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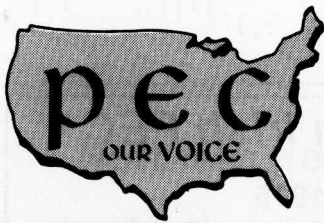


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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN Irish Political Education Committee

Volume 18, Number 2

February 1993

The Final Court of Justice (Again)

by Fionnuala ni Aolain, Northern Ireland

(From 12/92 "Just News," Bulletin of the Committee on the Administration of Justice).

Wednesday, 25th November saw the sixth victim this year as a result of a lethal use of force by members of the Security Forces in Northern Ireland. Mr. **Patrick Pearse Jordan** was shot by an RUC officer as he tried to run away, after the car he was driving was forced to stop on the Upper Falls Road in Belfast.

The incident highlights a number of CAJ concerns about the use of lethal force in general in Northern Ireland. Firstly, it now appears that as a matter of course immediately following such incidents, misleading information is passed to the press in a [studied] and systematic fashion. If such information has the RUC as a source, this is a discreditable activity from the organization which is, after all, charged with investigating such matters. As to the incident itself, eye-witness statements taken by CAJ appear to indicate that the victim could have been arrested but no effort was made to do so. It also appears that no warning was given prior to the shooting.

The public perception of such an incident might rightly be that shots are fired first and justifications sought afterwards. Such circumstances point to a **clear contravention of the principles of minimum force and proportionality as enshrined in Article 2 of the European Convention and Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.** In these situations the law is failing in its duty adequately to protect the right to life.

Following the incident, CAJ contacted the victim's family and advised that the family doctor can attend the post-mortem examination . . . The value of this independent presence cannot be overstated, in view of the fact that **families generally have to wait for at least six months for any official information regarding the death of their relative.** It is an example of the way in which families need to be aware of their rights immediately following the death of a family member.

CAJ also contacted the **Independent Commission for Police Complaints** expressing its concern that an investigating officer from an outside Police force was not appointed to conduct the Inquiry into the incident. The issue of investigation is central to real accountability for deaths caused by

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Another Honor For CAJ

Following the **Reebok Human Rights Award**, Martin O'Brien from Northern Ireland has received further international recognition from the US-based organization 'Human Rights Watch' for his work with the Committee on the Administration of Justice. The star-studded Reebok ceremony, which took place in Boston, Massachusetts, was attended by over 3,000 people, including Peter Gabriel, Joan Baez, and Richie Havens. Terry Anderson, former Beirut hostage, gave the keynote address.

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

The PEC's New England Conference is shaping up. The conference, to which all members are invited, will take place on a Saturday, in late June 1993. Details will appear in the March newsletter. (PEC)

Congressman Joe Kennedy, in a letter, has urged Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams to use his influence on the IRA to end its campaign. Mr. Kennedy's letter was made public as Mr. Adams responded to a speech by Secretary of State Patrick Mayhew. Sinn Fein denounced the British government for not endorsing a policy to end partition and "ignoring the central issue" of Britain's role in the division of Ireland. Mr. Adams questioned Mayhew's motives and asked has he even bothered to study Sinn Fein policy, including "Towards a Lasting Peace." (12/21/92, Analysis, N. Ireland) Gerry Adams said that he has not yet received a letter from Congressman Joe Kennedy but said Mr. Kennedy could help end the IRA's campaign by bringing hostile parties together for talks. Adams called on the US Congressman to become actively involved in a "peace making initiative." (12/22/92, Analysis, N. Ireland)

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From The Editor

President Bill Clinton is the first President of the United States to make a public commitment to speak out against British injustice in Northern Ireland. The world's most important leader is on our side. His commitment lends much-needed credibility to our issues and to our organization.

Clinton did not make a blind commitment. He knew the potential of Irish American support for such a favorable position. His campaign manager Mr. James Carville knew that potential first-hand. Carville managed the election campaign of Pennsylvania Senator Harris Wofford in 1991 who soundly defeated the favorite former US Attorney General Richard Thornburgh. Irish Americans in large numbers voted against Thornburgh because of his role in the Bush Administration's deportation of Joe Doherty.

President Clinton and his party are aware of the importance of the newly active Irish American voters who are fed up with administrations which ignore them. And they know too our rediscovered ability to influence public opinion as demonstrated by our recent advertisements in the New York Times. But most importantly, President Clinton is an advocate of democracy and human rights. We wait for follow-up actions.

WE CANNOT TAKE CLINTON FOR GRANTED!

Since the election, Clinton has been under constant pressure from the British government, influential members of our own government, and the media to abandon his commitment.

We have to surpass their pressure by giving Clinton our wholehearted encouragement and support.

Our letter-writing campaign to the President will be ongoing and nationwide. And we will expand that effort to include people who up to now have not been involved.

Take the following simple steps: immediately write the Action Request to President Clinton on page 6; have at least one other person do the same; order from the PEC our pre-addressed, pre-messaged postcards to President Clinton for others to sign (five cents each); and respond generously to the request you will shortly receive from the PEC.

Begin now by ordering the postcards! Be sure to order enough cards to cover your needs during the St. Patrick's Day activities.

DON'T LOSE THIS GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY!

The American Irish PEC

founded 1975

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**Supported in part by the Emerald Society,
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Thomas Gallagher

We mourn the loss of our good friend and member, Thomas Gallagher who died December 19, 1992, at the age of 74.

Through his book about the Famine, *Paddy's Lament*, Thomas Gallagher has touched the hearts of many people, Irish and non-Irish alike. He is the inspiration behind some major events planned for 1995 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Ireland's Great Starvation, including a monument to be erected in New York City by the Emerald Society, Fire Department, City of New York.

Thomas Gallagher was accomplished in fiction and nonfiction, and has written for magazines, television, and films. Among his books are *The Gathering Darkness* (a runner-up for the National Book Award); *Fire At Sea: The Story of the Morro Castle* (winner of the Edgar Allen Poe Award for nonfiction); *The Monogamist* (recently produced as a TV film called *The Family Man*); *Oona O'*; *The Doctors' Story*; *The X-Craft Raid*; and *Assault in Norway*. He graduated from Columbia College, served abroad during World War II as a civilian attached to the US Army Engineers. He will be sorely missed.

From the North

by Rev. Des Wilson *Director, Springhill Community, Belfast*

A recent statement by the British secretary in Ireland, **Patrick Mayhew**, was seized upon by journalists as though he had said something new.

What he said was not new: that if the IRA stopped its military campaign and if Sinn Fein not only agreed to the cessation, but "renounced violence" forever, and if they showed over a long period of time that they really meant it, then Sinn Fein could be admitted to talks.

And if the military campaign stopped, British troops could be called back to barracks to do only "garrison duties" from then on.

It was one of the most insensitive and diplomatically damaging speeches made by the most obtuse of secretaries, leaving real peace makers with nothing to work with.

He offered nothing. It was to be simply a case of the natives laying down their knobkerries and the Master deciding if and when they could be heard. If the war ceased then the British would go back to the position which caused the war in the first place, the garrisoning of British troops on Irish territory.

He did not say how long Sinn Fein would have to remain on the penitential stool - five years, ten years, twenty years? - renouncing violence before being heard. Perhaps long enough to make nationalists tired of voting for them so that they would fade away and thus cease to be an issue?

Mayhew's words echoed those of an archbishop of Armagh who said some time ago that it would not be enough for the republicans to stop fighting, there would have to be a period during which their sincerity could be tested. The statements of the secretary and the archbishop were an expression of the arrogance which mars every attempt even by British democrats to make the British

government treat Irish people as anything other than natives to be ruled. Changing times mean nothing to British secretaries and Irish archbishops. **What Mayhew was asking for was an end to a war with no gains for those fighting it, except of course for the British.**

Even he must have known that such a statement would at best provoke derision from republicans and at worst prolong the war. There are some who believe it is British policy to prolong this war in order to regain total control of Ireland.

Perhaps that is their policy. The massive fortifications along the border between the two states in Ireland are not there for show, but for war. Yet the only war relevant to such massive structures is one in which the British face a challenge from the south, a challenge which could only be born from aggression towards the south on their part.

Observers have been so blinded by facile and puerile theories of Protestants and Catholics unable to live together and by historical flummery about Planters and Gaels in combat that they do not examine fortifications along borders and see them for what they are. What would observers say if such massive fortifications were built up over a period of years on the borders of Iran and Iraq, or between Greek and Turkish sections of Cyprus, or in Pakistan? They would interpret these fortifications as a preparation for war.

In Ireland, however, such analysis does not exist. The British seal off Catholic areas, as they have done during the past five years; they seal off six Irish counties, as they have done this past ten years, and nobody even asks why. What is recognized as evidence of aggressive intent towards neighbors is dismissed in Ireland as of no importance.

Final Court *con't from pg 1*

members of the Security Forces. Such a lack of independence in the investigative process from the body being investigated is clear evidence of a **failure to conform to the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions.** These principles require that investigations be "thorough, prompt and impartial." Past experience with such incidents shows the inadequacy of the ICPC's involvement in merely supervising the investigation. In a clear indication of the ICPC's own dissatisfaction with its current powers, the chairman, Mr. James Grew criticized publicly the fact that his organization was not called in to supervise the investigation until 13 hours after the shooting had taken place.

Mr. Jordan's death cannot be viewed in isolation. It is another statistic to be added to the three hundred plus deaths caused by members of the Security Forces in Northern Ireland since 1969. Accountability mechanisms for such deaths remain completely inadequate. Furthermore, there is little evidence that preventive measures are taken by the Security Forces in planning and training procedures to avoid recurrence of similar deaths. Until all these issues are addressed, adequate protection for the right to life in Northern Ireland will remain sadly lacking.

Is it to be wondered at, then, that real peace makers read Mayhew's statement with dismay?

And that they long for international observers with the expertise and integrity to interpret what is happening in Ireland before it is too late?

Newsbits *con't from page 1*

An Armagh family criticized Northern Ireland's "two-tiered justice system" after two family members lost their appeals against "savage" jail terms. Last year Gregory Carroll was sentenced to 22 years and his sister-in-law Ailish Carroll was sentenced to 15 years for possessing two loaded rifles in their car. The family denounced the court decision as "another example of the deep-rooted injustice. When it comes to dealing with loyalist paramilitaries the sentences range from suspended sentences for possession of weapons to 10 years for conspiracy to murder." (12/22/92, Analysis, N. Ireland)

In a survey of the Irish in Britain conducted by the University of Bradford, one of the questions asked if respondents thought that the British government was doing all it could to find a peaceful solution to the northern problem. Seventy percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement while 16% agreed or strongly agreed with it. Eleven percent were undecided. (Irish Post, 12/19/92)

Liam Donnelly has had a fourth story accepted for transmission by BBC Radio 4. Liam said, "I see it as a tribute to the Conway Mill Writer's Group as much as a personal accolade. It was the writers' group which first convinced me that my writing was worthwhile and it has done so for many other people." (Andersonstown News, 12/5/92)

An ex-British soldier has made a plea to the BBC to make a documentary on the killing of Irish children by plastic bullets. Bob Harker, a member of the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets and the Committee on the Administration of Justice, said that a close investigation of two cases in particular deserves to be carried out. "Two completely innocent young schoolgirls, Julie Livingston, 14, and Carol-Ann Kelly, 12, were shot and killed with plastic bullets. Two girls from the most vulnerable and harmless section of our society, our children, were brutally cut down and their deaths need to be investigated fully. In dealing with these two cases, the BBC would be highlighting the whole question of plastic bullets and their use in the north of Ireland. There are umpteen contradictions in these two cases alone and many unanswered questions which any television journalist worth his salt would jump up at the chance of asking." (Andersonstown News, 12/19/92)

PEC Happenings

The PEC recently placed a quarter-page ad in the *Irish Echo* and *Irish Voice* asking readers to write to President Bill Clinton in support of his Northern Ireland agenda. This month similar advertisements will appear in the *Florida Irish American*, the *Irish Edition* in Pennsylvania and the *Boston Irish Reporter* in Massachusetts.

October 1992 member Stephen Downes placed a half-page "Why England Must Leave Ireland" ad in *Town & Village*, newspaper of New York City's Stuyvesant Town, a key precinct used by pollsters on election day. The Harrisburg, PA PEC placed a similar full-page ad in a local newspaper as did the PEC in Rockland County, NY, place two quarter-page ads in Rockland's leading newspaper. **We are effectively influencing public opinion!**

New PEC Support Groups

We congratulate Chris Yonts who has organized a PEC in Santa Cruz, CA. They are doing excellent work educating the public and media. Chris can be reached at (408) 476-4984. Congratulations to Margaret Behney who chairs the recently formed PEC in Harrisburg, PA which meets monthly. Margaret can be reached at (717) 564-4976.

Americans in Somalia: Where are the British?

by Kevin P. Murphy, *PEC State Director, Massachusetts*

For the past 12 years the US State Department has boldly declared that Britain is the United States' most reliable and loyal ally. During the Reagan-Bush era, anti-Irish extradition treaties with Britain and the Joe Doherty travesty of justice were put through under the guise that Britain is America's best friend.

Now that US Military units are engaged in security and humanitarian missions in famine-plagued Somalia, one asks the question: **Where are the British?** December 16, 1992 the US State Department issued a list of participating nations in this humanitarian effort. The US provides the vast majority of forces, France is second followed by Italy, Belgium, Canada and Saudi Arabia. Even tiny Botswana sent troops. In many relief hospitals and feeding stations in Somalia, Irish men and women comprise as much as 75% of the nurses, doctors and volunteer workers. **The Irish who were victims of the British-instituted famine of the last century are today in the forefront of helping the hungry.** Commanders of the US Army and Marine Corps Units are both Irish Americans.

Despite having a huge, well-trained and well-equipped military, Britain has made a marginal, token effort to help Somalia. Ireland and Botswana have put forth triple the effort that Britain has. How can Britain still be called "our greatest ally"? During the Vietnam war Britain was Communist North Vietnam's second largest trading partner. Britain openly defies US trade embargoes on Cuba and other nations hostile to the US.

The lack of moral fiber of the British Government can be measured in the fact that **Britain sends thousands of troops to N. Ireland to suppress Irish civil rights and liberty, but sends no units to Somalia to help feed people in that corner of the World where British Colonialism has also left its scars upon a people.**

Did Fianna Fail Create the Provisional IRA?

by Stephanie Finucane

RUC and loyalist collaborated brutality in response to the nationalists' civil rights campaign toward the end of the 1960s lead up to grave violence in August 1969. At this point the nationalists realized the police were not there to protect them. And where were the IRA? By 1969, the unarmed IRA was virtually nonexistent, having adopted a policy of restraint which concentrated on social policies since the fruitless border campaign of the 1950s. The IRA did not partake in the civil rights campaign, but merely gave silent consent by not opposing it.

Abandoned, nationalists vowed never again to be defenseless against the onslaught of British injustice. Witness one of the popular slogans from that year: "IRA - I Ran Away."

At this time, the government of Ireland, controlled by the **Fianna Fail** party headed by **Jack Lynch**, had to take a position regarding the North. While Ireland could not stand by as her sisters and brothers were regularly beaten, Lynch was well aware of how dependent Ireland was on Britain. Although his August 13 broadcast showed slight signs of militancy, he did not order troops into Northern Ireland. Instead he waited and within a few days British troops were arriving.

Subsequently, Lynch's public statements wavered on Fianna Fail's "traditional" Republican stand on partition, which was anti-partition. Writing off the border as a newly irrelevant issue, Lynch now began calling for "peace, with justice and equality" and denounced the use of force (**Liam de Paor, *Divided Ulster***). However, many persons in Fianna Fail did not agree with Lynch. For example, the Minister for Agriculture, **Mr. Neil Blaney**, publicly spoke against Lynch, stating that the Fianna Fail policy did not absolutely rule out force. Likewise, the Minister for Local Government, **Kevin Boland**, and Minister for Finance, **Charles**

Haughey, were ashamed of Lynch's failure to link Ireland with the cause of her people in the North.

At this point, the IRA began to develop networks of auxiliaries, many without arms because it was illegal for nationalists to obtain weapons. (January 1970 the IRA split into the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA, which became the dominant militant force in the 1970s.)

On the other hand, **loyalist paramilitaries like the UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force) had free and easy access to arms** - this after a year of RUC and B-Special brutality that provoked investigation in 1969 (via the Cameron Commission, Scarman Tribunal, Hunt Commission) which repeatedly found both bodies guilty of inciting violence, using firearms indiscriminately, and harassing the nationalist community.

It was ultimately decided that the B-Specials must be disbanded and the RUC disarmed, their role limited to intelligence gathering. Yet, application for gun licenses was easy for loyalists. Thus, the illegally armed B-Specials transformed into a legal "gun club," and by the end of 1970, the B-Specials were fully armed - legally. Similarly, by the end of 1970 the RUC were reissued weapons. Consequently, the UVF had "ready access to supplies of arms in the north" (de Paor).

The nationalist community formed the CCDC, **Central Citizens Defense Committee**, a "vigilante group" with the main purpose of self defense (**Ciaran de Baroid, *Ballymurphy and the Irish War***). They turned to sympathetic voices in the Fianna Fail Dublin government, such as Blaney, who hoped to revitalize the original intent of the Fianna Fail and take over a position within the civil rights movement. The Dublin government did give some aid via the Irish Red Cross to those affected by the August troubles. Secret agents were extremely active, intelligence gathering

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and bringing the case of the nationalists to the ears of Fianna Fail. Arms were even bought, mainly in Europe, with the intent of importing them to the North. The Irish army even was "officially involved in discussion of 'contingency plans' for the north, and was in touch with the northern defence committees" (de Paor). For a short time at the end of that September the Irish army gave military training to a group of men from the Derry Bogside. For nine months after that horrible August it looked as though the South was going to aid the nationalists. Then it all came to a halt.

May 1970, Lynch dismissed Haughey and Blaney, and accepted the resignation of Boland, due to their support for building up nationalist defense. The famous **Arms Trial** ensued and Fianna Fail busied itself with indicting her own people while the British took care of things in the North.

Between 1969 and 1973

Lynch's Fianna Fail sold out and fully adopted the "British view of unity by consent, which was a fraud anyway since Britain never had any intention of giving unity by consent or any other way" (**John M. Feehan, *Operation Brogue***). By doing so, Fianna Fail in effect accepted the unionist veto on a united Ireland and, thus, "was largely responsible for the formation of the Provisional IRA since the Nationalists of the North and the Young Republicans of the South lost confidence in the Irish government" (Feehan). The epitome of Lynch's betrayal is the fact that by 1973, Fianna Fail had no real policy on Northern Ireland. It wasn't even an issue.

Join or Support

The American Irish Political Education Committee (PEC)

For information, write the American Irish PEC, 18 Route 9W, Fairgrounds Plaza, West Haverstraw, NY 10993 or call (800) 777-6807.

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SDLP Seat Challenged

by Sandy Carlson

West Belfast SDLP MP **Joe Hendron's** election victory over Sinn Fein's **Gerry Adams** last April was challenged in court at the end of 1992.

Maura McCrory, on behalf of a group of West Belfast voters, alleged Hendron submitted an inaccurate election return and overspent on his campaign. By a 1983 law which determines campaign spending per constituency according to the number of eligible voters, Hendron was allowed \$12,000. His return shows he spent just under that amount, but McCrory says the figure is bogus since it left out many large expenses.

McCrory's lawyer accused the *Irish News* of "using secrecy to demote the democratic process" by giving up to 71% discounts on advertisements. She said the discount (about \$13,000) should have been counted in the election costs because the paper "was making a substantial contribution in the equivalent of money to Dr. Hendron's campaign." **Dominic Fitzpatrick**, who negotiated the ad rates with election agent **Tom Kelly**, said no other party got the same discount because no other party was prepared to spend so much.

This issue was complicated by convoluted bookkeeping. Kelly did not open a separate account for Hendron's campaign. Instead, the treasurer of the **SDLP's West Belfast Constituency Association (WBCA)** paid the bills, causing difficulty in determining which payments belonged to the campaign.

The return, illegally filed by Hendron instead of Kelly, also left out a \$3,000 half-page ad in the *Irish News* on election day because Kelly did not consider it part of Hendron's campaign, but a "general SDLP" ad. It also left out ads in the *Daily Mirror*, the *St. Peter's Cathedral Bulletin*, equipment for mounting election posters, and a survey on West Belfast. Kelly said the survey, by **Coopers & Lybrand**, had not provided useful

Betrayal in Chicago

by Richard M. Stanton, Esq., Chicago, IL

1992 opened with high hopes in Chicago's Irish community that the City Council would pass a MacBride Principles ordinance. Unfortunately, the year ended in bitterness and anger with no MacBride ordinance.

When the MacBride ordinance was introduced early in 1992 its passage looked assured, a majority in City Council supporting it. But the British Government objected to the ordinance so **Mayor Daley** withdrew the pending MacBride ordinance, arranging for representatives of the Crown to meet with City attorneys. The result was a new British Government-approved ordinance that was worse than no ordinance at all: a hoax allowing companies to continue their discriminatory practice without consequence.

When the Irish community learned of the proposed substitute ordinance, they quickly rejected it. However, the Mayor, claiming there was division in the Irish community, used the oldest Parliamentary trick in the book. The ordinance was assigned to a subcommittee chaired by **Alderman Burke** so it could be killed through inaction.

Early October, Burke, known for killing affirmative action ordinances proposed by Black and Hispanic aldermen, announced that because of the "widespread and varied interest" in the MacBride ordinance, in November "at least two hearings would be held in the Irish community." **No such hearings were ever held in 1992 and none are scheduled for 1993.** Having effectively killed the MacBride ordinance, Mayor Daley dutifully reported to British Consul General in Chicago: "It is my understanding that Alderman Edward M. Burke, Chairman, City Council Finance Committee, has deferred consideration of [the MacBride Ordinance]. Therefore, we anticipate no further action on this proposed ordinance at this time. I would, however, encourage you to stay in touch with the Finance Committee to monitor any further developments. Again, I welcome your interest and thoughts on this measure."

I am sure the Mayor appreciates British interest in the MacBride Ordinance. The front page story of the *London Sunday Times* November 8, 1992 issue reported that the Crown had spent £3 million, over \$5 million, "trying to put its views across in the United States." Obviously, British money was well spent in Chicago.

information and was not available in time for the election. He said he was unaware of the final bill for the survey, which the WBCA paid. But, **Catherine Toner** of **Coopers & Lybrand** said Kelly personally negotiated the fee for the survey and that she gave him the results and a bill for the total cost more than a month before the election. The survey concerned voting habits, non-voters' attitudes, and voters opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the SDLP and Sinn Fein.

Both Hendron and Kelly claimed they made mistakes due to ignorance of electoral law. Kelly, claiming ignorance of the law concerning the legal

duties of an election agent, said he took the job under duress because Hendron could not get anybody else, and believed he would be assisted on legal matters. Hendron said he had not thought to ensure that Kelly be advised by experienced party members on the role of election agents. Hendron also said he knew Kelly had recently been in the US for electioneering training.

As we go to press, the **Election Court** has not made a decision on the case. If they rule against Hendron, he could be barred from running for office for 10 years. What remains to be seen is if alleged ignorance of the law places Hendron and his agent above the law.

Northern Ireland: The Media in a Muddle

by Margaret Mary McGovern

For anyone who thinks the war in Ireland is a muddle, no matter what side you're on, there are grounds. And the media, sad to say, are often not any better informed than the rest of creation.

In the early 1970s I came to journalism full of optimism and my own rigid standards of the "truth." Like most of my generation of early Baby Boomers, I thought everyone else in the Fourth Estate thought the same as I did. In 1973 I was writing TV news for the **Associated Press** in Rockefeller Center. One of a handful of women in that sacrosanct male world, I was hellbent on proving I was not only as good as the guys, but often better. So I read copy like a hawk and wrote it with an eagle's eye for the right mix of accuracy and care. I usually worked the night shift and wrote 8-10 stories that led your 10 and 11 p.m. TV news shows. For background I had access to all the AP wires, local, national and international news.

Since **Bloody Sunday** in 1972, Ireland was a typical story each night. I was always a bit more careful with those articles and often would rewrite wire copy for two reasons: 1). they were all dispatched from London even though they carried a "Belfast" or "Londonderry" dateline, and 2). they usually didn't make any sense, especially the lamentable repetition that the guerilla attacks were all due to religion or the use of the term "outlawed" Irish Republican Army. Most articles alluded to "sources said" and, since London was the starting point, I naturally questioned these "sources." As my father would have put it, you "don't question the fox about the chickens."

I spent my early childhood in Ireland and went to primary school in County Offaly, so I was familiar with many of the areas mentioned in dispatches. I also knew the history of the "troubles" since my parents

were passionate Irish Nationalists. I had traveled extensively in Ireland and knew the civil rights violations and economic suppression firsthand. Very often during those years at the AP, I would point out errors in Northern Ireland stories to superiors who just didn't want to hear it. They told me to stick to the wire copy, which was the accepted practice, . . . or not use the stories. Many of them thought this "gentleman's war" wasn't all that important: too few casualties.

One night a story came across from Derry that infuriated me. The wire copy said that a woman and two children were killed by IRA gunmen as they stood on a street corner. Though I am no fan of the IRA, this made no particular sense since the woman and children were identified as Catholic by whatever method the writer in London had of identifying one's religion. I pulled the story for my news package and told my editor that I had a real question on this story. Luckily, he agreed with me so we contacted London for more information.

What had really happened was that the woman and children were killed by a runaway car carrying three youths who had been shot and killed my British soldiers who suspected them of being IRA members. Aha, my journalist's sense was vindicated, but my brain told me this was only one story in probably a string that had been misrepresented by sloppy handling on both sides of the Pond.

After I finished work that night, I clipped the story to a note

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which I sent up to the then-AP President, Wes Gallagher (you would have thought he'd be at least interested in Ireland with a name like that). Not. A few days later I was called in by my Editor and told my copy on Northern Ireland would be monitored since it was being questioned. I could see that sending a note to Gallagher had been a mistake. Mistake or not I kept on doing it, attaching the copy whenever it was hazy or downright wrong.

One night Gallagher himself came into my department and had me pointed out. I just kept on typing. Finally I got a note back from the chief asking me what would stop these queries. I replied either send a staffer over to Belfast or Derry, or have one work from Dublin, but relying totally on British press and British sources for the news compromises AP stories. And where was the balance? I got a terse hand-slapper that maybe I should think of doing public relations for the IRA.

Being twenty-something, I laid it all to exhaustion rather than malice. Vietnam and Nixon-watching took most of our time and energy those years and soon I left the wire service because I never did understand how a news organization could investigate the messenger and not the message.

In the years since, I still find the same kind of confusion over the Irish-British battles and I still try to clarify what I can. I hope in my heart that Ireland will be united without any more bloodspill. The first step lies in understanding the truths behind the conflict.

(Ms. McGovern has worked for United Press International, Newsweek and Time Magazines, Gannett and Copley news chains in California, and Heart Magazines in New York. She has written a screenplay about Northern Ireland called "Narrowback" and prays daily for a producer.)

Action Requests

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

Action Request #1 -- PRIORITY

As stated in **From The Editor** on page 2, it is most important that we again communicate with President Bill Clinton.

Write to: Honorable Bill Clinton, President, The White House, Washington, DC 20500.

Dear President Clinton:

I wish you every success as President of the United States. I urge that you stand firmly behind your Northern Ireland agenda. I also urge that your Secretary of State, Mr. Warren Christopher, meet with the presidents of major Irish American organizations to discuss American concerns about Northern Ireland.

Information is available through the American Irish PEC at (914) 947-2726.

Sincerely yours,

Action Request #2

Foreign Policy Association annually publishes a briefing entitled *Great Decisions*. The briefing is part of the FPA's program, open to the public, to enable participants to have their views known. Each year's briefing covers important issues around the world and is sent to media people and our Washington representatives. The FPA also puts out the *National Opinion Ballot Report*, a survey of the opinions of participants in the program. The selection of issues takes place during spring and summer of each year.

Write to: Great Decisions, Foreign Policy Association, 729 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019.

Dear Executive Director:

I urge you to include the crisis in Northern Ireland as a topic for the 1994 edition of *Great Decisions* and the *National Opinion Ballot Report*. As you are aware President Bill Clinton has pledged to speak out against British government injustice in Northern Ireland. Valuable information is available through the American Irish Political Education Committee at (914) 947-2726.

I look forward to your response on this urgent matter. Sincerely yours,

New Appointment

We are happy to announce the appointment of **John Hatch** as our **National MacBride Principles Consultant**. He will replace **Thomas O'Flaherty**. Mr. O'Flaherty played a role in many past MacBride Principles campaigns including his home state of New Hampshire. We are grateful for his valued service. Mr. Hatch was a key player in the successful MacBride campaign in Pennsylvania.

If you have any questions about the MacBride Principles, contact John Hatch at (717) 249-4217.

Join Or Support

The American Irish Political Education Committee (PEC)

I want to join in/support the struggle to end British government civil and human rights violations in northern Ireland. I am sending you this completed form together with my membership fee/donation.

- Regular Membership / Membership Renewal \$20
- Senior Citizen, \$15 Student, \$15
- Additional Donation \$ _____
- Donation Only \$ _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

Members receive the monthly *American Irish Newsletter*. If you give a donation only and would like to receive the newsletter check here .

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Make checks payable to American Irish PEC and mail to American Irish PEC, Fairgrounds Plaza, West Haverstraw, NY 10993 -- Phone number (914) 947-2726.

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