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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 22, Number 5

May 1997

Media Double Standards Continue

Once again the media in the United States continually fails to report British and Loyalist violence in Northern Ireland. When the IRA conducts bombing attacks in Northern Ireland or in Britain, it is widely reported in the US media. This often includes the ritual condemnations from sections of the media and political establishment. This is not the case when violence comes from British or Loyalist sources.

A clear example of the double standard is a comparison of the media coverage surrounding the killings of British soldier Stephen Restorick and John Slane, an innocent Catholic father of 10 children. When an IRA sniper killed Restorick, there was massive media coverage in the US, just as there was in the British media. Politicians on both sides of the Atlantic blasted the killing and used it to attack Sinn Fein. However, when British Loyalist terrorists, reportedly from the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), murdered Mr. Slane as he prepared formula for his newborn twins, the incident was barely reported in the media.

An even clearer indication of the double standard is when, during the same weekend, two IRA bomb hoaxes forced the cancellation of Britain's most famous horse race, the Grand National, and Loyalists burned down four Catholic churches and tried to murder a Catholic butcher. The IRA hoaxes were widely reported, both in the television and print media. There was no mention of the Loyalist acts whatsoever in the American media. Furthermore, even when the British government admits that Loyalists carried out attacks, they still cling to the facade that the Loyalist ceasefire is intact and they have no intention of expelling the Loyalist representatives from the talks. The same cannot be said for their attitudes towards Sinn Fein and Republicans.

American journalists still don't fully investigate or understand the conflict in Northern Ireland. Most still refuse to question A.P. reports which emanate from the London bureau and are often supplied by British government sources.

Support Our 1997 Raffle PEC Needs Your Financial Support

Please purchase the book of raffle tickets enclosed with this newsletter. The support of all members for this raffle will go a long way in making the PEC financially strong. The tickets cost \$3 each (book of six tickets for \$15). The drawing will take place on October 18, 1997. Winners will be announced.

The prizes are: 2 Round Trip Tickets to Ireland from New York or Boston, or \$1200 cash. There are also 3 \$100 consolation prizes. Please return the stubs with your check payable to PEC-AIEF in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible.

Volunteers Are Needed To Sell Tickets! To order extra books of raffle tickets, call (800) 777-6807 or write: PEC-AIEF, 54 South Liberty Drive, Stony Point, NY 10980. Specify how many books you want. Your help is important so that we can continue our necessary work.

(Purchase of tickets is not necessary to enter raffle.)

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

A father of ten, John Slane, was murdered in his kitchen as he was heating milk for his infant twins. Political representatives of loyalist killer gangs tell us they don't know who is behind it, unionist politicians confine their comments to pointing out how inevitable it was and British government officials act as if nothing had happened. What is there left to say about the sickening hypocrisy of a political process that involves a talks process which excludes 43% of the nationalist community on the basis that republicans have no ceasefire but which includes a minuscule section of the population represented by the PUP and the UDP while the men they claim to represent continue to bomb, murder and maim at will?

(Andersonstown News, 3/22/97)

Even as John Slane lay dead on his kitchen floor, three balaclava-clad members of the RUC were flushed out of the undergrowth outside a bar and responded by opening fire indiscriminately on the packed premises, lives only being saved by the fact that the glass was bulletproof. Were these masked and heavily armed men going to kill a Protestant in the car park of the mixed bar and blame it on the IRA? Were they going to turn their

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OUR VIEW

When the PEC began preparations for the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Ireland's Great Hunger way back in 1982, we faced an uphill battle.

Our mission was not only to have a proper and dignified commemoration of Ireland's Great Hunger, but also educate the public about what really happened during that time.

In the past, the general perception among the mainstream was that The Great Hunger was a "potato famine." The Great Hunger was also perceived to be a natural disaster.

The most important development in the commemoration of Ireland's Great Hunger is the fact that these myths have been exposed. It is because of the PEC that the public is now aware that there was no famine in Ireland. The potato crop failed, but there was more than enough other foodstuffs to feed the people of Ireland three times over. If the British government had provided adequate relief or stopped the export of food as other nations did in Europe when their potato crops failed, then the tragic consequences of The Great Hunger would have been averted.

We in Irish America have always known this to be the case. Now the rest of the world is catching on. Next year, children in schools in New York and New Jersey will be studying The Great Hunger as part of those states' human rights curriculum. Recent documentaries on The Great Hunger have finally begun to examine Britain's culpability for the deaths during The Great Hunger. Who could have predicted that powerful American elected officials would be in a highly public feud with the British government over its actions during The Great Hunger?

The success of The Great Hunger commemoration and education campaigns is a testament to the strength of the PEC, our members and grass-roots action.

Join the PEC National Telephone Chain

One of the PEC's most effective weapons in our lobbying efforts in support of peace with justice and Ireland's reunification is the PEC's National Telephone Chain.

Many of the important successes achieved by the Irish American lobby, including the positive changes in America's Irish policy to the granting of a visa for Gerry Adams, were accomplished through the efforts of the phone chain.

The phone-chain is simple. When an issue arises that requires urgent action, the PEC's national office contacts the members who have signed on to the phone chain. The PEC gives these members the name and phone number of the person to contact (i.e. the White House) and provides them with the message to relay. These members are also asked to contact others they feel would be interested in calling.

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The chain is so simple, yet so effective. But in order to increase our clout and the effectiveness of the **PEC National Telephone Chain**, we need members who have not signed up to join.

There are many important battles ahead, the peace process, the deportees, the Great Hunger campaign. We need to increase the size of our chain to increase our strength in these battles. Please call the PEC and sign up for the **PEC National Telephone Chain**.

To join the **PEC National Telephone Chain**, simply call the PEC office at (800) 777-6807, Tuesday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm. Call today.

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

From the North: Major's Legacy

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

We know that John Major, the British Prime Minister (and even more so Sir Patrick Mayhew, his Northern Ireland Office Secretary) was opposed to the Irish peace process right from the beginning. This statement is confirmed by the research done by **Eamonn Mallie** and **David McKitterick** for their book, *'The Fight for Peace; The Story Behind the Irish Peace Process.'*

Even more telling is the actual record of the Major Conservative government in its seven years in office. Not only did it collude with Northern Ireland Unionism to stymie any significant democratic change, it did everything it could to prevent inclusive negotiations during the 18 months of the IRA's ceasefire. Even pressure from Reynolds/Hume/Adams, supported by influential Americans, was unable to shift Major from his dogged defense of the anti-democratic status quo in Northern Ireland.

If he goes out of office in May following a British general election, that will have been his legacy to the people of Ireland and England. None of this stops his spokespersons from waffling on about 'their' mission in Northern Ireland. In a 'personal message' accompanying the *Frame-works for Agreement Document*, Mayhew had the effrontery to suggest the following as a basis for 'promoting agreement and reconciliation' in the North. Here is his fantastical notion.

* Irish recognition of the need to remove the territorial claim (in the Irish Constitution) to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland.

* Ways of dealing with fundamental breaches of a settlement without creating Joint Sovereignty or Authority over Northern Ireland.

Would you believe it? In the first place Ireland's claim is not a TERRITORIAL claim. To describe it as such is to portray one's ignorance

(genuine or otherwise) of the nature of the problem. People are somewhere involved. In the second place, the non-authoritative presence which the Irish government already has in the North via the Anglo-Irish Agreement etc. has not been able to prevent **State-terrorism** taking place there as a fairly regular occurrence.

Given that the whole problem derives from British sovereignty in the north, it is ludicrous for Mayhew to rule out change in this respect in the search for an accommodation. This is an attitude which explains why no progress has been made during Major's seven years in government. When Mayhew's message talks about the will of the north's people, he has in mind only the Unionists. Throughout Ireland as a whole (and including at least 40 percent in the North), the will of the people is for the British to get out of Ireland and give the Irish people a chance to devise democratic structures for the exercise of self-government, in other words, democracy.

British governments have never been able to deliver this. It should not be necessary to recite the features of their rule: permanent emergency legislation (the Civil Authorities Special Powers Act, the Flags and Emblems Act, prohibiting the flying of the Irish flag) anti-Catholic discrimination, deployment of the sectarian paramilitary police force, backed up with B Special auxiliaries and gerrymandered elections leading to permanent one-party rule. For British government spokespersons to preach about democracy reeks of cynicism of a very high order.

And it is not all past history. In having to deal with the crises they are constrained to go even further down the anti-democratic road. In a series of recommendations and rulings, the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights and the

United Nations watchdog on torture have described Britain's policy in dealing with its crises as 'flawed and unjust', the diplomatic way of expressing it. The UN's specialist committee on the elimination of Human Rights abuses recommended that Britain should repeal the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In his dealings with the Irish prisoners, the British Home Secretary, Michael Howard, has been rapped over the knuckles by the European Court and found to have acted in an 'unreasonable and unlawful manner.'

Nevertheless, the spokespersons for the British government go on prattling as if the lengthening list of human rights abuses (verified) did not exist. This is the state to which their full blooded attachment to Unionism has brought them. They would like to restore a new Stormont if they could. It used to do the repressing for them. While it could not claim to be sovereign, it enabled Westminster to distance itself from what was going on.

Fittingly emblematic of their rule is the Baroness Denton affair. She is embroiled in three cases which transgress the Fair Employment legislation which the British were forced, reluctantly, to introduce. One involved her press officer, a Catholic, who was harassed in her place of work, the Baroness' office, during the lawlessness at Drumcree. The Baroness dealt promptly with the matter by removing the victim. Along with her other duties as an economic minister, the Baroness is responsible for implementing the codes of the Fair Employment Commission.

Just how seriously the Major government has taken its responsibility to deliver reconciliation to the people of the North and an end to the violence which has over-spilled to his own English people, is further illustrated by the Conservative Party's election manifesto. In a document 60 pages long, just 5 paragraphs were devoted to Northern Ireland and these, according to one T.V. reporter, were "meaningless."

Newsbits *cont. from page 1*

weapons on a Catholic and blame it on the UVF? The statement issued in the wake of the incident asks us to believe that they were investigating "suspicious activity" but neglects to tell us why they felt the need to chase bar staff across the car park firing wildly as they went.

(Andersonstown News, 3/22/97)

There has been a chorus of promises that, if the IRA calls a ceasefire, Sinn Fein will be "admitted" to talks. Sinn Fein has a right to be at all talks whether the IRA calls a ceasefire or not. The voters gave them that right. [All the politicians say] that, if the IRA calls a ceasefire, all representatives of the people will be heard, there will be all-inclusive talks, everyone will be treated with respect. If a ceasefire were to be called, not one shred of evidence has been given that Sinn Fein will not be treated the same way as before. We have had constant killings and house burning, insults and threats from loyalists who called a ceasefire but never had one. We have had anti-Catholic discrimination and cruelty in the government offices. We still have Harryville (where Catholics are harassed and taunted as they go to Mass) ... Unless and until there are promises underwritten, guaranteed by a responsible international body, any people would be extremely foolish to believe [the politicians].

(Andersonstown News, 3/22/97)

Roisin McAliskey, a pregnant Irish prisoner held without bail by the British government, will be manacled on her way to the hospital and during labor. The hand and leg irons will be removed during the delivery of the child but replaced immediately after birth ... She has to go before a prison panel, which normally sits to consider the cases of drug-abusers, to find out whether she is deemed a fit parent to keep her baby.

(Andersonstown News, 3/8/97)

Margaret Thatcher might never have won the 1979 election if she had not hired handlers to deepen her voice an octave. *(Andersonstown News, 3/1/97)*

The O'Brien Brothers

by Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

The power and prestige of the U.S. Navy is known in every port throughout the world. However, the beginning of this mighty institution has a very American Irish theme. Yes, it is known that Commodore John Barry is the founder of the U.S. Navy, but history seems to have forgotten Jeremiah and John O'Brien of Machias, Maine, who out of meager means brought the American Navy its first victory.

John and Jeremiah O'Brien were born in Maine to Irish immigrant parents who had come to Massachusetts. Maine was a part of Massachusetts during the 1700's. The family operated a saw mill in Machias and called it "Dublin Mill". During the spring of 1775, Massachusetts was embroiled in conflict against British authority. Jeremiah O'Brien was the local leader of the American independence movement. The top lumber man in Machias at this period was Ichabod Jones who was a strong Tory and was supplying lumber for the British Army defenses in the Boston area.

Like many Massachusetts towns, Machias erected a large Liberty Pole in its town square and flew the flag of the 13 colonies on it as a show of defiance towards British rule. Ichabod Jones requested and received an escort of the British Naval vessel *Margaretta* and a compliment of Royal Marines to protect his ships, the *Unity* and *Polly*, when they loaded British Army bound lumber at Machias. Commander Moore of H.M.S. *Margaretta* ordered the town of Machias to take down its Liberty Pole or he would have his cannons destroy the town. On Saturday June 10, 1775 the H.M.S. *Margaretta* sailed close to Machias as it prepared to shell the town.

In the face of the British threat, Jeremiah and John O'Brien held an emergency meeting of townspeople. The following Monday, another O'Brien brother, Dennis led a group of patriots to seize the Jones lumber ship *Unity*. Under the leadership of Jeremiah, the men of Machias also managed to seize the lumber ship *Polly*. John and Jeremiah gathered 50 Machias lumbermen and sailed the *Unity* out to face the might of the H.M.S. *Margaretta*. The men of Machias voted to have Jeremiah O'Brien serve as captain. On June 12, 1775, Jeremiah O'Brien became America's first naval officer. An African-American, Richard Earle, sailed with the O'Briens to fight against the H.M.S. *Margaretta*. Earle became a longtime employee of the O'Brien's sawmill after the war. The *Unity* engaged the British off the Machias coastline. John and Capt. Jeremiah rammed the British ship with tremendous force and led a boarding party against the highly trained Royal sailors and Marines. John O'Brien was the first to board H.M.S. *Margaretta*. A vicious battle that lasted for over an hour occurred on the decks of the Royal Navy Ship. Killed in battle was Derry born John McNeil, who became the first American to die at a naval battle. Commander Moore of the British Navy, who was prepared to destroy Machias, died in the battle. Four Americans died in the battle and ten British died as well. The O'Briens re-named the vessel *Unity*, The Machias Liberty. The British Navy under Admiral Graves sent a large force of Royal Marines and Sailors to destroy Machias, in revenge. The O'Brien brothers defeated the British raiding party and captured HMS *Diligent* and *Tapnaquish*. The O'Brien's saw other victories over the British throughout the war off the Maine coast. In 1936 then Massachusetts Governor James M. Curley dedicated a memorial to the O'Briens at the Massachusetts State House in Boston.

The O'Briens are three more of the American Irish who helped create the United States, but have been left out of America's history pages.

Source: Library of Edward Kelley, Dorchester, Massachusetts

The Dove That Died

by Pete Hamill, *New York Post* (2/7/72)

(Editor's Note: As we commemorate Bloody Sunday, the PEC has decided to reprint an article that appeared in the New York Post, one week after Bloody Sunday. The article is both fascinating and infuriating. After reading it, one must ponder the question of whether, if not for the British government, we could have had peace in Ireland 25 years ago.)

Dublin - On the Thursday before Bloody Sunday, the British government was presented a secret five-point plan that could have brought about an immediate IRA ceasefire in Northern Ireland, to be followed by a peace conference. The British rejected the plan and by the following Monday morning all hope for a swift peace seemed to have been lost in the slaughter in the Bogside.

The plan was presented to "very high officials" in the British Home Office by Dr. John O'Connell, a Labor member of the Irish Parliament in Dublin. O'Connell had been working for weeks to try to find a way out of the political and diplomatic impasse that had been in effect since interment without trial started last Aug. 9 and for a few days seemed to have succeeded.

"O'Connell wanted to see the killings stopped and the talking begin," said a man who was very close to the negotiations. "Since he was not part of the ruling Dublin government, he had certain advantages over many people."

O'Connell first approached leaders of the Provisional IRA in Dublin. After a series of discussions, the Provisionals agreed to halt the campaign of bombing and shooting in the North if certain concessions were made. This was encouraging, because the Provisionals had been stereotyped as hard-nosed gunmen who would fight to the bitter end.

Basically, the Provisionals agreed to an immediate 30-day cease

fire, if the British would stop internment. During that period, while ground work was laid for a peace conference, the British Army would be confined to barracks and the army harassment of Catholics in the North would come to an end. The Official IRA went along with the plan as long as it guaranteed that the British Army would be confined to barracks.

"The key was that there was an agreement that internment would end," the source said. "That then freed the SDLP to join the negotiations."

The Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) is the major opposition party in the North and has withdrawn from the Stormont Parliament until internment is ended. If the IRA could agree, even to a phased-out end of internment, SDLP leaders would then be free to negotiate. O'Connell made clear, however, that the IRA would have to have a seat at the conference table.

With agreement from the IRA and the SDLP, O'Connell then travelled North to see the Rev. Ian Paisley, the Protestant militant whose constituency includes the most hard-lined Protestants in the North.

In a series of extraordinary discussions, O'Connell managed to convince Paisley that a peace conference was necessary to end the killings, but that Paisley and the IRA must be present at the table. O'Connell reminded Paisley that Michael Collins, one of the greatest of all IRA leaders, had attended the peace conference of 1920, and Paisley agreed that this was a legitimate precedent. Paisley went along with O'Connell's plan.

And so, armed with agreements from the major opposition party, both wings of the IRA and the most powerful Protestant militant, O'Connell traveled to London on Jan. 27 for meetings at the Home Office. There were five basic points in his proposals.

- 1) Amnesty for all political prisoners (More than half of the 750 people in the camps are being held for their political beliefs and are not members of the IRA).
- 2) The end of internment.
- 3) The immediate withdrawal of the British Army to barracks.
- 4) The complete restructuring of the Stormont government along democratic lines.
- 5) A declaration by the British on the future of Ireland

If the British agreed to a conference, the Provisionals would have put a ceasefire into effect immediately, as a sign of good faith. If, at the end of thirty days, internment was also ended, talks would begin the following week.

Despite a public statement about not sitting down with gunmen, the British were prepared to admit the IRA to the conference table. Initially, they had no trouble accepting the first four points but were shaky about the fifth because that dealt with the reunification of Ireland.

"We told them that the fifth point did not have to be agreed upon going in," the source said. "That's what the conference would be all about."

Unknown to O'Connell, Northern Ireland's Prime Minister Brian Faulkner was in a nearby room during these top secret talks and was being informed of all the developments. At the end of the day, O'Connell was asked to stay overnight in London for further talks in the morning. He agreed.

The following day, he returned to the Home Office and the British turned down the whole package.

Their only apparent excuse was that, "We didn't know what would happen if the talks broke down." O'Connell flew back to Dublin. Within 48 hours, 13 people were dead in the streets of Derry and a major chance for peace had been lost.

"They are either very stupid," the source said, "or they already had planned the events at Derry and had opted for the military victory over the IRA. Either way, we are now back at square one."

We Should Be Ashamed

by Clifford Longley, *Reprinted from the London Tablet,*
an English Catholic publication, 2/7/97

Sometimes it is necessary to say where one stands; and Bloody Sunday is a case in point. Judging from the newspapers this week, how one sees the events of that day 25 years ago is determined by one's perspective, Irish or British.

If the former, the massacre of innocent civilians by British soldiers on that dreadful day in Derry is a collective wound that is still hurting and bleeding. For the British, on the other hand, an impartial inquiry by the Lord Chief Justice of the day established that nobody was to blame. It was a regrettable accident of war: the matter is closed. Those who say otherwise are troublemakers or duped by troublemakers.

I cannot go along with this. It appalls me. I am British, indeed English, to the core; and, though I am Catholic, I have no trace of Irish ancestry. It is my very pride in being British that is offended by the Bloody Sunday affair and its outcome. Despite its many faults, Britain is a decent society. We have not behaved decently over Bloody Sunday. To be frank, I am ashamed of us.

Bloody Sunday did not happen out of the blue, as if something similar could just as easily occurred in similar circumstances in Gravesend or Gloucester. It was a culmination of a long history of prejudice and a habitual misreading of Ireland, its peoples and their troubles, by whole generations of British people. If, as a fully paid up member of this tribe, I had to put my finger on this as best I could, I would say it is a feeling that the spilling of Irish blood is not precisely as important as the spilling of English blood, and therefore appears differently in the balance sheet.

I just cannot believe that

soldiers of the Parachute Regiment could have opened fire on a crowd in Gravesend or Gloucester, killing 14 unarmed civilians and wounding many more. I do not believe that they would have done so, even if they had thought they were under fire. Had that unimaginable thing happened, furthermore, there is no way the matter would have been dealt with as Bloody Sunday was dealt with, literally a case of no names, no pack-drill. At the very least, there would have been resignations and disgrace; probably there would have been trials, with a fair chance of conviction and long sentences.

Part of the trouble is our deep belief that Britain is still basically a decent, law-abiding society. We have armed forces of which we are proud, perhaps second to none in the world. They are not cruel and they do not panic. So, we reason, British soldiers surely cannot have fired on unarmed civilians knowing they were unarmed; therefore they must have come under fire and were shooting back in self-defense.

But not one of those killed was seen holding a weapon, and the later official inquiry, after examining some of the evidence, cleared all of them of suspicion in this regard. So why were they shot? What did the British soldiers see (or think they saw) over their rifle-sights? Gunmen, or just Irishmen?

The determination to keep this issue open, as well as to remember the dead, was what brought 20,000 people on to the streets of Derry last Sunday. They do not share my British faith in the innate decency of the British people and the disciplined professionalism of our soldiers. But, starting from another place, they have reached the same conclusion: that there has been no adequate explanation of what happened and an explanation is still owed.

Reproduce and Distribute

THE MASSACRE in Derry was a turning point in Northern Ireland. It gave enormous impetus to the IRA's policy of alienating the nationalist population from the civil and military authorities. That campaign still continues and was represented on Sunday in the speeches of Sinn Fein leaders such as Martin McGuinness. But, of all the grievances, real and imagined, of all the nationalist population against the forces of the Crown in Northern Ireland, this one is the most real and the least imagined. Those 14 unarmed people did indeed die. It was indeed the British army, and nobody else, that killed them.

So when the chairman of the Conservative Northern Ireland Committee in the House of Commons, Andrew Hunter MP, writes in the Times of London this week that, "the tragedy has been shamelessly exploited by evil men," his British sense of decency seems to have deserted him. Bloody Sunday did not need to be "exploited." Were I a Derry nationalist, I would be angry too, angry 25 years ago and angry now, and I would not need Martin McGuinness' encouragement to remain so.

This week there has been renewed talk of fresh evidence, which the Irish government is soon to submit to the British. Mr. Hunter urges the British government to ignore it, on the grounds that it could help the IRA. On the contrary, the case for another inquiry is unanswerable. If ever there was a matter where no stone can be left unturned, this is it. It is a matter of honor.

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Roisin McAliskey Case Continues

by Sandy Carlson, *PEC Representative*

For Roisin McAliskey, the price in Northern Ireland for failing to provide the British government with the information it wants has been indefinite imprisonment under degrading, unhealthy conditions.

The British government is holding Roisin because she is wanted by the German authorities for questioning about an IRA bomb that exploded at a British army barracks in Osnabruck, Germany last June. The government has said that her court battle against extradition could last into next year.

The British continue to hold the young woman, even though the German government's key witness later denied ever having seen her before and even though Roisin has never been to Germany. Roisin is the daughter of civil rights activist and former Member of Parliament Bernadette Devlin McAliskey. She was living in Coalisland, Co. Tyrone, until her arrest.

The 25-year-old woman has been incarcerated in Castlereagh in Belfast and in Belmarsh and Holloway prisons in England since her arrest Nov. 20, 1996. Although she is now eight months' pregnant, the British government continues to deny her prenatal medical care.

Amnesty International issued a call for action in support of Roisin on Feb. 7. The human rights group said it "is concerned that the conditions of detention in which Roisin McAliskey is being held may amount to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment."

Roisin's sister, Deirdre McAliskey, visited the US from April 1 to April 9 to publicize Roisin's case and encourage people to support her by contacting the German embassy in Washington and demanding that they cancel the extradition warrant.

"The British have introduced the threat of extradition to punish my sister for her complete non-cooperation during the six days she was held in Castlereagh," Deirdre said in an interview April 1.

"The whole thing is an attempt to terrorize an unbroken young woman," she added. Roisin was traumatized, her sister said, by prison officers who told her about the details of friends' murders by the British armed forces. She was even shown pictures of her friends' corpses.

Following a recent British Prison Services affidavit, Roisin's prison conditions have improved somewhat, according to her sister.

The affidavit guarantees that she will be allowed to keep her baby.

"Roisin has gained weight for the first time since she has been in prison," her sister said. The young woman suffers from an eating disorder and asthma, also.

Although Roisin is now allowed to have limited association with other prisoners, she is seldom out of her cell because prison staff claim they do not have the personnel to allow her out for association.

Meanwhile, the computer literate community worker is taking a basic computer course just so she can pass the time in jail. She is also studying introductory German, even though she is not allowed to speak German with her tutor, who does not speak German anyway, and is not allowed to use the practice cassettes.

"My sister is just doing anything she can to keep herself alert. She is making the most of the limited access she has to education in Holloway Prison," Deirdre said.

Roisin now awaits the House of Lords' decision on her latest bail application. Gareth Pierce, who is Roisin's attorney, filed the bail application during the first week in April. The attorney has expressed concern that Roisin's conditions of imprisonment may worsen.

Deirdre said her family is hopeful that Roisin will be allowed out on bail because Ms. Pierce is making

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the application for bail on the basis of the key German witness' denial of ever having seen her. "I have a transcript of his interview on the German program Kontraste, which is a reputable political investigation program," Deirdre said. "And he says openly that he is unable to identify anybody in photographs provided by the government and that he was unaware that he was the prime witness for the German government."

On April 9, a wheelchair bound Roisin McAliskey was back in court in London. She had been requesting bail so she would not have to give birth while in prison. The court refused her request for bail and set May 6 as the date for her next court appearance. On May 6, the Court will hold a hearing on the extradition request by the German government.

After the court hearing, Bernadette McAliskey reported that Roisin suffered a blood clot in Holloway prison and is not receiving proper medical attention. McAliskey is due to give birth in May and still suffers from asthma and a stomach ulcer.

Supporters of McAliskey continue to contact the German government in Berlin, London, New York and Washington demanding that they rescind their request for McAliskey's extradition. This request has been given a definite boost by the admission by the prosecution's chief witness, Manfred Schmit, that he had never seen McAliskey before. The Germans still claim to have handwriting and fingerprint evidence against McAliskey. In light of Mr. Schmit's admission, the reliability of their other supposed evidence must be called into question.

For further information contact:

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54 South Liberty Drive
Stony Point, NY, 10980
(800) 777-6807

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Action Requests

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

Mention in your letters that you are a member of the AIEF-PEC

1. Hon. Trent Lott
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20500

Message: The peace process in Ireland needs your help. Please use your good offices to publicly support all-party peace talks in Ireland including Sinn Fein.

2. Ambassador John Kerr
British Embassy
3100 Mass. Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008
202 462-1340

Please advise your government to issue an apology to the Irish people and the Irish diaspora for the role of the then British government in causing the starvation deaths of more than 1.5 million people during Ireland's Great Hunger. This would be a major step in the search for reconciliation in Ireland.

Pearson Wins Political Asylum

On March 27, Tyrone native Brian Pearson was granted political asylum by U.S. Immigration Judge Phillip Williams. The judge denied the INS attempts to deport Pearson on the grounds that he had committed an 'aggravated felony' and had a criminal record.

Pearson was convicted by a one judge, no-jury Diplock Court in 1976 for his role as a getaway driver in the bombing of a Royal Ulster Constabulary barracks. (A one hour and 55 minute warning was given and nobody was injured.) He was accorded 'special category' (political prisoner) status and served 12 years in Long Kesh prison.

Judge Williams ruled that Pearson has led an "exemplary life" in the United States, has not been involved in any criminal activity and his fears of persecution were well founded if returned to Northern Ireland. He also found that Pearson's attack on the RUC barracks was a 'political offense' under existing US immigration law. "The attack was in the context of a conflict and/or insurrection and was clearly in furtherance of the objectives of that conflict. The attack was also not out of proportion to the political objective sought nor was it of an atrocious nature. Sufficient warnings were given to avoid personal injuries and the target of the attack was a legitimate military target as a combatant in the conflict."

The PEC, which has been working tirelessly of behalf of Mr. Pearson and the 6 other men facing deportation, welcomes Judge Williams' decision to grant political asylum and allow the Pearson family to remain in this country. PEC would like to thank all of our members who supported Mr. Pearson during his fight to stay in this country. Mr. Pearson and his family are very appreciative of all the letter writing campaigns, and support which you gave to them.

As we go to press, the INS has not yet decided whether to appeal Judge Williams' decision. They have until April 28 to decide. **Since the decision, the PEC has been contacting members all over the country asking that they contact the President and ask him to advise the INS not to appeal. The PEC has made the same requests on our telephone hotline, both PEC Internet Websites as well as the National Telephone Chain.**

One of the most important aspects of Judge Williams' decision is that, in this case as well as in past cases, the INS has tried to say that, if a person is involved in the IRA at any time, then they are responsible for all IRA activities and atrocities. Some judges have agreed with this ridiculous notion. Judge Williams ended that practice when he stated in his decision that, "the IRA is not on trial here, Mr. Pearson is."

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