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POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Vol. 6, No. 3

JUNE/JULY, 1981

“Another martyr for old Ireland — Another murder for the crown” Bobby Sands - Francis Hughes - Ray McCreesh - Patsy O’Hara

THE MORALITY OF A HUNGER STRIKE-TO-DEATH

Rev. John J. Foley, C.S.P.

The hunger strike of Bobby Sands in Northern Ireland has led to much discussion of whether it is ever permissible (morally) for a person to follow such a course. These observations may shed some light on this problem.

Whenever we decide on a course of action to achieve something that we perceive as good, we choose to follow certain steps along the way to that good thing. The steps are chosen in light of our own assessment of what is practical in our situation. It is most important, however, that the particular action steps which we take not cause more harm than good.

In this particular case, Bobby Sands would have to have concluded that the sacrificing of his life and the likely civil violence to follow were justified steps in order to achieve a far greater good. How might that “far greater good” be described: the ultimate ending of ongoing violence, the ending of economic repression, the developing of educational and cultural opportunities for future generations, the termination of an unjust system of incarceration, stopping the killing of innocent people, etc.?

It is essential that serious moral decisions such as that faced by Bobby Sands not be treated as simply a matter of his personal feelings. There is a certain measure of good and evil to be applied to each element worthy of consideration in this case. However, in light of the long term view of the number of people affected by 800 years of history and the potential for future years of evil, it might well be justifiable for Bobby Sands to choose as he did.

SPECIAL EMERGENCY ACTION ISSUE

As Bobby Sands lay in his death bed and Francis Hughes prepared for death, President Ronald Reagan entertained England’s Prince Charles in the White House. Three days later, Bobby Sands died and eight days later, Francis Hughes was dead as now are Ray McCreesh and Patsy O’Hara.

On April 26, Jim Shannon, Chairman of the PEC in California, met with Edwin Meese, President Reagan’s top adviser, and presented him with more than 70 mailgrams urging President Reagan to intercede on behalf of the hunger strikers. For the most part, the mailgrams represented U.S.-based Irish-American organizations, including the 2 largest, the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America and the non-sectarian, Grand Council of the United Emerald

Societies. Mr. Meese told Mr. Shannon that President Reagan will not become involved.

That President Reagan entertained Prince Charles and that he will not get involved can only mean that President Reagan has no political respect for the Irish-American community. Because we are not united, or should we say, **were not united**, no elected officials would have cause to respond to our concerns. But that is all changing now. The cold hard facts of the continuing murder of Irish hunger strikers and President Reagan’s insult to and disrespect for Irish-Americans have served only to **awaken** the sleeping giant, the Irish-American community. We have learned the hard lesson of what can happen when we are not united. The Irish in America will now unite and remain united **until their dying days**.

(Ed. Note: The PEC has been advised that both PM Thatcher and President Reagan are under tremendous pressure. We must double our efforts.)

YOU ARE URGED TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING EMERGENCY STEPS:

1. Immediately send the following mailgrams or letters to: (to call Western Union simply dial operator and ask for Western Union’s Toll Free Number).

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Please intercede on behalf of the remaining hunger strikers. Do not continue to let the Irish-American community down. The troubles in Ireland exist solely because England illegally occupies part of Ireland.

signature

Honorable J. Stephen Wall
British Embassy
3100 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Mr. Wall:

I am appalled at the conditions that Irish prisoners of war must live under in British occupied northeast Ireland. I am participating in a boycott of British goods and services that is designed to help your government make up its mind to withdraw from Ireland.

signature

2. Support all rallies, demonstrations, and activities in support of our brothers on hunger strike. For information on activities in the Tri-State area call Irish Northern Aid at (212) 567-1611.

3. SPECIAL URGENT APPEAL

Please send a donation payable to: PEC-AOH. This is a special request due to the urgency of the continuing hunger strike. How will your donation be utilized?

a. Expand the PEC's newly initiated radio and newspaper advertising program.

b. Expand the PEC's Project Reach-Out. This program enables the PEC to send valuable information to the news media, unions, big business, the clergy, college student bodies, elected officials, etc. Due to the hunger strike, there has been a great demand for information and the PEC has been meeting this demand.

c. You will receive a one year subscription for the bi-monthly PEC National Newsletter and our valuable information package. (See Newsletter Donation Page 3).

4. Boycott All British Goods And Services.

Whenever you purchase an item, check to see where and by whom it was produced.

BRITISH INJUSTICE IN IRELAND

Denis Mulcahy

Michael Culbert, Belfast, is married to a schoolteacher and has two young sons. On November 1, 1977, he was arrested and questioned for 3 days at Castlereagh. He was accused of being an intelligence officer for the IRA, and was told he'd be accused of murdering a UDR man. After his release, he made statements to the Association for Legal Justice and Amnesty International, and also complained to the police about the ill-treatment he had received during this time. After doing this, he was constantly stopped and questioned.

He was arrested again on May 6, 1978, and charged with the murder of a policeman, which had taken place on a day when Culbert was working. Once again, he suffered abuse at the hands of the police.

During Culbert's trial, the judge admitted that there were discrepancies in the case, and a psychiatrist testified that Culbert had received inhuman and degrading treatment. Several foundations of British law were violated; for instance: Culbert was refused to be allowed to see a lawyer (this is guaranteed in *R vs. State, 1977* and also in the preamble to the Judges' Rule); and one is supposedly not allowed to be compelled to testify against oneself or to be compelled to admit guilt (International Civil and Political Rights Covenant, Article 14 (3)).

Culbert was sentenced to life in H-Block and has been on the blanket protest since sentencing in December 1979. He is now on appeal, but this may not be heard for some years.

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P.O. Box 16, Garnerville, N.Y. 10923

Editor John J. Finucane
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IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE THE BI-MONTHLY POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER, PLEASE SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, AND A \$5.00 DONATION TO THE POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE, POST OFFICE BOX 16, GARNERVILLE, N.Y. 10923. ATTENTION: CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT.

NEWS FLASH NEWS FLASH

According to the Irish Press, May 20, 1981, the Royal Ulster Constabulary supposedly received a shipment of weapons from the United States which is under lock and key in the Sprucefield Barrack's in Lisburn, Northern Ireland. The shipment is alleged to have been made during the changeover of the Reagan-Carter Administration not too long before President Reagan promised to continue the ban on weapons sales to the RUC...according to an international survey of 64 leading newspapers, conducted by the London Sunday Times, world opinion has begun to shift away from the British Government and in favor of the IRA. World opinion also calls for a British withdrawal.

EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND — 1980

David Lowry (Professor of Law, New York Law School)

In 1976 the British belatedly addressed the issue of discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland. However, observers were quick to point out that the British approach to discrimination was largely cosmetic. The British Fair Employment Act of 1976 failed to create a proper enforcement machinery whereby discriminating employers could be exposed and prosecuted.

Since 1976 the British approach has been one of "moral persuasion." How the British could hope to adequately deal with entrenched bigotry by mere "moral persuasion" and yet without full prosecutorial powers, was never explained. Consequently discrimination against Catholics has continued unabated as both Employers and Unions realized that a cosmetic piece of legislation advocating "moral persuasion" could not in any way endanger the *status quo* of Protestants privilege.

Under the 1976 legislation Britain created a Fair Employment Agency (FEA) to watch over allegations of discrimination. The FEA even tried to prosecute a few cases but unsuccessfully as the British law did not provide adequate enforcement machinery.

But the FEA, while toothless, at least has been able to gather statistics and other research data in its short existence. This FEA-sponsored research is most revealing, showing a continuing pattern of discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland.

In a survey conducted by researchers of Queens University, Belfast, for the FEA and published in 1980, it was revealed that job opportunities in Northern Ireland still depend on religion and social background. This FEA Report showed that more Protestants than Catholics are still found in top jobs while the opposite is true at the bottom of the employment scale. Furthermore, Catholics experience a lower level of upward mobility than Protestants.

The 1980 FEA study shows conclusively that in the last generation Northern Irish Catholics have tended to move *down* the social scale relative to Protestants. Moreover, even the British-created FEA has to admit that without "strong and constructive government intervention" the occupational disparities between Catholics and Protestants "*will persist and probably widen.*"

Thus even the British have been forced to openly admit the charge that they have done nothing to eradicate discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland and that matters are getting worse.

British diplomats in the U.S. have recently argued that discrimination was perpetrated in the past by *Loyalists* but under British Direct Rule proper steps have been taken. After the 1980 revelation of the British FEA that matters have been steadily worsening under British Rule in the last few years I wonder what story British diplomats will not tell Americans?

FROM THE EDITOR

The senseless murders of Irish hunger strikers Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Ray McCreech, and Patsy O'Hara has shown to the world the brutal attitude of England's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her Government towards the Irish people. Thatcher has made a big mistake and world opinion is running against her.

The massive media coverage of the hunger strike has not only caused an "awakening of conscience" in the Irish-American community, but has also generated an enormous hunger for knowledge on the part of the American public. The successful dissemination of information, together with Thatcher's continued refusal to bend on the just demands of the hunger strikers, is nurturing an anti-British sentiment in America. Another result is that the newly informed American public is beginning to understand the Irish Republican Movement. They are becoming sympathetic and even supportive of the Irish Freedom Fighters (IRA) and their struggle to end Britain's **illegal** colonial occupation of part of Ireland.

Another positive result is that the Irish-American community is becoming **united**. The cold hard facts of the deaths of our brothers on hunger strike and President Ronald Reagan's refusal to intercede on their behalf has taught us the lesson of what can happen when we are not united. The likes of Governor Hugh Carey, Senators Edward Kennedy and Daniel Moynihan, and Congressman Thomas O'Neill are running scared. They, the so called "Friends of Ireland", are being exposed for what they really are, "The Friends of the Status Quo". The Irish-Americans will not forget them.

The key to success is to embarrass the British Government and this is already happening. Opposition to Thatcher's inhumane position is already building in both English government and society. (A poll taken just before the onset of the hunger strike indicated that 57% of British citizens favored a British withdrawal from Ireland. This percentage is said to have increased since the death of Bobby Sands). The Irish-Americans and their supporters must continue to display their support for the hunger strikers by continued participation in demonstrations; letter writing to the British Ambassador and President Reagan; and most importantly, Boycotting all British Goods & Services.

PEC INFORMATION PACKET

Patrick O'Neill

The PEC now has available a highly informative information packet dealing with the H-Block protest and background information on the Irish Question. This information has been compiled by experts — professors, historians, and journalists. Not only is this information valuable for the individual who wants to broaden his knowledge on the Irish Question, but can be used by the individual and organization wishing to educate his community.

To receive the information packet, you may send \$1.50 to Patrick O'Neill, Information Director, Political Education Committee, 1941 68th St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11204. Make checks payable to: PEC-AOH. (If you send a donation, as requested on page 1, you will automatically receive the information packet. Therefore, you will not have to contact the Information Director.)

OUR READERS RESPOND

Dear Friends:

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your April/May newsletter. The articles and essays that you feature are not only extraordinarily well-written, but they also demonstrate a range and depth which cannot be found in a conventional newspaper or magazine. It is very important for the American public to be informed of conditions in Ireland, and I feel the Political Education Committee is performing this task in exemplary fashion..."

Sincerely,
Alfonse M. D'Amato
United States Senator

NEWSLETTER DONATION

We find that we have to request a donation of \$5.00 per year to cover the printing and mailing costs of the "Newsletter". The mailing list keeps expanding which is what we want, but costs are becoming prohibitive. If — for any reason — you cannot afford a donation, but want to remain on the mailing list, please drop us a note to that effect. Please note: if you respond to the donation request on page 1, your \$5.00 newsletter donation is automatically covered. This request is also covered if you sent a donation during the month of May, 1981. Make checks payable to: PEC-AOH.

MAILGRAM BANK

Margaret Phelan

Be Ready — Be Organized! Join the PEC Mailgram Bank.

How does the Mailgram Bank work? You authorize the PEC to send 3 mailgrams a year in your name. The charge of \$3.20 per mailgram (\$9.60 a year) will be billed directly to your telephone bill.

When a critical issue arises on the Irish question, such as the hunger strike, a brief message will be prepared and a determination will be made as to whom the mailgram will be sent. The Bank will be activated, sending out the mailgrams.

Please complete form below and mail to the Political Education Committee, c/o Mailgram Bank Director, P.O. Box 448, Nanuet, N.Y. 10954.

Dear Sir:

I authorize the PEC to send 3 mailgrams a year in my name during the period beginning (today's date) _____, 1982 and ending (same date 1982) _____, 1982. I understand that the mailgrams will pertain only to the Irish question.

Signature _____

Name _____
(use name of person your telephone is registered under)

Address _____

Tele. No. _____

(print)

THE GAELIC CONNECTION

Anthony Bartlett (Professor of Law, Pace University)

The language and culture of the Gaels held a strong appeal for various waves of invaders. Danes, Normans, and Englishmen of the Elizabethan period found the ancient Irish ways so compelling that they became "hibernis hiberniores," i.e., more Irish than the Irish. Irishmen of Danish descent fought in the army of Brian Boru, repulsing a Danish invasion at the Battle of Clontarf. The Normans gave Ireland patriots such as Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and the English gave such leaders as Patrick Sarsfield and Padraig Pearse. Despite their ancestry, these men never thought of themselves as anything other than Irish.

The English Crown sought to stem the process of cultural absorption by such measures as the Statutes of Kilkenny (1367), which forbade subjects under pain of treason to observe the laws of the Brehons, to speak Irish, to wear Irish dress, or to intermarry with those of Irish descent. Measures such as these proved to be abysmal failures, but by 1608 the Crown embarked on a determined course of action to counter cultural absorption, viz. The Plantation of Ulster by Protestants from England and Scotland. By requiring these settlers to be of Protestant religion — a religion alien to the Catholic Irish — the Crown ensured, to this very day, that it would have a permanent garrison on Irish soil.

The Irish clung stubbornly to the old faith in spite of various economic and social inducements to desert it, thus giving the term "Irish Catholic" an ethnic, as well as a religious, meaning. The Irish language did not fare as well, however, owing to the efforts of the Crown to deny education to Catholics, and the concerted attempt to crush Irish commerce. As English was the language of trade and commerce its dominance seemed assured. But love of the Irish language and traditions was not dead, merely dormant: and it inspired Padraig Pearse to lead others in the supreme sacrifice of the Easter Rebellion in 1916.

Paradoxically, the present-day attempt of the British in Northern Ireland to defeat Republicanism has evoked a renewed interest among the people in the strongest link to the ancient past — the Irish language. Proof of this rebirth is shown by the fact that, according to informed estimates, West Belfast is now the largest Irish-speaking area in the

BRITISH INFLUENCE IN AMERICA

James Lavelle (Texas PEC Chairman)

There is a certain large monument in a churchyard in a big city of a great country that memorializes several thousand people who were starved to death in a prison governed by an occupying army in that country.

This stone does not commemorate the victims of Nazi aggression nor the countless victims of communist pogroms or the hapless innocents who stood in the path of the oriental invaders. It is located in downtown New York City.

This monument is in the Trinity Church Cemetery located on lower Broadway. Among the hundreds of graves located within the cemetery are those of American heroes Alexander Hamilton and Robert Fulton. The memorial is dedicated to the several thousand Continental soldiers who were starved to death by the British in a New York prison known as the Sugarhouse during the American Revolutionary War.

Several Americans have been working for years to have a postage stamp issued to commemorate those brave men, plus the thousands who died as prisoners-of-war during this period in other rat-infested jails and British prison ships. Their efforts have been successfully blocked by the British government through the British Embassy in Washington. The credit for this blockage must go to the British Information Services, the propaganda arm of the embassy which works out of the British Consulate in New York.

These brave Continental soldiers, many of them Irish immigrants, were the guerrillas, the freedom fighters of their day. They died a horrible death for their young country, much worse than a death incurred in battle. Today in Ireland, the freedom fighters are called terrorists and are jailed by another British government for attempting to expel the British trespasser and occupier from Ireland.

There is little mention of the atrocity today in our history books. Our British cousins have successfully seen to that. I suspect that some day soon, the memorial stone in Trinity Church Cemetery will also be gone.

country. In addition, the security forces in Northern Ireland *have been forced to employ* Irish speakers to interrogate Republican supporters. Quite unwittingly, therefore, the spirit of defiance which the British engendered has assured the Irish language — the oldest unified language north of the Alps — of a flourishing future.

**POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS**

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