

Republican SINN FÉIN Poblachtach

Aitheasc an Uachtarán



101ú Sinn Féin Ard Fheis 2005

Presidential Address to Ard-Fheis 2005 from Ruairí Ó Brádaigh

A Chathaoirligh, a Theachtaí is a Cháirde ar fad,

Fearaim fíor-chaoín fáilte rómhaibh go léir ag an Ard-Fheis seo, an 101ú ceann de chuid Shinn Féin. Ach is ócáid ar leith í seo mar gur comóradh céad bliain é an comhthionól inniu ar an Ard-Fheis bhunaithe i 1905.

Ar an 28ú Samhain a tionóladh an chéad Ard-Fheis de Shinn Féin. Tháinig sí le chéile céad slat ón láthair seo – ins na Seomraí Rotunda ar Chearnóg Pharnell. Agus tá an-bhród orainn ar fad gur bhail den eagraíocht seo muid a sheas go diongmhálda leis an gcuspóir bhunaithe riamh ó shoin – neamhspleáchas náisiúnta na h-Éireann uile.

Bhíodar ann thar na blianta a scar linn agus a ghlac le riail Shasana sa tír seo. Chabhraigh cuid aca leis an námhaid eachtrannach, ach sheas dream dílis an fód go daingean neamhleithscéalach. In a measc siúd tá Sinn Féin Poblachtach a thaobhaigh gan briseadh le Bunreacht Shinn Féin riamh anall. Ní beag sin.

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Is sibh-se ionadaithe polaitiúla an dreama neamhghéilliúla sin agus traoslaím daoibh bhúr ndílseacht, bhúr ndúthracht agus bhúr gcuid oibre ar son na Cúise. Lá breithe sona do Shinn Féin!

A cháirde, this month we celebrate the 100th birthday of Sinn Féin. This, then, is no ordinary Ard-Fheis but the centenary of our historic organisation. Sinn Féin is mentioned in the various encyclopaedias and even in dictionaries. A sample entry (Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary 1981 Edition) reads: "A political movement and party in Ireland championing a republic and later opposing partition".

Brian O'Higgins, writing in his Wolfe Tone Annual of 1949, stated: "The constitution of Sinn Féin in 1905, and certainly the spirit of it, was at least as clearly Separatist as was the constitution of Sinn Féin in and after 1917". That constitution of 1905 had as its object "the re-establishment of the Independence of Ireland".

When, 50 years later, Pádraig Mac Lógáin gave his Presidential Address to the Ard-Fheis of Sinn Féin, Brian O'Higgins and the Donegal author and poet Séamus Mc Manus, who were there in 1905, were still staunch Republicans and supporters of the Movement.

Another 50 years on and the Ard Oifig of Republican Sinn Féin has carried a banner all year saying "Sinn Féin 1905-2005 – One Hundred Years – Unbroken Continuity". A suitable plaque to mark the centenary was unveiled on the front wall of our Belfast office by veteran Republican Billy McKee.

A special commemorative calendar for 2005 has been on sale over the past 12 months. It contains rare photographs and dates as well as a list of the fifteen Presidents from 1905 to date. It has been much in demand and is sure to become a collector's item in time to come. Also available are laminated pictures from the calendar as well as commemorative badges and T-shirts.

A reprint of A Proud History Gives Confidence of Victory by Margaret Buckley, the sole woman President of Sinn Féin who held the office during the lean years 1937-1950 is being arranged. It covers the first 50 years of our organisation up to 1955 and an update to 2005 is being added.

On the day following his address at Bodenstown, the current President handed over many of his personal political papers at a ceremony in the James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway. They will be available to interested people from January 1st next. In the same month will be launched a biography of the President entitled Ó Brádaigh – the Life and Politics of an Irish Revolutionary. The author is Dr Robert W White, Professor of Sociology at Indiana University, USA. It will deal among other matters with many controversial events.

At Easter a much-appreciated Republican Garden of Remembrance to the 12 hunger-strikers of 1974-81 was opened in Bundoran. It also honours local men who

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made the supreme sacrifice for Ireland in the same period. It has drawn much favourable comment from the families of those being honoured as well as from local people and visitors to the area who stop at this impressive and peaceful spot facing Donegal Bay and Sliabh Liag mountain.

At the beginning of the year Dan Keating of Kerry was invested as Patron of Republican Sinn Féin in succession to the late George Harrison of Mayo and New York. Dan had attained the great age of 103 in January last and is a veteran Republican of many battles, hardships, prisons and internment camps. With pride we congratulate him on his uncompromising stand down the decades.

In September, at a joyous and celebratory function in the capital, Comhairle Ceantair Átha Cliath made a presentation to the present incumbent in honour of the Office of President as “guardian of the constitution of Sinn Féin” over the hundred years.

Earlier, in January “the marking of the centennial of Sinn Féin, the oldest Irish political party” was among the themes at the annual Michael and Pearl Flannery Testimonial Awards Dinner in New York. Cumann na Saoirse Náisiúnta (the National Irish Freedom Committee) were the sponsors and the President of Republican Sinn Féin's 20-minute address was conveyed to those assembled in New York by video link.

In two weeks time on Saturday, November 26 a celebratory march and open-air ceremony will be held in central Dublin. That weekend is nearest to the 28th November, the centenary of the foundation Ard-Fheis of Sinn Féin. The parade will form up at the Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square and will march with music to O'Connell Bridge, returning to the Ambassador Cinema beside the Parnell Monument.

The ceremony will be held on the open space in front of the cinema which is adjacent to the Rotunda Rooms where our organisation was founded. At this time when all we stand for is under attack as never before, a large attendance from all counties is expected to show that as we enter our second century the imperishable ideals, for which so much has been sacrificed, still live on in the hearts of Irish men and women.

On Monday, November 15, last year the 26-County Special Branch aimed a deadly blow at Republican Sinn Féin. It was the day following on last year's Ard-Fheis that they descended on the Dublin hotel which had been the venue for our annual cómhthionól náisiúnta.

The Branch seized from the hotel staff the proceeds of last year's National Draw and the takings at the Ard-Fheis ballad session on the Saturday night. A total of £4900 sterling and 3800euro was grabbed by them. No warrant was produced, the money

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was not even counted and no receipt was given. These funds had been placed in the care of the hotel overnight.

Subsequent correspondence between our solicitors and the Special Branch revealed the real purpose of the seizure. It was to cripple the Republican Sinn Féin organisation financially by denying us access to funds legitimately and openly acquired. Local elections had been contested by us the previous summer and we were committed to participate in the Údarás na Gaeltachta elections the following April.

Proceedings were long drawn out with voluminous correspondence and requests by the Branch for meetings which they never attended. A year later there is no movement by them in this matter. However, an appeal to members, supporters and friends to come to our aid financially was a great success. Our well-wishers rallied to our support immediately and in a short few weeks subscriptions greatly exceeded the amount grabbed. Meanwhile we are not content to let the matter rest. We are continuing to take advice and are exploring every avenue.

Not content with an illegal seizure of our funds, the Branch are under orders by their political masters to harass our membership in every way possible. Following an Ard-Chomhairle meeting in Dublin on February 12 two members were stopped and papers taken from their car. These Ard-Comhairle documents were held for an hour before being returned.

On April 2, five members were accosted on their way to an education seminar in Parnell Square, Dublin. One man was handcuffed and a 16-year old girl given a body search. This type of harassment is not new and is part of a concerted campaign of intimidation. Young members in particular have been targeted and the intention is clearly to intimidate and disrupt our organisation and criminalise us in the eyes of the public. In fact it merely galvanises members and supporters, making them all the more determined to put forward the Irish Republican agenda of ending British rule and building a New Ireland.

In spite of the seizure of our funds and harassment of our members Republican Sinn Féin continued with its activities. Prominent among them was the contest of the Údarás na Gaeltachta elections in April.

Sheas Tomás Ó Curraoin dúinn arís i dtoghlach Chonamara agus chuir sé féin agus a chomrádaithe feachtas an-láidir isteach. Tháinig baill de Shinn Féin Poblachtach as chontaethe eile i gcabhair ortha agus sheól lucht tacaíochta airgead chuca nuair nach bhféadfadh siad taisteal.

In the outcome Tomás increased his vote by 35% on his 1999 performance – from 629 to 848 first preferences. He was in seventh place for six seats and remained in the running until the 13th count. He was first in Bearna (2 boxes), Na Forbacha, Buaile Beag and Cnoc na Cathrach on the edge of Galway city.

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Tá Tomás ag dlúthú a chuid tacaíochta i gcónaí agus ag cur leis. Tréaslaíonn muid leis agus len a chuid oibrí. Beidh lá eile aca, le cúnamh Dé.

On June 19 a Republican Sinn Féin protest was made when 20 members of the Mac Curtáin–MacSwiney Cumann mounted a picket against the visit of British warship HMS Grafton to Cork city. The Cumann is to be congratulated on their new website as is the McKearney–Mc Caughey Cumann, Dungannon on a similar achievement.

Then on the weekend of July 3 the President led a group of members from Mayo, Galway and Roscommon at a huge protest march and public meeting in Castlebar. This was in support of the jailed Ros Dumhach Five and their demands. The men want the natural gas from the Corrib Field off Mayo to be refined at sea instead of on shore which will endanger the lives and safety of local people. An interview was given to Mid–West Radio, Ballyhaunis on that occasion.

Subsequent demonstrations in Ballina and other Mayo towns and on a number of occasions in Dublin city centre were attended by our members carrying banners and selling our paper which had the headline “Boycott Shell” on its front page in July.

While we welcome the release of the Ros Dumhach Five after more than three months imprisonment, we note that their demands have not yet been met and that the threat of re–imprisonment still hangs over them. Indeed, it was stated in a letter to the Irish Times signed by more than 40 UCD academics that Shell had stated at a Bord Pleanála hearing that refinement at sea would cost the company an extra 340,000euro per year. But refinement at sea is carried out in the case of Kinsale Gas and indeed, all over the world.

We remember the Whiddy Island blast in Bantry Bay in 1979 that took 50 lives. Not alone is the Dublin government supporting Shell in its operations, but they have given away our natural resources to buy them back at international market prices.

In 1975 exploration terms were fixed at a tax rate of 50% on profits; an automatic 50% stake for the state in any commercial wells and royalties per unit of production as well. In 1987 the requirements that the state have a 50% stake in any commercial project and that royalties be received were abolished. Also a facility whereby exploration expenses could be written off against tax was introduced.

In 1992, even more concessions were granted to the multinational companies when the corporation tax rate on oil and gas production was reduced to 25%, the lowest in the world. (Norway, for instance, has a tax rate of 78%). The companies were also allowed to write off all costs going back for 25 years.

Then, on August 16, the Leinster House politicians gave a similar licence to Shell to explore for 16 years off the coast of Co Donegal. The people of that county can

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expect to be treated in a similar fashion to the people of Mayo, but we know they will resist.

For our part, we will continue to support the people of Mayo and to agitate for a fair and safe share of our oil and natural gas for the Irish people. We would also advocate a supply of the refined gas to the towns in Co Mayo and that the main pipeline should go past Westport to Leenane and on to the Galway Gaeltacht beyond Maam, running along the coast of Galway Bay, past the city before joining up with another pipeline going to the east coast.

On the first weekend of July also our members took part in the 20,000 strong "Make Poverty History" march in Dublin as part of world-wide protests against the G8 Summit in Scotland. Then our two Vice-Presidents went to Edinburgh to participate in the Alternative G8 events there. Our Francis Hughes Cumann in Glasgow sponsored their visit.

In a statement Republican Sinn Féin said that it was entering into the demonstrations to highlight the fact that "the G8 countries' political and economic agenda is the new imperialism of the 21st Century. Their goal is the enrichment of the most powerful industrialised states of the northern hemisphere regardless of the cost in terms of people and the environment".

Both Des Dalton and Josephine Hayden took part in the Anti-Poverty march which attracted a crowd of over 200,000 people in Edinburgh on July 2, as well as addressing workshops at the Alternative G8 summit in Edinburgh University on Sunday July 3. They along with Stephen Coyle, cathaoirleach of the Francis Hughes Cumann, spoke at a public meeting organised by the Scottish Republican Socialist Movement, entitled "Make Britain History". Josephine said that imperialism and poverty are two sides of the one coin.

Among the 60 workshops, "Ireland: Britain's Forgotten War" was addressed by Des. Both attended the workshop "International Platform Against Isolation" which dealt with political prisoners around the world. In addition the reasons for Republican Sinn Féin's rejection of the Stormont Agreement of 198 were explained, as was our alternative ÉIRE NUA programme. All in all, interesting international contacts were made. While most were aware of Republican Sinn Féin's existence, few knew our stand on Irish and world affairs.

Meanwhile, an unsavoury development has taken place in that immigrant workers are now being exploited in a scandalous manner. Gama Construction (Ireland) Ltd., which has been named as engaging in such practices, has been in receipt of huge state and local council contracts. Such companies import workers who do not speak English from their home base, control their passports and work permits, often accommodate them in company housing, demand outrageous working hours and pay about half the decreed minimum wage.

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The chairperson of Republican Sinn Féin in Co Clare, Paddy Kenneally from Crusheen, is also secretary of the Clare Plasterers' Union. He has been to the fore in exposing such exploitation locally showing that foreign skilled workers are paid half the going rate for Irish union members. His union has decided to unionise the foreign workers and to take strike action if needed. Such people are entitled to the protection of labour law in this country and to be paid in accordance with recognised rates and agreements in the industry.

Paddy Kenneally was threatened with High Court action by a building contractor for setting foot on a site in order to unionise foreign workers, but he received the full backing of his union. The development will eventually affect Irish workers and their pay rates as greedy builders seek to employ only those who are prepared to work for the lower rates. We have already seen the consequences of such "outsourcing" of employment in the case of the Irish Ferries company on the sea routes to France. The outcome can be disastrous for Irish workers and the situation must be confronted without further ado. Our members who give a lead in this regard are to be complimented. The language question must be dealt with, too, and union leaflets should be made available in Polish, Portuguese, Turkish or whatever is required.

The annual Human Development Report for 2005, was published by the United Nations last month. The 26-County State, out of 18 industrialised countries surveyed, was the second wealthiest in the world, based on Gross Domestic Product, but was one of the most unequal with the third highest level of poverty. The report estimated that 15.2% of Irish people lived in poverty. Only Italy and the United States had a higher poverty rate.

In addition, the State had the second highest rate of illiteracy with 22.6% of the population lacking functional literacy skills, that is the ability to read a train or a bus timetable with effect.

The report cited relatively low levels of investment in education and health in the State. Some 2367 dollars per head of population was spent on health in 2002 compared to 5274 dollars per capita in the United States. In general, the report found the State to be one of the most unequal countries in the developed world, with the richest 10% having 9.7 times more wealth than the poorest 10%.

Taking the top 30 most developed countries in the world, only the US, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Portugal were said to be more unequal. The report warned that in very unequal societies, economic growth "may have little impact" on reducing poverty, adding "far more attention should be paid to creating conditions under which the poor can increase their share of future national income gains".

Also the report noted that the State lagged behind its UN commitment to overseas development aid of 0.7% of GNP. On current trends there will be more than twice as

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many, or 827 million people, in the world living in extreme poverty in 2015 if the targets set by the UN are not met.

But inequality is contributed to also, the report says, by differential life expectancy, educational attainment and adult literacy between rich and poor people. The Area Development Management report, published on the same day, states that poverty rooted in certain areas of the State, – Ballymun, Ballyfermot, west Kerry and parts of Mayo are mentioned – also plays a significant part in inequality. The social capital, of which we have heard so much recently, is eroded by the growing and persistent lack of equality.

Meanwhile in June Amnesty International criticised the Dublin administration for allowing Shannon Airport to be used by the US to transfer people involuntarily across borders without due process and often in secret. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR) has established an inquiry into this and into allegations that suspects passing through Shannon are being moved to jurisdictions where they may be tortured during interrogation. Egypt, Pakistan, Kuwait and the US base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba have been named.

Landings and re-fuelling by US military planes ferrying troops to and from Iraq and Afghanistan have increased sharply. Our members with their banners and SAOIRSE newspaper for sale have taken part in all anti-war demonstrations during the year. We remain opposed to imperialist wars and resist the steady erosion of neutrality by the Dublin government.

A further development during the year was the defeat of the proposed new EU constitution in referendums, first in France and later in Holland. This was a major setback for the project to tighten the EU's grip further. It halted for the time being the advance towards a federal United States of Europe, with among other measures a single EU Foreign Minister to speak for all 25-member states.

Already an EU army is in the making with "battle groups" being drawn from the various states and being integrated into a force ready to operate up to 2000 miles outside the European Union's borders. With military combination and an attempt to harmonise foreign policy, it is clear where all of this is leading. It would certainly end military neutrality and political non-alignment. Republican Sinn Féin's attitude has been clear. We would campaign for a "No" vote in any referendum. In this connection Vice-President Des Dalton visited Brittany as a guest of the Breton independence movement EMGANN which often sent representatives to our Ard-Fheis. The visit coincided with the final days of the referendum in the French state and representatives of a number of small nations in Europe gathered there.

These nations have been denied their right to national independence and they sought to highlight the fact that the proposed EU constitution would worsen their position. Des Dalton told the gathering at a press conference in Rennes that

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Republican Sinn Féin shared EMGANN's analysis of the issue. "The entire EU project has been about consolidating the power of the bigger states at the expense of the various stateless nations of Europe. The EU simply represented a new form of imperialism. Brittany, the Basque country and Ireland had much in common", he said.

In the matter of regional development at home in Ireland, every report issued on the economy of the western, border and midland areas has cited the lack of infrastructure. At various Ard-Fheiseanna of Republican Sinn Féin for 12 or 15 years now calls have been made for a major north-south motorway from Donegal to Limerick and on to Roslare Europort. We have also regularly sought the re-opening of the Western Corridor railway line from Sligo to Limerick.

The launch ten days ago of the "Transport in the 21st Century" proposals by the present 26-County Administration contained a limited version of both our demands. The line from Ennis to Claremorris is to be opened over 10 years. Public opinion in the West and our organisation have sought the completion of the line northwards to Collooney. In addition the Ennis to Limerick track should be diverted to include Shannon Airport, less than 10 miles off the line. Commuter arrangements from Tuam to Galway city need to be established.

Rail access to the proposed midlands gateway, defined in the so-called National Spatial Strategy as Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar, needs to be completed by re-opening the already existing Athlone-Mullingar line. The absence of investment in the Dublin-Roslare track and services which run through the growing Wicklow-Wexford area also shows a lack of commitment to regional development.

Only after the motorway programme already in hand has been finished – under which all roads lead to Dublin – will the proposed "Atlantic Road Corridor" from Letterkenny via Cork to Waterford be commenced. Stated to be in the interests of promoting an effective counterbalance to the dominance of Dublin, it is not to be built to motorway standards at all. Indeed not even all of it is to be a dual carriageway and some of it is to be developed only as a 2+1 road.

This is not the level of upgrade that more than 300 companies in the regions affected have been lobbying for the past five years. Despite all the grandiose plans for Dublin and its immediate environs, a mere 20 extra buses are offered while 180 were provided for in the 2000-2006 "National" Development Plan. This move accompanied vague promises to increase passenger journeys by 80,000 per day over the next 10 years. The alleged "world-class transport system for the 21st Century" falls far short of a national transport plan. It is neither national nor regional. During the past year the deterioration of the Provisional Movement accelerated towards its inevitable conclusion. The political surrender begun in 1986 with their acceptance of the 26-County parliament at Leinster House was followed in due course by their

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crawling into Stormont and administering English rule in the Six Counties as Ministers of the Crown.

Offices in Westminster were taken up next with the acceptance of heavy subsidies of £107,000 sterling per year for each of their "Members of (the British) Parliament". Well and truly can it be said that those "who pay the piper call the tune". Unlike the Officials who attempted to do all of this in one move, the Provo leadership learned from the Officials and proceeded more cautiously employing deceit and duplicity and even downright untruths to dupe their adherents. Three steps forward and two backwards, making a net advance of one step each time.

Military collapse followed political surrender as surely as day followed night. Arms and volunteers were there as never at any stage since 1922, but leadership was lacking. As it did in the aftermath of the Treaty of Surrender in 1921, the British government forced the counter-revolution on the Provos, first with a unilateral ceasefire and then with the voluntary destruction of arms, ammunition and explosives. This year they completed the demolition of all their military stores. An army without arms is no longer an army and the Provisionals can no longer pretend to oppose British rule here in arms.

All the while they seek to re-write history to their own advantage. They tell the Irish people that the struggle was merely for civil rights under British rule and that they have won! In no way would sacrifices such as were made since 1969 be justified simply to reform English rule in this country. The struggle was to get the British government OUT of Ireland for good and glory and to make the Irish people supreme in their own country – and for nothing less.

To complete the counter-revolution, the British Establishment requires the Provisionals to accept the RUC/PSNI, to take part in their management, to recruit for them and to join their ranks. If their performance to date is anything to go by, they will become the new Broy Harriers, hounding and oppressing their former comrades in the interests of British imperialism. Already they have joined the British forces and the 26-County State forces in threatening and intimidating owners and managers of premises where functions are to be held in support of Republican prisoners' dependants.

Easter Lily sellers are not immune from the Provos' attentions as the occupation forces, the Free State and renegade Republicans combine to drive our members off the streets and put a strangle hold on the continued struggle for Irish national independence.

In spite of Mr. Ahern having said that "the constitutional issue is settled", the struggle will continue until the renowned Irish Question is resolved with an end to the British government presence here. The Éire Nua proposals for a new federation of the four provinces provide for the sharing of power on the basis of local majorities, including a nine-county Ulster.

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The fact that the Provos have departed from the stage and no longer pretend even to be a revolutionary organisation is a definite gain. They can now clearly be treated as just another establishment political party. But the use by them – even in this centenary year – of the historic name of Sinn Féin when they have broken its constitution and treacherously abandoned all that Sinn Féin stood for down the decades is an obvious loss and causes confusion in people's minds.

In no way does that celebrated title belong in Westminster, Stormont or Leinster House. After all, was not Sinn Féin founded a hundred years ago to withdraw from Westminster and all its works and pomp – the fountain-head of imperialism – and yet the Provos sup there. They take the shilling and drink the soup.

Under the Stormont Agreement in 1998 the Provos signed away political status for future Republican prisoners – a right dearly won by our hunger-strikers. In the years since then a hard struggle has been engaged in, both inside and outside the prisons to reclaim political status. This has been successful to a degree but the Republican Prisoners Action Group has this year listed the outstanding demands of the prisoners in Maghaberry Jail.

These are: the right to education, to adequate medical treatment, to free association, to open family visits and an end to humiliating strip-searching. An end to harassment of visitors, and in some cases of lawyers, is also sought. We must stand by the Republican prisoners in Maghaberry and Portlaoise Prisons and their families. We salute them all in their stand and their endurance, and send warmest greetings to them from this Ard-Fheis.

Shortly before the present Ard-Fheis assembled the long-awaited Barron Report on the murder of Séamus Ludlow outside Dundalk was published. It is 30 years since his death at the hands of British-backed loyalists and the report lay 14 months in the 26-County Department of Justice before being made available to the public.

The findings were similar to those in the cases of many of the Irish people randomly done to death south of the Border by the underground arm of the British occupation forces. In the three and a half years from December 1972 to May 1976 48 such killings took place. In no case inquired into was there any co-operation from the British government or British forces. Yet forensics had been sent north to British agencies for examination. In Séamus Ludlow's case, it was the bullets that killed him – sent back to those they originally came from! Four persons were named in the report as being directly responsible for his death and two of these were serving members of the British Army's UDR.

The inquiry further found that files in the case were again missing from Garda Headquarters. The investigation was shut down in a few weeks – in other cases it was a few months – and there was no paper trail to indicate who was responsible. It

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would appear that this was done verbally only. In none of the 48 cases was there charges or convictions.

But the Special Branch was insulting to Séamus Ludlow's family and even alleged that Republicans were responsible for his death. Why did all this happen in the aftermath of such killings and why did the Irish people have to wait 30 years for it to come out? Because simply the 26-County State since its foundation has by its very nature been engaged in a policy of collaboration with the British occupation forces.

This policy requires it to regard Republicans as the only enemies of the State in the 26 Counties. The British, for their part, regard the loyalist death squads as allies of the British-imposed Six-County statelet, and a positive asset to them. Occupation regimes in any country find it useful to have a hidden extension to their forces largely composed of local people to operate outside the norm.

We support the demand of the Ludlow family for an independent public sworn inquiry into Séamus's death, including the power to compel witnesses and the discovery of documents. We do not want a secret, behind-closed-doors inquiry as in the cases of the 33 people who died in the Dublin and Monaghan bombings. Collusion and collaboration must be exposed for what they are – instruments of British imperialism.

This summer, according to published RUC/PSNI reports, the number of sectarian attacks in the five months April to August has doubled. Nationalist families, throughout Co Antrim particularly, have been pipe-bombed, paint-bombed and petrol-bombed out their homes. Schools and churches have been targeted and we condemn equally the attacks on Protestant as well as on Catholic places of worship. Over 700 attacks took place in the five months, twice the number in the same period last year.

The nationalist nightmare has increased in intensity. Indeed it was pathetic to see a delegation from the last remaining nationalist families in Ahoghill, Co Antrim making its way to Leinster House in August asking for help and protection. Many of you are, no doubt, too young to remember but is this not a repeat of such events in 1969 – only this time the delegation was accompanied by a Provo councillor.

After 36 years and all that sacrifice, this is where the Provisionals have led the people – back to where they started out. Unfortunately for the nationalists of the Six Counties, assistance and defence for them from Leinster House are like Free State "Republicanism", purely verbal in nature.

The unionist-oriented people, for their part, have seen the certainties of the past give way to uncertainty, confusion and bewilderment. England, on whom they relied so much in the past, has little or nothing to offer them at this stage. Many of them have come to realise this. The nationalists, on the other hand, have cultural and

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psychological links and a sense of belonging to the people of the rest of Ireland. Continuous rebuffs by England will increase the unionists' sense of isolation and they could become the great losers in all of this. We would remind them that their place in the Irish nation was long since bought in their own blood. We can visualise Henry Joy McCracken leading his men into Antrim town and Henry Munro at the head of the United Irishmen at Ballynahinch. The names of Betsy Gray and Jemmy Hope come to mind.

The ground the unionists stand on politically narrows all the time, as can be seen from the results of each successive local council election. We ask them, once more, to consider the ÉIRE NUA programme which offers the most secure and generous means of taking their rightful place, as equals, in the historic Irish nation.

While wealth accumulates but at social and environmental cost, an anti-national agenda is being pursued on a wide scale. Unionist demands are increasing as political commentators and letters to editors of newspapers seek to have us as a people forget the whole idea of a free and united Ireland. Unless British rule in the Six Counties and the status quo since 1921 is accepted, there will never be peace in Ireland, they tell us. Neither the 26-County Establishment nor the Provo political party who have the ear of the media stand up to these people and answer them.

On the contrary these neo-unionists are encouraged by the official actions of the Establishment on a country-wide basis. A flotilla of the 26-County navy was dispatched to take part in the bicentenary celebrations of the English victory over the French at Trafalgar. We recall that the French were the allies of the Irish people in 1798 and 1803 – the period immediately preceding Trafalgar.

A month or so earlier in July, a minister of the 26-County State unveiled a monument at Carrigaline, Co Cork to Francis Drake, an official Elizabethan pirate and privateer who took part in the massacre of civilians of the Mac Donnell clan on Rathlin island in 1575. A guard of honour of the State navy performed official duties on that occasion. Within days a slogan in Irish was inscribed on the monument: “Ní seoiníní sinn go léir” (We are not all West Britons). On a wall opposite a faded slogan could be read “God’s light (shine) on you, Bobby Sands”. Similarly, in Castlebar, Co Mayo a memorial was unveiled last year over a British soldier who died 90 years earlier and who was awarded the VC medal for his part in crushing the Indian Mutiny against the British in 1857. Again the State army was officially represented there. In Dún Laoghaire and at University College Cork a year or two earlier, memorials to the Famine Queen Victoria, as Maud Gonne called her, were refurbished and put in place.

In Nenagh, Co Tipperary a plaque, taken down 100 years ago because of objections to the inscription on it, is to be replaced now. It commemorates “the unparalleled benevolence of the English nation to the poor of Ireland at a season of extreme

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distress, AD 1822". The patronising words, unacceptable a century ago, are now to be swallowed in a slavish and servile manner. Anti-national elements within the media were allowed by the GAA leadership to set the agenda regarding Rules 21 and 42 in recent years. The invitation to teams from the British occupation forces RUC/PSNI to take part in the Sigerson Cup colleges competition is part of the ongoing campaign to normalise English rule in Ireland. These occupation forces came to Croke Park before, to massacre spectators and even a player on the pitch, all in the interests of British rule. Their basic function today is to maintain that British government presence in Six Irish Counties.

We call on members of the GAA to make their voice heard; we call on GAA Clubs and teams to refuse to play against British forces teams. All of us should step up the campaign against this latest attempt to turn the GAA into a recruiting office for the British forces in Ireland. In the debate on Rule 42, the fact that the GAA, an amateur sporting organisation, had the courage and the drive to build a world class stadium while professional sporting bodies, particularly the FAI, have lacked similar vision or competence has been ignored in the whole debate. We ask what others have failed to ask: what have they done with the financial resources they must have accrued over the past 15 to 20 years and why in that time were they not in a position to build their own stadium?

Despite the decision of the GAA to amend Rule 42, both the IRFU and the FAI have said that they are still considering alternative venues abroad a fact that makes people wonder what agendas lay behind the entire debate. Will the next campaign be to stop the flying of the Irish national flag at GAA venues in the Six Counties, or to prevent GAA clubs being named in honour of Irish patriots? Is the tide of Anglicisation to sweep everything in Ireland before it?

The coming year requires renewed dedication and energy from our members. Our political education programme needs to be stepped up to counter the acceptance of English rule here and the normalisation of English influence; to foster matters Gaelic and strengthen working class resistance to exploitation; to step up our opposition to imperialist wars and protect our environment and natural resources; to promote ÉIRE NUA – a New Democracy, SAOL NUA – a New Way of Life and Towards a Peaceful Ireland. We need to develop a many-sided approach to our objectives and prevent them being misrepresented to the people.

The year 2006 marks the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rising of 1916 as well as the 25th commemoration of the sacrifices on hunger-strike in 1981. We must be up and doing, losing no opportunity to reach the Irish people and make them aware of our glorious past, our stimulating present and our vision of the future. Let us arise!

Victory to the Irish people

An Phoblacht Abú.

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