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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 23, Number 3

March 1998

Loyalists Sentence Peace Process to Death

Loyalist extremists have assumed the authority to sentence their opponents to death--a power that even the British state does not inflict on its citizens.

Simply, if loyalist terror chiefs don't agree with you, you are therefore responsible for the death of pathological killer Billy "Mad Dog" Wright, and you are eligible for the death penalty. Violence is done in the name of Billy Wright because, in the twisted logic of loyalism, one is exonerated of guilt or responsibility for "starting it"--killing--if one can point to the behavior of one's political opponents as the inspiration for the attack.

Even the British governor in the north, Mo Mowlam, is responsible for the death of Billy Wright, according to the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). In February, the LVF plastered loyalist enclaves with posters of Mo that claimed she is wanted for Wright's death. Between the lines, read that the LVF does not like the direction in which it believes the British are taking the peace process.

Wright died last December in Long Kesh when a few INLA prisoners shot him dead as he was making his way to a visit. Nevertheless, Catholics have been killed and subjected to threats and aborted murder attempts. The murder continues because loyalists fear anybody whose identity threatens loyalists' ideas of loyalism. That is, *They are different from Us, so kill them, chase them out, or have a temper fit of a bloody magnitude until they concede to us what we want.*

The LVF said it would continue killing until the Irish government stopped "interfering" with the north and dropped its constitutional claim to sovereignty to all of Ireland. There should be no cross-border institutions with executive powers, the LVF said. This sounds frighteningly like the position of the Ulster Unionists and the Democratic Unionist Party. The gun-toting chorus has been providing a bloody refrain to the same old unionist song.

It is sublimely ironic that Mowlam rates with Sinn Fein and the SDLP in the eyes of the LVF. It remains to be seen, then, whether Mo will begin treating nationalists concerns fairly and openly now that she is "one of them."

The Charter for Change Campaign NEEDS YOUR HELP!

There is still much to be done to make the *Charter for Change* in Northern Ireland Campaign a success. We need everyone involved. Get your state, county and town councils to adopt a Charter for Change support resolution, a copy of which appeared in the February newsletter. Get organizations, union locals, student bodies, religious groups, etc., to adopt resolutions. **A copy of all adopted resolutions must be sent to President Bill Clinton and the PEC.** For information, or a copy of the resolution or the Charter for Change, contact the PEC at 800-777-6807.

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

The Irish News received over 150 personal notices on the death of cross-community worker Terry Enright, Jr. This is a heartbreaking farewell from his wife, Deirdre: *ENRIGHT Terry (Murdered) - January 11, 1998. Well Terry, this was going to be our best year yet. That was you, you always wanted the best for the kids, for me, for yourself. You made me laugh and you made me so happy. My heart is broken and the thought of never seeing you again is too painful to deal with. I loved you so much "the whole world and back again." I've tried to tell myself this isn't happening, it's all a bad dream and you're going to be there and put your big arms around me and tell me its all going to be all right. You were always there for me. I'm going to need you now more than ever. Please be with me in spirit and give me the strength to get through this nightmare. I will always love you to death, as you used to say. I will never forget you. When I look at our two kids I know you will live on and they will make you proud. Love always, Angel From your heartbroken wife Deirdre. XXX*

THE SLOW rate of improvement on human right issues in Northern Ireland has been criticized in an

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OUR VIEW

Suddenly the lethargic Northern Ireland peace process has burst into a frenzy of activity, seemingly mostly bad. Yet not a single agreement has been reached. The main unionist parties object to north-south structures of any substance; Sinn Fein still opposes a Northern Ireland assembly and doesn't want to discuss it; Trimble doesn't even want to speak to Sinn Fein; Sinn Fein has retreated to basing its hopes on the vague Framework Document, a copy of which an Ulster Unionist leader tore up publicly at a meeting; the proposals of the two governments, a Heads of Agreement, are attacked by both unionist and nationalist parties. Is it all coming apart?

We think not. While it may be that the political parties in the "negotiations" (not a good word for what is going on) will find it difficult to compromise in view of their various "principles," it is important to remember that, in the final analysis, it is the two governments which have the responsibility to their people. The governments are increasingly asserting themselves. It is hopeful that they can agree on a compromise plan, and we believe that they will do so, "over the heads" of the parties, if need be; and we believe that the people, north and south, will agree in the referenda which will follow. In this scenario, the "loyalist veto" will be irrelevant, although we can expect some puffing from the Unionist parties.

The problem is, a government-dominated deal, such as we predict, will not be what we as supporters of a united, democratic Ireland had hoped for in this process. For this reason it is very important that the Irish Government NOT concede the Constitutional claim to ultimate unity as part of such a settlement. But all this is ahead of us.

Turn to Action Requests #1 on page six

Offensive Situations: Boston Globe Apologizes for Offending the Irish--Again

by Paul Newman, *New York*

Editor **H.D.S. Greenway** of *The Boston Globe* apologized in early January for running an editorial cartoon that denigrated the Irish people. The apology came after Greenway received letters and phone calls urging him to express regret for offending the Irish and the American-Irish by running the cartoon.

The Dec. 30, 1997 cartoon by artist **Paul Szep** showed two scruffy-looking men drinking beer and discussing politics, apparently in an Irish pub. One man remarks to the other that "the peace process could destroy our way of life." He goes on to say that peace "would kill our ability to hate...and we'd have to go to work! Well, we do hate work!"

Greenway said in a press statement, "We thought the cartoon intended to mock only the men of violence on both sides of the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland, but we apologize for the offense it has so obviously given."

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GREAT HUNGER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR: Frank Morris, Jr., 821 Briarwood Ln, Camp Hill, PA 17011-(717) 737-7013

NATIONAL ORGANIZER: Pete Foley, 3615 Greystone Ave., Bronx, NY 10463 - (718) 884-2220

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Archbishop Bernard Cardinal Law initiated the campaign against *The Boston Globe* by calling for an apology shortly after the cartoon was published.

The Globe's apology shows how far we have come in our campaign to put an end to the stereotypical images that denigrate the Irish. The PEC has in the past pressured *The Globe* to apologize for other such cartoons and has petitioned its advertisers to stop advertising in *The Globe* to pressure the paper to stop insulting the Irish and the American-Irish.

Please let H.D.S. Greenway know you're still watching his paper and still care that he does not run derogatory images of the Irish and the very fragile peace process. Tell him that, while you appreciate his apology for running the Dec. 30 anti-Irish cartoon by Paul Szep, you expect that such cartoons will not run in *The Globe* future.

Write: H.D.S. Greenway, The Boston Globe, 135 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125.

**Send Offensive Situations to: Paul Newman,
9 Deltic Road, New City, NY 10956**

From the North

by Robert Heatley, *Belfast, Northern Ireland, co-founder of the Campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization*

In 1991 the Campaign For Democracy (CFD) warned that talks between Northern Ireland's political parties would not bring about a settlement to the Anglo-Irish problem. Seven years later, the talks are on the verge of collapse. It was our opinion that all three "strands of the talks process"—how Northern Ireland will be governed, North/South relationships and the relationship between Ireland and Britain—should be the responsibility of the British and Irish governments.

The problem was a matter for the two governments to resolve. Why the talks were structured as to give unionists such a pivotal role remains a mystery. The unionists will not permit a democratic solution. The British government must take responsibility for coming up with a settlement and stop hiding behind the unionists.

Our fears that multi-party talks would be a farce were confirmed. Both Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party and the so-called UK Unionist party walked out of the talks when Sinn Fein joined the talks: the Ulster Democratic Party, the political wing of the UDA/UFF, were ejected because of their complicity in anti-Catholic killings. A significant section of the Ulster Unionist Party is at the talks reluctantly, which prevents that party from even pretending to negotiate. What this probably means is that most unionist political parties reject the whole process.

Why the governments persist on this talks structure is amazing. One would think that after nearly 30 years of deadly conflict, the unionists would want peace and stability. Especially since the talks present no real threat to their demand, that Ireland remain partitioned, at least for the foreseeable future. The unionists are not prepared to give anything in return for saving partition. What they want is a resuscitated Stormont government. They might not even accede an SDLP stipulation that a new "Assembly" be situated elsewhere. They rule out Cross-border bodies capable of development, even though the SDLP, apparently, would be satisfied if they were devoid of immediate and direct political and constitutional significance. In a recent list of their demands (*Irish News Feb. 11th*) the unionists do not even refer to cross-border bodies. On the other hand, they persist in referring to Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Republic's Constitution as a territorial

demand, even though a majority of the people in four out of the six partitioned counties are Irish nationalists and republicans.

Despite the fact that the only interferer in Northern Ireland's affairs is the English-dominated British government, the unionists have the audacity to demand the replacement of the 1985 "Anglo-Irish Agreement" to, as they put it, end Dublin's interference in Northern Ireland's internal affairs. The main reason for Dublin's presence in a consultative role at the Maryfield Secretariat in Belfast was to assure the nationalist/republican community that its human, democratic and civil rights would be protected against the combined forces of British and Northern Ireland Unionism. Even as matters presently stand, it would seem that the Irish government has been only partially effective in this regard. But the unionists want to scrap even this and offer in its place a "human rights framework within which the Assembly would function affording protection to every Northern Ireland citizen."

What do unionists mean by this? They say they mean: "Full recognition and protection of minority rights, be they cultural, linguistic or economic," none of which, in themselves, threaten Unionism's stranglehold and might even strengthen it by more sharply demarcating the "minority" which they and the British created in 1920. One **highly significant right** is missing among those which the unionists see as necessary to be addressed: the national right of Irish people in the north of Ireland to be governed by an Irish government of **their own choosing**, one which would be accountable to all of its citizens.

Aside from the fact that the unionists, with Britain in the background, had 50 years in which to behave as good "boys," there is not the slightest shred of evidence to suggest

that they are sorry for the past error of their ways and that they are now ready to reform. As Mitchell McLaughlin of Sinn Fein put it to Seamus Mallon of the SDLP in their disagreement over allowing the unionists to have a reformed Assembly: where is the District Council, Belfast City Council and Forum evidence to show that the unionists have a capability or a desire to accept equality of treatment for nationalists/republicans?

However, the danger of a Hume/Trimble alliance emerging in place of the pan-nationalist one of Hume/Adams and the Irish government might have receded given what might now be happening outside the talks in response to the unionist direction in which they were apparently being driven. It might however go the other way. At the time of the writing of this article, it is still not clear if the IRA is linked to two paramilitary killings which have taken place in Belfast. If some kind of credible proof is produced by the authorities, then Sinn Fein's continued presence in the talks appears to be unlikely, especially after the expulsion of the UDP.

Only the parties incapable of delivering the peace would then be left at the talks. Should the SDLP then attempt to cobble up a Hume/Trimble outcome, with Trimble's fingerprints all over it, then SDLP ought to take seriously the words of a young SDLP supporter, "If you Mr. Mallon and Mr. Farren [SDLP representatives] don't bow out from playing the Three Little Maids to Trimble's Nanki Poo, in the Return to Stormont farce, then you're going to find the curtain coming down long before you retire! (*Irish News, 11/2/98*) In other words, the SDLP, which itself emerged from the now defunct (Irish) Nationalist Party, will suffer a similar demise.

If Sinn Fein is expelled, the talks—as predicted by the CFD—will be a goner. The two governments might be forced, at long last, to take responsibility for their own design for the six counties and put it to the referendum. Mr. Blair might have anticipated this eventuality and, when over in Washington, arranged for President Clinton to act as salesman in Ireland come May.

[Editors Note: Call President Clinton's office regularly (202 456-1111) and express your views on this issue.]

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Newsbits *cont. from page 1*

influential United States government report just published. The US State Department noted that the British government has "adopted few security-related recommendations" put forward by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, set up in 1973 to monitor human rights abuses. The report quotes watchdog groups as saying wrongdoers—including soldiers and police officers—are shielded by the narrow remit of inquests and bereaved families "are unnecessarily kept from learning the truth of the circumstances surrounding their relative's death."

"Coroners do not have the power to compel those suspected of involvement in extra-judicial killing to testify at inquests and the relatives of the deceased receive no advance disclosure of evidence. In Northern Ireland, coroners are permitted to inquire only into 'how'—that is 'by what means'—the deceased died, rather than into the broad circumstances of death." Complaints to the Independent Commission for Police Complaints, the report said, increased from 2,540 in 1996 to 3,108 last year.

"Of the 2,699 cases processed (some pending from previous years), investigations led to informal disciplinary action in 109 cases and to formal charges in seven cases involving nine police officers..." "Local human rights groups continue to complain that the Commission is not truly autonomous in that it has no independent investigatory abilities and must rely on supervising police investigations into the complaints." On emergency laws, the State Department said: "The PTA is the most reviewed piece of legislation in the United Kingdom. It expires every two years and, due to the changing security situation, is amended or altered to account for those changes. Critics charge that the annual review is superficial. Extensive PTA detention powers were held in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, which led to a derogation by the government in 1988." (*Irish News*, 2/10/98)

Irish Figures of South America and Mexico

by Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

The tens of millions of Irish who are spread throughout the globe have done much for their adopted lands. Much has been written about the Irish who came to the U.S., Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Unfortunately, little has been known of the large Irish legacy in the South American nations.

Ambrose O'Higgins, a descendant of the Wild Geese who fled British cruelty in Ireland, was the most influential Spanish official during Spanish colonialism in South America. O'Higgins was named Spanish Viceroy of Peru. Many Irish regiments in the Spanish Army served in the vast Spaniard settlements of the South American continent.

When the South American people fought for independence from Spain, the Irish took the lead. Dubliner John Devereaux organized an Irish Legion to fight for Simon Bolivar. Bolivar, the George Washington of South America, had for his top aides John and Morgan O'Connell. The O'Connell brothers were the sons of the Irish emancipator Daniel O'Connell. Irish-born Daniel F. O'Leary was Bolivar's top diplomat in Washington, D.C.

Irish-born Edward Sandes is a national hero of Ecuador. Francis O'Connor is also a national hero in Bolivia for his fight for freedom in that land. Irish-born William Brown founded the Argentine Navy. Bernardo O'Higgins founded present-day Chile. Ships, squares and schools are still named in his honor in that nation. His top two military aides were George O'Brien and Charles O'Connor and Irish-born Raymond Morris was a close advisor.

In Paraguay, Eliza Lynch is remembered as a national heroine. In the 1800's during a war with Brazil, she organized an all-woman unit that fought for Paraguay. Irish troops also fought for Brazil.

The McKenna family played a major role in the history of Peru. The largest Irish community in South America is in Argentina. GAA games are played in Buenos Aires. From 1944-1946 Gen. Edelmiro Farrell served as President of Argentina. Norma Nolan of Buenos Aires became one of the first to win the Miss Universe beauty pageant.

In Mexico, the architect of many government buildings in Mexico City was named O'Gorman. In 1825 the Spanish Diplomat who gave Mexico the Plan of Iguala, which led the way for Mexican nationhood, was the descendant of the Wild Geese Juan O'Donoju (originally O'Donohue). O'Donoju is buried in Mexico City's Cathedral as a national hero. In Mexico City there is a monument to the San Patricio Brigade of Irish-born soldiers. Each year the President of Mexico places a wreath on the monument. Many people of Irish blood live in Mexico today.

Don't Forget the Commemorative Stamp

The Great Hunger Commemorative Stamp Campaign continues to pick up more momentum. The Federation of Irish American Organizations in Delaware Valley has planned for protest rallies at a number of post offices in major cities supporting the stamp. These pickets should reinforce our ongoing efforts by drawing new attention to the campaign. Also, there has been a very encouraging upsurge in requests for postcards, which means many more people from across the US are contacting the USPS. We are also advised that this campaign is far from over. The final decision on this stamp will not be made until the end of 1999. So get on with it. Step up the pressure on the USPS. **ORDER THE FREE POSTCARDS NOW!** Just write or call PEC at 800 777-6807 for the cards. We can and we will win, but it will require your continued and determined participation.

Northern Ireland: Equality Must Come Before

Negotiations By Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Fein

[Editors Note: Adams is president of the third largest political party represented at the peace talks. In the following excerpt from a recent analysis, he discusses the importance of rights as a prerequisite to a political settlement in the north.]

Justice issues are the essential foundations of any functioning democracy. They are basic fundamental human rights which should be protected and upheld. They are also inalienable rights which are universal and, therefore, not up for negotiation.

The six-county state, created for and dominated by unionists, has never been able to afford all its citizens the justice and equality fundamental to a peaceful and democratic society.

The pillars which underpinned the northern state have been discrimination, inequality and intolerance. Whether a democracy is functioning morally or not depends on the morality of the ends it pursues and the means it employs. Clearly, in this context the north has never been democratic. The consequence has been a cycle of repression, conflict, and resistance.

Unionists cannot be held solely responsible for this. Britain's policies created a sectarian state. Since the collapse of Stormont, the British government has failed to effectively tackle economic and structural discrimination against Catholics and the continuing cultural discrimination which denies Irish children their right to be taught through the medium of Irish. It is British policy which today labels nationalists as inferior and second class.

The excesses of the British state in defense of the northern statelet have been well documented. Every major human rights agency in the world, from Amnesty International to Helsinki Watch, has accused Britain of torture, summary execution and extensive violations of human rights. Britain holds the distinction of having been found guilty before the European Court of Human Rights more than any

other signatory since 1950.

This, then, is the reality of the northern statelet. Over 75 years on a life support of oppression, injustice, and inequality, it is a history of failure. It was a unionist one-party state which rejected basic principles of democracy, justice, and equality.

The entrenched unionist mindset that denied these basic principles to a section of our people and which still prevails today in councils and institutions dominated by unionists has to end if we are to genuinely bring about a democratic settlement.

No longer can the unionists defend or the British government maintain a status quo that is recognized internationally as being inherently undemocratic and which has been chiefly responsible for fueling the conflict.

We need a strong and effective culture of rights which guarantees equality for all citizens. It must be developed in our schools, in our homes, in our places of work and entertainment, in government departments and agencies, in local councils, in every layer of our society. This must mean:

- * equality in employment opportunities;
- * equality in economic investment into areas of high unemployment;
- * equality for the Irish language and culture;
- * equality in the provision of resources for education;
- * equality for political representatives.

We need:

- * to tackle the difficult issue of cultural symbols, of flags and emblems;
- * an end to repressive legislation;
- * a new unarmed policing service under democratic control;
- * speedy progress on the issue of political prisoners, their conditions, transfer and release;
- * to address outstanding human rights abuses by state forces providing redress under standards of international law;
- * to establishment a human rights

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commission and human rights court.

These and much more are matters for the British government - not for negotiations. These are matters of policy - not negotiations. These are rights, civil and political, which every citizen in every democratic state should be entitled to. They are enshrined in international law and they have been advocated by international courts and human rights organizations world wide.

The British government should act on these issues immediately by outlining a programmatic approach which delivers real change, which makes equality a reality and which builds confidence in the wider peace process. The immediate responsibility for equality rests with the British government. This is a government which has placed human rights in other countries at the top of its international agenda.

Equality is not a threat to unionists. It means civil and political rights for unionists as well as nationalists. Whether it is the right to march, or the right to worship or the right to vote - these are civil, religious and political rights which must be guaranteed and protected.

In the search for a just settlement, parity of esteem, equality of treatment, and full human rights protection must be guaranteed.

There must be no artificial distinctions, no arbitrary barriers standing in the way of these rights. These are not minority rights but rights which every person should enjoy.

There is nothing complicated or unreasonable about these goals or their achievement, but they will not be achieved without leadership. It is our task to provide that leadership.

For further information contact:
American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC, 54 South Liberty Drive,
Stony Point, NY -- 800 777-6807

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'Too many concessions' claims are only fantasy

By Brian Feeney - *Excerpted from the Jan. 7, 1998 Irish News.*

Aren't you sick of them, all these concessions? It's getting to the stage where you don't know what to ask for next. Barracks demolished and houses built on the empty spaces, new anti-discrimination legislation based on the latest SACHR (British government-appointed Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights) report, no more pointless watchtowers along the border, a new police force that nationalists can join, a civil service stripped of British exclusiveness, the end of Diplock courts, interrogation centers closed, RIR (locally recruited British soldiers) Home Service disbanded, proportional representation in all elections, partnership in councils enshrined in legislation, 'quangos' which represent nationalists and unionists and not just 'naye Ketholics' in the NIO's (Northern Ireland Office, Britain's administration in the north) front party.

You could fill pages listing the concessions, couldn't you? In your dreams. Let's deal with facts. The fact is the NIO have given no concessions whatsoever to nationalists. So what's going on? The answer is a very successful campaign by unionists and--to their disgrace--some senior Protestant clergy, to prevent any change in the north of Ireland. The secretary of state, sadly, has bought their line. She told a journalist, English of course, who had the privilege to sit with her in her armored limousine, that unionists feel hard done by: "There is a perception there, it is a serious perception, and I have to deal with that." Oh really?

So she governs by perception? Obviously, serious perceptions are more serious than trivial perceptions. Doesn't matter if there's no reality there at all. You couldn't take decisions on that basis. Come on now. This is New Labor, and she speaks New Labor wordzak which accompanies muzak at major press conferences when the prime minister is present. The wordzak is as insubstantial and irritating as the muzak.

Let's decode the unionist 'perception' for the secretary of state. First, all concessions are always to republicans--and you're not allowed to give concessions to republicans because they don't count. Unionists don't speak to them so they don't count. Quite a crafty line, this, because it simultaneously eliminates the whole nationalist population. The fact is, the nationalist population has consistently and overwhelmingly voted through

the SDLP for change. Unionists have just as consistently ignored them, too. They concentrate on republicans as if they were the only people demanding change. The pretense that it's 'only' republicans automatically invalidates the demand of nationalists as a whole for change. For example, you would think only Sinn Fein want the RUC radically reformed. Unionists never mention that the SDLP asked first and still require it.

Orange marches are the same. Unionists, with or without their Orange collar, maintain that only republicans want marches rerouted or banned. Because all republican demands are in themselves invalid in unionist eyes, then, of course, Orangemen need not take them under their notice. By this stratagem, they conveniently ignore the fact--repeat, fact--that the overwhelming majority of Catholics, nationalist and republican, do not want Orange marches coming through their districts. Catholics have objected for generations, long before there were modern nationalists or republicans. The success of the lie that there has been a stream of concessions to republicans is extraordinary, the more so since no one can list these concessions. Oh yes, they can point to some measures the Irish government has taken, but none at all from the British. The mantra 'concessions to republicans' is a code for refusing to entertain the legitimate rights of all nationalists in the north. Even if it were true--which, again, it's worth repeating, it is not--that this British administration had taken any measures, they

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would have done no more than fulfill the promise to recognize the democratic rights of nationalists in the north.

Furthermore, if there's this much hullabaloo about nonexistent concessions, then what will it be like if there ever were real change? Make no mistake, real change to produce equality for the 40 percent plus of the electorate who vote SDLP and Sinn Fein will require a transformation of the north, and without it nationalists will withhold their consent to be governed. In their efforts to block a fair society, unionist leaders and clergy who have made bogus claims about a one-way street of 'concessions' must also take responsibility for the upsurge in violence against Catholics in the last year.

The lies about concessions--which, again, if any had been given would be rights, not concessions--have encouraged extreme loyalists to believe their own rights are threatened. The result is the old story. 1997 has been no different from 1966, 1969, 1972, 1975, 1986. In each of those years, governments of one kind or another began to address nationalist grievances. Whenever that happens, unionist leaders start to bleat about reforms and, as night follows day, murder gangs start to kill Catholics.

The modern loyalist murder campaign began in 1966 to prevent reform; loyalists began bombing in 1969 to prevent reform. A myth has developed that loyalist violence was in some way a retaliation against republican violence. Not so. Each upsurge of loyalist violence was and at present is, a retaliation against 'perceived' reform which unionist leaders denounce. This secretary of state has said 'the status quo is not an option.' Will the fraudulent campaign supported by dire warnings of loyalist terror stop her in her tracks? It has always worked in the past.

For further information contact:
American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC, 54 South Liberty Dr. Stony Point, NY 10980 -- 800 777-6807

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Bernadette McAliskey: Some Views on the Peace Process

Editor's Note: The following interview with civil rights activist Bernadette Devlin McAliskey has been excerpted from International Viewpoint.

The peace process strategy of the republicans was based on an alliance of Sinn Fein with the SDLP and the Dublin government. The strategy was intended to force the British government to grant equal rights and other concessions for nationalists. In the following interview, McAliskey talks about why the republican strategy has failed.

Should the nationalist people be campaigning in support of peace talks or some concrete demands?

McAliskey: Once the republican movement got into secret negotiations and was putting peace talks forward as the Sinn Fein party position, there didn't seem to be a strategy for continuing the broad grassroots movement calling for civil and other rights. Everything revolved around decommissioning, a date for all-party peace talks, the shape of the table and so on. People started to worry that the issue of basic human rights, the issue of discrimination in employment and all sorts of broader issues, such as minimum wage legislation, the extension of the European 48-hour work week, women's issues, all the issues that had been a vibrant part of the life of the community, were being sidelined.

Sinn Fein was an integral part of creating a dynamic that they cannot control. They created the slogan "give peace a chance." They created the initial demand for peace talks. But they had no basis for determining or even having any influence on which issues those peace talks would take place because they were allowing the Irish government to play their hand for them. They have actually, unintentionally, disempowered the republican community, who are confused about what's happening. On the opposite side, they empowered a whole layer of people who are now very active against them. They have empowered a very broad spectrum of Irish America whose interest is in peace at any price, and they certainly have opened up the way for a lot of propaganda by the southern state.

What can be done?

McAliskey: It's a very difficult position. I have a hard time comprehending

how the republicans could fail to see how deep the water was that they were getting into. The first step was in failing to reject decisively the parameters of the Downing Street Declaration. Finally, the republicans said they were opposed to it, but by that time they had already been working within its framework for six months.

I think that the republicans have gotten themselves in an irreversible position. I don't believe that a return to military operations is an effective option. I think that if they go back to military operations within the climate that they themselves were a party to creating, then military defeat, for the first time in 15 years, becomes a very real possibility.

What about a return to mass campaigns?

McAliskey: The real question, of course, is how do you build the mass campaigns within the current context, because there is still an expectation on the part of the broad base of the nationalist community that the present negotiations, when they get started, will somehow lead to a peaceful and fair settlement. Now, that is not the case. What is very clear from all of those talks is that we are looking at the solution which the British put forward in 1972, some kind of power-sharing between the two power blocs [nationalist and unionist], a referendum to determine the balance between the populations every 10 or 15 years and such economic and commercial cross-border trade links as are required by the end of the century economic necessities of the European Union. No more and no less.

Is there no alternative?

McAliskey: I think that the way forward is first of all to make an honest assessment of where we are. I think we

should hang on to the cease-fire. The special repressive legislation is still on the books, but we can initiate mass action and continue campaigning against that. If we don't go back to war, there's less chance of everybody being slaughtered. I think Sinn Fein should get out of the "peace process." Our presence in this process can do nothing to affect it. Our campaign should be based upon insuring that whatever mechanics they put on this country, we will demand equality of citizenship. As long as we are citizens here, we will demand equal opportunity, we will demand our national identity, we will demand our fundamental human rights and begin to build a political campaign around that.

I think we can begin to build a political movement raising fundamental social, class and national issues, and one that is free to do that because it is not tied to the apron strings of the Irish government and the Hibernian [bourgeois nationalist] alliance.

CORRECTION: Loyalists Censor CNN

Media attending the Portadown funeral of loyalist killer and former Loyalist Volunteer Force leader Billy "King Rat" Wright felt the effect of loyalist intimidation when loyalists took tapes and other gear from CNN and other news reporters who got too close to the cortege. Loyalists forced a BBC reporter to give up the tape in his video camera.

Following the incident, CNN did not reveal that their equipment had been taken by loyalists. This is a blatant act of censorship by the same group who have been killing Irish nationalists lately with the hope of turning the political tide in the favor of loyalism.

Contact CNN to find out whether the network will report on its encounter with loyalists in Portadown. Call CNN at 404-827-1895 during business hours. (Please note this is the correct number, not the one that ran in the Feb. 1998 Newsletter. We regret any convenience our error might have caused you.)

Action Requests

Write the letters below (or call), preferably in your own words, or as is. Be courteous. Have others do the same. Mention that you are a member of the American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC.

President Bill Clinton
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
Ph# 202 456-1111
Fax# 202 456-2461
president@whitehouse.gov

Message: Please use your influence (and possible visit to Ireland) to emphasize the fundamental importance to any settlement in Ireland of civil, national, and human rights. These rights, like ending partition and Britain's presence in Ireland, are essential to a just and lasting peace.

Ambassador Sean O'Huigin
Embassy of Ireland
2234 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20008
Ph# 202 462-3939

Message: I strongly suggest that PM Aherne must reestablish the pan-nationalist front and accept that any settlement in Ireland must include full civil, national, and human rights, that will bring about an end to partition and Britain's presence in Ireland.

Centuries of British Misrule Brought About "Gentlemen's Genocide"

by Frank Morris, *Pennsylvania*

The ongoing American commemoration of Ireland's "Great Hunger" 150 years ago has brought the details of that event into sharper focus for us than for previous generations. We know that it all began in 1845 with a potato blight . . . a particular fungus that had never struck before and could not have been anticipated. This fungus turned the potato into black rot: inedible, watery and foul-smelling. The blight struck western Europe as well as Ireland. But only in Ireland did it bring about 1.5 million deaths due to starvation and disease. For here the potato was the only food of the Irish peasantry, a subsistence crop that would support a family or a very small plot of land. Faced with starvation, a million more Irish fled to foreign lands, most to the United States.

The *New York Times* travel editor in June 1997 reflected upon these events of the Great Hunger: "subtle reminders are everywhere. Empty fields and rambling walls tell a poignant story." Indeed, they tell of a time when workhouse deaths soared to 2,700 persons per week. "In Mayo, Galway, Clare, Kerry and Cork," read the *Times* report, "there are still runs of cottages, churches, and stone walls marking settlement boundaries that were abandoned during the famine or in the half century of economic distress that followed." Near Skibbereen, amid the ruins of the 14th Century Cistercian Abbey, "a field of uneven grassy mounds and a memorial mark, the mass burial ground or famine pits" that held thousands of bodies.

There are similar reminders throughout this verdant and beautiful land--reminders that we as American travellers see and ask "why." Records show that during the Hunger years, enough food was grown in Ireland to feed the population many times over. But this food was instead gathered and transported to Britain under heavily armed guards, there to be sold on the open market. (Ireland at the time was administratively joined with England through the 1801 Act of Union.) The Irish were victimized by Britain and absentee landlords in what the Uris' have aptly called a "gentlemen's genocide."

Genocide was also on the list of Paul Johnson, a distinguished British journalist who wrote in the *New Statesman*: "In Ireland over the centuries we have tried every possible formula: direct rule, indirect rule, genocide, apartheid, puppet parliaments, real parliaments, martial law, civil law, land reform, colonization, partition. Nothing has worked. The only solution we have not tried is absolute and unconditional withdrawal"-- to which a million muffled voices from famine pits across the land solemnly echo: "Amen."

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