Irish community in Britain has led to a classic 'divide and rule' situation and to the isolation of the nationalist community

in the the north of Ireland from its most natural solidarity grouping. The lack of a strategy suited the British left who did not and still don't want to tackle Irish disadvantage in Britain. It is easier to patronise a struggle across the water than to tackle your own practices at home. It is easier to deny the Irish community a voice than to allow it to determine its own way forward. The Irish community in Britain is severely disadvantaged in housing, employment, health (including mental health) care, education and welfare. It suffers from political oppression and a lack of civil and legal rights. In one year alone—1974—eighteen Irish people (the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four, the Maguire Seven and Judith Ward) were wrongfully convicted by the British State and since 1974 the racist PTA has been used in an attempt to intimidate and silence our community.

It is clear that the Civil Rights Movement could only ever have had limited success against British state repression; Bloody Sunday was the British answer to the demands for civil rights.

It was clear that the nationalist community would have to choose other methods to resist this oppression, just as oppressed peoples all over the world—including previous generations of Irish people—had chosen their own ways to fight for liberation, freedom and justice. All true democrats would support the right of oppressed groups to choose their own means of liberation.

In Britain our struggle has taken different shapes at different times in history and our solidarity support of Irish people in struggle in Ireland has taken many forms depending on the prevailing conditions. Thus the Irish in Britain have been involved in struggle from the time of the Chartist movement, through the Fenian movement, support for Fenian prisoners, the War of Independence, the Anti-Partition League, the Connolly Association and, since 1981, the IBRG. There has always been and remains to this day amongst the Irish community here a culture of resistance. That resistance is a constant challenge to the British state and its racism, its divide and rule tactics and its discrimination in housing, employment, health, welfare and education. In opposing the PTA, in seeking justice for the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, in opposing strip searching, in challenging the racist media and Labour councils' racist deportation of homeless Irish families and in opposing British rule in the north of Ireland we are a community in daily struggle.

We take courage from the struggles of the



Black communities in Britain who face more sharply the racism of the state and support their uprisings and struggles against state oppression. Thus today the Irish community must build itself and demand equal rights, human rights for our community, the right to justice, the right to adequate employment, housing, health care, welfare and education. Today we demonstrate and picket and organise and educate. At times the community takes direct action in upholding its rights by squatting, by striking and by defending itself. The primary struggle for Irish freedom goes on daily in the north of

Ireland and we hold a vital position in Britain to bring the struggle home to the British people via the Labour movement.

Our primary task is to liberate our own community, to build up, to agitate, to organise, to campaign, to educate, to finally see our community free from oppression. But we realise that we can never be free whilst our sisters and brothers remain oppressed in the north of Ireland. Our lives are underscored and structured by Britain's relationship with Ireland and its people, so every step forward taken by our people anywhere should be applauded. We build daily using

the most appropriate tools within a given situation for our future and our children, for a world where all our people are free and have justice and freedom. The civil/human rights model may be the appropriate way forward for our community in Britain at the moment but it has severe limitations in a right-wing Thatcherite Britain. Our civil/human rights campaign can include a range of tactics from a Gandhian passive resistance to an active challenge which confronts everything from their ideology to their racist jokes. The form our resistance takes is the choice of our community as it moves forward.

# IBRG Policy on Anti-Irish Racism

The following policy was agreed by IBRG's Árd Choiste 22nd October 1988

Racism is a practice which assumes innate superiority by a dominant people or nation towards a subject or formerly subject people or nation and which also assumes the innate inferiority of the subject people. Racism can be seen as a system based on power relationships between the oppressor and oppressed groups.

IBRG recognise that the imperialist and colonial policies of Britain have been and continue to be the primary determinant of racism in this country.

In Britain this racism is endemic and is interwoven into the culture, history and traditions of Britain. The structures and institutions arising from this ideology have been created by Britain both at home and in its colonies to maintain its colonial domination and have developed forces intended to divide and thereby rule those subjected to its colonial ambitions. This racism and division is also reflected in the policies and practices of the labour and trade union movement in Britain from whom oppressed groups should be able to expect complete support in their struggle for equal rights.

Both the denial of the difference between Irish and British culture and the denial of the existence of anti-Irish racism has resulted from a history of colonialism and a policy of stripping Ireland of its resources and culture. This leads to pressure on Irish people to assimilate and the appropriation as British of successful Irish people and the emphatic identification as Irish of any aspect of Irish culture or people perceived as negative.

Anti-Irish racism in Britain takes a number

of forms. These include discrimination in terms of education, employment, housing, health care, culture and the freedom to play a full part in the social and political life of this country without fear of harassment or abuse from individuals or the security forces. Whether a person who identifies as Irish is obviously Irish or not, they see and hear all around them evidence of the belief that they and their people are inferior to the English.

IBRG is profoundly opposed to anti-Irish racism in all aspects of British society. IBRG stands for the right of every Irish person to absolute equality in terms of the goods which society has the power to dispense or withhold. IBRG also stands for the right of every Irish person to complete pride in their Irishness and the right to lead their lives unhindered by stereotypes and prejudice. No Irish child should grow up hearing that the Irish are stupid, violent, alcoholic, unreliable, superstitious, objects of fun, etcetera and having to fight against internalising such stereotypes.

IBRG therefore demands for the Irish in Britain:

- (a) equal rights to education at all levels which fosters in each individual a sense of pride in her/his heritage and identity;
- (b) equal opportunities in employment with adequate pay, safe conditions and the right to organise;
- (c) enough decent housing at affordable cost;
- (d) adequate and appropriate health care;
- (e) the right to participate in and have resources allocated to cultural activities reflecting Irish heritage;

- (f) freedom from discrimination and abuse;
- (g) the right to play a full part in the social and political life of this country without fear of harassment and imprisonment by the security forces;
- (h) adequate and unbiased coverage of Irish issues in the media, the provision of programmes of Irish interest;
- (i) an end to the institutional practices in employment, housing, education, health and social services which have caused disadvantage to our community.

IBRG believe that anti-Irish racism should be seen in the context of racism against all groups. The struggle against anti-Irish racism is part of the wider struggle against racism.

IBRG is resolved to challenge anti-Irish racism wherever it is met. IBRG will encourage and support its members and all other Irish people to develop their awareness of anti-Irish racism and their confidence in challenging it. IBRG will campaign to eliminate anti-Irish racism. IBRG will work with other ethnic minority groups on the elimination of all forms of racism.

Irish Travellers experience dual racism based on both anti-Irish and anti-Traveller prejudice.

The Irish should be recognised as an ethnic minority group and included in all equal opportunities policies and programmes. Such recognition should be based on the definition of the Irish as 'those persons who originate from Ireland or whose forbears originate from Ireland and who consider themselves to be Irish.'



# No time for love in the morning

Pat Reynolds calls for a renewed campaign against the PTA

“The law should be used as just another weapon in the government’s arsenal and in this case it becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public. For this to happen effectively the activities of the legal services have to be tied into the war effort in as discreet a way as possible.” Brigadier General Frank Kitson, OC Northern Ireland from his book *Low Intensity Operations*.

The British state in its colonial policy has always had a strategy for maintaining its oppression of colonised people in Ireland, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. It had different strategies for various regions for dealing with any fight back from the people. In the current Irish struggle 1968-88, the British state has adopted different strategies towards the Irish people; it is thus at its sharpest point of combat in the north of Ireland trying to stop the inevitable victory of the Irish people. But it also has a strategy of operation in the 26 counties with which the Dublin government openly collude as well as a policy for America and wherever else Irish voices are raised against British repression.

The British strategy for dealing with the Irish community within Britain is the one which most concerns Irish people here for this is the way the state directly oppresses our community. We know that our lives in Britain are underscored and structured by Britain’s relationship with Ireland and the Irish people. The Irish community in Britain has responded to every single struggle in Ireland from the Chartist movement to the present struggle; each time the British state has responded with bloody repression. In Fenian times they hanged the Manchester Martyrs and young Micky Barrett. Today they use the so-called Prevention of Terrorism Act (renamed the Creation of Terrorism Act by the Irish community). The British had been alarmed at the strong support in the Irish community for the Civil Rights movement and the Anti-Internment League. The British state needed new weaponry to fight this solidarity and, when the IRA opened a second front in Britain, the government used this as an excuse to bring in draconian legislation to smash the Irish community. The state already had all the laws it needed to deal with IRA action in Britain and the PTA, as such, has had nil effect on IRA activity here.

It is our belief that the primary function of the PTA was to silence and politically neutralise the Irish community in Britain. The overall effect of the PTA was that every Irish person was deemed suspect and guilty and wholesale political surveillance began with the use of computers, mass carding at points of entry, mass examination of Irish people at ports, computer checkouts running at 55,000 per year and the arrest and holding for up to seven days of over 6,000 innocent Irish people. The British state also deported over 300 Irish people back to Ireland because of their political beliefs. The cases of the

Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and Maguire family clearly show that these were not mere miscarriages of justice. The British state throughout its history has always created examples of colonised peoples and, indeed, its own working class as a warning to others. The state, in such cases, takes innocent people from their community. In the past they hanged them; today they condemn them to spend their lives in prison. We believe that justice was not given to the Birmingham Six, the Broadwater Farm defendants, the Guildford Four or the Maguire family.

The fact that the British left, the Labour Party, the Trade Unions, the British Liberals and the Church did nothing to stop this repression of Irish people is to their eternal shame. Most of the people arrested under the PTA will have been trade unionists; this means that over 300 trade unionists have been deported, over 6,000 trade unionists were falsely imprisoned and innocent Irish trade unionists are spending their lives in jail simply because they are Irish. It is a shocking indictment of the inherent racism of the British labour movement that they never lifted a finger to aid their fellow workers victimised because of their politics and racial origins. A few organisations such as the Troops Out Movement and the NCCL strongly opposed the PTA but, in general the British left stood idly by.

The fight back by the Irish community started back in 1979 with the Alternative Sense of Ireland but it was the struggle of the hunger strikers which provided the spark for a more sustained effort in Britain. The founding of the IBRG created a new climate for the Irish community and provided space for other organisations to build. The new feeling of being Irish and proud of it was electric and the bond between generations born in different countries became stronger in a fight for culture and identity. The IBRG made the PTA its number one target in the knowledge that, if our community is to be free, we must get rid of all repressive legislation. Pressure from the IBRG and the Irish community made the Labour Party abstain from voting on the renewal of the PTA in 1982 and oppose it since 1983.

Along with the PTA the British state had the use of its media to attack, openly and daily, the identity and self view of Irish people in a clearly racist fashion. By misuse of dirty propaganda and censorship they deliberately mislead the British public into stereotyping Irish people and believing myths about Ireland. This is another battle which the Irish community and the IBRG have taken up and we have successfully countered the effects of such propaganda within our own community.

The Irish government has a shameful record in defence of the civil liberties of its



Paddington Green Police Station Photo: Máire Steadman



citizens abroad. It has always colluded openly with the British state in the oppression of its own citizens in Britain and has always supported the PTA. It is no accident that the Irish government and opposition parties did not even know who the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and Maguire family were three years ago or that they should be the last agency to take a vague interest in the cases. Indeed, there is increasing evidence to indicate that the Irish government has actively promoted groups in Britain which are revisionist and 'right of centre' and ignored groups which take a more active role in defence of the community.

This year the British government will debate new legislation to make the PTA a permanent feature of British law. The law has, in recent years, extended its racist nature to cover other oppressed people while neo-nazis openly enter Britain. Brian Lenihan, when in opposition, stated in Dáil Éireann that "This Act is absolutely indefensible by reference to any national or international canon of law or to the Convention on Human Rights because of its discriminatory nature." We are still waiting to see Lenihan act on his words. The present Fianna Fáil government's view on the Act is exactly the same as that of

the Coalition government.

As far as the Irish Government is concerned, the Irish community in Britain stands on its own in fighting this new legislation and the Government will stand idly by once again while its citizens are daily victimised in Britain. The Labour Party, many trade unions, the NCCL and many other groups now oppose the PTA. It is important that we build a massive campaign between now and the summer to oppose this new legislation which will enshrine anti-Irish racism into permanent law. The new legislation will further endanger the rights of Irish people in Britain and other minority groups. Colville's review of the new legislation is a familiar smokescreen to divert international attention away from the racist nature of the Act and to cover up the blatant injustices carried out under it. The Act has legislated for the practice of anti-Irish racism with no legal redress whatsoever. The Irish community know well the Orwellian 1984 style of the PTA and the nightmare of the last 13 years but we know, too, the fear of the British state that they may lose control of their last colony. The last colony and its protection is their final line of defence for the corrupt nature of their own power and what minor

power they give to the neo-colonial Dublin government. A free and independent people, having liberated themselves from colonial oppression, could unite in working class solidarity to claim what is rightfully theirs. That is why the British state divide and rule on a sectarian and racist basis and why the British working class should support the struggle of the Irish people, for every chain put on the Irish people is also a shackle on the progress of oppressed people in this country. The Birmingham Six decision and the Shoot-to-Kill/Stalker report are warning that the British state is ready to let the ends justify the means whatever the cost.

The cost for Irish people, Black people, women and others in struggle is too high. We must intensify our efforts for freedom and justice for all. The fight for justice for our community, the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and the Maguire family and against the daily racism of the PTA starts here with you. The Pogues say it all "they're still doing time for being Irish in the wrong place and at the wrong time . . . You'll be counting years, first five, then ten . . ." (Birmingham Six). What are you prepared to do before they come for you in the morning?

---

## Irish lesbians and gay men in Britain

Although unemployment and the state of the economy are major reasons behind the current level of emigration from Ireland, many people are pushed to leave because of social factors. There are no official figures on the numbers of lesbians and gay men leaving Ireland but there is every reason to believe that they constitute a far larger proportion of emigrants than the 5-10% usually estimated to be gay in any given population. Although the European Court of Human Rights has recently directed the Irish Government to change its laws on homosexuality, it is unlikely that this will result in any major change to the oppression which lesbians and gay men face in Ireland.

Conservative government, a tradition of repression in the area of sexuality whether it be gay or heterosexual and the rigidity of the catholic church have all combined to make Ireland a very alienating place for lesbians and gay men. The virtual impossibility of coming out and being accepted by one's family, friends and associates condemns lesbians and gay men in Ireland to a life of secrecy. The message given by Irish society to lesbians and gay men is that their secret is a shameful one and that they will only be tolerated if they pretend to be other than they are. Things don't seem to have changed much since the days of Oscar Wilde.

However, life isn't exactly a bed of roses

for Irish lesbians and gay men when they reach the supposedly progressive shores of Britain. Assuming that they head for London, the capital of liberal attitudes, they will be immediately faced by one or more of a series of problems. The first is likely to be accommodation—the shortage of which affects most emigrants. But many people arriving here for the first time have the option of staying with relatives or friends. For a newly arrived lesbian or gay man, this option will land them back in the same situation which they have just left—having to pretend to be heterosexual in case the family back home find out that they're gay. Many of the Irish community in Britain are as rabidly anti-gay as are the population back home, so coming out in the community here is hardly an attractive proposition.

Another option is to find accommodation alone and avoid contact with people who are in touch with those back home. Even if this is financially possible, it can mean a very lonely start in a foreign and very large city. The logical place to look for social contacts is amongst the lesbian and gay communities which flourish across London and whose members have developed strong support networks and political campaigns to help counter the constant heterosexism which, with the enactment of Section 28, seems set to remain a part of British society for some

time to come.

The problem is that the lesbian and gay communities are no more (or less) free of anti-Irish racism than any of the other oppressed groups struggling for their liberation. Except within specific networks such as that centred around the London Irish Women's Centre, there is likely to be little understanding of the issues facing a new emigrant (or, for that matter, a second generation Irish person). At worst, an Irish lesbian or gay man is likely to have to suppress her or his Irish identity and pride in that identity in order to be accepted and, at best, is likely to feel that her or his Irishness is an irrelevance.

Many Irish lesbians and gay men feel pressurised to choose between their identity as an Irish person and their identity as a lesbian or gay man. They seem to have left the frying pan only to have jumped into the fire, alleviating one oppression somewhat, perhaps, but adding another on top.

Until both the Irish community and the lesbian and gay communities accept and value all their members, both will contain significant numbers who experience vicious oppression with little or no support from those from whom they have most right to expect it.

**From a speech by Éamonn Summerfield to the 1988 IBRG Welfare Conference.**



# Lifers - political hostages in Britain's war

The history of British colonial involvement in Ireland has been one of ruthless aggression and violence. Whenever the Irish people challenged this repression the British used military violence and mass summary executions to intimidate the people. In addition, Britain extracted vengeance by taking political prisoners, often transporting them to England as they did with the Fenians and, later on, after the 1916 Rising. Today Britain continues to take political hostages and tries to break them just as they tried to break the Fenians. They never succeeded in breaking the Fenian prisoners and are unlikely to be any more successful today. Irish political prisoners like Bobby Sands, Mairéad Farrell and hundreds more are the bravest of their generation. Like Mandela, they remain unbroken. Like the Mandela family, Irish prisoners' families have remained strong. By trying to criminalise and break the prisoners, the British were hoping to criminalise and break the Irish struggle.

Irish political prisoners should be clearly seen as prisoners of war. Protocols I and II of the Geneva Convention signed in 1949 clearly show this: "The situation referred to ... includes armed conflicts in which peoples are fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and racist regimes in the exercise of their right of self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration of Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations" and, again: "Recognising however that there are situations in armed conflicts where, owing to the nature of the hostilities, an armed combatant cannot so distinguish himself, (*sic*) he shall retain his status as combatant provided that, in such situations, he carries his arms openly: (a) during each military engagement; and (b) during such time as he is visible to the adversary while he is engaged in a military deployment preceding the launching of an attack in which he is to participate".

The withdrawal of political status in an attempt to criminalise the prisoners led to the Hunger Strikes where, again, the British government failed to break the prisoners. The history of Irish resistance repeated itself and the struggle went back from the prison to the people. Today the government continues to hold Irish prisoners of war as hostages. The prisoners and their families have now started a campaign to expose the way the British try to use prisoners of war as a deterrent to resistance against their war of oppression.

The six demands of the campaign are:

- the ending of indeterminate sentencing;
- the right to legal representation in the review process;
- the right to know the reason for unfavourable decisions;
- the publication of objective criteria for release;

- the ending of secret reports on prisoners;
- the right to challenge the make up of review boards.

Young persons under the age of eighteen are sentenced 'at the Secretary of State's Pleasure' (SOSP) to terms of imprisonment of undetermined length. These sentences are not even reviewed until after eight years and those of lifers after ten years with no guarantee of a recommended release date. The decision of the review board is often that the prisoner should not be released for several more years. Some prisoners have served up to seventeen years. Considering that the average life sentence in Britain is nine years and for some, like Private Thain, only two years, one can see the racist and vindictive special treatment of Irish political prisoners. On top of this, the British government is proposing to cut remission of prisoners in the six counties.

Prisoners want an end to the inhuman manipulation by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) of the Life Sentence Review Procedure (LSRP). After criticism of the review procedure in 1985, the NIO produced a booklet, *Life Sentences in Northern Ireland*, an explanatory memorandum which, like Viscount Colville's reports on the PTA served merely to cover up the faults in the system. It made provision for the prisoner to make a written submission to the review board and for the probation service to do likewise.

A yearly report is made out on each prisoner; the report includes areas such as the political views of the prisoner and whether she/he is likely to continue to resist the British occupation of Ireland. These reports are made out by prison officers and assistant governors in the absence of the prisoner and the prisoner does not see them. The prisoner is not represented at the review. Given the conflict within the prisons between prisoners and officers and the fact that nearly all the warders are loyalists, the reports can hardly be seen as unbiased and objective. The outside 'respectables' who sit on the boards are drawn from the loyalist middle class, their names are kept secret and no one can object to any member of a board. Also consulted in the later stages of the review is the trial judge who will invariably be part of the loyalist establishment.

The silence around Britain's vindictive treatment of Irish political prisoners must be ended. The prisoners are working class people who are being held as political hostages, to terrorise their families and communities and to be used as examples to deter resistance against Britain's war of occupation.

Even disregarding the inherent prejudice of those within the establishment against republican prisoners, the system as it is currently structured is unacceptable to political prisoners on both sides of the conflict. The 'Justice

for Lifers' campaign set up by relatives of loyalist prisoners in 1985 is demanding similar reforms and also questions the suitability of prison staff to write review reports.

As Bernadette McAliskey has stated: "No society based supposedly on democratic or Christian morals can be allowed to tolerate a situation where prisoners can be held in prison because of what they may do". The 'surrender your convictions' clause is the NIO yardstick for release. The prisoner is judged on her/his attitude to her/his 'crime' and sentence and on whether "he has entirely given up his affiliation to the organisation to which he belonged when arrested" and, even if this criteria is met, "particular problems arise where the organisation concerned is still perpetrating acts of violence".

Although it cannot openly say so, for fear of recognising the political nature of the conflict and de-criminalising those involved in the armed struggle against its occupation, the British government can be clearly seen to be saying that it is only willing to release the prisoners when the organisations to which they belong lay down their arms. Thus, although such a strategy shows no sign of working, Irish political prisoners are clearly hostages for the 'good behaviour' of their communities.

The issue of violence belongs to the British government, upon whom we should call to seek peace with their peace loving neighbours. The cycle of British violence must be broken along with its propaganda machine. It is time to take up and support the basic human rights demands of these prisoners and support their efforts to internationalise the scandal of Britain's abuse of their rights. There would be no political prisoners in Ireland without the British occupation and while there is repression in Ireland there will be resistance.

The prisoners state "we will not accept the hostage/ransom syndrome of political releases for shelving or postponing resistance. We are prisoners; we are not the cause of the problems in our country, nor can our release be the solution" and "when we achieve our freedom we won't have bargained away our dignity for it".

Every Irish person should actively support the six demands of the Lifers' Campaign. They are in prison because they are Irish and because they have resisted British violence against their communities. Practically all the Irish organisations in Britain support the six demands and it is time to take the campaign into the wider labour movement to protest at the shameful treatment of our working class sisters and brothers in prison in Ireland and Britain. Britain's inhuman treatment of Irish political prisoners must be exposed now. The campaign needs your support. Contact them at Campaign for Lifers, 5-7 Conway Mill, Conway Street, Belfast.

**Padraig McRannall, Haringey IBRG**



# Women of Ireland: Eva Gore-Booth

**Bernadette Hyland** describes the life of an Irishwoman who spent many years working for women's rights in England

Two sisters born in the same place, of the same background, class and upbringing. How is it that they can be so close and yet politically so separate?

This is the story of one of the sisters, Eva Gore-Booth, the younger sister of Constance Markievicz. Many books and articles have been written about Constance as a soldier, prisoner, first woman MP and Minister in the first Dáil Éireann. Little has been written of her sister, Eva, who left Ireland in the 1890's to live in Manchester and play an important role in the suffrage and labour movement in the North-West of England.

Both Eva and Con were involved in political movements but, although very close as sisters, they took different paths to achieve what they saw as important liberation struggles: Con in terms of her country, Eva in terms of women.

Con and Eva were born in Lissadel in Co. Sligo. They came from a well-off landowning family and their father is said to have given free food to the poor during the 1870's and 1880's.

Eva was a timid child born at Lissadel on 22nd May 1870. Lissadel is a beautiful and romantic part of Ireland surrounded by mountains and sea and it was here that she absorbed the material for many of her poems.

Eva and Con lived the very typical lifestyle of country gentry. They rode and walked, read and wrote poetry and Eva read English and German literature. Many of these activities she shared with Con and later in life reminisced about the beauty of their life together in Lissadel.

Eva travelled to the Caribbean and America with her father when she was 24 years old. She visited Europe to attend music festivals, art galleries and plays. She was always a delicate person and had to convalesce in the Mediterranean.

One of Eva's greatest passions was writing poetry and in 1897 she had her first book of poems published by Langmen's, Green and Co. In Ireland at this time there was a Celtic literary revival and her poetry was commended by key persons in this movement such as Yeats and A.E. Russell. She used her poetry to express her strong feelings about religion and mysticism.

1896 was a very important year for Eva because it was the year she met Esther Roper who became a lifelong companion and friend. She met Esther in Bordighere whilst convalescing and the months they spent together cemented a friendship for life.

Esther was a graduate from Owen's College and was living in Manchester. She

was involved in the campaign for votes for women. Eva and Con started a Sligo Suffrage Society in 1896 and, although little is known about this part of her life, it is logical to come to the conclusion that meeting Esther inspired Eva to throw herself completely into the suffrage movement.

The Gore-Booths had owned land in Salford near Manchester for years and in 1896 Eva moved to the north west and never returned to live permanently in Ireland.

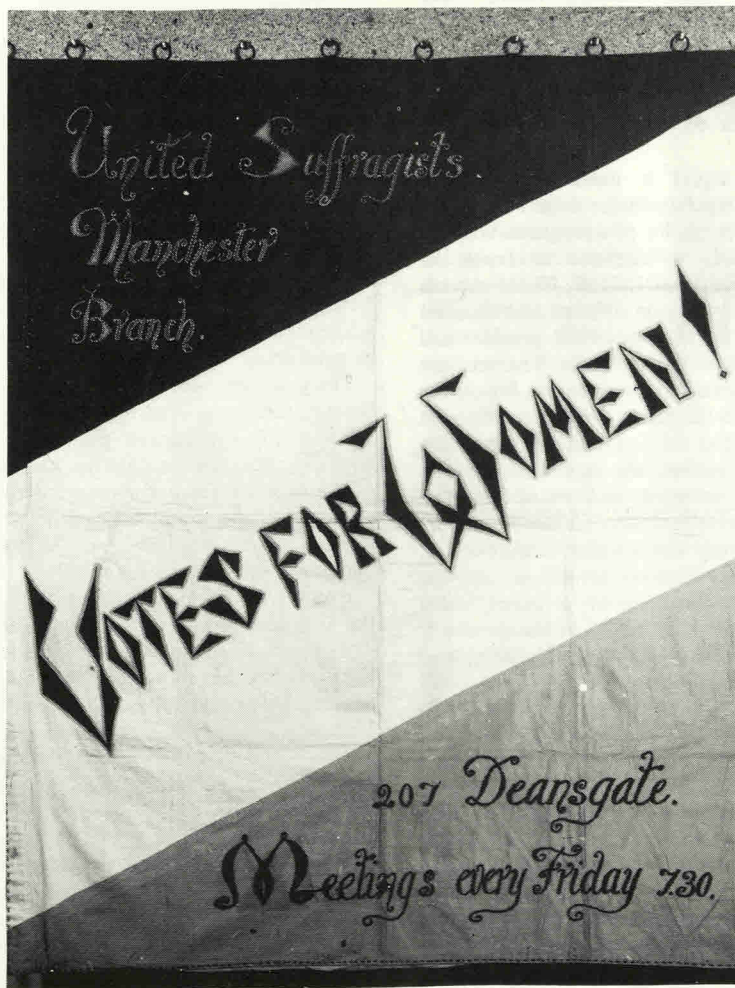
The north west at this time was characterised by its cotton industry. The majority of its workers were women working as cotton operatives and in many families they were the only adults bringing in a wage. Many of these women were active in the trade union movement campaigning for equal pay and votes for women.

The Trades Council tried to organise women into unions without success. Men in unions were hostile to women joining and it was recognised that what was needed were separate unions for women. In 1895 a group of women and men including Esther Roper decided to set up a Women's Trade Union Council for the Manchester and Salford area. Sara Welsh (later Dickenson), a working-class woman, was appointed as a full-time organiser and later, in 1900, was joined by Eva Gore-Booth. Sara Dickenson later wrote of Eva; "She is remembered by thousands of working women in Manchester for her untiring efforts".

The Women's Trade Union Council was involved in organising women into unions in trades such as capmaking and tailoring. At one point Eva was joined by Con in campaigning for the rights of barmaids. Trade unions were very important to women in raising the very meagre wages they were paid.

Eva was a delegate on the Manchester Education Committee and realised the importance of education to the lives of women. The lives of Lancashire women must have been in stark contrast to the privileged background that Eva came from. She was involved in the Ancoats Brotherhood (!) taking reading classes and trying to put over her great love of poetry. Eva started a women's drama group and one of the women involved, a machinist, said "We were rough ... and (Eva) showed such an understanding sympathy that we came away feeling that we had a real friend".

The link between votes for women and women's role in the labour market was recognised by women such as Esther Roper. 1901 saw the involvement of the Pankhursts in the Manchester Women's Suffrage Society. Eva and Esther with local women such as Sara Reddish campaigned throughout the north west to raise the issue of votes for women. They collected sixty-seven thousand signatures of textile workers on a petition demanding the vote for women. This petition was handed in at the House of Commons and signified the link between women as workers and women as citizens.



Banner of Manchester Suffragists Photo by courtesy of Manchester Public Libraries





Jersey Dwellings Photo by courtesy of Manchester Public Libraries

One of Eva's poems, *The Street Orator*, captured the essence of her life during this period:

At Clitheroe from the Market Square  
I saw rose lit the mountains gleam  
I stood before the people there  
And spake as in a dream.

Their strategy was to support candidates who would take up the issue in Parliament and they set up campaigning bodies such as the Lancashire and Cheshire Women Textile and Other Workers Representation Committee.

In the Women's Trades Council the issue of votes for women caused a split leading to the formation of the Manchester and Salford Women's Trades and Labour Council. Eva and Sara Dickenson were elected joint secretaries. The next ten years were spent speaking at public meetings, writing articles and lobbying MPs and ministers. Unfortunately there are no records in existence of this organisation.

Eva started a newspaper, *The Women's Labour News*, to spread further the arguments for the political and economic rights of women and for the "uplifting of those who suffer most under the present political and industrial system".

By 1913 Eva's health was breaking down

and the industrial air of Lancashire made it impossible for her to stay there. With Esther, she therefore moved south.

The outbreak of war in 1914 led to Eva's involvement with the Women's Peace Crusade. Eva campaigned on behalf of conscientious objectors at meetings and supported them at tribunals and courts martial.

Constance's involvement in the Easter Rising of 1916 highlighted the differences between the two sisters. Constance believed in the necessity of armed struggle while Eva opposed any kind of war. Throughout her writing, though, Eva supported the ideal of a free Ireland and of justice for Irish people. Eva supported Constance throughout her prison life and campaigned in England to stop the executions of Connolly and his comrades.

The mixed feelings Eva had about the Rebellion were expressed in her poetry. She had great respect for Constance and for James Connolly and in her poem *Easter Week* she explained her feelings:

Grief for the noble deed  
Of one who did not share their strife  
Yet felt the broken glory of their state  
Ribbon with gold the rags of this our life.

Her poetry showed her sympathy with Con's aims and with many people involved in the Rising and its aftermath such as Pearse,

Roger Casement, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and so on. Esther Roper says in her biography of Eva that the executions of the leaders of 1916 affected her so much that she was never the same afterwards.

Whilst working in the Women's Peace Crusade and supporting conscientious objectors Eva also gave support to Irish men and women who were imprisoned because of their activities in the Easter Rising.

Eva died in 1926, having lived to see part of her objectives met when women over thirty were given the vote in 1918. She campaigned until her death for the rights of women workers whilst producing poems and plays expressing her thoughts on many issues including animal rights and prison reform as well as Christian mysticism.

Like many women of this period there has been little written on her life. In this article I have pieced together some of the few existing sources.

The life of Eva Gore-Booth is important because of the issues for which she fought: the rights of all women to decent wages and equality; the importance of women organising separately whilst participating in a mass movement; her love of Ireland and the freedom of its people.



# The Banned Community

On the 19th October, the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, announced a broadcasting ban on Sinn Féin, Republican Sinn Féin, the UDA and proscribed organisations. The ban prohibited the broadcasting of speech by members or supporters of these organisations and anything which could be interpreted as support for these organisations. In its attempt to silence the elected representatives of the nationalist community in the six counties, the government has revealed the blatant hypocrisy of its stance on freedom of speech and democracy.

On 3rd December, 1988, the Andersontown News held a conference on the ban. Putting the new ban in the context of the experience of the nationalist community over the years, **Gearóid Ó Caireallain** gave the following address to the conference:



Douglas Hurd - and the press

“When the broadcasting ban was first announced a moderate sigh of disapproval was to be heard from within the media. Not too much, of course; journalists working on radio and television in Ireland and Britain are well aware of the price of dissent. One woman had already lost her job, TV programmes had been taken off the air, offices and homes raided, and all that before the Hurd decree.

But the plain injustice of the latest set of repressive laws was a bit much—too close for comfort to the censorship in South Africa that journalists all over the world had most

vociferously opposed, too obviously an attack on the basic rights of a free press and on the people’s right to know. The journalistic fraternity considered that they must do something. So a ‘health warning’ was announced in advance of censored reports: “because of Government restrictions we are unable to bring you ...”. When a member of a banned group or Sinn Féin was to be interviewed the picture was frozen just as he or she was on the point of speaking, the words to be said were written up in full on the screen and the broadcaster spoke the text. Word for word. The result of this anti-

ensorship device was that the Sinn Féin point of view was put across distinctly, was more noticeable because it was preceded by the announcement of intent and, to cap it all, the statement was actually written up so that the hard of hearing could get the full benefit as well. I said to myself ‘they’ll all be wanting banned after this.’

It didn’t last, of course. Maybe it was just too cumbersome. Editors stopped sending expensive camera teams out to film the Banned, the sub-titles were dropped and the health warnings forgotten. Now the accepted wisdom is that it is better just to pretend that no other opinion exists except those which have governmental approval to exist. It’s more trouble than it’s worth to try to represent on TV and radio the ideas and reactions and words of people and representatives that the government has decided are no longer deserving cases. The rule of thumb is: silence is golden and better just keep the head down. That is why we are here today.

I wasn’t particularly surprised when the British government announced their censorship package. Dublin had had it for years anyway and what was one more snipe at freedom, civil rights and democracy from those who are pastmasters in the craft? And it was nothing new to me for, as an Irish speaker, I have been on the receiving end of media censorship for as long as there has been a media. Many people still think that the Irish language revival in Belfast and the Six Counties started in 1981 after the hunger strikes. But you would have to go back ten years before that to the foundation of the Bunscoil at Shaws Road. It was ten years before that again that the Shaws Road Irish language colony was planned. It was in the forties that Cumann Chluain Árd moved to its present site in Hawthorn Street. The thirties had Gluin na Buaidhe, in the twenties the Árdscóil was set up in Divis Street ... Lift that book, *I mBeal Feirste Cois Cuain*, and you will discover that the Irish language has been spoken, developed and protected in Belfast for hundreds of years.

There was an Irish speaking community alive and kicking in the north of Ireland



before the arrival of television, radio or, indeed, newspapers. But, as the various branches of the media came about, each one more powerful than the one that went before, Irish was nowhere to be seen or heard. Maybe we didn't look upon ourselves as a language community, a people with their own language and entitled to services in that language. The sense of community has certainly come about in recent years, especially with the foundation of the Shaws Road community and school. But even if Irish speakers didn't recognise themselves as a community that doesn't mean to say that they were not one. As far back as the time of Roibeard Mac Adhaimh in the eighteenth century efforts were being made to develop the Irish speaking people as a community. Had they got their civil rights from the media of the time, who can say how far advanced the community would have been by the time of the media boom of this century. But Irish as a community language was kept out of the newspapers. Throughout this century there has been constant and growing interest in the learning and use of Irish as a community language yet even today there is little evidence of this in the national newspapers. At best you get a column or two per week—in the majority, faic.

When the radio days of the twenties arrived, then those of television in the fifties the Irish language revivalist may have been forgiven for thinking their day had come. These are the perfect media for language, depending as they do on the tongue and the ears and the eyes. And, to be fair to RTE, the early days of state radio did contain a high proportion of Irish. The importance of radio was to be proved once and for all later when Radio na Gaeltachta was set up. RnaG is now the very backbone of the Gaeltacht communities throughout the country. Yet, until 1981, the BBC had not broadcast one single word of Irish for the Irish speaking community in the North. Now they produce fifteen tiny minutes of radio in Irish per night. Except in the summer!

To this day there has never been a television programme on either the BBC or UTV in Irish and, of course, Downtown are the

same. There are no plans for TV broadcasting in Irish to begin. Ever. Not only are spokespeople of this particular community banned but the community itself is banned. The very language is censored. The other night on a TV programme announcing forthcoming events, the announcer referred to a social being run in aid of Bunscoil Gaelscoil na bhFal. Except that she called it "the Irish language primary school on the Falls Road". She couldn't even say three words in the banned language.

Yet, although the language has suffered this long-running ban, this permanent state of censorship, the community has not been left dumb. It was in Belfast that the language was first set to print. In McAdam's time it was the dream of the Irish activists and enthusiasts to establish a monthly publication to serve the needs of their community. Through the years small magazines and papers, pamphlets and publications have appeared regularly and irregularly. An alternative media which, if they were small and sometimes amateurish in comparison with the powerful English language counterparts, if they were denied the mass circulation network, if they did not have much money behind them, at least had spirit and vitality.

Today, of course, the censorship is all the greater because the media is itself bigger and more powerful. Irish is denied access to an extent never before considered possible. Yet opportunities for the Irish language exist today that never did before. Newspaper and magazine publication is easier and cheaper than ever before. We have our own daily newspaper, our own radio station and, if neither of them are yet as good as we would like them to be, at least they are there to be developed. And in these times the magical mystery of television is gone. The necessary equipment is available and not as costly as is thought. In Italy and other European countries small television broadcasting companies already flourish. We are at present on the threshold of broadcasting de-regulation in this part of the world and, for the Irish language that simply means time to get in on the TV explosion or be cast aside, overpowered. I believe that the Irish speaking

community may well be able to remove the ban on their language and set Irish free.

But isn't there a lesson there for the wider community, the nationalist community that is under attack from the British government's broadcasting ban? As far as I am concerned, this ban is not aimed at any particular political party, but at the whole of the nationalist community. We are to be silenced, ignored, denied access. But we are not without power. We spend money—that is power; we are talented and able and that is power, too.

If we are to be denied access to BBC and UTV why should the nationalist community not follow the example of the Irish speaking community and set about creating their own media? There are radio stations all over the country; why should there not be one here? I know I would listen to a radio station if it had the likes of Bernadette McAliskey, Nell McCafferty and Eamonn McCann gracing the airwaves. I am sure you would, too. And I bet that were the McCanns, McAliskeys and McCaffertys of this world to be heard on a new radio station it would not be too long before the bosses at the BBC were down on both knees begging Margaret Thatcher to scrap her ban—for who would ever listen to Talkback if it didn't have the services of today's speakers and others to keep things rolling?

I am not suggesting that the broadcasting ban should not be fought. It should. And it should be beaten because at the end of the day the BBC and UTV and Downtown radio depend on our money to exist. But what better weapon with which to fight the ban than to create an effective and attractive media of our own. It has happened before. About twenty years ago another group of people feeling the weight of British oppression around them started a weekly newspaper as a community service. Today nothing unites the people of West Belfast more than the *Andersontown News*.

And it is to the *Andersontown News* that I would like to address my final words and thank them for organising this forum and for giving me the opportunity to speak. Go raibh maith agaibh."



Nell McCafferty



Bernadette McAliskey

Photo: T.O.M.



# Mental Health and the Irish Community

Here we give the second and concluding part of Dr. Máire O'Shea's analysis of the reasons for the poor mental health of the Irish in Britain

Since the establishment of a neo-colonialist state in the twenty six counties of Ireland in 1922 and of a colonial statelet in the six north eastern counties, mass emigration to America and, after the introduction in the thirties of immigration controls in the US, to Britain has continued. This has left native middle-class governments free to collaborate with the continued British military occupation of the six counties and the repression of that part of the nationalist majority imprisoned in the artificial apartheid statelet. Contrary to the theory of selective emigration, emigration to Britain from Ireland in the forties and fifties was basically a mass response to chronic mass unemployment.

In the sixties and seventies limited industrial development was providing jobs for those who remained in Ireland and emigration was reduced to a trickle. There was also a snowball effect in that the depopulation of the countryside resulting from the neo-colonialist economy had helped to drive the young away due to lack of social life and had given the traditional killjoy undisputed sway. Irish history has been revised to sanitise British imperialism and devalue the hundreds of years of struggle against it. Struggle for a united independent Ireland taking place in the six counties is criminalised in the media and excluded from RTE and credence is given to the idea that there is no option for the economy other than dependence on Britain. The youth cannot take pride in an allegedly sovereign state which extradites freedom fighters under the title of 'terrorist' to the jurisdiction of the imperial power. Those driven out of the occupied counties by naked repression and discrimination in jobs and housing have abandoned hope of succour from the Dublin government.

The higher proportion of women emigrating can be understood when it is considered that, traditionally in rural Ireland women grew old before their time due to constant childbearing and bad midwifery, the expectation of losing the children through emigration, lack of escape routes from loveless marriages and lack of social life. They were expected to sacrifice uncomplainingly and to be the guardians of catholic morality. Until 1974 those working in the public services were forced to resign on marriage.

Irish emigrants have arrived in Britain crippled by the anti-Irish racism internalised over generations and disillusioned with native governments which failed to deliver the promised land for which their forbears had suffered and died. No longer seeing a visible British presence in the twenty six counties, they do not blame British colonialism, only the inferiority of themselves and the native governments. Expecting to enjoy the equal opportunities promised by the Labour government which came to power in 1945, most are offered only the jobs too hard or badly paid for the British—navvying,

building, catering and nursing.

If they tried to enter a field in which there was competition from the British they were faced with notices proclaiming "No Irish need apply". The same notices were encountered outside respectable lodgings. Thousands of building workers found themselves in cold, overcrowded, dreary lodging houses from which they could only escape to the warmth and familiar company of the pub where they spent the money they had hoped to save to buy a farm or a small shop in Ireland. Many of these, still single, are now unemployed or retired and trapped in the same dreary lodgings and are depressed or are alcoholics being admitted to mental hospitals for drying out.

Even those who are successful are often forced to give up their dream of going home because their children have put down roots here. Poor families could not afford to go home on holiday. Many families stopped going when they began to feel alienated from the younger generation who saw them as foreigners. Many of their children have lost their Irish identities. Some who took jobs at home in the boom years of the seventies were forced to return to Britain when the boom disappeared.

For Irish emigrants the choice has been between ghettoisation and assimilation. Many have sought security in the song and dance and the 'crack' in the pubs, clubs, dance halls, GAA clubs and churches. Here they could preserve their cultural identity at the expense of accepting poor housing and the decaying environment. Ironically, nowadays there is more Irish cultural activity in London than in Dublin. Within these environments, one does not have to pretend illusions about authority or respect for the law or keep 'a stiff upper lip'. Visiting is informal and new arrivals from Ireland are put up as a matter of course.

But here people tend to cling to traditional values now largely outmoded in Ireland. But while many have been rewarded with moderate success very few have penetrated the top echelons reserved for the British elite except, perhaps, in the entertainment industry where they can capitalise on the stereotype of the romancer or the clown. Elsewhere they pay a heavy price, settling for the emotionally impoverished nuclear family and are deprived of clan loyalties, warm neighbourliness, the enjoyment of words for their own sake and the imagination which leads to exaggeration for the sake of a good story. They live in fear of their Irishness being exposed in front of British colleagues. If they are not in a position to take their frustration out on people below them in a hierarchy, they turn the anger in on themselves and become depressed or the pressure of maintenance of a false identity leads to a total break from reality and schizophrenic breakdown.

The second generation, now comprising the majority of the Irish in Britain, have their

own particular psychological problems. Many, cut off from their Irish heritage by assimilated parents cannot identify with the indigenous younger generation and feel alienated from British society. Others have rejected the traditional values of their parents and the sexual restrictions imposed and seek a new identity. Experiencing identity, sexual and religious conflicts and guilt feelings about disloyalty to their parents as ideas of being possessed by the devil or as voices arguing in their heads, they may find themselves admitted to a psychiatric hospital with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

Since the outbreak of the colonial war in the six north eastern counties of Ireland in 1971 and the resulting resurgence of anti-Irish racism, the Irish in Britain have been subject to increasing pressures. The sight on TV of thousands of nationalist people marching for civil rights in Derry and being viciously attacked by British security forces allowed them to rediscover their pride in their heritage of resistance and release the anger pent up for years. Many of the second generation began to discover an Irish identity. The anger exploded onto the streets of London in mass protest marches against internment culminating in the largest demonstration seen in London for many years.

But the PTA, introduced in 1974, allegedly to prevent further atrocities like the Birmingham pub bombings by criminalising the entire Irish community, effectively drove them off the streets. Protest was silenced, forcing people to internalise their anger again, making them depressed. The old internalised anti-Irish racism resurfaced making many wary of articulating their Irishness. As thousands have been stopped at ports for questioning, many have been afraid to travel home.

Many innocent Irish people have been dragged from their homes and detained in police stations incommunicado to be interrogated, often brutally about their friends and legitimate political activities. They have suffered loss of jobs, hostility from British neighbours or marital discord due to the spouse's suspicion that the arrested person might be to blame due to political involvement. Anxiety states, depression or paranoid states have taken their toll of the victims and there have been suicides.

A number of Irish people detained under the PTA in conditions calculated to force them to sign incriminating statements have been incorrectly convicted for major terrorist activities; these people were guilty only of being Irish and, sometimes, of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The Irish are now convinced that there can be no justice for them in Britain and have become more alienated from British society. They expect no support from British politicians. Indeed very few bother to see that they are on the electoral register. There is a fear of talking freely to each other in pubs in case



angry or threatening talk of vengeful fantasies may be used against them. They have difficulty in making demands on welfare services because of the racism of some DHSS or Social Services staff. Nor can they make demands on the Irish Embassy which does not support them against institutionalised racism and disclaims responsibility for their welfare.

There can be no doubt that Irish people believe that most British professional mental health workers are at best unable to understand their idiom, their feelings, their family relationships or their history and at worst patronising, interfering or blatantly punitive. If they have had previous contact, they may already have experienced frank misdiagnosis. A case which springs to my mind is that of a Belfast man who was labelled paranoid schizophrenic when he recounted to a British psychiatrist his experiences of harassment by the army and police in Belfast.

I have known women who have talked of seeing visions of the blessed virgin or have insisted that they have seen statues moving to be labelled schizophrenic and a normally discursive and rather boastful Irishman who tells tall stories and makes associations foreign to the psychiatrist can find himself diagnosed manic depressive. On the other

hand, Irish people have been known to complain of hallucinations to avoid having to discuss marital or sexual problems. There is a reluctance to admitting to ill-treatment at home in Ireland because of fear of a racist response. It is no wonder that Irish people are considered to be particularly averse to psychotherapy.

It must be clear that there is an urgent need to provide appropriate help for the vast numbers of Irish people who are psychologically vulnerable and beginning to suffer disability and for those who, having already broken down, have been mistreated or neglected. The lack of interest on the part of the statutory services leaves it up to the Irish community itself to meet the need.

In the first place, research with a cultural and political dimension is required to convince the professionals that the Irish in Britain have special problems specific to their immigrant status. The basis of a positive promotion of mental health will be the restoration of the continuity of our cultural and political heritage by popularising the learning and speaking of the national language, the establishment of Irish history groups and securing an Irish input into the teaching of history in schools, asserting the right of the Irish in Britain as part of the Irish nation, to

make demands on the Irish as well as the British government and organising the Irish to actively resist personal and institutionalised racism. These are already the aims of the IBRG.

Eventual provision for vulnerable groups will include housing (some sheltered), youth clubs, clubs for the elderly and for women and self help counselling groups. Drop-in centres for those already suffering disability could serve two purposes; firstly to provide crisis therapy and to point clients to facilities for ongoing treatment and, secondly to research the needs.

There must be an Irish input into the training of psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists and psychiatric nurses. Irish professionals should be recruited to advise their own professional colleagues and, ideally, where there is a high proportion of Irish in the population, an equal proportion of Irish professionals should be employed to work with Irish clients.

A consumer input into decision making is crucial. The Irish Mental Health Forum, set up as a result of the national IBRG conference on the mental health of the Irish, is currently exploring these areas and aims to provide space for members to look at their own problems of being Irish in Britain.

## The songs speak

The songs in any culture are more than artistic works alone; they may also be historical records, political propaganda (in the non-pejorative sense of the word) and, above all else, social documents. This is not so much in that they document social conditions—which they often do—but in that they record ideas and trends of thought current in the whole, or part of, society during the lifetimes of their authors. In the tens of thousands of Irish songs which are available there are expressed a wealth of ideas and values. Here it is only possible to look at some of them.

'Love between a woman and a man should have nothing to do with money and to marry without love is wrong' are ideas which in various forms are to be found in numerous songs. In *Step It Out, Mary*, for example, Mary is asked by her father to entertain a country gentleman, that he may be encouraged to marry her. The gentleman arrives and offers Mary "wealth beyond compare" but she rejects him and finally, in her desperation to avoid a loveless marriage, drowns herself.

Such ideas are also to be found in *Raggle-Taggle Gypsy* and in similar songs across Europe as, for example, in the English song about the *Gypsy Rover* who "whistled and sang 'til the green hills rang and won the heart of the lady".

We tend quite often today to be shocked by stories of arranged marriages. We forget that such marriages were the rule in feudal times—particularly among the higher classes—and were common, too, in modern times in rural society where feudal customs and relations persisted for longer. The British Royal family's marriages could be said to be still very much arranged and, similarly, those of the daughters and sons of big corporations whose marriages often seem to be more of a

corporate merger than anything else.

These feudal customs affected men as well as women but, whereas it was acceptable for the 'gentleman' to wed Mary and 'marry down', it was less so for a woman who was expected to marry 'across' or 'up'. In the song *Bunclody*, the landless man is rejected by the woman he loves "for she has a freehold and I have no land". The unfortunate youth ends up emigrating to America.

Another theme in love songs is that love itself is not above politics. This is very explicit in *Jackets Green* when the woman says: "Oh, had you come in England's red to make me England's queen, I'd have roamed the high green hills instead for the sake of my Irish green." She also says that she "loved him for himself alone and the colour bright he bore" and ends "Irish maids love none but those who wear the Irish green."

Like attitudes to women, attitudes to Travellers in Irish songs are an interesting subject for study. In *The Travelling People* and in *The Life of a Rover* the sense is of regret for the passing of a way of life. In *Danny Farrell* by Pete St. John, there is also the sense of things gone—"mending pots and kettles is a trade lost in the past", but also a condemnation of various authorities' attitudes to Travellers, from the school to the dole office: "Ther's no handouts here for tinkers" was his answer when he asked. All such 'Traveller songs' are remarkable in that they embody sentiments which would seem to belong more to the authors (and perhaps the Travellers, too) than to the majority of the Irish population. Perhaps a closer approximation of the latter's attitude can be found in *Sullivan's John* which seems to be about a farmer's son who ran away from home with a Traveller woman. The song ends with him

saying: "Bad luck to the day that I went away for to join with a tinker's clan."

The idea that culture is not divorced from politics is rarely verbalised in Irish song—perhaps because the culture itself is so steeped in overt politics. But it is given expression in Thomas Moore's *Minstrel Boy* where "the minstrel boy to the war has gone ... His father's sword he has girded on and his wild harp slung behind him". Later:

"The minstrel fell but the foeman's chains could not bring his proud soul under.  
The harp he loved ne'er spoke again for he tore its chords asunder.  
And said 'no chains shall sully thee,  
thou soul of love and bravery,  
Thy songs were made for the pure and free,  
thy shall never sound in slavery.'"

Another idea rarely expressed, perhaps surprisingly so, is that the children of Irish emigrants have a responsibility to their ancestral homeland. It is, however, to be found in *Skibereen*. The son asks the father what drove him from Ireland and the father catalogues the disasters—crop blight, high rent and taxes and the failure to pay them, eviction, the death of his wife—which resulted in his emigration with his young son. After hearing all this, the son proclaims:

Oh, father dear, the day will come  
when in answer to the call,  
Each Irishman, with feelings high  
will rally, one and all.  
I'll be the man to lead the van  
beneath the flag of green  
And, loud and high, we'll raise the cry:  
'Revenge for Skibereen!'

**Diarmuid Breatnach** Lewisham IBRG



# Irish youth in Britain: their rights to their roots

Many Irish children raised in Britain are pointed towards their roots by their parents. They hear Irish accents and music at home, they hear talk of Irish relatives who sometimes visit and, if their parents can afford it, they take an annual holiday in Ireland every summer. In addition, they may well go to Irish dancing or music classes. Yet, by the time they're 14 (or even younger) many lose their ties with their roots.

Part of the reason may be that the Irish 'environment' which has been created is one primarily aimed at children; as they move into the phase between childhood and adulthood, there tends to be very little to help them make the transition and yet remain close to their roots.

At that age, the company and opinions of their peers become increasingly important, accompanied by a horror of social embarrassment. A young person who proclaims their Irishness may well face ridicule (and perhaps even hostility) and such a declaration is hardly likely to be the password to the desired new circle of friends.

In the face of the loss of many of our next generation, there are those who would argue that a useful intervention can be made by Irish-oriented youth work.

The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) makes youth-work provision for young people aged from five to twenty-one but with the cuts currently being made there is increasing pressure to ignore the age-range five to twelve. This is a pity as not only can this be useful work in its own right (in a non-school environment), but it can also serve as a valuable introduction to the youth work of the adolescent years.

But if it's in the adolescent years that the greatest loss of our youth occurs, it may follow that the most crucial youthwork to undertake with Irish youth is in the twelve to twenty-one age span. This is sometimes further subdivided into 'Intermediates' (12-15/16) and 'Seniors' (15/16-21).

It is worth noting at this point that the term 'youth' is often misconceived as applying only to males and this is not a mistake that

youthworkers should make. Attendance at mixed youthclubs tends to be dominated by boys and young men and some workers have tried to overcome this by having evenings for girls and young women only. It is true, however, that this work is often marginalised and in a busy programme of youthwork evenings the girls/young women are often allocated the less attractive Friday evening. The underlying premise that girls will become more confident through exclusive provision has also been questioned, since the rate of reintegration is often not good. However, since boys/young men continue to outnumber them at youthwork facilities by at least two to one a continuous effort is required to redress the balance.

It is worth noting also that the ILEA estimates that only about a third of the available youth (males?) are regular attenders at youth clubs or projects, another third have attended at some time or attend occasionally and about a third never attend. It may be that youthwork cannot appeal to all our youth even if it is specifically aimed at them.

Irish-oriented youthwork in Britain is in the realms of pioneering; very little has been done and even less has been documented. As we know, the Irish dimension is rarely acknowledged in multi-racial or anti-racist work. The ILEA has at this point only one full-time worker whose specific brief is to work with Irish youth. She is based in Camden and, not unnaturally, feels somewhat overwhelmed by the scope of her work and the scarcity of resources with which to tackle it. Recently, the Irish Youthworkers' Group was formed by interested ILEA youthworkers and, among their other initiatives, they have organised two training days for ILEA youthworkers. Working largely voluntarily, they also face difficulties in their mammoth task.

Also in existence is the Action Group for Irish Youth which has been involved in organising a festival along with conferences on the needs of Irish youth. With members of a wide spectrum of political opinion, they tend to concentrate on the needs of the massive influx of Irish-born youth in the present wave

of Irish emigration. This concern seems also to dominate to some extent the agenda of the Irish Youthworkers' Group although one exception is the work being done at the Irish Women's Centre in Islington with young women of Irish parentage. The need for a response to the crisis of emigration seems to overwhelm systematic consideration of the specific needs of Irish young people reared in Britain—not to mention the need to do educational work about Ireland and the Irish among non-Irish youth. We do need to remember that youthwork is seen by the ILEA as being primarily educational, which is why youthwork in London has for many years been located within the brief of the ILEA rather than with any other agency.

Creative thinking and sensitive research among the young Irish reared in Britain would, no doubt, come up with a wide variety of ideas for inclusion in a youthwork programme; these might include such ideas as group trips to Ireland at one end of the scale and the opportunity merely to meet and socialise with other second-generation Irish youth from the local area at the other. The work needs to be done, written up, discussed, assessed and re-assessed before we can provide models of appropriate and useful work.

As we consider these problems and lobby the authorities for their resolution, we need to be aware that there many issues in Irish-oriented youthwork that frighten even well-intentioned youthworkers and there may be times when some Irish parents may not be supportive of the work. We also need to recognise that the official response to our community's needs is likely to decrease as the agencies concerned are squeezed ever more tightly financially. In ILEA's case, the authority is going to be abolished and it seems unlikely that the local boroughs will want—or be able—to take on that additional burden.

If we want to ensure that our children maintain their roots or, at least, ensure that whatever choices they make about their identity are as free as possible from pressures they cannot resist, we may in the end have to fall back on our traditional means of coping with our problems—we may have to do it ourselves.

**D. Breatnach, Lewisham IBRG.**

## Going the other way!

As the numbers of emigrants from Ireland to Britain reach crisis proportions, two of IBRG's members have taken it upon themselves to stem this tide. Kevin Campbell of Blackburn IBRG and Jim Corbett of Manchester IBRG have both upped their roots here and moved back to Ireland.

Jim, ex-Cisteoir (Treasurer) of Manchester IBRG, was born in Dublin but, like many others in the fifties, his family moved here to find jobs and permanent homes. Jim was brought up in London but came to Manchester to train as a social worker and lived here for many years with his partner, Ruth, and their three children. A keen interest and pride in Irish culture and heritage led to his involvement in Manchester IBRG. Jim was

particularly interested in the welfare of the Irish community and raised it at the highest level with Manchester Social Services Department.

Jim and Ruth decided to return to Ireland because they wanted their children to be brought up Irish and they felt that they would have a better life there. Jim now works as a social worker in Bray and the family have settled in quite quickly. They are realistic about things such as the high cost of living but feel that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and Jim's parents have now decided to join them there.

Kevin came to Blackburn to attend the local college. Originally from Belfast, he fitted in well to the Blackburn branch of IBRG and

was heavily involved in their social activities.

After finishing his course he decided to return to Ireland and, with other members of his family, buy a pub in a beautiful part of Donegal, Meenagh Cross near Dungloe. Kevin aims to extend the pub and build a shop on the premises. The pub is in a beautiful spot overlooking a bay and is a short walk from the beach. As it's the only pub for miles around Kevin has plenty of local trade and the tourists in the summer. At the weekend there is live Irish traditional music and Kevin will be pleased to see any IBRG members (or non-members!) who are in the area. Kevin's pub is 'The Crib', Meenagh Cross, Nr Dungloe, Donegal.



# Squatting – the only option?

For many homeless young Irish people in London there appears to be no other option

Everyone knew that the old ex-Sally Army building opposite Hackney Town Hall was occupied by the squatters whom the Council had just evicted in a blaze of publicity. One morning the building was suddenly sporting a green, white and orange tricolour. This personalised the issue for me so that I could no longer ignore the fact that young people were being evicted onto the street in the borough where I lived and worked. Any other flag I could probably have passed by pretending that the issue was 'none of my business'.

I knocked on the door. The first words I heard were designed to encourage me to go away but when I explained that I wanted to see if there was any way IBRG could give them support the door opened and four young men filed out. They were from different parts of Ireland. They had been in London for varying lengths of time. They had no work, they were having difficulty getting social security, they had no hot water, no cooking facilities and no furniture. Many of the windows were broken, the floors were covered in broken glass, they had had some of their few personal possessions stolen and they were concerned that they might be accused of the damage to the building which had been in this uninhabitable state before they moved in.

They'd been told that they had to have a fixed address in order to claim dole and that a squat address would not suffice, which is not true. They needed proof of identity; a

driver's licence or baptismal certificate was not good enough. The DHSS insisted on a birth certificate which a number of these young people did not have. They were fobbed off and given conflicting information and no money.

What they really wanted was work; for that and the freedom to be themselves without harassment they had left Ireland. They wore studded black leather jackets and their hair in various punk-style shapes and colours. This had led to harassment by the gardai in small town Ireland where they had found it impossible to get jobs. In London—famed for its liberal broadmindedness—where tourists would pay them to have their photographs taken, they were constantly being stopped and searched by police who assumed they were carrying drugs and abused them with anti-Irish racism. The job centre adviser told them they had no chance of getting work 'looking like that'. The local Black community with whom they felt that they had much in common regarded them with suspicion, presumably because the studs and leather were too reminiscent of National Front skinheads.

Discriminated against, misinformed by the dole office, harassed by the police, isolated from other young people, jobless and without the most basic amenities, they were daily expecting to be evicted again. All we could offer them was information on their rights to income support, housing benefit, etc, a copy of the Squatters' Handbook and an address to

which they could have mail sent. When I went back a few days later they were gone. Not until I met one of the young men in the street was I able to contact them again. They had moved into another vacant Council flat. As a Council employee I knew the pressures under which the Council were forced to operate but I could also see that for these young people it was a choice of a squat or the street.

Still they were living in the most basic conditions. At least the flat was undamaged but they had no light and no heating. They were afraid to remove the boarding from the windows because it made the squat more secure so the flat was dark even at midday. They were using candles to provide enough light to see by.

Even under these conditions they did not regret leaving Ireland. Here there was at least hope that things would get better. In Ireland such hope, for them, at least, did not exist. The only encouragement their homeland could give them was to leave. These young people are bright, determined, independent and optimistic. Ireland can ill afford to lose them. The saddest thing of all is that this is not an isolated group. All over London, thousands of young people just like them are struggling to build a decent life for themselves. Ireland has lost even more than they have.

Virginia Moyles Hackney IBRG

## Gloucester Irish Theatre Company

Many theatre companies from Ireland such as Druid and Charabanc tour England promoting contemporary and traditional Irish plays. In Britain, apart from the professional companies such as the Irish Company there is a dearth of both professional and semi-professional Irish theatre groups.

There has been a tradition in Britain in the past of local amateur dramatic companies which were based around parish halls and staged Irish plays for the Irish community. During the sixties this tradition died out and it is only recently that there have been encouraging signs that this interest in drama is going through a renaissance with groups such as the Gloucester Irish Theatre Company.

The Gloucester Irish Theatre Company was founded in 1986 by Seán O'Neill and several other like-minded people. One of their aims is, as Seán says: "to introduce people to Irish drama and to see an aspect of Irish culture that is not always there in the traditional Irish Festival." Drama has always been an important part of Irish life and Seán sees groups such as the Gloucester company having "a tremendous market for the rest of the country ... a market for putting on rural plays because people do relate to it".

Seán's public performances started in his childhood when he played in a pipe band. In later years he looked for a more creative outlet and joined one of the local youth theatre groups. Encouraged by the enthusiastic reception the theatre group received at a local Irish club to one of Brian Friel's plays, Seán sat down with other interested people and formed the Gloucester Irish Theatre Company.

The Company includes Irish born and second generation women and men, some of whom have had acting experience and many who, during the day, are housewives, building workers, students and so on. Rehearsals take place at night and at weekends. The Company puts on both traditional and contemporary plays including W.B. Yeats' *Cathleen Ní Houlihan*, Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen* and O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman* and are presently touring *Sive* by John B. Keane. The Company tours Irish clubs and centres around the country and have taken part in the Oxford Irish Festival and the Battersea and Wandsworth Irish Festival.

One of their aims is to encourage other people to form drama groups. The Company hopes that not only will they act as a catalyst

to other groups but that their work will promote Irish drama to the Irish community and to the wider community in Britain. As Seán says, groups such as the Gloucester Company and the discipline that is involved "not only encourages creativity in the actors but gives them qualities and skills which help them in their own lives".

Seán plays a major role in the Company, acting, directing and doing the publicity. He recently acted and directed himself in a one-man play about Patrick Kavanagh, the Irish poet. Now that the Gloucester Irish Theatre Company is established, Seán wants to get an Equity card and go into a full-time acting career. This grounding in Irish drama, though, he said, "will always help me to appreciate other people's cultures. The Irish culture is and always will be very important to me."

Seán is very willing to take enquiries from people who are interested in setting up a drama group. He is also available to do readings of Joyce with music and song as well as extracts from Flann O'Brien's work. He can be contacted at 32 Lonsdale Road, Bornwood, Gloucester GL2 0TA or on Glos 24358.

Bernadette Hyland Manchester IBRG



# Táin Bó Cuailnge

Na h-Éireannaigh a chuireann spéis sa teanga Chaistilise (nó Spáinnis) beidh gliondar ar a gcroí tar éis an nuafocht seo leanas a chloist-eáil (nó a léamh) uaim. Tá scéal Cú Chulainn ar fáil sa teanga sin: *El Perro del Ulster*, le J.M. Alvarez Florez agus Éamon Butterfield (Muchnik Editores, Barcelona; ní fios dom an praghas. Níl aithne agam ar cheactar acu. Níor léas an saothar. B'amhlaidh a chonaic mé an leabhar i gceann de na háiteanna i mBaile Átha Cliath a thatháiom, le staidéar a dhéanamh.

Is ait liom nach bhfuil an scéal sin ar fáil roimhe seo sa Chaistilís, ceann de mhórtéan-gacha an domhain. Is fada ó cuireadh cló air sa nGearmáinis agus tá clú agus cáil ar eagrán amháin díobh sin, eagrán Leipzig, a bhfuil réamhra ann le Kuno Meyer, saothar nár mhiste a aistriú go Gaeilge, mar scrúdaigh an scoláire mór seo an scéal sa chomhthéacs Ind-Eorpach. Ní dóigh liom gur aiféiseach dom a rá go bhfuil an tábhacht chéanna ag baint leis an scéal seo is a bhaineann le mórscéalta na Gréigise. eachtra Traí san áireamh.

Mar is eol dá lán, tá dealbh in Árd-Oifig an Phoist i mBaile Átha Cliath, Cú Chulainn ag saothrú a bháis. I gcumhne na laochra a thit ar son na h-Éireann i 1916 a rinneadh an dealbh sin agus go háirithe in ómós dóibh siúd arbh in Árd-Oifig an Phoist fód a mbáis.

Má chuirtear ceist ar Éireannaigh ar shráid-eanna naofa Bhaile Átha Cliath faoi Chú

Chulainn inniu is féidir a bheith réasúnta cinnte nach eol don bhformhór mórán faoi. Chuireas féin roinnt ceisteanna ar roinnt daoine, féachaint an mbeadh aon tuairim acu faoi, agus ní raibh. Bhí cuid díobh seo ag dul isteach in Árd-Oifig an Phoist gach lá, beagnach, agus ní raibh a fhios acu go raibh dealbh Chú Chulainn ann, fiú! An ar an gcóras scolaíochta sa tír seo atá an locht? D'fhéadfaí ag tosú a labhairt faoin Rúraíocht agus faoin bhFiannaíocht sa réamhscoil, fiú, ach scéalta beaga simplí a roghnú ar a bhfuil ar fáil sa litríocht, mar thosú ar an oideachas seo, oideachas faoinár ndúchas.

I leagan ar bith fágtha againn den Táin tá cur síos saibhir agus cumasach ar cheantracha áirithe na h-Éireann. Is féidir Méibh agus a harm a leanúint trasna na tíre go dtí an áit a bhfuair Setanta bocht bás ar ball. Cuid de logainmneacha na h-Éireann atá luaite sa Táin, táid beo i gconaf, mar atá Baile Átha Fhirdhia (*anglice*, Ardee).

Ach ní bhfaighfidh an turasóir leid dá laghad faoi sin uilig, agus é ar chuairt sa cheantar seo, go bhfuil sé in áit fhíor-stairiúil, gur seo láthair na Tána, ceann de na scéalta is mó i litríocht na hEorpa.

I gCo. Lú, an lá atá inniu ann, atá Baile Átha Fhirdhia agus sin Cúige Laighean, a deir tú, agus an ceart ar fad agat. Inniu, is lú ar fad Cúige Uladh ná mar a bhí sé 2,000 bliain ó shin. Tá sé soiléir a dhóithean ó fhoghraíocht

na logainmneacha go raibh Gaeilge Uladh dá labhairt go dtí an Tulca, ar a laghad. Tugtar faoi ndeara "Ballybock", leagan an "Bhearla" de "an Baile Bocht", in aice le Droim Chonrach.

Ach an amhlaidh a bhí cúlra stairiúil ag an Táin, ar chor ar bith? Is cinnte go bhfuil miotas mór de chuid an Ind-Eorpachais i bhfolach sa Táin, laoch mór, agus ainmhí, curtha chun bháis, mar íobairt, ar son an phobail. Ach tá an seans ann gur pósadh an miotas ar chuid den stair. Ceapann cuid de na scoláirí gur ar Theamhair a bhí ionsaí na gConnachtach dírithe, agus gur chúlaigh na hUltaigh de réir a chéile go dtí Eamhain Macha. Céard é a tharla don suíomh sin? Ar scrios na hUltaigh féin é chun nach dtitfeadh an áit naofa seo i lámhaibh na nGael (lucht Dáil Riada)?

Tá achainí agam. Is dócha go bhfuil cumann nó Club Éireannach i ngach baile mór de chuid na Bhreataine agus daoine ó cheantar na Tána ina mball de. D'fhéadfadh na cumainn sin scríobh chuig na nuachtáin áitiúla in Éireann agus fiafraí de na léitheoirí cén fáth nach bhfuil an Táin comóraithe i ngach baile atá luaite sa scéal, ní hamháin ar son na dturasóirí ach ar son na h-Éireannach féin. D'fhéadfadh daoine, freisin, brú a chur ar na húdaráis áitiúla chun sin a dhéanamh. Nó an amhlaidh a chuireann an Táin náire orainn?

**Deasún Breatnach**

## Activities in Bolton Branch

Bolton branch are presently involved in a wide range of activities. They have representation on the Ethnic Minorities Joint Consultative Council, are affiliated to the Bolton Council for Community Relations and hope to have a delegate on the executive committee next year.

The branch is currently organising a major input to the Multi-Cultural Festival planned for February 1989, with music and dance workshops, lectures, céilithe and a concert.

The branch has received a grant from Bolton Council to complete a photographic history of the Irish in Bolton to be displayed in the new Bolton Heritage Centre which is due to open in late 1990.

They are affiliated to the Bolton Area Resource Centre and take part in the steering committee of a community transport association.

The branch also has an Irish language class for beginners which has attracted 22 pupils of all ages and welcomes more. The class is held every Sunday evening at the Nightingale Inn, Lever Street, Bolton.

Céili dance classes are held every Tuesday evening at St. Edmund's Parish Hall, St Edmund Street, Bolton.

The branch's most ambitious project to date is the setting up of an Irish Community Care Group in conjunction with Bolton Area Resource Centre. A meeting to try to identify the needs of the Irish in Bolton is to be held on 19th January at Mount St. Joseph's School. The meeting will be addressed by Sister Roseleen, co-ordinator of Manchester Irish Community Care Group and, it is hoped, will devise a project to respond to the needs of Bolton's Irish community. Invitations are extended to representatives of the Social Services department, the Travellers' Association, St Vincent de Paul, Age Concern, Church groups, Irish organisations and Irish people employed in any of the caring organisations.

**Joe Mullarkey, Bolton branch**

## Comhbhrón

The IBRG extend deepest sympathy to the husband and family of the late Noreen Hill. Noreen's life remains an inspiration to the Irish in Britain. She was one of the many unsung heroes of the older generation who kept the torch of Irish culture and identity alive in difficult times. Her story is told in the recent book *Across the Water* and her words re-echo across time: "I'm proud of being Irish. I love Ireland ... my spirit is there." For Noreen being Irish in Britain meant standing up for the rights of her oppressed sisters and brothers. Like many of the more concerned of her generation, Noreen joined IBRG and helped create unity between the generations. Noreen not only passed on that love of freedom, that *tír grá*, but helped to lay some of the foundation stones from which generations yet unborn will benefit. We are sad at the loss of a courageous and outstanding woman but happy to have benefited from her energy and strength and we know that her spirit lives on in our community as we strive for equality, justice and fair play for all. We will not forget her.



# Help fight the PTA!

**In support of IBRG's campaign against the new, and permanent, Prevention of Terrorism Bill you are asked to tear out the letter below, fill in your address and the name of your MP, sign it and send it to your MP.**

..... MP,  
House of Commons, London SW1.

Dear .....,

I write to seek your support in opposing the new Prevention of Terrorism Bill. As you will know, the British government has recently been found guilty by the European Court of Human Rights for abusing Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The government's decision to derogate from the Convention on this point reveals its contempt for human rights. Over 6,500 innocent Irish people have been arrested under the existing Act for no reason other than their ethnic origin. Less than 2% of people arrested under the Act were ever convicted of any offence under the Act. In addition, over 300 Irish people have been deported to internal exile similar to that operated by the South African government.

The evidence available indicates that the PTA infringes many of the Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights: Article 5 on the right to liberty, Article 6 on the right to a fair hearing, Article 8 on respect for private and family life, Articles 10 and 11 on the freedom of expression and assembly, Article 13 on the right to a remedy to grievances within one's own country and Article 14 prohibiting discrimination in the protection of these rights on grounds of national origin.

This law is clearly racist and aimed at ordinary law abiding citizens. Existing laws already provided all the legislation necessary to imprison those involved in violent action against the state. Over 55,000 people are being stopped, searched and examined at points of entry to Britain each year. Of those arrested for up to seven days, 92.7% are arrested for the sole purpose of interrogation.

Brian Lenihan, the Irish Foreign Minister has stated in Dáil Éireann that "this Act is absolutely indefensible by reference to any national or international canon of law or to the Convention on Human Rights because of its discriminatory nature".

The NCCL states that "by giving the Home Secretary and the police powers which cannot be challenged in the courts, the PTA has destroyed at a stroke the edifice of safeguards built up in this country's legal system to protect the citizen against wrongful arrest, detention or conviction". The Guildford Four and the Maguire Family are clear examples of what the PTA can do to Irish people.

You will, no doubt, agree with me that this racist and discriminatory piece of legislation should be abolished immediately as no legitimate democracy would even consider legislating such abuses of human rights. As a constituent of yours, I would be grateful if you could let me know of your opposition to this Bill and to the harassment of members of an ethnic minority within your constituency.

Yours sincerely,

.....



# Reviews

## London Irish Writer

One of the newest Irish periodicals to be produced recently is the *London Irish Writer*. It meets a need which has long existed for a magazine which will include Irish articles, short stories and poetry as well as reviews of current literary, dramatic and artistic works and productions.

One point of interest is an Irish language article written by Seoirse Ó Broin—interesting for the style and content of the story as well as for the inclusion of an article in Gaelic in the very first issue; one hopes that this is evidence of a welcome policy towards the language.

I'm told that the editors of the *London Irish Writer* (why 'London', for heaven's sake?) are interested in contributions in all their categories of writing, but particularly in all Irish language writing and in English language poetry. They are also eager for help with distribution.

On this showing they deserve to be supported and each issue is very reasonable at 50p. Go n-éirí go maith leo.

## I Bhfus

Another newcomer to the magazine world is *I Bhfus*, an all-Irish language publication, the first issue of which came out recently. It doesn't say how often it will appear—the first issue is dated 'Samhradh (summer) 1988'.

It contains poems by Éamonn Ó Fionnagáin, articles by Tomás Millar, Éamon

MacSéafráigh and Pádraig Ó Conchiúir, as well as stories by Mairéad Barnes and Seoirse Ó Broin. The piece which most affected me, however, was the one by Míchéal Ó Fionnagáin. Discussing the language movement today, he argues forcefully that unless the decline of the Gaeltachtanna can be halted, the language is doomed. It doesn't really matter, he says bluntly, how many people are learning it here and there—what counts is how many people use it at home with their children.

The pieces in this issue were written as part of the Irish language course founded by the North London Polytechnic and that is also its contact address: I Bhfus, c/o Mary Hickman, Irish Studies Centre, Polytechnic of North London, Marlborough Building, Holloway Road, London, N17.

The layout is reasonable and, at 50p, it's good value—all in all a welcome new publication.

## Doodlebug

The final magazine being reviewed here is yet another newcomer. *Doodlebug* is an "anti-imperialist comic" magazine. It includes a couple of cartoons by the wonderful 'Cormac' but the quality of some of the other cartoons tends to vary. It is, however, only the first issue and anti-imperialist magazines are badly needed.

We wish it well and look forward to the next issue. The editors welcome contributions, comments or criticisms and they can be reached at: The Doodlebug, c/o Conway Street, Belfast, BT12, Ireland. The issue of *Doodlebug* to hand is unpriced.

## Plays

Two new plays which are exceptionally welcome are *Tiocfaidh Ár Lá* and *Ann Devlin* by John Maharg. The first is a one act play about the hunger strikers. In the main it consists of a dialogue between two H-Block prisoners at their respective windows. As such, it has virtually no movement but there is the innovation of a sort of Greek chorus with which one of the prisoners interacts.

*Ann Devlin* is a more conventionally staged drama around the torture of the Irish heroine. Her courage and endurance are much more striking in this one-act play than in the portrayal of Ann Devlin in the film of the same name. One also learns more about her privations and the terrible fate which befell her family.

John Maharg's mother was Irish and he was brought up in James Connolly's home town, Edinburgh. He has deliberately written these plays with small casts (five in each) and a minimum of props so that they can quite easily be performed in pubs, community centres and the like but, despite this, they have not received the exposure they deserve. "Our actors tend to be people who are committed to other activities too, as I am myself", says John. "It's hard to keep a group together for any length of time rehearsing and playing."

For those interested in booking a performance or in becoming involved with the drama group, John would be glad to hear from you on (01) 627 0599.

D. Breatnach, Lewisham IBRG

# Lá Fhéile Pádraig

## March and Rally

For justice for the Irish in Britain and Ireland

**Assemble:** Whittington Park, Archway, London N19

**Rally:** Joint rally with Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign

## Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March 1989

Organised by IBRG



# The Dreamer

You went in the evening  
when the westering sun was sinking low  
over the Galtee mountains, and the white mist  
crept softly in from the Atlantic  
to spread its silence across the land.  
We found the patient mare unharnessed,  
huge feet planted firmly astride  
the last deep furrow you had ploughed  
in the rich Irish earth.

Seventeen years old ... and your young mind  
should have been set  
on céili and dancing and the soft curves  
of a cailín's body in the warm darkness  
Or listening to the scolding cry  
of a blackbird, or the wild, sweet  
liquid notes of an invisible lark  
high in the clear air  
of an Irish morning.

But you were hearing  
the distant sound of gunfire, the cries  
of dying children, the screams of women  
and the hoarse voices of fighting men.  
High explosive shells and shrapnel  
screaming thro' the thin Spanish sky  
ending their short flight in a welter  
of blasted earth and shattered bodies.  
And a cruel beauty flew with silver wings  
lazily spiralling in graceful robes of vapour  
high in the blue, then dipping,  
pointing sharp noses downward  
towards cowering villages in a screaming  
dive ...  
a ghastly rehearsal for the coming  
holocaust.

And you thrilled to the magic  
of your impossible dream  
when all the guns fall silent and the flowers  
bloom on the tortured earth,  
and the broken bodies are whole  
and the children laugh,  
and the hungry are filled with good things  
and the hearts of men turn to love,  
and war is cast out into its own darkness  
to be replaced forever by  
peace.

So you followed your dream ...  
into the very heart of nightmare,  
and it was hard for you and the others like  
you,  
the young ones, the dreamers of dreams,  
the makers of myths, the poets, the artists,  
schoolteachers, labourers, creeping away  
into the pages of history in defiance  
of little men ...  
men without dreams.

Aye, it was hard ...  
when you were named from the altar steps  
by the priest, when you were condemned  
by the Archbishop in unctuous tones,  
when the Holy Father himself from the Chair  
of Peter  
pronounced you damned ...  
you and your dream.

The merchants complained,  
the rich men blustered,  
the governments warned,  
the League of Nations threatened sanctions.  
While in suffering Spain  
the bombs fell,  
the rifles cracked,  
the tanks rolled,  
the babies wailed  
and the people died  
in their thousands.

And so you went ...  
you with your gentle smile,  
away from the rich plains of Tipperary,  
across the waters and over the snow-clad  
mountains  
to meet your destiny.  
And somewhere there  
on the arid soil near Badajoz  
you found your peace.

Then the priest was mollified,  
the Lord Bishop was silent,  
the Holy Father sang a solemn Te Deum  
and thanked his God that Christendom was  
triumphant  
on the points of Moorish bayonets,

beneath the tracks of churning tanks,  
in the sights of screaming dive-bombers  
and the incandescent flash  
of bursting shells.  
The priests can prate of peace now  
and chant their hymns and canticles,  
the peace of the merchants to ply their trade  
and multiply their profits unmolested,  
the peace of the rich man to sleep easy  
in his soft, warm bed,  
the peace of the exploited to exist  
in squalor and ignorance.

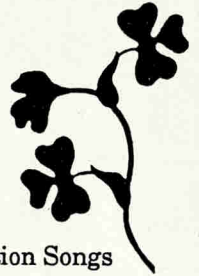
Priestcraft and statecraft reign supreme,  
God is in his heaven  
and His will is being done ...  
all's well with the world.

The dreamer is dead  
and gone  
and forgotten.

But what of his dream—  
how do you kill  
a dream?

**Deasún MacGearailt  
Lambeth IBRG**

## Irish Cultural Studies: a teaching pack edited by Tom Arkell



Guide for Teachers	Irish Emigration Songs
Ireland Today	Irish Migration
Irish Music Song and Dance	The Great Hunger (1845-1850)
The Celts in Ireland	Michael Davitt in Haslingden
Early Christian Ireland	The Irish in Britain five life stories
The Vikings in Ireland	Popular Irish Surnames
Irish Poems and Stories	Popular Irish Personal Names
Finn in the Kingdom of the Big Men	

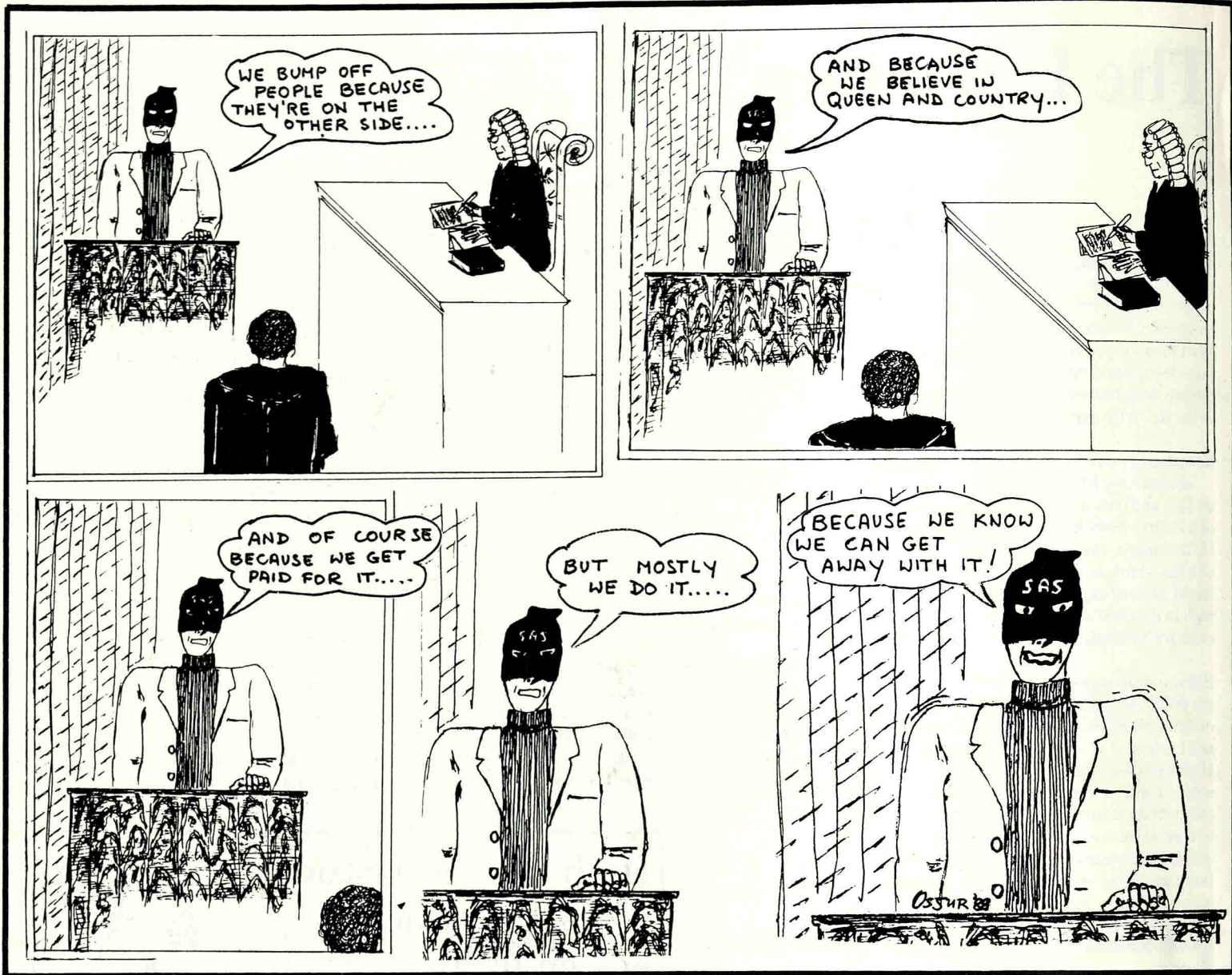
Price £16

From bookshops or post free from  
Trentham Books Limited  
151 Etruria Road  
Stoke-on-Trent ST1 5NS

Phone 0782 274227

with cheque, official order, access or visa (quote expiry date)





## Join IBRG and/or subscribe to An Pobal Éirithe

IBRG has branches throughout London (in Camden, Hackney, Haringey, Harrow, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark) and in Birmingham, Bolton, Brighton, Coventry, Derby, Leeds, Manchester, North East Lancs.

If you would like to join (or start!) a branch please fill in the form below and return to An Pobal Éirithe, 52 Victoria Park Road, London E9 7NB.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION:** Fee £2.00 (£1.00 unwaged)

I would like to join IBRG.

NAME: .....

ADDRESS: .....

If you would like to subscribe to An Pobal Éirithe please fill in the form below and return it to the above address:

**SUBSCRIPTION APPLICATION:** Individuals £2.00 Organisations £10.00 Plus postage £1.30

I would like to subscribe to An Pobal Éirithe.

NAME: .....

ADDRESS: .....

Please make cheques payable to **An Pobal Éirithe**