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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 23, Number 5

May 1998

URGENT-- A 39-page booklet that is meant to explain the agreement is being distributed to the Northern Irish people. The booklet is not understood by the vast majority of citizens as it is filled constitutional law and unclear statements. If this is the case, the voters are being asked to vote blindly on something they don't understand. **Turn to Action Requests 1 & 2 on page 6.**

April 10: A Pact is Brokered in the North

As we go to press a deal was finalized in the North under the leadership of Senator George Mitchell with the backing of President Bill Clinton. The main points of the deal are as follows:

1. An Assembly will be created which will govern "Northern Ireland." The largest party as determined by the election results will select the Prime Minister. It is expected that David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party will be selected. Elections for the Assembly will take place in June.
2. Cross-border bodies will be created with members of the Dublin government and new Assembly. It would promote joint policies in areas of common need, such as agriculture, health, tourism and international development. Early reports indicate that these bodies will not have the executive powers originally called for. Instead, both the Dublin government and the new Assembly will have veto power.
3. Council of the Isles, which was sought by the unionists, will be created. Participating will be the London and Dublin governments, the "Northern Ireland Assembly", and the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies.

Decommissioning of arms by the different paramilitary groups is to begin and the release of prisoners will take place over the next 2 years.

Referendums will be carried out in both the North and the South on May 22, seeking approval of the proposals by the citizenry.

Observers noted that the Sinn Fein delegation did not appear to be too happy with the deal, but John Hume, Bertie Ahern and the unionists were very pleased.

We will provide analysis of the deal in the next issue of the newsletter.

Congress Set to Enshrine Fair Employment Rights

If the Senate approves them, the MacBride Principles might enter US law after the House and Senate Conference as part of new legislation that covers all funds from the International Fund for Ireland. This major victory for the Principles, which call for any American company investing in the North to have anti-discrimination enshrined into company policy, comes just weeks after Ford Motor Company was forced to incorporate the MacBride Principles. This came after years of a US boycott against the Belfast factory that had numerous fair employment cases brought against it. In a major case against Ford, a Catholic man who was refused promotion was awarded almost 40,000 Pounds after he was described as an "active Catholic."

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

Recent discoveries document collusion between the British Army, RUC, and loyalist death squads. The British Army's Force Research Unit (FRU) recruited Brian Nelson, a former soldier in the Black Watch regiment, and infiltrated him into the Ulster Defense Association (UDA) to ensure that "proper targeting of Provisional IRA members [took] place prior to any shootings." The classified files—known as "Contact Forms"—provide detailed accounts of Nelson's meetings with army handlers between 1987 and 1990. Nelson was one of more than 100 agents run by 50 officers and handlers in the FRU. The Contact Forms repeatedly report that Nelson saw his role as an Army agent helping the UDA to assassinate "only legitimate targets." In April 1987, he rejoined the UDA and introduced a card index system in which details of republican terrorist suspects were recorded on "Personality" or "P" cards. Nelson then handed these cards to UDA assassins. The officer commanding the FRU wrote that, by getting Nelson into the UDA, the "FRU... reasoned that we could persuade the UDA to centralize their targeting through Nelson and to concentrate their targeting on known PIRA activists." The files, together

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OUR VIEW

It is 8AM on the morning of April 9 and the peace process has something over twelve hours to go to the supposed deadline for agreement between the parties and the two governments.

Basically, Bertie Ahern and David Trimble are head to head on what's referred to as Strand 2, the cross-border institutions. Mr. Trimble claims that as outlined by Senator Mitchell they are too GREEN, with Ahern seemingly suggesting further compromise on both sides.

The British leader, PM Tony Blair, seems to be acting as referee, the "honest broker" in an Irish dispute. One would think that Britain had no responsibility for the Irish divisions in the first place. Blair talks glibly and indeed, passionately about peace, yet he seems to be unaware that all political violence on the island of Ireland has its roots in partition introduced by a British Act of Parliament in 1920, to which not one Irish person, nationalist or republican, loyalist or unionist, assented.

Mr. Blair was not right off the plane in Belfast, when he announced that Britain guaranteed the unionist position. A cryptic remark, which sounded ominous from an Irish viewpoint. Nevertheless, Blair put his finger precisely on the crux of the problem. As long as the British guarantee exists, it is the bulwark against which the unionists can stand firm and continue to shout No Surrender. Further, it manacles any unionist leader who might be inclined to compromise. Such a leader would be labelled as a traitor and quickly destroyed.

Maybe, Tony Blair, will address the guarantee problem, even at this late stage, and allow the people of Ireland as a whole and the people of Ireland alone to decide their own future without external impediment (British colonial interference), to paraphrase his predecessor, John Major, in paragraph 4 of the Joint Declaration, the original peace document that brought about the cease-fires.

* * * *

Michael Laurence's March 9 editorial in Linn's Stamp News acknowledges that PEC letter writers have had an impact on his in-box. He says, "Recently, we've been the target of a well-organized propaganda campaign promoting a stamp to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Irish potato famine."

Laurence goes on to explain that the News has a policy of not publishing letters promoting new stamp ideas because there wouldn't be enough room for all such letters and it wouldn't be "fair." Nonetheless, he takes our letter-writing campaign as an opportunity to say why he would oppose a Great Hunger commemorative stamp.

He says, "None of our previous immigrant stamps focused on the events that drove the immigrants out of Europe. Instead, all celebrated their arrival on American shores. To PEC, that's a vital distinction. Honor the Irish, maybe. But

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forget the potato famine."

Our stamp campaign has been based on the premise that the US should commemorate the Great Hunger because the event had a tremendous effect on this nation. In addition, in many states, the Great Hunger is officially part of public school curricula. Thus, we are acknowledging that the Great Hunger affected the development of our nation.

We seek a commemorative stamp now to honor the Great Hunger Irish who made it to our shores as we commemorate the 150th anniversary of that event.

Our stake in the Great Hunger stamp is that many of the victims of that catastrophe helped form this nation. Our letters must clearly state this so that influential stamp people such as Michael Laurence cannot accuse us of simply wanting to acknowledge what he sarcastically calls an event that could belong in a "Celebrate the Catastrophe" series.

**Join PEC's
National Telephone Chain**

To join or for information call 800 777-6807

From the North by Robert Heatley, *Belfast, Northern Ireland* (Co-founder of the Campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization)

This article was written prior to the deal.

The intention of Senator George Mitchell's paper was to produce a synthesis that would be acceptable to all concerned. Objective observers could conclude that the British and unionists had been the tougher negotiators and that they had the least to complain about. They forced Prime Minister Blair to go to Belfast to rescue the talks, when they furiously rejected Mitchell's proposals as a Sinn Fein wish list, and to make sure they met the deadline.

Why were the unionist angry? For the foreseeable future they will keep partition and the British rule that goes with it. They will get their Northern Assembly and be given the Irish government of Bertie Ahern's agreement to alter articles 2 & 3 of the Irish Constitution, if okayed by the Irish electorate.

These concessions constituted most of the key elements in the unionists' demands. Hadn't they done well? Only two elements were missing: their preference for the administration of the powers and mechanisms of the assembly and the adoption of their design for the cross-border bodies. There had to be something that made the unionists so angry: Mitchell must have given the other side something. For almost the life of unionism the nationalists have never existed, nor do they exist now! How could anyone describe the forgoing as a "Sinn Fein wish list?"

What escapes the unionists is that 43% of the North's population is nationalist/republican. But the real culprit for permitting them to get their way is Prime Minister Blair. He had many meetings with David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party during which these matters could have been made clear. Blair should have made clear to Trimble that he was getting most of his demands while the SDLP and Sinn Fein were getting their minimal demands.

The question being asked by republican and nationalist dissidents is: why are the SDLP and apparently Sinn Fein allowing the British and unionists to get away with so much of what they want

from the talks process? The answer seems to be pragmatism, a recognition of power realities and perhaps a better appreciation than their critics of the potency of even minimal demands, especially when wedded to skillfully crafted methods of political campaigning. The struggle for Irish freedom will not end with these talks. The unionists know this and not all of their bluster is synthetic.

Even conceding nationalism's minimum demands could be fatal for unionists. Remember what those simple democratic demands, Civil Rights, one man one vote (man denoting the female as well), the abolition of the Special Powers Act and the disbandment of the B-Specials, did to them. It shattered their monolithic unity and brought down, after 50 years, the sectarian monstrosity at Stormont. And so just what are the current minimal demands of nationalism and republicanism?

A restored Northern Assembly-- Dublin and the SDLP are accepting this, provided that constitutional stipulations and mechanisms prohibit unionist domination from future progressive developments.

Cross-border bodies-- pan-nationalist unanimity here, but Sinn Fein is wanting them to impinge directly on the absoluteness of British sovereignty in the North while the Irish government and the SDLP are satisfied, at this stage, with bodies capable of evolution and development. Their emphasis is on economic linkages that do not involve sovereignty directly. Sinn Fein has asked for an all-Ireland Human Rights Commission and an all-Ireland Constitutional Court responsible to a North/South council. This demand could tie in with Mr. Mitchell's proposal for Commissions which will be referred to later.

The Irish government, SDLP and Sinn Fein want the cross-border bodies to be legislatively based in the London and Dublin parliaments so that a unionist dominated Northern assembly could be prevented from aborting them. Unionists resisted cross-border bodies of any kind, except those that are solely cosmetic.

Balanced constitutional change-- Only Sinn Fein is standing out against neutering Articles 2 & 3. Any change should strengthen the national and citizenship rights of the people in the North. Unanimity exists in relation to an expectancy that the British will reciprocate by altering their own constitutional law affecting the North -- the Government of Ireland Act (GIA) 1920. Only Sinn Fein is emphasizing that more than the GIA is involved. There is the Act of Union 1801, the 1949 Ireland Act and the 1973 Constitution Act, etc. The unionists, of course, want Articles 2 & 3 scrapped and British colonialist claims untouched.

National, civil and human rights--
- Senator Mitchell has proposed the setting up of Commissions to deal with these urgent matters. The pan-nationalist parties have not ruled these out. Guarantees of their effectiveness in bringing about urgent change are being sought. Long-fingering is not going to be tolerated. Given the record of British administrations down through the years perhaps an international element will be required. Irish government involvement, with sufficient empowerment, is crucial. Policing, the administration of justice, the equality agenda and the issue of politically motivated prisoners are high on the list of matters to be addressed.

Again the unionists would prefer to have these matters dealt with internally ie. by themselves, but they may have to swallow these proposals for the sake of having to show that they will make some movement.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Blair has had to fly into Belfast to "rescue" the talks. Only one previous British Prime Minister has had the guts to face down the unionists and that was Mrs. Thatchers when she signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Mr. Blair is said to be a great admirer of Mrs. Thatcher, but will he emulate her in this respect. Mr. Ahern has already stated, with complete justification, that he has no more concessions to give. What the nationalist side had been seeking has been described as a transition to a transitional period, and there are many people who, perhaps not understanding or agreeing with this situation, are -- to put it mildly -- in a very volatile mood.

Newsbits *cont. from page 1*

with notes written by Nelson himself, show that he was involved in 15 murders, 15 attempted murders and 62 conspiracies to murder. At least one of Nelson's victims had no connection with republican terrorism at all. The Contact Forms were unearthed in September 1990 by detectives from Britain, led by the then-Deputy Chief Constable of Cambridge, John Stevens. Stevens was investigating allegations that soldiers and police had colluded with loyalist paramilitaries by leaking documents containing names, addresses and other details of IRA suspects. The files also paint a graphic picture of how the FRU misled and obstructed the Stevens Inquiry. Within a week of Stevens's arriving in the province, one of Nelson's handlers noted that he had been "reminded that, should he be arrested, he must make absolutely no mention of his work for this office." On the eve of Nelson's planned arrest by the Stevens team, he fled to England. That night a fire destroyed Stevens's offices. After Stevens, the FRU was disbanded, although another agent-running unit was reconstituted under a different name. (*Sunday Telegraph*, 3/29/98)

Mr. Nelson was never charged with offences arising from the affair after consultation with Sir Patrick Mayhew, the then-attorney general. He was persuaded to plead guilty to five charges of conspiracy to murder, and there was no trial. He was jailed for 10 years and now lives in England . . . Military intelligence officers said the operation was intended to save lives, and they had passed to Special Branch the names of 217 people under threat. But an inquiry was able to establish that only two lives were saved as a result. Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams said that Sir Patrick's involvement in a deal in which the murder charges were dropped raised questions about the involvement of the Thatcher and Major governments in an "illegal and murderous" strategy. (*The Guardian*, 3/30/98)

Stephen M. White

by Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

The American Irish influence certainly has made itself known in California. In the early days, American Irish leader Stephen M. White played a vital role in the development of the Golden State, particularly Los Angeles. White's parents were born in Ireland. His father, William, came from County Limerick and emigrated to the US after the British executed two of his farm hands (drawn and quartered) for possessing an unusable flintlock musket. White's mother, Frances, immigrated to Florida with the family of her uncle Stephen Mallory, who designed the ironclad Civil War ship Merrimac. Frances and William were married in Savannah, Georgia, in 1848. Soon after their wedding, they sailed around Cape Horn to San Francisco. Their son, Stephen, was born on Jan. 19, 1853 in a tiny cottage on Taylor Street in San Francisco.

The White family moved to Santa Cruz County, where they worked on a ranch. William became active in California politics as an advocate for the poor. Stephen attended the Jesuit College of St. Ignatius in San Francisco as a gifted student. After graduation, he studied law in Watsonville. He moved to the then tiny town of Los Angeles where he became a struggling lawyer. He was ready to move to Arizona when the St. Patrick's Day Committee of Los Angeles asked him to give the oration for a festival on March 17 held by the old Spanish families of Los Angeles.

After his oration in the town square, White became popular and his law office became the largest in Los Angeles. In 1883, he married Miss Hortense Sacriste, a member of an established Spanish family in the city. Soon after, White was elected to the council in that small but growing city. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, White was elected as the District Attorney of Los Angeles County. When it came to crime and unscrupulous businessmen, White led a full assault against offenders. His reputation as an honest leader was spreading throughout California. He soon became a state senator for Los Angeles and he went on to become Lieutenant Governor of California.

White's first bid for the US Senate was unsuccessful, however, because the business leaders whom he had prosecuted as District Attorney campaigned against him. He succeeded to the Senate in the mid- to late 1890s. Editorials against him for his Irish Catholic heritage prevented him from being nominated as Vice President. White was a diligent public servant, fighting against the Southern Pacific Railroad's efforts to dominate much of public lands in the state and control the Harbor Area of San Pedro. Because of White's efforts, many public parks and beaches in California are open to the public today. He was also an early supporter of civil rights and voting rights for all Americans. White helped develop the metropolis of Los Angeles and preserve California's natural beauty. (*Special thanks to Edward Kelley of Dorchester, Mass.*)

PEC Activates National Telephone Chain

On Sunday, April 5 the PEC activated its National Telephone Chain (NTC). PEC called as many NTC members as possible. NTC members were requested to call the Irish Embassy in Washington, DC. and to urge that Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and his government not support changing Articles 2 & 3 of the Irish Constitution (this issue is still relevant) and that it not water down the powers of the proposed cross-border bodies. The powers of the cross border bodies were part of Senator George Mitchell's package that was being negotiated at that time.

Articles 2 & 3 give Ireland the legal claim over the 6 occupied counties known as "Northern Ireland." We thank the NTC members we reached for their splendid cooperation and willingness to call other people.

cont. on page 6

Loyalist Cease-fire by Another Name is Killing Campaign

Compiled by Sandy Carlson, *Connecticut*

Loyalist paramilitaries continue their campaign of sectarian murder, despite announcing their cease-fire in October, 1994. Though no group claimed responsibility for several murders, the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) is widely believed to be responsible. In some cases, nationalists believe the LVF acted with the help of the larger paramilitary groups--the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF)--whose political representatives have participated in the peace talks. The loyalist death count since the 1994 cease-fire follows:

1996

• **July** - Lurgan taxi driver Michael McGoldrick is shot dead. He is last seen going to collect a fare the night before.

1997

• **March** - Two loyalist gunmen enter the west Belfast home of John Slane and shoot him dead. **May 8** - Portadown Catholic Robert Hamill dies weeks after he is savagely beaten by a loyalist mob in the center of town. **May 13** - the body of GAA official Sean Brown is found beside his burned-out car at Randalstown in County Antrim. Mr. Brown had been abducted as he locked the gates of the Bellaghy GAA club, of which he was chairman, after a meeting. **June - 11** - Shankill Butcher Bobby Bates, responsible for the murder of about 20 Catholics, is gunned down at a prisoners' center in east Belfast. A former UVF member, Bates is thought to have been killed in a vendetta for his part in the murder of UDA man James Moorehead in 1977. **June 1** - Off-duty RUC Constable Gregory Taylor dies after he is beaten to death outside a pub in Ballymoney, County Antrim by a loyalist mob. **June 1** - A lone gunman is responsible for the murder of 18-year-old Catholic Bernadette Martin in her Protestant boyfriend's County Antrim home while the two are sleeping in the same bed. **June** - The incident is followed by the sectarian murder of 16-year-old James Morgan, from near Castlewella, County Down. **October 25** - Glen Greer dies almost instantly in a car-bomb attack in Bangor, County Down. **December 5** - GAA official Gerry Devlin is shot as he

drives into the parking lot of St. Enda's club in Glengannon, County Antrim. **December** - shortly after Christmas the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) kills leading loyalist Billy Wright in the blocks of Long Kesh prison in Northern Ireland. **December 27** - Doorman Seamus Dillon is gunned down by LVF gunmen at the Glengannon Hotel in Dungannon. **December 31** - The subsequent victim of loyalist paramilitaries is Edward Treanor. He dies in the New Year's Eve gun attack on the Clifton Bar in Belfast.

1998

January 17 - Fergal McCusker (28) is shot dead by the LVF minutes after being dragged off the street near his home in the early morning. **January 20** - Blame for the murder of north Belfast taxi-driver Larry Brennan is laid firmly at the door of the UFF. Loyalist paramilitaries carry out a dummy run for the murder of taxi-driver Mr. Brennan before the INLA kills loyalist Jim Guiney. **January 21** - Ben Hughes (52) is killed outside his work place in a loyalist area. **January 23** - Following a statement that its killing spree will continue, the UFF kills Liam Conway in North Belfast. **January 24** - The body of taxi driver John McColgan is discovered dumped on the western outskirts of Belfast. **February 18** - An infant is left alone as its father Kevin Conway is lured to his death. Though no group claims responsibility for murdering the 30-year-old Lurgan man, republicans blame loyalists.

Republicans have also claimed several

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lives in 1997 since loyalists announced their cease-fire.

December - The INLA kills leading loyalist Billy Wright in Long Kesh prison. **February 12** - Lance Bombardier Stephen Restorick (23) is shot dead by an IRA sniper at a security check-point. **May 9** - suspended RUC officer Constable Darren Bradshaw is shot dead at point-blank range by the INLA in Belfast's Parliament bar. **June 16** - Constable Roland John Graham and Reserve Constable David Andrew Johnston (30) are shot from behind at point-blank range in Lurgan. The IRA admits responsibility for the double killing.

1998

February 18, 1998 - Two unclaimed murders cause northern secretary Mo Mowlam to expel Sinn Fein from the talks. Though the IRA deny responsibility, the RUC and Dr. Mowlam blame the IRA for the deaths of UDA man Robert Dougan and drugs dealer Brendan Campbell. **February** - In the same month, Paul McFadden, a long-time friend of RUC informer Martin McGartland, is murdered by the Continuity IRA. **March 29** - the INLA kills Cyril Stewart, a former Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) officer, when they gun him down at a supermarket. **April 8** - The same organization claims responsibility for killing Derry man Trevor Deeney. The tiny group, which is opposed to the peace process, claims the dead man was a leading member of the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) murder gang.

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Does Trimble Think the People Are Stupid?

by Brian Feeney

Excerpted from the Irish News, March 25, 1998

ONLY one political front for a terrorist organization hasn't spent any time in the sin bin Senator George Mitchell devised for those who "demonstrably dishonor" his principles of democracy and non-violence. That's the PUP, who, as their spokesmen . . . helpfully tell us, represent the UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force]. The fact that they haven't been thrown out of the talks at any time bears some examination.

The [Royal Ulster Constabulary] RUC chief constable told us memorably last year that all the terrorist front organizations at the talks had broken their cease-fires. In the case of the UVF, it has [committed] attempted murder, bombings, punishment shootings and beatings. If you think about it there aren't many other ways you could break a cease-fire. Still, it's OK as long as one of their spokesmen says the loyalist cease-fire remains intact. In their case, there was no hurry by the chief constable to "make a determination"--why does it always have to be so pompous?--And tell the secretary of state who dunnit, so to speak.

Poor old Sinn Fein tried that, even using the same phrase, that the IRA cease-fire remained intact, but they got slung out. Nor did David Trimble rush to "indict" the PUP. Why the difference? Would it be mischievous to point out that Trimble needs the PUP whereas no one needs Sinn Fein? Trimble needs the PUP because he did so badly in the election he demanded in 1996 that he failed to get a large enough vote to speak for the unionist electorate.

The procedure at the Stormont talks requires "sufficient consensus"--that is, a majority in each community and across both communities for any decision to be taken. The UUP [Ulster Unionist Party] needs the support of one of the loyalist front parties to deliver unionist consensus. Is that why no one was ever keen to sling out the PUP? It also demonstrates conclusively the absurdity and hypocrisy of David Trimble's call in his predictably visionless weekend speech to consign extremists to history, unless of course he doesn't count the UVF as extremists. The Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) has the percentage to deliver sufficient nationalist consensus alone, though they

won't, because to do so would render the talks pointless besides inviting electoral disaster.

Because of his electoral failure in 1996, David Trimble **cannot** walk away from loyalist extremists. On the contrary, last autumn, for the benefit of the cameras, the UUP walked into the talks flanked by more convicted murderers, bombers and gangsters per square foot than you could shake a bag of ecstasy [drugs sold by loyalists] at. Yet, despite his brazen denial on TV on Sunday, David Trimble won't talk to Sinn Fein. It can't be repeated too often that he depends on the support of convicted terrorists in the talks, yet he won't speak to members of Sinn Fein who have never even been charged with anything, let alone convicted. His position is bereft of logic or consistency.

There are only two conclusions: for the UUP, loyalist terrorism is less reprehensible than republican; and the UUP has no integrity. Furthermore, the PUP's support doesn't come without a price. The PUP's "Plum" Smith has said his party won't sign up to anything unless there's a deal securing the release of loyalist prisoners, a deal beginning when an agreement is signed. Presumably he means after it's ratified in referenda, but you get his drift. Do you think "Plum" made that statement to clear his throat and that the PUP will reverse it at Easter? Or do you think that's the settled policy of his party and a UVF requirement for an agreement? The harsh truth is that if the PUP won't sign up in those circumstances then neither will Gary McMichael's lot. They can't be satisfied with less for their prisoners than the UVF.

When it comes to the crunch, the UUP depends on satisfying the PUP's demands on behalf of convicted

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terrorists. So much for consigning them to history. Does David Trimble think people are stupid? Does he not understand that TV interviewers give him enough rope to hang himself, that viewers are laughing at his manifest political chicanery? Quite simply, the PUP, beloved of the media, the NIO [Northern Ireland Office], and the RUC, have the Portadown Prancer in an arm-lock on prisoners and policing.

Yet, paradoxically, it is they who prevent his taking even more extreme unionist positions than he has. They wouldn't support him, so he can't. Ominously, this pivotal position the PUP holds has not gone unnoticed among other unionists who call them traitors

Equally, extreme republican groups who don't support the IRA cease-fire regard the PUP as the key to the talks. The PUP, because they have refused to endorse Trimble's instinctive right-wing unionism, are therefore in danger from both extremes. The LVF are recruiting UVF members, criticize the leadership for being old, soft and "communitic" and hoping to draw the UVF back to sectarian murder. At the same time, republicans outside the process would love to provoke the UVF into violence that would result in their ejection. If they succeed, the talks will collapse for lack of unionist consensus.

Despite all these threats to their organization and their personal safety, the PUP have hung in trying to make the talks work. Sadly, while they can rein in the Prancer's natural political instincts, they can't drive him to negotiate and, on the evidence so far, there's no indication he wants to do anything except project his own failure onto the SDLP and Sinn Fein.

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Irish Peace Process Update

March 11 - There is speculation that documents sketching the outline of a possible settlement will be placed on the negotiation table during the week of March 23. The overall settlement package should include: constitutional change based on the principle of consent; new institutions in Northern Ireland so politicians can share real responsibility; new executive decision-making arrangements between Northern Ireland and the Republic; a new basis for relationships between the UK and Ireland which also takes account of the British government's devolution proposals for Scotland and Wales; better protection for the rights of all and promotion of equality of opportunity for all; and steps to build a normal, peaceful society.

Independent TD Harry Blaney threatens to withdraw his support for the Irish government if Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern does not keep to a deal on Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution which the two men signed last June.

March 13 - 32-County Sovereignty is to mount a trans-Atlantic legal challenge over Britain's claim to Northern Ireland. Bernadette Sands McKevitt and Omagh Sinn Fein councilor, Francie Mackey, will launch the challenge at the UN's New York headquarters next month.

March 15 - Ahern formally confirms that his government is prepared to alter the key clauses of the Irish Constitution in return for concessions from the British government in relation to its Government of Ireland Act (1920). Sources suggest that Britain will insert a clause in its law providing that if a majority in Northern Ireland affirms a wish to enter a united Ireland, then the British government would put forward the necessary legislation.

March 17 - Gerry Adams, speaking in Washington, says Sinn Fein will continue to pursue the goal of Irish unity though he acknowledges a united Ireland is unlikely to happen by May.

March 18 - The gulf between unionists and nationalists about the role, remit, and powers of a north-south council will be

the main focus in political negotiations over the next few weeks. The Ulster Unionists' bottom line is that north-south bodies should be consultative, but the SDLP insist there will be no settlement without meaningful cross-border arrangements including executive powers.

March 19 - US lawyer Tom Burke reveals that RUC Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan was unable to provide evidence linking the IRA or Sinn Fein to the killings which were used as the basis for the party's expulsion from the talks.

March 20 - Sinn Fein releases details of its plans for public forums across Ireland and possibly elsewhere to allow for a greater input into the peace process. Proposals for three separate independent commissions on policing, justice, and prisoners are likely to be put to the political parties next week.

March 21 - Sinn Fein decides to return to the talks on Monday.

March 24 - The wide gap between the positions of Dublin and the UUP on north-south bodies is revealed in the latest peace talks document.

Cross-border structures are discussed at a Cabinet meeting in Dublin.

Prime Minister Bertie Ahern raises doubts about the ability of Northern Ireland parties to reach an agreement in time for a referendum in May.

March 25 - Talks Chair George Mitchell issues an ultimatum to the parties to reach agreement by Thursday, April 9th.

March 26 - The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is bracing itself for further possible leaks as a storm erupts over an internal document handed over to unionists detailing the NIO's plans to secure a "yes" vote in the proposed referendum.

March 29 - A poll in the *Sunday Independent* newspaper claims that a majority of voters in the Republic are in favor of changing the Constitution as part of a peace deal for Northern Ireland.

The *Sunday Business Post* claims

the new Article 2 of the Irish Constitution drops the territorial claim to the island of Ireland and instead refers to the "entitlement" of any person born on the island "to belong to the Irish nation."

March 30 - The *Irish News* reports that Ahern has told Fianna Fail TDs opposed to changing Articles 2 and 3 that there would be regular polls on the status of the north. Under present legislation, there is supposed to be a poll in Northern Ireland every 10 years to gauge the people's view on a united Ireland.

April 2 - Ahern says that unless the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) is prepared to compromise on the powers of north-south bodies, there will be no northern deal.

April 3 - The UUP issues an ultimatum to Ahern, saying if he does not soften his position, there will be no peace settlement in Northern Ireland.

April 4 - The two governments send Mitchell the long-awaited joint paper on their proposed settlement on the north, but it still contains different opinions over planned north-south bodies.

April 5 - A draft document outlining a peace deal is withheld at the last minute after Trimble protests against one section concerning a proposed north-south ministerial council with the power "to make and effect decisions."

April 6 - Sinn Fein negotiator Martin McGuinness says equality must be a "fact" in any agreement for it to work. He says both the Irish and British governments should legislate for an all-Ireland constitutional court.

April 7 - Mitchell tables long-awaited outline of peace proposals. He gives the document to party leaders trying to meet a Thursday deadline.

The peace talks are plunged into a new crisis when Trimble dismisses draft proposals for a peace settlement as unacceptable to his party.

April 8 - Ahern and Blair go to Belfast to try to save the peace process. Blair raises hopes of a breakthrough in the peace process, claiming the substance of an agreement is "just about there."

Action Requests

Write the letters below, preferably in your own words, or as is. Have friends, organizations, business associates, etc., do the same.

Mention your membership in PEC.

1. Prime Minister Tony Blair, 10 Downing Street, London SW1A, Great Britain

Message: I am advised by PEC that the booklet being distributed to the Northern Ireland public to explain the agreement is not understandable to the majority of citizens. They are being asked to vote on something they do not understand. Please correct this situation.

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

Message: I am advised by PEC that the booklet being distributed to the Northern Ireland public to explain the agreement is not understandable to the majority of citizens. They are being asked to vote on something they do not understand. Please help correct this situation.

Roisin McAliskey Freed

Efforts to extradite Irish human rights victim Roisin McAliskey have been dropped. British Home Secretary Jack Straw said on March 9 that the medical evidence in her case meant extradition would be "unjust and oppressive." The 26-year-old mother had been detained by British authorities for 16 months with no clear evidence to link her to an IRA attack on German soil in 1996.

The Home Office abandoned the case only days before St. Patrick's Day protests on behalf of the young Tyrone woman and other Irish political prisoners were due to take place worldwide. Roisin was arrested, while pregnant, at her home in Tyrone. She was held in the notorious Castlereagh Interrogation center for six days and questioned for twelve hours a day, one hour on and one hour off. She was then flown to London and put into a filthy, feces-smear cell in an all-male prison.

Only an international outcry forced her transfer to a female prison, where she was strip-searched more than 100 times and told that she would be forced to give birth shackled to a prison guard. The appalling conditions inflicted on Roisin while carrying her child, Loinnir, had been condemned by human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Roisin's doctors had recently accused the British government of adding to her suffering by baiting her with nonexistent visits by the psychiatrist appointed by the British Home Secretary.

However, the psychiatrist's assessment is apparently the basis on which Straw has ordered the extradition bid ended. The psychiatrist said her mental health had been seriously undermined by the trauma of her imprisonment, and had continued to deteriorate while she was being held at the secure wing of a London psychiatric hospital, according to a Dublin newspaper. The doctor is also believed to have said she would be unable to face further interrogation on the allegations against her.

National Telephone Chain cont. from page 4

We apologize to the many NTC members we did not reach. Unfortunately our automated telephone chain system was not in service at the time. We had to call as many members as possible, one at a time, a very tedious task. By the time you receive this newsletter we will have the automated system in service.

In order for you to get the message from the automated NTC, you, or someone in your family, or an answering machine, must answer the phone.

So sign up to the National Telephone Chain today! Call 800 777-6807. Leave your name, address and a phone number that has an answering machine hooked up to it.

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Members receive the monthly *American Irish Newsletter*.

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