# *"As long as Ireland is unfree, the only attitude for Irishmen and Irishwomen is an attitude of revolt": The Armalite, the ballot box, and the shifting politics of Irish republicanism, c.1970-c.1994*

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September 2016


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**Acronyms**

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| BICO | British & Irish Communist Organisation |
| BWC | Belfast Women's Collective |
| CPI | Communist Party of Ireland |
| CPI (M-L) | Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist) |
| CPP | Community of the Peace People |
| CSJ | Campaign for Social Justice |
| DWA | Derry Women's Aid |
| ETA | Euskadi Ta Askatasuna |
| FLQ | Front de libération du Québec |
| HtPC | Help the Prisoners Committee |
| IIP | Irish Independence Party |
| INLA | Irish National Liberation Army |
| IPLO | Irish People's Liberation Organisation |
| IRA | Irish Republican Army (Pre-1970) |
| IRSM | Irish Republican Socialist Movement (INLA and IRSP) |
| IRSP | Irish Republican Socialist Party |
| ISP | Independent Socialist Party |
| LCR | League of Communist Republicans |
| NHBAC | National H-Block/Armagh Committee |
| NICRA | Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association |
| NILTUG | Northern Ireland Labour & Trade Union Group |
| NIWRM | Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement |
| PD | People's Democracy |
| PFLP | Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine |
| PIRA | Provisional IRA |

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|---|---|
| PLO | Palestine Liberation Organisation |
| PSF | Provisional Sinn Féin |
| OSF | Official Sinn Féin |
| OIRA | Official IRA |
| PD | People's Democracy |
| RCP | Revolutionary Communist Party |
| RMG | Revolutionary Marxist Group |
| SDLP | Social Democratic and Labour Party |
| SFWP | Sinn Féin The Workers' Party |
| SPI | Socialist Party of Ireland |
| SPLM/A | Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army |
| StSTC | Stop the Show Trials Committee |
| SWG | Socialist Women's Group |
| WAI | Women Against Imperialism |

**Key to primary archives**

| | |
|---|---|
| EHM | Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast |
| IEL | Irish Election Literature |
| ILA | Irish Left Archive |
| NAI | National Archives of Ireland, Dublin |
| NIPC | Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast |
| PRO | Public Records Office, Kew |
| PRONI | Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast |

## Introduction

### I

Modern Irish republicanism has been the subject of innumerable works of commentary, reportage, and analysis, but significant lacunae in the historiography remain. Many treatments of republicanism employ a heavily narrative style, focusing predominantly on republican personnel and their military activity.[1] Other historical studies, supported by rigorous research transcending archival sources, oral history, and contemporary reportage, have provided more analytical approaches to the conflict, and republicanism in particular.[2] Important research across a range of disciplines including sociology, political theory, human geography, and anthropology has furnished modern scholars with valuable insights into micro-aspects of the republican campaign and the place of republican politics within specific communities.[3]

Many works have neglected to analyse the political character, or *characters*, of Irish republicanism, its adherents, and the concomitant issue of republicanism's heterogeneity – an issue whose importance Richard English has helpfully underlined.[4] Liam Clarke's *Broadening the Battlefield* represents a significant history of the emergence of Provisional

[1] J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army* (Dublin, 1989); Patrick Bishop & Eamonn Mallie, *The Provisional IRA* (London, 1987); Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles* (London, 1995); Kevin Kelley, *The Longest War* (London, 1982).
[2] Rogelio Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle* (Abingdon, 2003); Richard English, *Armed Struggle* (London, 2012) [First edition 2003]; Tommy McKearney, *The Provisional IRA* (London, 2011); Brian Hanley & Scott Millar, *The Lost Revolution* (Dublin, 2009); Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (London, 2002).
[3] Notable interdisciplinary research works include: Frank Burton, *The Politics of Legitimacy* (London, 1978), a sociological microstudy of the Ardoyne area of Belfast; Laurence McKeown, *Out of Time* (Belfast, 2001), a detailed oral history of Irish republicanism narrated through the political experiences of former prisoners; Jeffrey A. Sluka, *Hearts and Minds, Water and Fish* (Greenwich, Connecticut, 1989), an anthropological-sociological survey of Belfast's Divis Flats conducted in the early 1980s; M. L. R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?* (London, 1995), an analytical assessment of republicanism's changing political-military policies from a strategic theory model; and John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford, 1990), a magisterial study encompassing statistical evidence and human geography methodologies.
[4] English, *Armed Struggle*, 166.

Sinn Féin's electoral strategy in the 1980s, but does little to analyse the strategy's popular reception among republicans on the ground.[5] Malachi O'Doherty's *The Trouble with Guns* presents some noteworthy criticisms of Provisional republicanism, but is informed by the writer's memoirs and without recourse to rigorous historical research.[6] Ed Moloney's *Secret History of the IRA* draws upon a wealth of reportage and oral evidence, but concerns itself primarily with an exposé-style fixation with Gerry Adams and tends towards a teleological interpretation of Provisional republican politics. Moloney's work thus demonises the perceived duplicity of republicans moving away from a military strategy through the 1980s towards constitutional politics and ultimately peace.[7]

Academic work on republicanism tends to concentrate on the two largest cities in the north of Ireland, Belfast and Derry.[8] Such a focus is justified in view of the two cities' obvious importance as crucibles of conflict, but leaves much interesting research to be conducted besides. Irish republicanism has often been treated as a homogenous political creed, with major wings of republicanism such as the Official republican movement and the IRSP-INLA (Irish Republican Socialist Party-Irish National Liberation Army) receiving, to date, just two book-length treatments between them.[9] Commentators' discussions of motivations for support for republicanism often revolve, sometimes in simplistic terms, around the notion of an insurgency response to specific events such as Bloody Sunday (1972) and the hunger strikes (1980, 1981).[10] Such an event-led 'explanation' of popular support for

[5] Liam Clarke, *Broadening the Battlefield* (Dublin, 1987).
[6] Malachi O'Doherty, *The Trouble with Guns* (Belfast, 1998).
[7] Moloney, *Secret History*.
[8] Ciarán de Baroid, *Ballymurphy and the Irish War* (London, 1990); Niall Ó Dochartaigh, *From Civil Rights to Armalites* (Cork, 1997).
[9] Hanley & Millar, *Lost Revolution*; Henry McDonald & Jack Holland, *INLA* (Dublin, 2010) [First edition 1994]. Sean Swan's work on the Officials predates 1972, while Kacper Rekawek's study focuses predominantly upon the Provisional wing of republicanism. Sean Swan, *Official Irish Republicanism, 1962-1972* (Belfast, 2006); Kacper Rekawek, *Irish Republican Terrorism and Politics* (London, 2011).
[10] Bishop & Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 160; Brian Feeney, *Sinn Féin* (Madison, Wisconsin, 2002), p. 270; Peter Taylor, *Provos* (London, 1997), p. 113.

republicanism has come at the cost of discussion of broader economic, cultural, and familial factors. The literature has done little to analyse variations *within* republicanism and, concomitantly, the place of republican politics in broader society in regard to other political groupings and the Church.

Among those studies which do analyse the political characteristics of Irish republicanism, its popular support base, and the place of republican politics in broader society, some striking conclusions have been reached. An extensive historiographical discussion on the issue of whether modern republicanism was based on sectarianism, in theory and/or in practice, witnessed the sociologist Robert W. White arguing that the Provisional movement was broadly non-sectarian, excepting certain noted atrocities, while political scientist Henry Patterson forcefully portrayed the Provisionals as executors of a plainly sectarian campaign, especially in rural areas of counties Fermanagh and Tyrone, *pace* official republican rhetoric and publicity.[11] Paul Gill and John Horgan have proposed a distinct periodisation of the republican campaign which takes into account significant change over time in republican strategy and politics, from the questionable appellation of 'indiscriminate violence' as a modus operandi in the first half of the 1970s to processes of 'growing politicisation' through the 1980s.[12] M. L. R. Smith, by contrast, has argued that the politics of republicanism became increasingly confused and acephalous over the course of the campaign, as the sheer need to sustain a military campaign gradually took precedence over the formation of a developed or coherent political strategy,[13] and Marc Mulholland perceives

[11] Robert W. White, 'The Irish Republican Army: An Assessment of Sectarianism', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 9 (1997), pp. 20-55; Henry Patterson, 'Sectarianism Revisited', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22 (2010), pp. 337-356. The controversy over alleged sectarianism in the republican campaign continues in contemporary discourse: speaking in 2014, then-First Minister of Northern Ireland, Peter Robinson, branded the PIRA's campaign in border areas of rural county Fermanagh as 'ethnic cleansing', 'genocide' and 'sectarianism'. 'Peter Robinson: IRA carried out 'genocide' in Fermanagh', *Impartial Reporter*, 6 February 2014.
[12] Paul Gill & John Horgan, 'Who Were the Volunteers?', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 25 (2013), p. 437.
[13] Smith, *Fighting for Ireland*.

republicanism to have grown increasingly isolated, politically and socially, as its military efficacy waned through the 1980s.[14] Tommy McKearney's recent political analysis of the PIRA presents a series of retrospective critiques of the left and republican politics.[15] Anthony McIntyre has argued *inter alia* against scholarship placing a false dichotomy between the 'military' and 'political' dimensions of republicanism.[16] Some commentators have focused on specific geographical or political aspects as a base for studies of republicanism. Toby Harnden has pointed to the IRA in south Armagh as a unit more militant, hostile to electoral or even agitational political strategies, and largely autonomous in its military behaviour,[17] while Robert W. White has illustrated a degree of exceptionalism in the local politics of Derry City, where he sees the relative dearth of loyalism allowing republicanism to flourish and pervade the Catholic community in a more straightforward manner than in Belfast, for example.[18]

## II

Methodologically and theoretically, this dissertation aligns itself with the burgeoning field of research into the Troubles engaging Tillyian social movement theory.[19] Charles Tilly's discussion of 'multiple sovereignty', in which separate power blocs with their own particular loci of popular support, contend for control of a state, serves as a useful paradigm

[14] Marc Mulholland, *The Longest War* (Oxford, 2002).
[15] McKearney's work is made all the more worthy of attention by the author's position as a left-wing republican who, while incarcerated as a PIRA prisoner, broke with the Provisional movement to found the League of Communist Republicans in the late 1980s. McKearney, *Provisional IRA*.
[16] Anthony McIntyre, 'Modern Irish Republicanism', *Irish Political Studies*, 10 (1995), pp. 97-122; Anthony McIntyre, *Good Friday* (New York, 2008).
[17] Toby Harnden, *"Bandit Country"* (London, 1999), pp. 11, 178.
[18] Robert W. White, 'From Peaceful Protest to Guerrilla War', *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (1989), p. 1283.
[19] Tilly is reluctant to define too narrowly social movements, but insists that they exist as organisations engaged in campaigning and performing public displays seeking to convey 'worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment' for a cause, or series of causes. Charles Tilly & Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements, 1768-2012* (Boulder, Colorado, 2013), p. 9.

in the context of the Troubles.[20] Scholars such as White have demonstrated the potential for social movement theory to illuminate important variations within republicanism across a varied socio-political landscape with respect to differences of geography, class, gender, and religiosity. White's work has demonstrated the potential for work on micro-mobilisation and identity to explain support for, and variations within, republicanism.[21] Social movement theory's concerns with micro-mobilisation and collective identity at a local level are integral to the theoretical framework underpinning this dissertation, which, following Tilly, locates its subject, that is Irish republicanism, as a series of positions competing within a broader political arena.

In examining a vast array of contemporary documents spanning local and national newspapers, political periodicals and manifestos, and republican literature, the thesis engages the tenets of discourse analysis, as described by Julianne Cheek, in gauging implicit agendas and differences within republicanism with respect to contemporary discussions and controversies.[22] Discourse analysis hereby informs research into the social contexts, often at a localised level, in which political and paramilitary organisations highlighted specific aspects of their politics. The thesis also utilises a growing body of historical sources released by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), many of them originating from British intelligence services, which can elucidate variations within republicanism and aspects of contemporary popular responses to the republican campaign(s).

A significant body of oral evidence also informs the dissertation. Over twenty extensive interviews have been conducted with republicans with first-hand experience of the period in question. Oral evidence is especially apt for this project in view of Donatella della Porta's description of the potential of 'life histories' to explicate the 'cultural life' and

[20] Michael S. Kimmel, *Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 207.
[21] See, for instance, White, 'From Peaceful Protest'; *Provisional Irish Republicans* (Westport, Connecticut, 1993); *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2006); 'The Irish Republican Movement and Recruitment Issues in Social Movement Research' (forthcoming).
[22] Julianne Cheek, 'At the Margins?', *Qualitative Health Research*, 14 (2004), pp. 1140-1150.

'networks' of social movements and the 'intersection between personal narratives and social structures' more broadly.[23] The use of oral evidence in the paper takes inspiration from the work of White, Kevin Bean and Mark Hayes, Rogelio Alonso, and Laurence McKeown who have used oral evidence in histories of aspects of the republican campaign, as well as the psychologist Neil Ferguson and sociologist James W. McAuley who have assessed oral evidence in researching collective identities among former loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland.[24] The interviews, conducted in a loosely-structured fashion, explored the importance of place, collective memory, and familial and personal political experience in shaping allegiance. In this respect the oral evidence drawn upon in this dissertation operates as a 'bridge' for understanding social contexts through stories of individual experiences of the past told as stories in the present.[25] Narrative accounts of mobilisation, as expressed through oral histories, illustrate the importance of social identities and shared emotions in interviewees' personal understanding of their engagement in radical political movements.[26]

This dissertation engages an extensive historiography in addressing two central areas of research. Chapter 1 assesses the qualitative nature of republican politics across the period in question, considering the changing place of the politics of civil rights, socialism, feminism, and populism in republican politics, and assessing how republicanism varied across a heterogeneous social geography. To this end, the dissertation analyses factors informing the

[23] Donatella della Porta, 'In-Depth Interviews', in Donatella della Porta (ed.), *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 228-261.
[24] White, *Provisional Irish Republicans*; Kevin Bean & Mark Hayes, *Republican Voices* (Monaghan, 2001); Alonso, *IRA and Armed Struggle*; McKeown, *Out of Time*; Neil Ferguson & James McAuley, 'Ulster Loyalist Accounts of Armed Mobilization, Demobilization and Decommissioning' (forthcoming).
[25] Kathleen Blee & Verta Taylor, 'The Uses of Semi-Structured Interviews in Social Movement Research', in Bert Klandermans & Suzanne Staggenborg (eds.), *Methods in Social Movement Research* (Minneapolis, 2002), p. 103.
[26] Jacquelien van Stekelenburg & Bert Klandermans, 'Individuals in Movements', in Bert Klandermans & Conny Roggeband (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Movements Across Disciplines* (New York, 2007), pp. 157-204; Jacquelien van Stekelenburg & Bert Klandermans, 'Fitting Demand and Supply', *Social Movement Studies*, 13 (2014), pp. 179-203; Ferguson & McAuley, 'Ulster Loyalist Accounts'.

framing of political allegiance. Chapter 2 analyses the complex place of republicanism within broader societal politics, with particular reference to republicanism's interactions with the Catholic Church, alternative political parties and groupings, and nationalist communities themselves. The thesis also addresses the issue of political hegemony, questioning the extent to which republican politics were moulded and transformed by the wider communities in which they existed, making a distinction between leadership and rank-and-file, cognisant of the contested nature of political directives within organisations.

## Chapter 1: The politics of Irish republicanism, c.1970-c.1994

### I.I Provisional republicanism and civil rights

The relationship between republicanism and the politics of civil rights has proved a vexed issue, the historiographical debate reflecting tensions which cut through the period itself and hark back to the late 1960s. Just as that arch-adversary of republicanism Ian Paisley had described the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association as 'a bunch of republican rebels' in January 1969,[27] so the scholarly dispute on the connections between republicanism and civil rights politics has centred on the issue of the extent to which the NICRA was influenced by republicans in its midst.[28] But the historiography has neglected the inverse issue of the place of civil rights politics within republicanism.

The central tenets of civil rights politics in Northern Ireland – challenging sectarian discrimination in employment opportunities, housing allocation, electoral gerrymandering, and the implementation of the law[29] – were to be reiterated and reconstituted in several important ways by diverse wings of republicanism throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Kenneth Christie's blanket denial of the moral legitimacy or rectitude of militant republicans' laying

[27] Ian Paisley quoted in Tony Allen, *Witness to History* (London, 2004), p. 29.

[28] In an important article of 1988, Bob Purdie refuted the notion that republicans had any significant influence in shaping the NICRA towards more militant tendencies, positing that the civil rights movement only became more radical in the wake of Stormont intransigence through the 1960s to the imposition of direct rule in 1972. Bob Purdie, 'Was the Civil Rights Movement a Republican/Communist Conspiracy?', *Irish Political Studies*, 3 (1988), pp. 33-42.

[29] That the NICRA constituted a broad political church has been fully established in a diverse literature on the subject. See, inter alia, Kenneth Christie, *Political Protest in Northern Ireland* (Reading, 1992); Christopher Hewitt, 'Catholic Grievances, Catholic Nationalism and Violence in Northern Ireland during the Civil Rights Period', *British Journal of Sociology*, 32 (1981), pp. 362-380; Fionnbarra Ó Doherty, *Ulster's White Negroes* (Edinburgh, 1994); Bob Purdie, *Politics in the Streets* (Belfast, 1990); Conn McCluskey, *Up Off Their Knees* (Dublin, 1989). At the core of NICRA's agenda stood a Bill of Rights calling for equal rights and opportunities for all in regards to the allocation of jobs, housing, and the redrawing of electoral wards to prevent gerrymandering. NICRA, *We Shall Overcome* (Belfast, 1978), p. 20; NICRA, *Direct Rule* (Belfast, 1972). The movement also expressed after the outbreak of conflict opposition to the prevailing 'anti-democratic laws' and emergency powers facilitating summary arrest. NAI Public Records TSCH 2002/8/99: NICRA, 'A programme for peace this Christmas' (22 December 1971).

claim to a civil rights legacy will not do.[30] Irrespective of one's position on the nature of republican involvement in civil rights campaigns and republican appropriation of civil rights agendas, that the legacies of the civil rights movement played an important role in republican politics should not be neglected. In the years immediately following the split within republicanism of 1969 and 1970, the Provisional movement repeatedly portrayed itself as a vanguard whose programme on the national question promised much for more moderate supporters of the civil rights movement as well as radical republicans. Somewhat ironically, the Provisional wing retained the civil rights concerns of the Gouldingite IRA of the 1960s from which the Provisionals had seceded. In one of the final pre-split IRA statements the organisation had declared 'for a number of years past the Republican Movement has been committed to support of the moderate demands of the Civil Rights Movement'.[31]

The crises in nationalist ghettos of 1969 and 1970 compelled the Provisionals to concern themselves with Catholic civil rights when loyalist onslaughts were feared. The early Provisionals highlighted the expedience and urgency of civil rights reform in their first Easter statement (1970): 'At the moment the greatest need of all is for assisting our people in the Six Counties in their demands for Civil Rights'.[32] Theoretical concerns with sectarianism prevented the republicans from overtly captioning 'our people' as the underclass Catholics, but the subtext was clear enough. Simplistic historiographical portrayals of Provisional republicanism as a straightforward anti-partition movement miss the centrality of civil rights politics to the organisation's early history.[33] The Provisionals' first major policy document, the Éire Nua plan proposed in January 1971 with an appendix added in June 1972, included

[30] Christie, *Political Protest*, 148.
[31] ILA: IRA statement (pre-split) signed by Cathal Goulding, chief of staff (August 1969).
[32] Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, *Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA* (1973), p. 13.
[33] Taylor, *Provos*, 194. Brian Feeney's claim that only from 1973 did PSF engage in its 'first stirring of political activity' with the opening of the Republican Press Centre sets an extremely narrow definition of the political process as confined to either the constitutional process or public relations visible to the outside world, and misses the grassroots activism within republican communities from the very outset of conflict in 1970. Feeney, *Sinn Féin*, 272.

in its 'Structure of the New Ireland' a charter of rights of democracy, citizenship and conscience.[34] At grassroots level in Belfast, the early Provisionals offered support to Catholic households facing intimidation or vandalism of property: the PIRA in July 1972 implored the Housing Executive in West Belfast to honour tenancy agreements with Catholic families in need of rehousing after experiencing threats.[35] Although the Provisionals' ultimate objective was undoubtedly Irish unity, the movement was cognisant too of the political currency of civil rights politics among the Catholic community at large.

**I.II Official republicanism, People's Democracy, and civil rights**

Frank Burton's assessment of the early Provisional campaign relying heavily upon demands for civil rights and NICRA members for support has much to recommend,[36] but the enduring influence of civil rights politics pervading the Official republican movement through the 1970s has not been noted. The NICRA and the Officials had shared a desire for reform of Stormont rather than its prorogation in 1972,[37] a common cause which prominent Official Roy Johnston noted in the political-cultural monthly, *Fortnight*, in February of that year.[38] The Officials' and NICRA's shared position favouring the reform, rather than the abolition, of Stormont in the early 1970s intrinsically advocated legislation as a means of achieving and asserting civil rights. Demonstrating his opposition to the abolition of Stormont, Official sympathiser C. Desmond Greaves appealed to Westminster to legislate for

[34] Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, *Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA* (1973). Appendix: 'Structure of the New Ireland' (1972).
[35] 'The Past Four Weeks', *Fortnight*, 44 (August 1972).
[36] Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy*, 121.
[37] Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion* (London, 1989), p. 141. The Officials' Easter Statement of 1972 elucidated their opposition to direct rule by Westminster.
[38] Letter from Roy Johnston, *Fortnight*, 34 (23 February 1972), p. 22. 'Reform of Stormont by Westminster enactment is NICRA policy and the [Official] Republicans support this to this day'.

nationalists' rights in Northern Ireland in 1971[39] – a tactic striking similar to the well-established 'bill of rights' which the NICRA programme retained throughout the decade.

The Officials formed notable alliances with civil rights campaigners through the mid-1970s. In September 1972, months after the Official IRA ceasefire, the OSF publicity organ declared:

> [T]he issue in the North of Ireland is CIVIL RIGHTS NOW… We want full guaranteed democracy… Let the people unite once more in the mass movement for civil rights, the NICRA.[40]

The Officials' explanation for their ceasefire included the need for the political party to help 'give leadership so as to develop the struggle for *basic civil rights*'.[41] Officials had not abandoned their aspirations to socialist revolution – one former Official internee remembered the ceasefire being explained 'as a tactic… we believed we were on the verge of world revolution and that in ten or fifteen years' time the world would be socialist'[42] – but the importance of fundamental civil rights demands to Official politics was undiminished. Although there had been a precedent for alliances between the Officials and NICRA since 1970 – when five members of the Officials' Republican Clubs had been elected to the NICRA executive committee[43] – the Officials' concern with the politics of civil rights became most pronounced in 1975. Speaking in Enniskillen, county Fermanagh in June 1975, party secretary Kevin Smyth referred to the 'sustained campaign of the Republican Clubs for the introduction of a Bill of Rights' as part of their 'striving for peace' through 'non-violent united political action'[44] – words which could almost have come from a NICRA

[39] Anthony Coughlan, 'C. Desmond Greaves, 1913-1988: An Obituary', *Saothar,* 14 (1989), p. 9.
[40] Editorial: 'Let the people speak', *UI,* Vol. 26 No. 9 (September 1972).
[41] 'Army council sees growing danger of civil war: Why Officials called a halt', *SP,* [n.d., 1972]. Emphases added.
[42] Former Official republican internee interviewed by the author (Belfast, March 2016).
[43] Swan, *Official Irish Republicanism,* 327-328. The five were: Kevin Agnew, Malachy McGurran, Liam McMillen, Ivan Barr, Denis Cassin.
[44] 'Republicans fight for peace', *UI,* Vol. 33 No. 7 (July 1975).

representative. The County Tyrone Republican Clubs had joined with NICRA in anti-internment demonstrations on marches from Coalisland to Dungannon in August 1975,[45] and the Republican Clubs councillors went further later in the year by pledging full support to the NICRA's 'civil disobedience campaign'.[46]

By the end of 1975 the Republican Clubs described their organisation as a civil rights lobby favouring reformed devolved rule in Northern Ireland. OSF president Tomás Mac Giolla called in November 1975 for the Constitutional Convention to expedite a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland,[47] while the *United Irishman* reflected the Official movement's designs, commenting that '[Official] Republicans play a considerable part in the struggle for Civil Rights in the North'.[48] Even as Official politics shifted substantially through the later 1970s towards quasi-Stalinist economics – most notably around the tenets of *The Irish Industrial Revolution* (1977), which moved attention to calls for overarching central state planning in industry and constituted a major step in what one scholar has described as 'the de-republicanisation' of the Official movement[49] – the Officials remained committed to civil rights politics, a policy document of 1980 calling for the 'protection and consolidation of the Civil Rights advances' of the previous decade.[50]

The Officials' increasing emphasis on class unity and societal reform above anti-partitionist aligned with particular aspects of civil rights politics, such as calls for the reform of the police – a cause espoused in NICRA's demands for an end to the 'policy of military saturation and repression' in nationalist-republican areas in the early 1970s.[51] While NICRA

[45] 'Tyrone rights demos', *UI*, Vol. 33 No. 8 (August 1975).
[46] 'Councillors fight sectarianism', *UI*, Vol. 33 No. 11 (November 1975).
[47] 'Mac Giolla restates Civil Rights demands', *UI*, Vol. 33 No. 12 (December 1975).
[48] 'Rights and R.U.C. the targets', *UI*, Vol. 33 No. 12 (December 1975).
[49] Robert Perry, *Revisionist Scholarship and Modern Irish Politics* (Farnham, 2013), p. 51.
[50] NIPC P116(A): Workers' Party Republican Clubs, *The Case for Devolved Government in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: WPRC, 1980), p. 5.
[51] NAI Public Records TSCH 2002/8/99: NICRA, 'A programme for peace this Christmas' (22 December 1971).

sought the abolition of the police's emergency powers of censorship and summary arrest,[52] the Officials in July 1975 joined in calling for 'the repeal of all repressive laws' including the Special Powers Act and Emergency Provisions Act, and proposed the establishment of an unarmed 'civic police service' controlled by local civilian bodies.[53] The overlap of membership between the Officials and the Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement also suggests the increasingly liberal, rights-based agenda pervading the Official movement in the late 1970s,[54] with the NIWRM's agenda including a campaign against discrimination along lines of gender and religion in employment.[55]

A more complex manifestation of civil rights politics in republicanism was expressed through the dynamic career of the People's Democracy (PD) movement. Although the People's Democracy had formally withdrawn from the NICRA in 1971 in frustration at the NICRA's failure to condemn aspects of Catholic Church politics,[56] the PD retained an important role in lobbying around matters regarding civil rights, especially against internment. Despite its origins in non-sectarian student politics in the late 1960s, the PD was by late 1972 emphatically republican: the grouping's publicity exhorted support for the 'fight for "THE WORKERS [sic] REPUBLIC"'.[57] The PD's principal involvement with civil rights politics stemmed from the anti-internment campaign of the early 1970s. When leading member Michael Farrell spoke in Andersonstown in June 1973 at a Provisional rally he denounced internment as illegitimate political repression,[58] and later that year in Killeen,

[52] ILA: NICRA, *Direct Rule: Civil Rights NOT Civil War* (Belfast: NICRA, 1972), p. 5. Robert W. Heatley wrote the pamphlet on behalf of the organisation.
[53] NIPC P117: Six County Regional Executive, Republican Clubs, *The police and you! The Republican Clubs' case for a new Civic Police Service* (1975).
[54] Carmel Roulston, 'Women on the Margin', *Science and Society*, 53 (1989), pp. 227-228.
[55] NIPC P13672: Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement, *Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement* (1980).
[56] Hanley & Millar, *Lost Revolution*, 206.
[57] IEL: People's Democracy, 'Remember "Bloody Sunday" 1972' Christmas card (1972).
[58] 'Ex-Minister of Home Affairs sends Michael Farrell to jail', *Republican News*, 27 June 1973.

south Armagh the PD's Niall Vallelley joined republicans at an anti-internment rally.[59] The grouping was far from uncritical of the mainstream NICRA, which it considered to have been excessively concerned with keeping the civil rights movement 'non-political' and avoiding 'conflict' and as such 'degenerated into a talk-shop and became irrelevant'.[60] But the PD demonstrated a civil rights-based hostility to government repression, warning in 1975 that a coup d'état by hard-line loyalists would be a harbinger for 'the most savage system of repression since the 1920's'.[61] Other radical leftist republicans were also influenced by the politics of the civil rights movement. The far-left Revolutionary Marxist Group in Northern Ireland shared the PD's distaste for the Constitutional Convention of 1975. As well as demanding the nationalisation of 'all struggling industries' and the government's imposition of wage controls, the RMG called for '*full civil rights* and an end to partition'.[62] The Provisionals, Officials, PD and RMG all deployed a civil rights platform at points through the 1970s.

### I.III Provisional republicanism and the recapitulation of civil rights politics in the late 1980s

Depictions of the Provisional movement undergoing a binary turn from a military to a constitutional strategy through the late 1980s and early 1990s miss the Provisionals' deft restoration of aspects of civil rights politics to their political agenda in the late 1980s.[63] The PSF Ard Chomhairle produced a policy document for the Árd-Fheis of 1987 recapitulating issues of sectarian discrimination in employment, arguing for the full implementation of the MacBride Principles and accusing the British government of having employed a 'seen-to-be-

[59] 'Rally at Coventry and at Killeen', *Republican News*, 25 August 1973.
[60] NIPC P1008: People's Democracy, *H-Block Struggle: Irish Revolution on the March* [n.d., 1981].
[61] 'On the brink', *Unfree Citizen*, 9 June 1975.
[62] 'SDLP capitulates to loyalism: if the sash Fitts, wear it!', *Socialist Republic: Paper of the Revolutionary Marxist Group*, 1 [n.d., 1975]; 'A programme of action', *Socialist Republic: Paper of the Revolutionary Marxist Group*, 1 [n.d., 1975].
[63] Feeney, *Sinn Féin*, 9, 292, 334.

doing-something' approach to a problem first illuminated by a series of meticulously-researched pamphlets issued by the Campaign for Social Justice in the 1960s.[64] The Provisionals' invocation of aspects of the civil rights campaign in the late 1980s was sustained by party president Gerry Adams's speaking tour of the Irish Republic in April 1988: 'In this the twentieth anniversary of the Civil Rights struggle, the denial of these rights continues'.[65] Through subtle symbolic adaptations, the Provisionals moved to claim ownership of the civil rights movement's legacies and pointed to the denial of the northern nationalists' aspirations of unification as synonymous with the civil rights of employment, housing and electoral franchise denied sections of the Catholic community from partition to the 1960s. Adams spoke at a NICRA commemoration march in county Tyrone in September 1988 in a rally which subtly linked civil rights causes with militant republicanism, with the march band adorned with illustrations of republican weaponry.[66] Standing for election in county Louth in the Republic's general election of June 1989, former PIRA prisoner Arthur Morgan's electoral manifesto declared that 'a vote for Sinn Féin… is a vote against extradition, for *civil rights for all, and an end to discrimination*…'[67] The legacy of the civil rights movement had been adapted in line with contemporary Provisional politics, encapsulating what Timothy Shanahan has described as the 'instrumentalist' incentive for a united Ireland, by which national unification is held as portentous of broader liberal social benefits such as the extension of democracy, cultural revival, and civil rights.[68] Liam Cullinane's contention that republicans' alliances with a civil rights agenda in the late 1960s

[64] PSF, *Setting the Criteria: Tackling Discrimination* (1987). The document's statistics regarding employment echoed the research informing the Campaign for Social Justice, *Northern Ireland: The Plain Truth* [Second edition, 1969].
[65] NIPC P3152: Gerry Adams speeches quoted in *Signposts to Independence and Socialism* (Dublin: SF Publicity Department, 1988).
[66] David McKittrick, 'Marching to the beat of the Armalite', *Independent*, 5 September 1988.
[67] IEL: Arthur Morgan, Louth, Republic of Ireland General Election (June 1989). Election flyer: *Make Your Vote Count*.
[68] Timothy Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Morality of Terrorism* (Edinburgh, 2009), p. 80.

prevented republicanism from social ostracisation and isolation thus appears equally relevant to the late 1980s.[69]

The Provisionals' invocation of aspects of civil rights politics through the late 1980s and early 1990s dovetailed with incremental changes in the language of the movement towards conceptions of 'peace with justice' – itself a phrase recapitulated from the early 1970s.[70] The Provisionals came to emphasise a populist anti-austerity and pro-public sector position in a bid to widen their political support base in the late 1980s. The language of civil rights was inextricably connected to an electoral agenda which championed 'peace with justice' and the search for consensus across the broad nationalist community. Contemporary media discourse focusing upon the perceived indiscipline of the PIRA as it widened its terms of 'legitimate targets' through the late 1980s had brought significant pressure to bear on a Provisional leadership with concerns for falling electoral yields from 1985 onwards. Prominent journalist David McKittrick captured something of the widespread dismay at the PIRA's killing of some thirty-two civilians in 1987 and 1988 alone, twenty-three of them from the unionist community,[71] when in his *Independent* dispatch in April 1989 he made reference to a 'public stance' of opposition against the PIRA's 'read[iness] to become involved in sectarian exchanges'.[72] The Provisionals' Northern Command even took the hitherto unprecedented step of standing down a PIRA unit operating along the Fermanagh-Donegal border in 1989 after a series of operations resulting in civilian casualties.[73] Writing in 1991, Derry City PSF activist Mitchel McLaughlin considered the 'unconscious

[69] Liam Cullinane, '"A happy blend"?', *Saothar,* 35 (2010), p. 60.
[70] PSF President Ruairí Ó Brádaigh had given the Éire Nua document appendage the 'Peace with Justice' title in 1972.
[71] Brendan O'Duffy, 'Violence in Northern Ireland, 1969-1994', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 18 (1995), p. 760.
[72] David McKittrick, 'IRA's toll of civilian deaths grows despite public stance', *Independent,* 13 April 1989.
[73] 'Gardai investigate claims about IRA unit', *Donegal News,* 28 January 1989.

insensitivity' of 'some IRA operations', [74] while the following year Belfast PSF representative Richard McAuley went further in arguing that the party would not 'realise our full potential as long as the war is going on in the north'.[75] Cognisant of the divisiveness of an increasingly unpopular armed campaign, sections of Provisional republicanism moved to advocate the more consensual agendas of civil rights advancement and peace-seeking.

PSF president Gerry Adams had argued at the Árd-Fheis of 1986 that the party ought to 'avoid ultra-republican positions' in order to deny 'the establishment media the opportunity of diverting public attention from more pertinent Árd-Fheis issues'.[76] Following this lead, the Provisionals espoused issues concerning social services of broad popular interest thereafter, launching a poster campaign in 1987 raising awareness of the Conservative government's cuts to public healthcare,[77] and campaigning four years later for the future of Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital.[78] Standing for election in Cavan/Monaghan in 1992, PSF's Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin's election literature made no reference to republican militarism and instead pointed to Ó Caoláin's activism during seven years as a Monaghan county councillor fighting for 'an end to all SOCIAL WELFARE cutbacks', and campaigning on hospitals and housing. Even with the PIRA campaign still in progress, a vote for Ó Caoláin's was already being presented as a vote for 'a genuine and sustainable PEACE PROCESS'.[79] Standing for election in Buncrana, county Donegal, in 1991, a year in which all PSF's election literature included promises of 'effective local leadership', Jim Ferry published an election flyer dedicated almost exclusively to local politics, centred around

[74] Mitchel McLaughlin, 'Protestantism, unionism and loyalism', *An Camchéachta: The Starry Plough*, Volume 1 Issue 2 (1991), p. 16.
[75] Rogelio Alonso, 'The Modernisation of Irish Republican Thinking', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 24 (2001), p. 135.
[76] NIPC P3152: Gerry Adams speeches quoted in *Signposts to Independence and Socialism* (Dublin: SF Publicity Department, 1988).
[77] NIPC PPO0430: PSF, 'Health cuts affect you' (1987).
[78] NIPC PPO0466: PSF, 'Save the RVH' (1991).
[79] IEL: Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Cavan-Monaghan, Republic of Ireland General Election (November 1992). Election flyer: *Together We Can Make a Difference.*

policies seeking to expand public spending on housing, road works, sanitation services, and even ecological causes. At the very bottom of Ferry's manifesto appeared a brief mention of opposition to British rule in Northern Ireland.[80] With the Provisionals' emphasis placed increasingly upon local affairs over the broader issue of Northern Ireland's constitutional status in the early 1990s, PSF also sought to present itself, even some time prior to the PIRA ceasefire of August 1994, as the party which could deliver 'peace with justice'.

As early as 1987, PSF's electoral literature for the Westminster elections presented their candidates as the voters' choice for 'freedom', 'justice' and 'peace'.[81] While Ed Moloney and Brian Feeney have teleologically exaggerated the novelty of *A Scenario for Peace*,[82] published by PSF in 1987, the document was notable for the Provisionals' subtle shifts in their presentation of their organisation as an agent for peace, albeit on the very specific terms of a British withdrawal and an end to partition:

> We offer [loyalists] peace. We offer them equality… Sinn Féin seeks to create conditions which will lead to a permanent cessation of hostilities, an end to our long war and the development of a peaceful, united and independent Irish society.[83]

Writing in 1992, leading Belfast PSF activist Chrissie McAuley suggested, perhaps paradoxically, that support for the republican organisation could be given out of an ultimate desire to accelerate a solution to the 'national question' and thus to achieve peace. 'So many

[80] IEL: Jim Ferry, Buncrana, Republic of Ireland Local Election (June 1991). Election flyer: *Vote Ferry for Effective Local Leadership*.
[81] See NIPC PP00827 for the generic PSF poster. For an example, see NIPC PPO0821: Brendan Curran, Upper Bann, UK General Election (June 1987).
[82] Moloney, *Secret History*, 298. Moloney argues that the document represented a significant progression from a 'Brits Out' sloganizing towards the 'much more subtle and flexible phrase "national self-determination"'. Such an assessment is overstated. The Provisionals in 1987 still fundamentally rejected the loyalists' right of veto as holding 'no validity' and referred to the unionists as 'an artificial majority' with an 'historic laager mentality'. Feeney, *Sinn Féin*, 9, 344.
[83] NIPC P1774: PSF, *A Scenario for Peace: A Discussion Paper* (Belfast: PSF, 1987). The document was initially produced by the PSF Ard Chomairle.

others share the republican vision because we want this bloody conflict to end as soon as possible'.[84]

The PSF leadership's portrayal of the party as a force for 'peace with justice' achieved notable success in Derry. The Derry Comhairle Ceantair called at the party Árd-Fheis of 1991 for the conference to promote PSF talks with the British government and other Irish nationalists as a means of advancing the cause of peace and Irish unity.[85] The election publicity of Martin McGuinness during the general election campaign of 1992 even addressed directly the most controversial aspect of Provisional politics, taking the remarkable step of calling upon voters to lend McGuinness their support even if they actively disagreed with the PIRA campaign; the Provisionals claimed to be capable of delivering 'a lasting peace' and tackling issues such as discrimination, employment, women's rights, and the environment.[86] Broadening the spectrum of their political offerings through the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Provisionals sought to widen their electoral support, even some years before the armed struggle was ultimately halted.

### II.I The legacies of the republican split of 1970 and the politics of the left

The place of leftist thought and socialism in republican politics proved a recurrent controversy with divisive potential throughout the conflict. The newly emergent Provisional republican movement had in 1970 cited the perceived tendency of 'extreme socialism' in the Gouldingite IRA as among their reasons for seceding from the original grouping, implying that the republican movement had been hijacked by left-wing ideologues against the will of

[84] Chrissie McAuley, 'Let's end the nightmare', *Spare Rib*, 231 (February 1992).
[85] 'Sinn Fein Ard Fheis', *Anglo-Celt*, 31 January 1991.
[86] NIPC PPO0836A, PPO0836B: Martin McGuinness, Foyle, UK General Election (April 1992). Election poster: *Towards a lasting peace*.

the majority.[87] But commentators who portray the Official-Provisional split as one of left-versus right-wing political tendencies do a disservice to the complexity of the issue.[88]

Many early Provisionals' refutations of 'extreme socialism' reflected political pragmatism and semantic sensitivities rather than any intrinsic centrism in Provisional politics. The Provisionals' need to discredit political rivals – during what Simon Prince and Geoffrey Warner have described as a period of intense political competition within republicanism[89] – meant that the dismissal of Officials as abstract left-wing theorists far removed from political realities served as a convenient slur. High-profile clergy levelling severe criticisms against the Official rump of the republican movement led many Provisionals to distance themselves from charges of collectivist radicalism. The celebrity priest Father Michael Cleary dismissed the Officials in a national newspaper as 'Communist-inspired and controlled', casting their Provisional rivals as the true inheritors of the republican mantle.[90] But the Provisionals encompassed left-wing thinking with their own number from the very outset of the conflict. In 1971 the commander of the Provisional IRA's Belfast Brigade, Joe Cahill, professed to belonging to a movement of 'socialists' and claimed a personal penchant for the highly-centralised collectivised economy of the USSR, 'the only workable system which has ever been hit on which really benefits the working man'. Cahill's hasty assertion 'we are not communists' illustrates the Provisionals' early sensitivities, seeking to avoid any label of foreign manipulation from Moscow, despite Cahill's own profession of admiration

[87] Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, *Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA* (1973), p. 13.
[88] Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983), p. 393. Townshend argues that the 'atavism of the street-fighting in Derry and Belfast' of 1969 and 1970 'overwhelmed the lately acquired Marxoid ideology of the IRA', implying that the Goulding movement was divorced from the defensive operations undertaken on the ground. Townshend tends towards over-dichotomisation: 'Once again traditionalists reverted to the primal function of physical force – not to create political waves but to defend territory'. See also Emmet O'Connor, 'Labour and Left Politics', in Arthur Aughey & Duncan Morrow (eds.), *Northern Ireland Politics* (Harlow, 1996), pp. 48-55. O'Connor suggested that in 1969 and 1970 the republican movement split between 'a 'red' faction, the Officials, and the 'green' Provisionals'.
[89] Simon Prince & Geoffrey Warner, 'The IRA and its Rivals', *Contemporary British History*, 27 (2013), pp. 271-296.
[90] 'Not reds, Sinn Fein tells Fr. Cleary', *Sunday Independent*, 19 December 1971.

for the USSR. Cahill himself sought to discredit the Officials with the implication that his rivals were the dupes of foreign communist regimes: 'They are prepared to call in aid from Communist countries... We [the Provisionals] can see no future in that'.[91]

That the Officials were especially vulnerable to such clerical charges of abstract theorising in the context of competition with the Provisionals and criticism from clergy has been insightfully noted by one former Official internee:

> We were being called communists, you know, right from the beginning. That was the main weapon the Provisionals had against us… "foreign ideologies", "national liberation fronts": that was a weapon they used, and the Church reinforced that weapon.[92]

Seeking to avoid portrayals as far-left extremists under malignant foreign control, the early Provisional hierarchy restricted public statements to broadly ambiguous statements on the issue of their socialism, mainly framing their allegiances only in negative and noncommittal terms of what they did *not* stand for. The ambition of the Éire Nua programme of 1971, including radical proposals for local cooperatives, limits on private landholdings, and significant state control of major industries, was downplayed by sections of the Provisional leadership at grassroots level on occasions when the proposals were met with a circumspect popular response. When owners of small businesses in Gransha, near Belfast, registered dismay at the Provisionals' plans in 1973, the local Sinn Féin cumann moved to reassure businesspeople that the Éire Nua cooperatives did not represent an assault on their interests:

> The impression many people have of the co-ops is generally a vague one of socialists trying to "do" shop-keepers out of a living. Of course this is not so.[93]

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[91] Christopher Macy, 'Sinn Fein and the IRA's [sic]: 1', *Humanist: Ulster Special Issue,* Vol. 87 No. 1 (January 1972), p. 19.
[92] Former Official republican internee interviewed by the author (Belfast, March 2016).
[93] EHM: 'Irish economy and Eire Nua', *An Guth: Bulletin of the Terry McDermott SF Cumann (Gransha)* [n.d., 1973].

**II.II The radicalism leftism of early Provisional republicanism**

Commentators have neglected the leftist radicalism of the Provisionals' original Éire Nua proposals of 1971 and their accompanying *Peace with Justice* (1972) and, conversely, have overstated the supposed 'leftward shift' in Provisional policy in the late 1970s.[94] In focusing on the Éire Nua programme's designs for an elaborate four-tiered form of federalised government and describing the plans in terms of concessions to northern unionism, historians have failed to appreciate the enduring radicalism of the *Peace with Justice* manifesto which outlined the Provisional plan for the 'new Ireland'.[95] *Peace with Justice*, which sold 12,000 copies in its first four months of publication,[96] stood as a remarkable document in terms of the enormity of the state which it envisaged. The federal and provincial governments were to be invested with extensive authority over finance, insurance, agriculture, fisheries, and the extent of private landholdings.[97] The original Éire Nua of 1971 had envisaged a 'centralised co-operative trade organisation' to help 'replace the investor's greed for private profit'.[98]

The programme of Éire Nua was designed and marketed, initially at least, as an unashamedly socialist document. A poster publicising the programme in 1972 described the

[94] Townshend, *Political Violence*, 395. Of the INLA, Townshend says it 'declared itself to be socialist, and may thus be seen as more 'Republican' than the PIRA, which is really a nationalist organisation'. Distinguished analysts such as Richard English and Ed Moloney have perceived the 'leftward shift' of the late 1970s, although English has qualified the claim by recognising the Provisional hierarchy's recurring tendency to seek to 'distance themselves' from labels of Marxism. English, *Armed Struggle*, 215-216; Moloney, *Secret History*, 185.

[95] Henry Patterson, Ed Moloney, and M. L. R. Smith have all focused on the elaborate form of federal government envisaged in Éire Nua over any of the item's socialist ideology, and have presented the proposals as almost immediately unpopular with northern republicans who resented the prospect of ceding significant local power to unionists. Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, 162; Moloney, *Secret History*, 181. M. L. R. Smith, 'Fin de Siècle, 1972: The Provisional IRA's Strategy and the Beginning of the Eight-Thousand-Day Stalemate', in Alan O'Day (ed.), *Political Violence in Northern Ireland: Conflict and Conflict Resolution* (Westport, Connecticut, 1997), p. 23.

[96] NIPC P1355: Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, *Our people, our future: What Eire Nua means* (Dublin: PSF, 1973).

[97] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH1578: PSF, *Peace with Justice: Support these demands for a just and lasting peace* (Dublin: Republican Movement, June 1972, reprinted July 1975).

[98] NIPC P986: PSF, *Éire Nua: The Social and Economic Programme of Sinn Féin* (Dublin: PSF, 1971), p. 10.

proposals as 'the blueprint for socialist policies in a Federal Ireland',[99] and another advertisement billed Éire Nua as the keystone for a 'socialist-federal republic'.[100] Other publicity highlighted the proposals envisaging the nationalisation of the banks, with 'mines and mining under public control for Irish profit', and 'work for all' in 'a Federal Republic… with Socialist policies'.[101] Reflecting in a private Ard Chomhairle meeting some years later, Seán Ó Brádaigh recalled that the original Éire Nua plan had been 'designed as a left[-wing] document'.[102]

Socialist politics pervaded much of early Provisional policy and publicity, especially overtly after the Officials had receded from public view after their ceasefire in 1972. The following year, the organ of the Provisional movement boasted of the PIRA's status as 'a socialist Army' and went so far as to posit 'their socialism' as 'the distinguishing feature from other so called Nationalist or "Anti Unionist" bodies'. Their 'competition' with the Officials now relatively muted, the Provisionals took the notable step of seeking to outflank all of their fellow republican groupings on a socialist ticket. In a statement of 1973, a Provisional press officer claimed the organisation had a unique understanding of Connollyite socialist ideology.[103] A similar article in October 1972 critiquing the 'present capitalist system' and reiterating the dual objectives of anti-partitionism and thirty-two-county socialism was also illustrative of the permeation of revolutionary socialist theory within the early Provisional movement.[104]

The party policy document *Mining and Energy* (1974) envisaged 'an alternative third way of life' and economic management which rejected both '"Western" liberal capitalism' and the Stalinist 'state capitalism of the "Eastern" block' [sic], emulating the position of the

[99] NIPC PPO0295: 'Ireland Free – No E.E.C.!' (PSF, 1972).
[100] NIPC PPO0306: 'Éire Nua' (PSF, 1972).
[101] See NIPC PPO0341: 'In the New Ireland' (PSF, 1973); NIPC PPO0340: 'Sinn Féin for a new Ireland' (PSF, 1973).
[102] Moloney, *Secret History*, 493.
[103] 'The Irish working class and the IRA', *Republican News*, 25 August 1973.
[104] 'Socialism without National Liberation is a Farce', *Republican News*, 13 October 1972.

British International Socialists.[105] The Provisionals' repudiation of both the western neoliberal and the dictatorial communist economies as forms of 'capitalism' goes some way towards highlighting the revolutionary character of the Provisionals' economic ambitions in the early 1970s, tinged with a lingering concern as to the political ramifications of appearing overly infatuated with Soviet methods, in a document which also outlined far-left proposals for extensive 'state management' of the finance sector, agricultural cooperatives, and state-funded national smelting process.[106] Even before the PIRA's campaign of 1977 against prominent industrialists, a PSF publicity campaign quoted the great socialist James Connolly's words: 'The day has passed for patching up the capitalist system; it must go'.[107] The accompaniment of Connolly's words with an image of PIRA volunteers on 'active service' left little room for doubt that the Provisionals were fighting not merely against partition, but for the overthrow of capitalism.

In perceiving a supposedly radical leftward shift in Provisional politics in the *late* 1970s, analysts such as Ed Moloney have overstated the long-term political significance of the PIRA campaign against 'syndicalists' and businessmen in the period between February and May 1977, when ten businessmen were killed.[108] Although highlighting a notable shift in the Provisionals' military targeting strategy, secondary assessments of a 'leftward' movement neglect earlier developments. The Provisional hierarchy in the late 1970s sought to temper and marginalise the socialist tendency within the movement, not least after an attempt by socialists in the party to drop from Éire Nua the sections sanctioning private property ownership was defeated at the Árd-Fheis of 1977.[109] Revisions to the Éire Nua plan made at

[105] See, for instance, Tony Cliff, 'The "People's Democracies"', p. 17, and Duncan Hallas, 'The Stalinist Parties', p. 71, in Richard Kuper (ed.), *The Fourth International, Stalinism and the Origins of the International Socialists* (London, 1971).
[106] ILA: *Mining and Energy: The SF Policy* (Dublin: Elo Press, April 1974), pp. 4-5, 9-10.
[107] NIPC PPO3051: 'The day has passed for patching up the capitalist system' (PSF, 1976). The Connolly quotes come from his 'Labour, nationality and religion' pamphlet of 1910.
[108] Moloney, *Secret History*, 185.
[109] Kelley, *Longest War*, 282.

the Árd-Fheis in 1979 struck a more apologetic note on socialist policy than had originally been stated in 1972: the federal government with neighbourhood co-operatives, it was clarified, was concerned to

> *strike a balance* between western individualistic capitalism with its poor and hungry amid plenty on the right, and Eastern Soviet State capitalism… with its denial of freedom and human rights on the left.[110]

Rhetoric aside, the Provisionals' attempts in the late 1970s to appeal to a broad base of workers did not indicate any particular growth in the socialist convictions of the leadership, but rather reflected a pragmatic desire to address what Adams described as 'our most glaring weakness to date… our failure to develop revolutionary politics and to build strong political alternatives to so-called constitutional politics'.[111] Despite allusions to Connollyite objectives and inheritance of collectivist politics from the Proclamation of 1916, the Provisionals' revised Éire Nua of 1979 stressed the democratic nature of the socialism they envisaged, rather than the more centralised and dictatorial socialism which had been proposed in 1971, when PSF had pledged to take over management of the economy through the nationalisation of all banks and creation of a National Financial Authority; the 'Government [would] obtain a controlling interest' in key industries, and 'the State would assume immediate control over [agricultural] marketing arrangements', shaping the direction of resources in agriculture nationwide. The state would 'control' and 'rationalis[e]' trade and imports. The plans of 1971 had provided extensive detail as to the all-encompassing state control of finance, industry, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, transport, planning, education, social services, and trade.[112]

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[110] NIPC Oversize P8801: PSF, *Eire Nua explained* (Belfast: PSF, November 1979). Emphases added.
[111] Gerry Adams, 'Revolutionary politics needed to back up military gains', *APRN*, 23 June 1979.
[112] NIPC P986: PSF, *Éire Nua: The Social and Economic Programme of Sinn Féin* (Dublin: PSF, 1971), pp. 14, 19, 25, 54.

Socialism was reified as an intrinsically 'democratic system' in 1979, to be implemented by the population from below rather than imposed from above, and 'small local businesses' would still 'be permissible provided no exploitation occurs'.[113] The Provisional hierarchy's deliberate ambiguity on leftist politics, interspersed with occasional flourishes of Connollyite language, were to become a frequent feature of the late 1970s and early 1980s. By November 1979, the Provisional leadership had distanced itself from charges of socialist radicalism,[114] and as part of the hierarchy's reaction against the radicalism of previous years, party treasurer Charlie McGlade demonstrated cognisance at an Ard Chomhairle meeting in April 1980 of the 'real fear' of 'Communism', especially 'in rural areas', urging the party leadership to strike a more moderate tone in public pronouncements.[115] Senior Provisionals' caution on espousals of far-left language extended through the 1980s. Commenting in 1983, PSF's National organiser and Ard Chomhairle member Paddy Bolger had warned the party against 'sloganising about socialism' since the Irish Republic in particular constituted 'a non-revolutionary situation' and that no matter 'however correct its content', socialist doctrine should not necessarily be at the forefront of the party's agenda.[116] Gerry Adams told the Árd-Fheis of 1986 that the party must not necessarily define itself as 'socialist republican' since to do so would narrow the party's support base and imply 'that there is no place in [PSF] for non-socialist republicans'.[117] Through the late 1970s and early 1980s the Provisional leadership tempered the radicalism of party pronouncements in an attempt at preventing the movement from becoming excessively esoteric and politically obscured from the masses.

[113] NIPC P985: PSF, *Éire Nua: The Social, Economic and Political Dimensions* (Dublin: PSF, 1979).
[114] Adams told *Hibernia* magazine in October 1979: 'There is no Marxist influence within Sinn Féin; it simply isn't a Marxist organisation'. Ed Moloney, 'Adams denies the "Marxist" tag', *Hibernia*, 25 October 1979.
[115] Moloney, *Secret History*, 493. See Appendix 1.
[116] 'New departures for Sinn Féin?', *Gralton* (August-September 1983), pp. 26-30.
[117] NIPC P3152: Gerry Adams speeches quoted in *Signposts to Independence and Socialism* (Dublin: SF Publicity Department, 1988).

**II.III Enduring leftist radicalism within Provisional republicanism in the 1980s**

Despite party statements and policy, there remained a significant leftist influence within Provisional republicanism, especially encapsulated among prisoners during the 1980s. Even Gerry Adams, whose leadership of PSF from 1983 witnessed the continuation of senior party figures' masking grassroots leftist tendencies, had while interned in 1977 presented an outlook on Ireland which even held the Republic as a neo-colonial state reliant and 'increasingly subservient to imperialism'. Adams expressed his anger at 'the development of southern [i.e. Republic of Ireland] capitalism and the growth of multi-national concerns geared solely to outside interests'.[118] Throughout the late 1970s and the 1980s there remained hardy groupings of left-wing thinkers among the Provisional prisoners, although the actual influence of such individuals in shaping policy was often kept marginal by the movement leadership. Leading Belfast Provisional Brendan Hughes recalled the leadership directing the burning of Marxist books read by Provisional prisoners in Long Kesh in the mid-1970s.[119] Another radical PIRA prisoner, Anthony McIntyre, remembered the Provisional leadership's obstructing the publication of a second volume of a history of Irish republicanism written by PIRA prisoners in 1987 since Gerry Adams objected to the way in which some of the contributors in Long Kesh had disputed Adams's socialist credentials,[120] while a former life-sentence PIRA prisoner has argued that Sinn Féin's leadership had 'never properly embraced socialism'.[121] Richard English's representation of socialism as a 'secondary' goal of the Provisional movement may apply to the movement's leadership, but not necessarily to the rank and file.[122]

[118] NIPC PA0142A and PA0142B: Gerry Adams letter to *Irish News* dated 5 March 1977 from Long Kesh.
[119] Moloney, *Secret History*, 77.
[120] Alonso, *IRA and Armed Struggle*, 37.
[121] Former PIRA volunteer interviewed by the author (September 2015).
[122] Richard English, *Does Terrorism Work? A History* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 109-110, 129. In summarising the Provos' objectives, English considers that 'socialism represented a commitment for many Provisionals, and should be seen as a significant secondary goal of the organisation'. He also

In the late 1980s, a discussion in the Provisional discussion journal *Iris Bheag* witnessed a confrontation between PSF Director of Publicity Danny Morrison and PIRA prisoners in Long Kesh. When Morrison criticised the highly theoretical contributions of some leftist writers in the previous two issues, who he described as using political 'short-hand' and indulging in 'Marxist Esperanto', he drew an aggrieved rebuke in a letter signed by 'Republican POWs, C Wing, H.5', who defended the right of republicans to use Marxist theory and criticised 'republicans [who] are a conservative lot, slow to embrace change, too slow some would say'.[123] Provisional student groups were also among those who continued to place socialism at the core of their politics through the 1980s. The party's youth department in 1983 described an idealised version of coercive socialism, by which

> the ownership and control of wealth and of all the wealth-producing processes should be taken out of the hands of the relatively small group of people who presently own them, and vested instead in the working class.[124]

The political radicalism of PIRA prisoners was largely influenced by scholarly interests in the revolutionary governments of the developing world as well as interest in the works of James Connolly. A former PIRA volunteer who served seventeen years in the H-blocks recalled a 'rose-tinted' view of socialism among prisoners who embraced revolutionary theories from the Mozambican FRELIMO movement.[125] The worldview of the blanket protesters early in 1981 gives some insight into the political interests of radical prisoners with a global perspective. Weeks before the commencement of the 1981 hunger strike, prison staff in Long Kesh discovered a series of letters written by soon-to-be PIRA hunger strikers intended to rally support among the left-wing governments and revolutionary

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notes that 'Sinn Fein politics exuded a lastingly leftist quality', citing Paddy Fitzsimmons's June 1983 Westminster election literature which included railing against 'the effects of British rule' including unemployment, housing, education, agriculture and other economic issues.

[123] 'Bad language', *Iris Bheag*, 5 (December 1987).

[124] ILA: Sinn Féin Youth Department, *Students and Sinn Fein* (Dublin: PSF, 1983).

[125] Former PIRA volunteer interviewed by the author (September 2015).

movements of the world. Bobby Sands had written to the 'revolutionary' MPLA regime in Angola, Francis Hughes to the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ), and Ray McCreesh to the radical Basque separatists of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA).[126] Naturally the PIRA volunteers' chief concern in February 1981 was with rallying support from wherever it may be given, but the fact that the hunger strikers chose to target leftist revolutionary governments and movements whose influence in real terms with the British government was clearly marginal – the British government recognised the ETA as a 'terrorist' organisation, while the FLQ had, despite a strong electoral performance in 1976, failed in a referendum of 1980 among Quebecers seeking to gain a democratic mandate to enter negotiations with the Canadian state[127] – suggests something of the prison politics of the time. PIRA prisoners in H6 evidently engaged with the politics of the developing world, including among their resolutions for the PSF Árd-Fheis of 1981 proposals of support for the Duarte regime in El Salvador and for the severance of all ties with the Iranian Khomeini regime.[128]

The Provisionals' *Notes for Revolutionaries*, produced with the input of republican prisoners in 1982, quoted poetry from the Marxist-Leninist FRELIMO party of Mozambique, and made reference to other revolutionary movements including those operating in Vietnam and Nicaragua.[129] The anthology implied the aspiration of sections of the republican prison population to identify closely with, and take inspiration from, far-left independence movements. The party's Foreign Affairs Bureau provided an outlet for similar Provisional interests in international revolutionary governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s, producing publicity campaigns backing independence for peoples as diverse as the Catalans,

[126] PRONI NIO/12/196A: Copies of letters found during a wing move in H3 Block on 15 February 1981.
[127] M. V. Vaidu, 'Democracy versus Terrorism', *Peace Research*, 27 (1995), p. 13.
[128] NIPC PA0144: H6 resolutions for the PSF Árd-Fheis (8 October 1981).
[129] NIPC P881(B): PSF, *Notes for Revolutionaries* (1982), pp. 88, 94.

Basques, Welsh, Cornish, and Manx,[130] while also espousing a pro-Palestine position and vowing to 'smash Zionism'.[131] Many Provisionals, influenced by the global revolutionary politics of the day, demonstrated a leftist approach which stressed anti-imperialism and economic determinism as per Marxist theory.

The radical thinking of republican prisoners was influential in shaping republican policies towards the grassroots politics of the working-class communities outside the prisons. Some four years prior to the hunger strike of 1981, often portrayed by commentators as a turning point in PSF's modes of involvement with community politics,[132] a document signed by Belfast PIRA volunteer Denis Donaldson, developed from a series of discussions among the prisoners, emerged from Long Kesh. The document affords a valuable insight into the prisoners' trailblazing ideas. The Donaldson cadre had drawn up proposals which envisaged an expansion of the authority, influence, and activity of the republican movement in urban communities, calling for the formation of 'Peoples' Councils' to assist the Provisionals in 'bringing together and co-ordinating the activities of community groups', 'Peoples' Militia[s]' to 'prevent anti-social anti-people activity in an area', and 'Peoples' Courts', through all of which 'the IRA would continue to influence the situation'. The Donaldson document was not merely a theoretical exercise imagining quasi-totalitarian republican rule in urban areas; the plans were to serve as a means to the end by which 'a stronger base for support [for the Provisionals] would be created throughout the Nationalist areas of the North'.[133]

The PSF Education Department also promoted an especially radical socialist agenda through its grassroots work with new party members through the 1980s in particular. The

[130] NIPC PPO0193: 'Free the small nations' (PSF Foreign Affairs Bureau, 1979). The poster quoted Connolly and called for the 'freeing' of the Catalans, Sardinians, Manx, Bretons, Cornish, Galicians, Welsh, Scots, Basques, and Corsicans.
[131] NIPC PPO2235: 'Irish solidarity with the Palestinian people' (PSF, n.d.).
[132] See for example Clarke, *Broadening the Battlefield*, passim.
[133] NIPC Oversize P8377: 'Eire Nua and the peoples' councils' [n.d., c.1977]. The document is signed by PIRA prisoner Denis Donaldson.

department encouraged local branch education officers to recommend 'classic books on wider world revolutionary issues' including texts such as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Che Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare*, and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, alongside other departmental publications such as *Socialism Made Easy*.[134] The department recognised openly the plurality of politics within republicanism – 'The [Provisional] Republican Movement has always had three tendencies: a militarist and fairly apolitical tendency; a revolutionary tendency; and a constitutional tendency'[135] – while stipulating that the Provisionals' objectives were simultaneously 'nationalist and socialist' with the organisation's task

> to act as the mass organiser of the people; to lead them in agitational activities on issues such as land, for better working, living and social conditions, showing them in all these fights that their enemies are their landlords and their gombeen exploiters banded together into the establishment.

The department went so far as to claim that only those who railed against partition were legitimate inheritors of the 'socialist' tradition.[136] In the mid-1980s the department continued to promote critiques which would appeal to those who 'suffer under imperialist and capitalist rule in Ireland', lambasting the 'evils' of the 'capitalist class' and producing designs for trade union agitation through the overthrow of the 'pro-Brit' position of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, as well as exhorting republicans to press on tenants' committees for the nationalisation of all building land and investment capital, as well as 'strict' state control over private rents.

[134] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH1571: PSF Education Department, *New Members Course: Notes for Sinn Féin Education Officers* (Belfast, 1981).
[135] NIPC P957: PSF Education Department, *The Split* (Republican Lecture Series, No. 1, c.1981).
[136] NIPC P938: PSF Education Department, *Nationalist and Socialism* (Republican Lecture Series, No. 3, c.1981).

## II.IV Schisms within Provisional republicanism: The League of Communist Republicans and Republican Sinn Féin

The emergence in the late 1980s of the League of Communist Republicans reflected a specifically Marxist-Leninist tendency among Provisional prisoners, whose objectives revolved around the Marxist-Leninist agenda of 'finance, trade, industry, production and communication' under the 'Democratic control of the Revolutionary Democratic Workers' and Small Farmers' Republic'.[137] Although the grouping was numerically minor and restricted to Long Kesh itself, with approximately twenty-five of the sub-100 Provisionals who resigned from the PIRA in 1986 joining the LCR and the *Congress '86* publication print run at fewer than 1,000 copies,[138] the LCR was emblematic of an ideologically significant leftist disillusionment within Provisional republicanism in the 1980s. Through the decade, Marxist Provisionals experienced marginalisation and even ostracisation by the leadership. Mickey McMullan recalled feeling shunned by the Provisional leadership for his uncompromising socialism,[139] while Tommy McKearney's Marxist-Leninist approach to the education programmes he had organised for his fellow prisoners in Long Kesh was criticised and stymied by the senior Adamsite Martin Lynch, among others.[140]

But the LCR existed not merely as an abstract commentary by disillusioned republicans; the grouping was a direct product of circumstance and events within contemporary republicanism in the 1980s, its concerns regarding Provisional electoralism, military elitism, and a dearth of socialist agitation on the ground. At one level the LCR had as its roots the hunger strike of 1981 and the concomitant nascence of Provisional electoral activity – albeit experimentally at first. The LCR reflected on the hunger strike elections of

[137] Liam O'Ruairc, *The League of Communist Republicans* (2001) available at http://documents.mx/documents/league-of-communist-republicans.html (Accessed 10 May 2016).
[138] NIPC P3600: *From Long Kesh to Socialist Ireland* (Shannon: League of Communist Republicans, 1988), pp. 7-10.
[139] Alonso, *IRA and Armed Struggle*, 88.
[140] Brian Campbell, Laurence McKeown & Felim O'Hagan (eds.), *Nor Meekly Serve My Time* (Belfast, 1994), p. 134.

1981 as precipitating 'the decline of the Provos' and a 'retreat into a 6-county based populist… petit bourgeois electoralism'.[141] An anonymous LCR member writing from the H-blocks in 1988 described the genesis of the movement stemming from PSF's early electoral experimentation in 1982: 'From 1982 we had been very wary about the dangers of this [electoral] trend. By 1986 electoralism was well entrenched [in PSF]'.[142] Reflecting on events, McKearney has described how

> by the mid-eighties, I believed we [PSF] had reached the limit of our [electoral] capacity. Sinn Féin was picking popular issues and was becoming right-of-centre, and I was making that critique as a Marxist critique.[143]

The perception of military elitism in Provisional republicanism was an equally central LCR grievance. McKearney had argued in 1988 that the Provisionals' 'concentration on anti-partitionism gives rise to the difficulty of… tending to ghettoise SF support', leading into a more military-oriented focus and neglecting the need to mobilise the wider population. Members of the LCR were not necessarily of the view that the PIRA's military campaign was inherently wrong-headed or failed: James Tierney of H-Block 2, writing in October 1987, defended the PIRA campaign against charges of sectarianism, and said that he remained wedded to the principle of armed struggle. But Tierney held that such a struggle must be executed by 'a popular front', whereas the PIRA's socio-political isolation had left it vulnerable to widespread hostility in its portrayals by the media.[144] In this respect LCR rhetoric echoed something of Official republicanism in the early 1970s: at the declaration of their ceasefire in May 1972, the Officials had criticised the Provisionals' 'elitist military

[141] NIPC P3600: *From Long Kesh to Socialist Ireland* (Shannon: League of Communist Republicans, 1988), pp. 2, 5.
[142] 'Reply from the H-blocks', *Congress '86*, 5 (Winter 1988), pp. 15-16.
[143] Tommy McKearney interviewed by the author (Armagh, September 2015). Tommy McKearney, born Lurgan, county Armagh, 1952; PIRA prisoner, 1977-1993; founding member of the League of Communist Republicans, 1986.
[144] Tierney and McKearney quoted in NIPC P3080A: Communist Party of Ireland, *Armed Struggle* (Dublin: Communist Party of Ireland, 1987), p. 16.

activity'.[145] Writing in 1987, Mickey McMullan and Anthony McIntyre argued that the Provisionals' targeting of RUC and UDR personnel had been 'a grave tactical error' since it had alienated unionists and 'in the course of doing so, strengthen[ed] Unionist popular resolve' as republicans were 'falling into the trap of Ulsterisation'. Without an ideology and strategy to appeal across the sectarian divide and reach the entire thirty-two counties, they argued, 'a bleak and barren time lies ahead for Republicanism in Ireland'.[146]

The phenomenon of the LCR cuts against Moloney's portrayal of rural conservatism, according to which small farmers tending towards centrist to centre-right positions on the economy and conservative social values – often shaped by allegiance to traditional Catholicism – would hold socialism in suspicious regard.[147] A Maoist tendency which gained traction within the East Tyrone Brigade of the PIRA, emanating from commander Jim Lynagh's studies in Portlaoise prison in the mid-1980s and developed by his comrade Vincent McKenna, demonstrated the potential for political radicalism in the rural PIRA.[148] Lynagh's unit had continued the endeavours of the East Tyrone PIRA since the mid-1980s in following Maoist theories to launch rurally-based spectacular attacks to strike out at 'local bullies and bad gentry [i.e. the unionist establishment]' in 'all-out' war seeking the 'annihilation of the enemy' to the end of 'captur[ing] enemy fortified points' – amounting to a rolling back of the de facto border.[149] Among the LCR's foremost theorists were PIRA

[145] 'Army council sees growing danger of civil war: Why Officials called a halt', *SP* [n.d., 1972].
[146] Micky McMullan & Anthony McIntyre, 'Ideas from Long Kesh', *Ainriail: A Belfast Anarchist Bi-Monthly*, 6 (January-February 1987), pp. 4-5.
[147] Moloney, *Secret History*, 182. According to Moloney, rural Provisionals were 'overwhelmingly Catholic and conservative in their outlook'.
[148] McKenna described the strategy involving 'getting anti-national elements out of Tyrone and creating a liberated zone… Our idea was that we secure an area and then push it outwards. Jim [Lynagh] knew how to handle explosives and saw a great role for big bombs in the right places'. Liam Clarke, 'Bomber who lost faith', *Sunday Times*, 29 March 1998. The PIRA in 2000 denied McKenna had ever been among its volunteers. 'Vincent McKenna jailed', *AP*, 16 November 2000.
[149] Mao Tse-Tung's writings 'On the Question of Agricultural Cooperation', 'On the Protracted War', and 'Strategic Problems in the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War' quoted in Jen Tso-hsuan, *Inside Mao Tse-Tung Thought: An Analytical Blueprint of His Actions* (Hicksville, New York, 1975), pp. 138, 143-144.

prisoners from rural backgrounds, especially in counties Derry and Tyrone,[150] and the most significant demonstrations of support for the grouping outside of Long Kesh occurred in rural county Tyrone: Tommy McKearney's sister Angela successfully raised enough money at a fundraiser to fund the LCR's *Congress '86* journal.[151] The political radicalism of rural Provisionals in county Tyrone was reminiscent of the popularity of the IRSP in its earliest years in south Derry, where the party striving for a 'socialist revolution' to be achieved by 'radical forces'[152] had established six branches and commenced work towards establishing six more within its first year, campaigning within cultural revival groups, credit unions, trade unions, and tenants' associations.[153]

The republicanism of the grouping which became Republican Sinn Féin after the Provisionals' dropping of Leinster House abstentionism in 1986 was not solely 'traditionalist' republicanism informed by Catholic morality and social conservatism.[154] Although Robert White has pointed to the prevalence among the 'dissidents' of 1986 of a predominantly older generation of republicans hailing from the Republic,[155] such assessments should not obscure the economic and socio-political radicalism of the RSF party from its earliest years, or the diversity of the party itself.[156] The emergence of RSF produced an uneasy situation in which some de facto Provisionals and their families of a young or middle-aged generation pledged allegiance to RSF, despite the abstentionists having no official military wing of their own. Several PIRA prisoners took the significant step in October 1987 of aligning themselves

[150] Consider Tommy McKearney, James Tierney, Pat Mullin (county Tyrone) and Tom McFeely (county Derry).
[151] Liam O'Ruairc, *The League of Communist Republicans* (2001).
[152] 'I.R.S.P. public meeting', *SPAC*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (April 1975).
[153] 'Party zooms ahead in south Derry', *SPAC*, Vol. 1 No. 2 (May 1975).
[154] Patterson has referred to the RSF members who left PSF in 1986 as 'traditionalist' republicans. Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, 186.
[155] White, *Provisional Irish Republicans*, 158.
[156] The PIRA prisoners aligning with RSF in 1987 were: Tommy McKearney, Dennis Cummings, Pat Mullin, Kevin O'Neill, Oliver Corr, Eoghain Roe O'Neill, John McCooey, Gene Byrne (all county Tyrone); Kevin Donegan (county Armagh), James Tierney (county Monaghan), Eamon McIlroy and Marcus Murray (county Fermanagh). 'Faoi ghlas ag gallaibh', *Saoirse*, 6 (October 1987).

ideologically with the abstentionists. That the RSF well-wishers included prominent Marxist-Leninists also active in the nascent LCR including McKearney, Mullin and Tierney highlights the limitations of White's suggestion that RSF was dominated by an older, more socio-politically conservative generation of republicans. The Belfast youth wing of the PIRA, the Fianna Éireann, with its membership composed of six- to eighteen-year-olds and a 'majority' going on to involvement with republican militarism,[157] gave allegiance to RSF – further highlighting the heterogeneity of the abstentionist hardliners.[158] Although a generation of republicans born in the south in the 1930s dominated the RSF leadership – most notable were party president Ruairí Ó Brádaigh (born 1932 in county Longford) and Dáithí Ó Conaill (born 1938 in county Cork) – there was little 'traditional' about the party's positions on the economy or social morality. In its new year message of 1988 the party argued for the 'complete separation of church and state and the building of a genuinely pluralist society', a move of distancing away from the Catholic hierarchy unseen in Provisional republicanism's leadership, while the 'dissidents' were equally hostile towards a global capitalist structure defined by 'international financiers whose usurious exactions… are reducing our people to beggary'.[159] At a local level, the RSF commitment to a leftist revolution was reflected by the reiteration by the Ballyshannon RSF cumann at the 1989 Árd-Fheis of the party's commitment to a 'democratic *socialist* Republic'.[160] The party remained firmly committed to the principles of Éire Nua as per the radical documents of the 1970s urging the decentralisation of governmental authority and the introduction of cooperative movements at

[157] NIPC P5219: Fianna Éireann handbook (May 1988).
[158] The Belfast Na Fianna Éireann had in 1986 'reaffirmed our support for those who refuse to recognise or partake in any partitionist government' and in 1989 posited RSF as 'the true custodians… of the Republican Tradition'. 'Belfast Fianna Éireann support', *Saoirse*, 23 (March 1989).
[159] '1988 new year message', *Saoirse*, 9 (January 1988).
[160] 'Éire Nua', *Saoirse*, 31 (November 1989).

local levels, with Ó Conaill reaffirming the proposals at Bodenstown in June 1989 as the nearest republican agenda to the legacy of Wolfe Tone.[161]

### II.V The changing politics of Official republicanism

Through the mid-1970s until the publication of their seminal *Irish Industrial Revolution* (1977), the political objectives of Official republicanism differed little from those of the Provisional wing. Even after the Officials' ceasefire of May 1972 – invoked at the time as a strategic 'suspension' of military activity rather than as any irreversible change of tack: the Officials publicly refuted the notion that they had been won over by the '"peace at any price" bandwagon'[162] – in matters pertaining to the economy, industry, and agriculture, the two wings shared much common ground. Although the Officials' 'stages theory' prioritised the unifying of the working-class north and south ahead of the need to end partition (in reverse to the Provisionals), the economic policies of the two organisations had much in common: an Official poster of the mid-1970s promoting the causes 'NATIONALISE THE BANKS TO PROVIDE THE FINANCE' and 'EXPAND THE STATE SECTOR TO PROVIDE THE JOBS' could easily have been a document exhorting support for the Provisionals' Éire Nua programme.[163] The Officials' Árd-Fheis of December 1973, promoting the nationalisation of banks, expansion of the state's authority and role in industry, and limits on farm holdings were all causes supported by the Provisionals' Éire Nua.[164] In terms of military activity, too, the Officials retained an organisational capacity and societal role as community defenders to be called upon in the event of attacks upon the nationalist ghettos, even beyond their ceasefire. A private British intelligence report of February 1973, some nine months on from the OIRA ceasefire, suggested the social importance of a

[161] NIPC P4167: RSF, *Eire Nua: A new democracy* (Dublin, 1990); 'Wolfe Tone commemoration 1989', *Saoirse*, 27 (July 1989).
[162] 'Army council sees growing danger of civil war: Why Officials called a halt', *SP* [n.d., 1972].
[163] IEL: 'End unemployment' (Dublin: [Official] Sinn Féin, n.d.).
[164] IEL: OSF, *Árd-Fheis 1972-1973 Report*, pp. 3-4.

community defence programme in Official politics, warning that if contemporary loyalist paramilitaries continued to target Catholic civilians the Officials would be prepared to break the ceasefire and respond militarily to 'the threat to the Catholic community'.[165]

The principal difference between Officials and Provisionals through the 1970s was a difference of politico-military *strategy*, as opposed to any major gap in political objectives. Through the mid-1970s the Officials' main critique of Provisional strategy centred upon the Provisionals' emphasis on the armed struggle which, the Officials feared, risked exacerbating sectarian tensions and edging Northern Ireland into outright civil war. Official spokespersons had registered concerns about the Provisionals' strategy as early as 1970 with the fear that the Provisionals' bombing campaign was 'completely sectarian' and inordinately targeted Protestant-owned businesses.[166] The Officials' Árd-Fheiseanna of 1972-1973 placed the emphasis on the immediate need to 'halt the escalating sectarianism' and 'avert Civil War',[167] opening up a space in which the Officials could criticise the Provisionals' ongoing armed campaign. A Strabane Provisional writing about Provisional-Official relations and politics in October 1972 took issue only with the Officials' conception of a National Liberation Front, a broad front of alliances designed to achieve class unity before attacking partition.[168] It was only after the development of the internecine conflict between the two major wings of republicanism in 1975 and 1977 that the Officials escalated their rhetorical attacks on the Provisional movement, the prominent Official Des O'Hagan in 1975 attacking the Provisionals for their 'naked irrational violence, religious hatred and nationalistic enmity', branding them 'pseudo-socialists' and 'corrupt right-wing nationalists',[169] while the *United*

[165] PRO PREM 15/1689: 'Northern Ireland: Weekly Intelligence Report' (9 February 1973).
[166] OSF, *The IRA Speaks* (Repsol Pamphlets, No. 3), p. 14.
[167] IEL: OSF, *Árd-Fheis 1972-1973 Report*, pp. 12, 33.
[168] '"Provo supporter" and the N.L.F.', *Strabane Chronicle*, 14 October 1972.
[169] Richard Dunphy & Stephen Hopkins, 'The Organisational and Political Evolution of the Workers' Party of Ireland', *Journal of Communist Studies*, 8 (1992), p. 95.

*Irishman* editorialised in the midst of the 1975 feud that the Provisionals were guilty of 'the most vicious crimes against the Irish people'.[170]

### III.I Republicanism and gender politics

The issue of women's rights, and the attendant position of the Catholic Church in society, represented the one significant point of difference between the objectives of senior Officials and Provisionals in the early 1970s. As early as 1973, the Officials took a progressive stance on women's rights, issuing a thirteen-point series of demands including free family planning advice,[171] a significant encroachment on the doctrinaire position of the anti-abortion Catholic Church – and, indeed, on the prevailing mentality within the Provisional hierarchy. Although senior Provisionals such as Joe Cahill and Ruairí Ó Brádaigh had, in spite of their personal faith, spoken in favour of the separation of Church and state in principle,[172] the Officials broke new territory in calling for the removal of Church influence in education and the inauguration of a non-denominational education system.[173] Although the Provisional movement in 1986 nominally supported the liberalisation of divorce laws in the Republic's referendum,[174] the positions expressed by the Provisionals on abortion at the Árd-Fheis of the same year were largely conservative. Across the north of Ireland, five Provisional groupings proposed the Árd-Fheis revert back to the 1980 policy on abortion which had read 'we are totally opposed to abortion'. Only in Derry City did the Provisional rank-and-file differ significantly in their stance on the issue, where the Northland Cumann

[170] Editorial: 'Belfast', *UI,* Vol. 33 No. 11 (November 1975).
[171] IEL: OSF, *Árd-Fheis 1972-1973 Report*, p. 42.
[172] Christopher Macy, 'Sinn Fein and the IRA's [sic]: 1', *Humanist: Ulster Special Issue*, Vol. 87 No. 1 (January 1972), p. 20; Christopher Macy, 'Sinn Fein and the IRA's [sic]: 2', *Humanist: Ulster Special Issue*, Vol. 87 No. 1 (January 1972), p. 22.
[173] IEL: OSF, *Árd-Fheis 1972-1973 Report*, pp. 3-4.
[174] Richard Davis, 'Irish Republicanism v. Roman Catholicism', in Yonah Alexander & Alan O'Day (eds.), *Ireland's Terrorist Trauma* (Hemel Hempstead, 1989), p. 68.

ambitiously called for 'a secular state' and the woman's right to choose, assisted by 'non-directive pregnancy counselling embodying all choices'.[175]

Throughout the period in question the Provisional republican movement contained a substantial lobby for the advancement of women's rights, taking liberal and sometimes radical positions on such issues as equal pay and employment opportunities, abortion, and divorce. But the Provisional hierarchy remained consistently ambiguous on political issues connected to feminism, reflecting the deep divisions within Provisional republicanism on these matters. Although the Provisionals made several notable moves to acknowledge the enduring significance of women and women's rights to the republican campaign – the first PSF women's committee was set up in 1978,[176] and it was implied in the pages of Provisional publications that 'women's rights and national rights cannot be achieved separately'[177] – it did not necessarily follow that the Provisionals would take radical positions as an organisation. But Monica McWilliams's scathing assessment, supported by Carol Coulter and Begona Aretxaga, that the republican movement was generally 'patriarchal and reactionary' and intransigent towards progressive voices on women's issues surely goes too far and neglects the important lobby for women's rights throughout the various strands of republican politics[178] – even if the Provisionals required substantial lobbying from groupings both within and without the republican movement before acting.

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[175] NIPC P2303: PSF, *Ard-Fheis '86: Clár agus Rúin*, pp. 45-50. See Motions 79, 80, 81, 84, 85, 88. The groupings were: PSF's Mid-Ulster Comhairle Ceantair; Donegal Comhairle Ceantair; the Leitrim Comhairle Ceantair; the Billy Reid Cumann (Omagh, County Tyrone); the O'Hanlon-McMahon Cumann (Monaghan).

[176] Catherine Shannon, 'Catholic Women and the Northern Irish Troubles', in Yonah Alexander & Alan O'Day (eds.), *Ireland's Terrorist Trauma* (Hemel Hempstead, 1989), pp. 242-243.

[177] 'Women of Ireland', *APRN*, 16 August 1980.

[178] Monica McWilliams, 'Women in Northern Ireland', in Eamonn Hughes (ed.), *Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland, 1960-1990* (Milton Keynes, 1991), pp. 91, 99. See also Carol Coulter, 'Feminism and Nationalism in Ireland', in David Miller (ed.), *Rethinking Northern Ireland* (London, 1998), pp. 162, 164 and Begoña Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1997), p. 151 for similar arguments. Aretxaga refers to a 'tremendously conservative' republican movement as regards women's rights.

But the rank-and-file of the Provisional republican movement contained a substantial lobby for women's rights. During the party Árd-Fheis of 1980, a significant number of delegates supported the widening of access to contraception, divorce, and family planning, and five years later at the Árd-Fheis of 1985 the party gave qualified backing to a woman's right to choose, passing by the narrow margin of 77-73 a motion that opposed abortion 'as a means of birth control' but which nevertheless 'recognise[d] that women have a right to choose' – although the eight women on the PSF Ard Chomhairle were opposed to the motion. The party's Education Department had promoted a radical stance on women's rights, a lecture series designed to be delivered to all new PSF members from 1981 stipulating that 'capitalist society… discriminated against' women, and that women held 'official equality in Sinn Féin' and it was incumbent upon 'the Movement' to 'promote women within its own ranks'.[179]

Some radical sections within the Provisionals' ranks held particularly progressive views on women's rights and social change more broadly. The party's Women's Department was not shy of vociferously attacking party policy positions. Mairead Keane, who headed the party's Women's Department in the late 1980s, spoke radically at the first annual PSF women's conference in September 1989 to a 150-strong assembly on the imperative of 'break[ing] the influence of the Catholic church' in hindering progress on women's rights.[180] The same department had taken a rebellious position against official party policy earlier in the decade. Mandated by the Árd-Fheis of November 1980, the Women's Department published an incendiary pamphlet in 1981 whose conclusion strongly criticised the official party policy of 'total opposition' to abortion. The Women's Department's publication registered strong dissatisfaction with party policy:

[179] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH1571: PSF Education Department, *New Members Course: Notes for Sinn Féin Education Officers* (Belfast, 1981).
[180] 'Interview: Sinn Féin', *Off Our Back*, Vol. 19 No. 10 (November 1989), pp. 13, 26.

> Abortion *is an issue in Ireland* and will not end with a solitary sentence in a policy document… We believe that those who are "totally opposed" to abortion and those who see it as a tragedy and an indictment against society must work to improve conditions for and attitudes towards pregnant women.[181]

While the department stopped marginally short of demanding in explicit terms the woman's right to choose, the views expressed in the publication gave an important insight into the progressive views on abortion held by factions within the party opposed to official policy. Progressive views on women's issues endured within PSF, to the extent that, by 1995, some 80 percent of party members favoured increasing the number of women councillors, at a time when one-third of party members were women.[182] The PSF Education Department again took a progressive line on gender equality, exhorting republicans not only to promote women internally within the Provisional movement but also to seek to 'advance the cause of women's liberation', 'condemn the oppression of women at all possible forums', and to 'join and support feminist organisations and advocate their policies so long as they fall within the policy of the [Provisional] Movement'.[183] While ultimately the feminist cause was technically subordinated to the Provisional line, the Education Department further illustrated the capacity of radical wings of Provisional republicanism to push a line more committed revolutionary agenda than the organisation's leadership.

Again, republican prisoners, men and women alike, demonstrated radical positions to the left of party dogma through the 1980s. The PRO of the protesting republican women in Armagh Jail had spoken of the need to ally the feminist struggle with the republican campaign, on International Women's Day in 1982:

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[181] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH1640: Sinn Féin Department of Women's Affairs, *Abortion Ireland* (Dublin: October 1981), p. 5.
[182] Robert Lee Miller, Rick Wilford & Freda Donoghue, *Women and Political Participation in Northern Ireland* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 169, 223.
[183] NIPC P3887: PSF Education Department, *Economic Resistance* (Republican Lecture Series, No. 7, c.1984).

> We cannot allow the same situation to evolve as in the past where women played a comparatively strong role in the Rising and Civil War but afterwards disappeared into oblivion, gaining little or nothing for the rights of women.[184]

That over two hundred prisoners attended the women's studies courses co-ordinated in the all-male H-blocks by PIRA prisoners Jackie McMullan and Laurence McKeown testifies to the breadth of interest in such political issues among large groups of Provisionals in the late 1980s.[185] The Provisional prisoners who formed the LCR in the late 1980s espoused support for advancement of women's rights, the grouping's initial prison communique calling for the establishment of a state which would guarantee its citizens the right to 'divorce, contraception and abortion… [and] meaningful equality between the sexes'.[186] Noting the conservative majority on the issue of abortion in Sinn Féin, Tommy McKearney of the LCR warned against perceptions of the Provisionals as overwhelmingly progressive, pointing in January 1988 to 'the 60% (leadership included) [of the party] who vote against' abortion.[187]

But the hierarchy of the Provisional movement was divided on this progressive agenda, and tempered and moderated the pace of change through the 1980s. Senior Sinn Féin figures expressed concern in the early 1980s with the agenda hinted at by the radicals in the party's Women's Department and with the divisions within the party on such issues, Danny Morrison admitting in 1981 that the issue of abortion was 'a difficult question, one which we [as a party] have not come to terms with publicly'.[188] Ard Chomhairle member and Dublin organiser Paddy Bolger struck a more reactionary note in 1983 when he suggested somewhat cynically that the politics of women's rights held little interest to a republican agenda, even if

[184] NIPC P881(B): PSF, *Notes for Revolutionaries* (1982), p. 3.
[185] McKeown, *Out of Time*, 145.
[186] NIPC P3600: *From Long Kesh to Socialist Ireland* (Shannon: League of Communist Republicans, 1988).
[187] NIPC P3080A: Communist Party of Ireland, *Armed Struggle* (Dublin: Communist Party of Ireland, 1987), p. 23.
[188] Danny Morrison quoted in NIPC P7488: Bob Rowthorn, 'Ireland's intractable crisis: interviews with the UDA and the Provisional IRA', *Marxism Today* (December 1981), p. 32.

progressive legislative change was desirable in itself: 'Can anyone seriously argue that [women's rights] have any real revolutionary potential?'[189] The words of Morrison and Bolger expressed a degree of discomfort within the Provisional movement hierarchy about promoting such a divisive issue, and the party carefully avoided partisan involvement in the Republic's referendum on the Eighth Amendment of September 1983, by which ultimately abortion was constitutionally banned. The party's stance prompted strong criticism from the academic and republican sympathiser Margaret Ward, who claimed that Sinn Féin's non-participation demonstrated conclusively that 'male socialists and republicans find it difficult to accept women as political equals'.[190] Once more the radicals within Provisional republicanism had been left aggrieved at the party's stance.

The IRSP and PD, like the Officials, consistently outflanked the divided Provisionals on women's rights. The IRSP lobbied on women's issues from its inception in 1975, International Women's Year, campaigning for equal pay and the widening of employment opportunities for women.[191] The socialism of senior IRSP figures such as Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh, the party secretary in Derry, intrinsically linked the national liberation struggle with the feminist campaign, O'Dochartaigh arguing in 1984 that 'under capitalism women have become social-engineers', and proposing radical changes to the education system to prevent it from reinforcing ideas of 'traditional gender roles'.[192] By the early 1980s the PD, increasingly critical of the Provisionals among their NHBAC allies, had also gone further on the politics of women's rights, producing a comprehensive women's programme in August 1981 which reimagined society with plans to 'remove the Church's veto on state policy' and for the decriminalisation of abortion, free and safe access to contraception, and the right to divorce. Ultimately the PD, which also rallied around equal pay and against

[189] Paddy Bolger, 'Which way forward in the Free State?', *Iris*, 7 (November 1983).
[190] Margaret Ward, 'We are all part of the same struggle', *Iris*, 7 (November 1983).
[191] 'International women's year', *SPAC*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (April 1975).
[192] NIPC P16410: Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh, *A woman's place?* (Derry: IRSP, October 1984).

domestic violence, held that 'the oppressive conditions suffered by Irish women… have been maintained and deepened by partition and imperialist domination'.[193] By comparison to Provisional policies, the Officials, IRSP and PD were all unequivocally supportive of women's rights.

### IV.I Electoralism and Provisional republicanism

The Provisionals' declarations on the ultimate direction of the republican campaign and its chances of success took a more complex and ambiguous turn from the turn of the 1980s onwards. The true significance of the Provisionals' Easter statement of 1980 pledging themselves to 'a long war' lies not so much in its moving away from the prophecies of imminent victory of the 1970s, but rather the reference to the *means* by which the republican campaign would be advanced: the statement called for a broad front to be established to 'tie together *all aspects of nationalism and socialism*, and all the strands of rural and urban discontent into a surging wave of Republicanism'.[194] For instance, in a commemoration event at Ballina, County Mayo in May 1980, Provisional Rita O'Hare still maintained that the PIRA could 'win a military victory'; the novelty in O'Hare's oration was to acknowledge that there would need to be a fusing of the military and political wings of Provisionalism to

> translate this [military] victory into the aim of the total struggle which is a united socialist republic… We must be involved in agitation on housing, on land, for strong democratic trade unions, for full employment, and we must see all this *as part of the overall struggle*.[195]

Fermanagh republican Owen Carron told a republican meeting in county Longford in September 1981 that a victory for the broad NHBAC committee campaign for special

[193] Sue Jackson, 'Programme to unify the womens [sic] movement', *Socialist Republic: Paper of Peoples' Democracy*, Vol. 4 No. 7 (August 1981).
[194] 'Easter Statement from the leadership of the Republican Movement', *APRN*, 12 April 1980. Emphases added.
[195] 'Ballina commemoration', *APRN*, 31 May 1980. Emphases added.

category status would intrinsically bring about a republican victory on Northern Ireland's constitutional status: the prisoners' winning their five demands would be

> a prelude to the final expulsion of the British from our shores… When we win the prison struggle, we win the nationalist struggle.[196]

Similarly, the republican journal *Iris* reported the party's strong electoral performance in the Assembly elections of October 1982 in terms of a harbinger of forthcoming victory: 'Britain is on the hook and we must not let her off'.[197]

Significant unease at the implications of the Provisional hierarchy's electoral experimentation in the early- to mid-1980s was widespread within the PIRA and PSF, not least in urban settings. Brendan O'Brien's simplistic and plainly inaccurate portrayal of the Provisionals' reception of the electoral experimentation being divided squarely along the lines of 'Sinn Féin versus the IRA' is unsustainable,[198] since numerous activists whose sole involvement was with PSF were deeply concerned, even opposed, to the electoral strategy. Alex Maskey, later to become a Sinn Féin Mayor of Belfast, recalled that in the early 1980s 'I couldn't bring myself to take part in an election campaign because as a republican I didn't believe it was the legitimate thing to do… I was opposed to going into, or taking part in, any British institutions', and he reflected that 'that would have been the standard feeling within republicanism at that time'.[199] In Derry, Mitchel McLaughlin initially refused to support Bobby Sands's election campaign in 1981: 'I was a committed abstentionist and I was actually anti-electoralism'.[200] Militant PIRA volunteers were equally divided on the electoral path. Nuala Perry, a volunteer in West Belfast, recalls 'feeling very confused' about the electoral strategy during Gerry Adams's campaign for the Westminster West Belfast seat in 1983, and recalls her uneasiness at her sense that the PSF community work in which she was

[196] HVA D00380 Tape 10: *Panorama: Part I – The IRA and the H-Blocks* (21 September 1981).
[197] 'The ballot bomb', *Iris*, 4 (November 1982).
[198] Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War* (Syracuse, New York, 1999) [First edition 1993], p. 122.
[199] Barry McCaffrey, *Alex Maskey* (Belfast, 2003), p. 42.
[200] White, *Provisional Irish Republicans*, 142.

involved was 'all an election stunt to get the people on our side'.[201] Patrick Magee was similarly hesitant about supporting electoral experimentation: 'I didn't see any merit in going into [electoral] politics. Being politically on the ground at community level – yes, I completely bought that'. He describes himself as 'a late convert' to the electoral strategy.[202]

The voting down at the PSF Árd-Fheis of November 1980 of an attempt to allow the party to contest local elections in Northern Ireland points to the extent of hostility and scepticism within grassroots Provisional republicanism towards electoral campaigning.[203] Although speaking from a position of evident hostility towards the contemporary Provisionals, leading RSF figure Joe O'Neill's claims that even Adams and his Belfast acolytes were initially reluctant to back the electoral experimentation in 1981 – O'Neill claimed that the initiative to encourage Sands's candidature in fact came from the senior Cork Provisional Dáithí Ó Conaill[204] – provide a helpful cautionary note against scholarship portraying PSF's entry into electoral politics in the 1980s as orchestrated and plotted some years in advance by a grouping around Adams which had developed in the late 1970s.[205]

The lobby within PSF for the extension of electoral endeavours through the 1980s found some of its most willing and vocal supporters among sections of the PIRA prison population. Richard English's claim that PIRA prisoners did not exhibit enthusiasm for electoral strategy has its shortcomings.[206] The PIRA prisoners of H6 in 1981 proposed the party Árd-Fheis pass a motion to contest Dáil elections and Northern Ireland council elections on a non-abstentionist ticket, and argued that party should 'approach other left-wing

[201] Nuala Perry interviewed by the author (Belfast, March 2016). Nuala Perry, born Belfast, 1958; joined PIRA, 1975; imprisoned, 1975-1977, 1981-1982.
[202] Patrick Magee interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015). Patrick Magee, born Belfast, 1951; joined PIRA, 1972; interned, 1973-1975; imprisoned, 1985-1999.
[203] Brendan Lynn, 'Republicanism and the Abstentionist Tradition, 1970-1998', Paper Presented to the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University Belfast, May 2001.
[204] 'Facts wrong on hunger strike – Joe O'Neill', *Donegal Democrat*, 18 May 2006.
[205] For such arguments, see Henry Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939* (Dublin, 2006), pp. 252, 315; Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *The Origins of the Present Troubles in Northern Ireland* (Harlow, 1997), pp. 78-79.
[206] English, *Armed Struggle*, 205-206.

and anti-imperialist groupings' in order to form an umbrella organisation with the capacity for widespread success in 'parliamentary elections both north and south'.[207] This group of PIRA prisoners envisaged not only the use of electoralism for symbolic ends, but for the attaining of real constitutional power. After the party's strong showing in the Assembly elections of 1982, the PIRA's Public Relations Officer in the H-blocks said on behalf of the Provisional prisoners that the 'Armalite and ballot box' strategy had been vindicated and that the 'dual track' of electoralism and militarism promised 'a means of finally ending British rule'.[208]

That the Provisionals were deeply divided on abstentionism and electoralism through the 1980s along political fault lines transcending Irish geography and the politico-military spectrum was demonstrated by the vote which in 1985 proposed to hold abstentionism as a Provisional tactic rather than an inalienable principle – the vote was divided by the narrow margin of 181-161, the 'tactic' lobby only marginally defeated.[209] Even four years on from the party's first forays into electoral activity, PSF remained in turmoil and indecision as to the future of the strategy, contrary to Brian Feeney's depiction of an immediate and all-embracing 'sudden enthusiasm for electoral politics' coordinated by Gerry Adams.[210] In the debate on Leinster House abstentionism the following year, PSF cumainn as close to one another as the Billy Reid Cumann (Omagh) and the neighbouring Dungannon Martyrs Cumann took diametrically opposite positions on Motion 162, the former in favour of the status quo and the latter supporting the dropping of abstentionism.[211] Commentators' descriptions of the 'militant' quality of sections of Provisional republicanism such as the East Tyrone Brigade of the PIRA should not obscure the malleability of such units on the issue of

[207] NIPC PA0144: H6 resolutions for the PSF Árd-Fheis (8 October 1981).
[208] NIPC PA0147: H-block prison comm from PRO for the 1983 hunger strike commemoration.
[209] 'IRA man at 'secret' session', *Irish Press*, 4 November 1985.
[210] Feeney, *Sinn Féin*, 9.
[211] NIPC P2303: PSF, *Ard-Fheis '86: Clár agus Rúin*, pp. 83-89.

abstentionism.[212] Armed militancy and political radicalism were not mutually exclusive. Max Taylor & P. M. Currie's portrayal of the East Tyrone and North Monaghan Provisionals as 'dissenting militants' who 'opposed the dropping of abstention' is simply incorrect.[213] Owen Smyth, a former Monaghan PSF councillor and friend of PIRA commander Jim Lynagh recalls that Lynagh 'wasn't a militarist in the strict sense', but rather a radical socialist with a concern for local politics in Monaghan. Another former associate of Lynagh's recalls Lynagh arguing for the abstentionist position in the early 1980s, but having converted to the anti-abstentionist argument by the Árd-Fheis of 1986.[214]

The PSF hierarchy's explanation for the burgeoning electoral experimentation through the 1980s continually cast the electoral strategy as just one aspect of the struggle among many others, occasionally downplaying the ultimate consequence of PSF votes to British policy. After the election literature of 1981 with its emotive pleas and discussion of 'lending votes' – Bobby Sands's election leaflet read 'HIS LIFE IN YOUR HANDS' and described 'THE BLANKETMEN AND THE WOMEN PRISONERS IN ARMAGH… BORROWING THIS ELECTION IN AN ATTEMPT TO ILLUSTRATE YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE PRISONERS AND YOUR OPPOSITION TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT',[215] while Kieran Doherty's flyer promised to 'solve the H-Block issue' if the republican hunger strikers gained widespread support[216] – the Provisionals from 1982 to 1985 downplayed the significance of electoral activity, presenting it as little more than a means by which the party could gauge its own support and emphasise its anti-establishment

[212] Moloney says this of East Tyrone and South Armagh. *Secret History*, 304-308; Martyn Frampton, *The Long March* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 83.
[213] Henry Patterson, 'Beyond the 'Micro Group'', in P. M. Currie & Max Taylor (eds.), *Dissident Irish Republicanism* (New York, 2011), pp. 81-82.
[214] Owen Smyth quoted in Loughgall20 Committee Commemorative Film, *Loughgall Martyrs* (2007). Copy in author's possession.
[215] IEL: Bobby Sands, Fermanagh-South Tyrone, UK By-Election (April 1981). Election flyer: *His Life in Your Hands*.
[216] IEL: Kieran Doherty, Cavan-Monaghan, Republic of Ireland General Election (June 1981). Election flyer: *H-Block*.

credentials. PSF's election leaflets of 1983 declared that 'we are not a party of salaried, career politicians' and argued that the elections served merely as an 'opportunity to again demonstrate the growing support for our full time advice centres'.[217] Speaking the same year, Danny Morrison cited among the chief benefits of electoral activity that 'the election machine creates pride, political awareness, and determination – and it strengthens and develops our base'.[218] The Provisionals had already explained their electoral policies in 1982 as 'only one way of quantifying support and building resistance'.[219]

Through the early- to mid-1980s, the Provisionals continued to downplay severely the actual importance of electoral strategy in terms of the Provisionals' ambitions. Speaking on television in 1984, Gerry Adams had said pessimistically that 'we don't believe that electoral politics will deliver the goods in relation to delivering a British withdrawal',[220] and the following year Adams was prepared to accept that while 'an electoral strategy is an important part in the overall republican struggle, if everyone in Ireland tomorrow morning voted for Sinn Féin it wouldn't make a blind bit of difference to the British government'. Even in 1985, after a strong PSF performance in the Northern Ireland local elections in which the party won fifty-nine council seats, leading Provisional Martin McGuinness remained wedded to the view that the army took priority over the political machine:

> We don't believe that winning elections and winning any amount of votes will bring freedom to Ireland; at the end of the day it will be the cutting edge of the IRA which will bring freedom.

[217] IEL: 'Sinn Fein: the voice of principled leadership'. UK General Election (June 1983). Election flyer published by PSF Election Headquarters (Dungannon, 1983).
[218] NIPC P2010: Danny Morrison quoted in 'Ballot and Bullet', an interview with Danish press (1983).
[219] 'The ballot bomb', *Iris*, 4 (November 1982).
[220] HVA D00770 Tape 63: *Brasstacks: The Armalite and the Ballot Paper* (17 July 1984).

That the PSF candidates winning seats on Derry City Council that day chanted IRA slogans as they left the city's Guildhall demonstrates the secondary place of the political party to the 'cutting edge' McGuinness described.[221]

Narratives implying a highly coordinated northern Provisional agenda which determined as early as 1981 or 1982 to shift the movement onto a solely constitutional footing underestimate the enduring strength of belief in, and prioritisation of, the armed campaign until 1985 and 1986. Only in July 1985, after the electoral success of the party in the local elections – celebrated by PSF since it 'constitute[d] a major destabilising element in the Northern political scene'; PSF was engaged in the politics of symbolism and unsettling the established political order, rather than envisaging constitutionally-based legislative supremacy in future years – did the Provisionals plan, with 'breathing space' before another series of elections 'not only to achieve the *organisational* tasks of consolidating the base and building a political leadership, but also the task of *evaluating* the electoral strategy'. Here were the first rumblings of a more sustained electoral strategy being mooted, albeit still with the reservation that the electoral process remained just one 'tactic in our armoury' and the recognition that 'there are… some times [sic] contradictions between the military and political aspects of our struggle which are, on the face of it, irreconcilable'. Notably in July 1985, the occasional Provisional publication *Iris* featured for the first time a 'Political Diary' segment. Hitherto the glossy format had included only highly-detailed 'War News' sections reporting the PIRA's campaign.[222] Only after PSF's electoral successes of 1985 did the lobby within the party seeking to further the party's electoral campaigns emerge. Thereafter, the organisation's politics shifted steadily but dramatically, with change afoot on the abandonment of Dublin abstentionism, the recapitulation of a civil rights agenda intertwined

[221] HVA D00860 Tape 70: *Real Lives: At the Edge of the Union* (16 October 1985).
[222] 'Forums', *Iris*, 10 (July 1985). Italics in original.

with proposals for 'peace with justice', and the marginalisation of radical sections of the organisation.

### IV.II Grassroots politics, populism, and Provisional republicanism

Scholarship exaggerating the novelty of republican activism in the Catholic community in the late 1970s and early 1980s misses the point that the Provisionals had enjoyed strong lines of communication with wider society from the very outset of the Troubles. Localised republican newsletters posited the movement at the core of local politics: much republican communication with local communities in and around Belfast in the early 1970s took the tone of upbraiding moderates in the Catholic community for their political quietism. The Gransha PSF cumann urged local people not to seek political neutrality but rather to 'wake up… Don't just shrug and say "Oh I never discuss politics"'.[223] Equally, a front cover of *Republican News* in July 1974 carried a call to arms which implied that many republicans of old had been 'content to live in the past' and to pass off past prison terms served 'as an answer to your critics': 'REPUBLICAN IRELAND NEEDS YOU ALL… NOW!'[224] The innovative communications of the new Provisional movement radically reimagined the importance of community relations. A similar perception pervaded the consciousness of the internees from Belfast's Ardoyne, who wrote in the *Republican News* in 1974 that the nationalist people of the north were merely 'flirt[ing] at times with the aims and objects of the Republican Movement' and argued that the majority of Catholics had

> allow[ed [themselves] to listen to the voice of men who promise an easier path… you thought you saw in Sunningdale, the means whereby we could all live in peace.

[223] EHM: 'Gransha wake up', *An Guth: Bulletin of the Terry McDermott SF Cumann (Gransha)*[n.d., c.1972].
[224] 'Are you a deserter?', *Republican News*, 13 July 1974.

The internees' letter reiterated that 'the British cannot construct a plan for Ulster or Ireland' in a frustrated rallying cry to a weary audience.[225] Early Provisional relations and communications with the broader communities in Belfast and Derry were often coloured by some degree of friction, political distance, and frustration. But the very existence of such communications gives the lie to the notion that republicanism became inclined to address broader society and consider societal perspectives of republicanism only in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Analyses placing excessive emphasis upon PSF electoralism in the 1980s as a watershed in the party's civic engagement on grassroots politics fail to consider the crucial work undertaken at a local level by PSF representatives, particularly in urban estates, throughout the 1970s.[226] As early as 1972 the Provisionals in the Gransha estate on the outskirts of Belfast took credit in the local newsletter for compelling the Belfast Corporation to clean the estate's streets,[227] and in April of the same year the PIRA in Derry were setting up a machinery to contest elections.[228] In July 1977 a PSF cumann in Andersonstown had established a community group to address the 'deplorable' conditions in local homes in 'shocking disrepair', while another Provisional cumann in Turf Lodge began fundraising in 1975 for the opening of a 'Peoples [sic] Shop' to provide a 'badly needed' grocery store on the estate.[229] By 1977 the Provisionals in Derry and Belfast had set up a private PSF postal

[225] 'Promised garden of Eden', *Republican News*, 13 July 1974.
[226] Alan Bairner, 'Paramilitarism' in Arthur Aughey & Duncan Morrow (eds.), *Northern Ireland Politics* (Harlow, 1996), pp. 159-172. Bairner argues that 'in the early years of the 1970s, the PIRA and other republican paramilitary groups went about their violent business with little or no reference to the political process'. Kacper Rekawek, David McKittrick and David McVeigh have also exaggerated the supposed inactivity of PSF in the 1970s. Kacper Rekawek, '"Their history is a bit like our history": Comparative Assessment of the Official and Provisional IRAs', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 25 (2013), p. 700; David McKittrick & David McVeigh, *Making Sense of the Troubles* (London, 2001), p. 158.
[227] EHM: 'Streets cleaned', *An Guth: Bulletin of the Terry McDermott SF Cumann (Gransha)* [n.d., c.1972].
[228] 'The Past Two Weeks', *Fortnight*, 38 (27 April 1972).
[229] EHM: 'Community group to be formed' and 'S/F shop', *Volunteer: Newsletter of the Cahal Brugha PSF Cumann, Andersonstown* (8 July 1977).

service which delivered post to republican areas for a small voluntary subscription, while post to the prisons was sent free of charge.[230] Standing for election to Belfast City Council in March 1984, PSF's Sean McKnight promised the tandem of 'an uncompromising stand on the national question' alongside 'a grass roots constituency service', imploring the people to contact Provisional advice centres 'on any problem' as wide-ranging as issues of 'unemployment, housing, education, culture, repression, discrimination'.[231] McKnight topped the poll and won the council seat. The party's Belfast PSF Housing Department was particularly extensive – in each of the ten West Belfast PSF cumainn, at least one PSF member was delegated to housing duties by December 1984 – and strove for the appearance of compassionate egalitarianism with the party's expression of 'support [for] the genuine squatter' forced by poverty to live outside the law.[232]

But Provisional republicans' extensive contact with the Catholic community at large took other forms beyond agitation around housing policies and civic matters. By the mid-1980s the PSF leadership encouraged a burgeoning scheme of community education programmes coordinated by PSF cumainn by party education officers at a local level, suggesting 'controversial' debates around sensitive issues such as the nature of the 'Armalite and ballot box' strategy and the relationship between the Catholic Church and the republican campaign and even proposing that SDLP and Church representatives be invited to participate.[233] In Bogside and Creggan the Provisionals began providing taxis into Derry City centre free of charge in 1984.[234] PSF workers campaigning for the demolition of the Divis Flats also contracted electricians to make safe hitherto exposed live electricity wires in public

[230] NIPC PPO0383: 'Use the People's Post' (PSF, 1977).
[231] EHM: Sean McKnight, Area F, Belfast City Council By-Election (March 1984). Election flyer: *His Life in Your Hands*.
[232] Sean Delaney, 'Sinn Féin and housing in Belfast: building community confidence', *Iris*, 9 (December 1984).
[233] NIPC P3885: PSF, *Republican Education: What we need to know to win.* The document is undated, but almost certainly dates from late 1984 or early 1985. The party's National Education Conference, which took place on 30 September 1984, is referred to in the past tense.
[234] HVA D00770 Tape 63: *Brasstacks: The Armalite and the Ballot Paper* (17 July 1984).

areas which had posed a threat to children playing locally.[235] In Belfast's Poleglass estate the Provisionals' local publications in the mid-1980s even drew attention to the Lagan Valley cumann's activism in championing welfare rights and supporting women who sought to take out exclusion orders against abusive men.[236] In 1984 PSF worker and former PIRA prisoner Gerry Fusco reported that he dealt with approximately one hundred cases per month, raising residents' concerns in West Belfast and lobbying the Housing Executive to make households repairs and improvements.[237] Provisionals in Derry's Creggan estate in April 1984 lobbied against the closure of the local post office and called for an alliance of local people including republicans to be enabled to take the service over. The language of PSF figures in the city underpinned the party's invocation of its role as ambassadors for a beleaguered community, spokesperson Síle Fleming condemning the closure as 'a vindictive and politically motivated act of discrimination against a community which has always suffered a scarcity of essential services,[238] while Martin McGuinness, later in the year in an example of PSF's reprising civil rights causes, accused the Housing Executive, RUC, and loyalists of collaboration in intimidating Catholic families from their homes in the Waterside's new Caw East housing development.[239]

### IV.III Provisionals as peace-seekers

Equally central to Provisional populism was the organisation's frequent self-portrayal as ultimately seeking peace. Distracted by the militant strategies of the Provisional movement, scholars and commentators have failed to note that with a few brief exceptions the PIRA remained broadly open to dialogue with the British government throughout much

[235] 'Divis Flats: building towards a demolition campaign', *Iris,* 7 (November 1983).
[236] EHM: *Lagan Valley Bulletin,* 3 (April 1985). The publication was the newsletter circulated by the Lagan Valley PSF organisation.
[237] HVA D00770 Tape 63: *Brasstacks: The Armalite and the Ballot Paper* (17 July 1984).
[238] 'Continued closure of Creggan Post Office condemned', *Derry Journal,* 1 May 1984.
[239] 'McGuinness allegations strongly denied', *Derry Journal,* 23 November 1984.

of the conflict. Though tending to accompany their messages with highly ambitious and plainly unrealistic demands of the British government – consider the infamous Cheyne Walk meeting of June 1972 in which the Provisional delegates, approaching the discussion from a Taberite position,[240] demanded of Willie Whitelaw an immediate British declaration of intent for withdrawal from Northern Ireland – the fact remains that at frequent intervals the PIRA sued for an end to the campaign. British civil servant Philip Woodfield was left in little doubt in June 1972 after meeting Provisional representatives Dáithí Ó Conaill and Gerry Adams that the two 'genuinely' wanted 'a cease fire and a permanent end to violence'. The PIRA representatives had even asked that the British facilitate PIRA talks with the loyalist UDA.[241] The PIRA statement issued at the time of the June 1972 ceasefire reported on the 'peace plan designed to secure a just and lasting solution' through 'meaningful talks'.[242] Just two months earlier, the Provisionals' publicity machine had been especially overt in suing for a peace agreement in a mollifying statement referring to 'the feeling revulsion against death and destruction' which 'everyone must share', and going so far as to claim that 'talk' would 'DEFINITELY… achieve more than gun', and that 'the I.R.A. are more than willing to talk. We have said many times that we detest this war with its suffering and misery'.[243] The Provisionals remained focused on the possibility of a truce in October 1972, when Ruairí Ó Brádaigh said in interview that provided the British recognised the legitimacy of Provisionals in representing local opinion in republican communities, repealed the Special Powers Act,

[240] The war theorist Richard Taber held that a victory for insurgency movements was possible provided the opposition was unable to eliminate the insurrection altogether. The British government's long-term intransigence in not conceding the Provisionals' central demands, while simultaneously being unable to wipe out the republican insurrection, gives the lie to Taber's theory in the case of Northern Ireland. Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea* (St Albans, 1970), pp. 11, 21.
[241] PRO PREM 15/1009: 'Report on meeting between P. J. Woodfield and PIRA representatives' (21 June 1972).
[242] NIPC PA0027: PIRA statement, 22 June 1972.
[243] Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, *Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA* (1973), p. 63.

and removed test oaths for public offices in Northern Ireland, a truce could be realised.[244] Ó Brádaigh reiterated that the Provisionals sought a 'just and lasting peace'.[245]

Even in rhetoric embodying ambitious demands and menacing threats, the Provisionals stressed to their republican followers their ultimate desire for peace: a PIRA statement of October 1971 published in *An Phoblacht* took an almost pleading tone urging that the war could be ended if the British government met the Provisionals' demands for the abolition of Stormont, all-Ireland elections, and the withdrawal of British troops.[246] In dismissing the White Paper on the Northern Ireland Constitution in July 1974, the Provisionals portrayed their militia as reluctant warriors in the absence of a reasonable opposition open to compromise, arguing that 'responsibility for prolonging the war rests squarely with the British Government… the Irish Republican Army has no option but to continue the war of armed resistance', since the White Paper 'offers little in the way of resolving the conflict'. The Provisionals cast themselves as justifiably sceptical in their approach to the British, pointing to 'the experience of the last five years [which] has demonstrated the futility of British Government proposals'.[247] But even so the Provisionals remained open to negotiations: Ó Brádaigh told the Árd-Fheis of October 1976, in the wake of the failed ceasefire, 'we are still prepared to meet [the British]… whenever they have something worthwhile to say to us'.[248] At the height of the prison protests in the early 1980s, a PIRA statement sued for peace and reiterated a desire to bring the campaign to a conclusion:

[244] 'The Past Two Weeks', *Fortnight*, 48 (19 October 1972).
[245] 'The Past Two Weeks', *Fortnight*, 71 (2 November 1973).
[246] Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, *Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA* (1973), p. 44.
[247] 'The alternative: English withdrawal or war', *Republican News*, 13 July 1974.
[248] 'New attack on peace women', *Irish Independent*, 18 October 1976.

> The war in Ireland could be ended very quickly if the British government acknowledged the democratic right of the Irish nation to self-determination, and announced a British withdrawal from Ireland.[249]

Speaking especially frankly at the funeral of PIRA volunteers Willie Fleming and Danny Doherty in 1984, Martin McGuinness put the matter plainly: 'We want peace. We deserve peace'.[250] After twenty years of conflict, Provisional publicity still presented the movement as reluctant militarists and emphasised the 'defensive' aspect of their campaign which chief of staff Mac Stíofáin had declared complete as early as 1971. A poster positing Bobby Sands alongside Nelson Mandela drew deliberate comparisons, with the caption: 'Our resort to armed struggle was purely a defensive action… We have waited too long for freedom'.[251] The Provisionals' overtures towards the British government ran long beyond M. L. R. Smith's focus upon the years 1970 to 1972 as the 'fin de siècle' of PIRA bargaining.[252]

### V.I Popular support for early Provisional republicanism

Scholars and commentators have pointed to several principal explanations of popular support for Irish republicanism, but seldom support such claims with more than a small quantity of anecdotal evidence. Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie claimed that support for the Provisional IRA was 'mostly negative' in nature, 'given with sigh-heaving resignation', and largely dependent upon familial ties creating a spurious 'hereditary tradition' to inspire junior republicans.[253] Rogelio Alonso, drawing almost exclusively upon oral evidence, posited that the majority of PIRA volunteers joined the movement while young and politically naïve or ill-educated, being led by influential figures among family and friends or by the force of immediate circumstances including bereavement at the hands of the security

[249] *APRN*, 14 February 1981, quoted in English, *Does Terrorism Work?*, 103.
[250] HVA D00810 Tape 65: BBC Northern Ireland News (8 December 1984).
[251] NIPC PPO0462: 'Freedom' poster (PSF, 1990).
[252] Smith, 'Fin de Siècle', 15-32.
[253] Bishop & Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 2-3.

forces or loyalists, or disruption to everyday life by army patrols, roadblocks, arrests, and so on.[254] More nuanced positions have been taken by scholars such as Ian McBride, who has argued that the repressive actions of the security forces served as the principal motivation for republicans, particularly in the earliest years of the conflict,[255] in line with the Tillyan conception of state repression against anti-state actors as a chief stimulant of revolutionary violence and rebellion.[256]

Any attempt to explain republicanism's popular support base must take into account a plethora of factors; monocausal arguments face inevitable pitfalls and oversimplify a complex question. But with due attention to both oral testimony and archival sources, a series of important factors emerge. The initial Catholic experience of loyalist incursions in 1969 and the concomitant popular desire for a form of 'community defence' are of certain importance in the rise of the Provisional IRA: the very existence of the Provisionals as a breakaway from the old IRA was, to a considerable extent, justified by pointing to the organisation's failure to defend Catholic areas during loyalist attacks in August 1969.[257] Brian Hanley's revisionist argument that the IRA remained moderately popular and well-supported in the immediate aftermath of the loyalist incursions of late 1969 has helpfully corroded earlier overstated claims of an IRA loathed by Belfast and Derry Catholics in 1970.[258]

The forms of republicanism motivated by responses to the outbreak of violence and unrest in the communities were located predominantly in Belfast and Derry, and revolved around an acutely localised sense of grievance. Danny Morrison recalled thinking it

[254] Alonso, *IRA and Armed Struggle*, 4, 67, *passim*.
[255] Ian McBride, 'The Shadow of the Gunman', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 46 (2011), p. 701.
[256] For this discussion of 'reactive' collective action and violence, see Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly & Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930* (London, 1975), p. 250.
[257] Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, 127.
[258] Brian Hanley, '"I Ran Away"?', *Irish Historical Studies*, 38 (2013), pp. 671-687.

'unforgivable' that the IRA had left Catholic West Belfast 'defenceless',[259] while PIRA volunteers Séanna Walsh and Patrick Magee framed their initial republican involvement as responses to assaults on their specific communities, both notable Catholic enclaves, in the Short Strand and Carrick Hill areas of east and North Belfast respectively. Walsh reflects on the 'tight-knit' community of the Short Strand, encased by loyalist areas, and the existence of 'something like eleven military installations completely surrounding the tiny area of the Short Strand',[260] while Magee recollects his perception of Carrick Hill as a 'saturation point':

> There was an [British] Army sangar and there was only three or four hundred residences in the whole of that estate: the British state had seemed to [have] declared war on them [the local people]… There was an Army sanger on top of the library, there was always two foot patrols, there were two Army barracks and a police barracks within half a mile, so there was a heavy [British Army] presence.[261]

The degree of popular Catholic antipathy towards the RUC from the earliest stages of the conflict was remarkable, with some 3,759 formal complaints lodged against the conduct of the RUC in the first five years of the 1970s alone.[262]

Although the rhetoric of republicanism as a force for the defence of an embattled Catholic community appears, prima facie, to be most relevant to the period from 1969 through perhaps to 1972 – a troubled time in which the nationalist communities of Belfast

[259] Danny Morrison interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015). Danny Morrison, born Belfast, 1953; PSF director of publicity, 1979-1990; PSF Assembly member for Mid-Ulster, 1982-1986; imprisoned, 1990-1995.
[260] Séanna Walsh interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015). Séanna Walsh, born Belfast, 1956; PIRA prisoner, 1973-1976, 1976-1985, 1988-1998.
[261] Patrick Magee interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015).
[262] NIPC P1337: Republican Clubs, *Torture: The case of the Beechmount Three* (Belfast: Republican Clubs, 1976). In view of such levels of resentment and repudiation of the security forces, it is likely that this figure represents just a fraction of the 'lived experience' of the period; many disillusioned Catholics would probably scarcely have bothered to register complaints at all. This figure takes in the period between the implementation of the Police Act of 1970 and April 1975.

and Derry experienced the loyalist onslaughts of July and August 1969,[263] the Falls Curfew (July 1970)[264], internment, the Ballymurphy massacre (August 1971),[265] and Bloody Sunday (January 1972) – historians' and commentators' emphasis on the early 1970s as the epitome of 'community defence' stimulating the PIRA's support base misses the fact that the Provisionals were able, over a longer period, extending into the 1980s, to articulate successfully a self-prophesised image as the bastions of defence in nationalist areas.[266] Although it has been noted well that the actual capacity of the PIRA and, later, the INLA to 'defend' the Catholic population against loyalist onslaughts was questionable at best[267] – between 1969 and 1989, loyalist paramilitaries killed some 506 Catholic civilians[268] – the key point is that republicans were able to *portray* themselves as bastions of community defence, long beyond 1972.

The foundations of the popular image of the urban Provisionals as community defenders had been well-established in 1970. In December of that year the Provisionals' reply to calls for a cessation of hostilities by the Belfast CCDC included a 'pledge' by the PIRA to 'continue… to defend Irish people against extreme Unionist and Official Stormont violence'

[263] In July and August of 1969 alone, 1,505 of Belfast's 28,616 Catholic households were evacuated during these riots. Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon & Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland, 1921-1996* (London, 1996), p. 156.
[264] An operation involving over 3,000 British troops who fired 1,452 rounds of ammunition and 1,355 CS gas cartridges, 337 arrests, and the killing of six civilians and the wounding of fifty-seven more. Geoffrey Warner, 'The Falls Road Curfew Revisited', *Irish Studies Review*, 14 (2006), p. 326.
[265] During the Ballymurphy massacre of August 1971, ten people were killed in the space of just over thirty-six hours. British soldiers 'recovered no weapons from any of the ten shot dead in Ballymurphy over those 36 hours'. Ian Cobain, 'Ballymurphy shootings: 36 hours in Belfast that left 10 dead', *Guardian*, 26 June 2014.
[266] Richard English notes the importance of the rhetoric of 'community defence' in early Provisional activity. A Belfast PIRA leader interviewed in February 1971 said that the PIRA was prepared to 'use force to any extent required to protect the minority in Belfast from attack from any sources – be it the British Army, the RUC, or Protestant bigots'. English, *Does Terrorism Work?*, 100.
[267] Former PIRA volunteers such as Marian Price (active in the 1970s) and also a younger generation including Raymond Wilkinson and Carl Reilly (who both joined in the early 1990s), have all retrospectively pointed to the Provisionals' inability to defend the Catholic community against loyalist attacks. Alonso, *IRA and Armed Struggle*, 43-44, 48, 60-61. The point has been substantiated by Richard English. English, *Does Terrorism Work?*, 112.
[268] Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Northern Ireland* (New York, 1991), p. 108.

and promised 'retaliatory action' against such attacks.[269] The potential for armed republicans to be cast as bastions of the local communities in Belfast and Derry was realised in Derry's Bogside in 1969, when an album of photographs produced to narrate the Battle of the Bogside was published 'in response to public demand' in the area, suggesting the potency of the episode in local collective memory:

> The Battle of Bogside will go down in Irish History as a victory for the ordinary people of Bogside, who after the battle declared the Bogside area as "Free Derry".[270]

The enduring importance of the collective memory of the early Provisionals as defenders of their ghettoised communities was borne out by ex-PIRA prisoner Maureen Gibson's recollection in 1980 that local Fian Gerard McAuley had been killed in 1969 'while defending the area'.[271]

During contingent emergencies arising in northern society the Provisionals communicated a message of reassurance and solidarity with the community at large throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. At the time of the Ulster Workers' Council strike of 1974 and its attendant social strife, the PIRA's 2nd Battalion issued a statement in West Belfast describing the Provisionals' roles in preparing the area for the worst:

> The Republican Army has already mobilised its resources to cater for every possible situation, including sustaining supplies of milk, food and medical supplies… The Republican Army has set up work committees in all areas to ensure smooth administration of all services to local committees, the welfare of the elderly and the young and the security of the people of the Nationalist ghettoes.[272]

Similarly, during the hunger strike of 1981, with street violence and rioting becoming increasingly prevalent and fears emerging among Catholics of renewed loyalist attacks, PSF

[269] John Pilgrim, 'The Provisionals', *Fortnight*, 11 (19 February 1971).
[270] NIPC P872: *The Battle of Bogside* photograph album, published by The Bogside Republican Appeal Fund (1969).
[271] Margaretta D'Arcy, *Tell Them Everything* (London, 1981), p. 66.
[272] EHM: Statement of the 2nd Battalion, Oglaigh na hEireann (1974).

organised first-aid courses in Belfast, and reassured the embattled community that the PIRA would be deployed against any looters if the situation deteriorated further.[273] As late as 1982, Sinn Féin talked up the loyalist threat, claiming that 'Paisley has already set up a 'Third Force' which has support from sections of the UDR and RUC' and either the British government would oversee 'an increase in repression' or 'the loyalists will grow increasingly restless'. In such adverse circumstances, the Provisionals cast themselves as defenders of the Catholic population:

> Despite this repression Sinn Féin will… *support and defend the struggles of the oppressed sections of the population* – the political prisoners, the unemployed, those economically and socially deprived, the underprivileged.[274]

**V.II The endurance of Provisional motivations**

Scholars such as Peter Taylor and Rogelio Alonso have noted well that early Provisionalism was underpinned by a wide-reaching belief among young volunteers that the campaign would be winnable in the relatively short term.[275] But the historiography tends to locate the phenomenon of this Provisional optimism solely early in 1972 and 1973. Alone in recognising the ongoing rhetoric of imminent victory throughout a much longer period is Richard English.[276] The Provisionals' hierarchy and publicity machine paralleled the positive line reflected by the volunteers on the ground through much of the 1970s. In 1975 the Army Council recorded that the PIRA stood 'in a very strong position… [in] the last phase in Ireland's long fight for freedom'. Party president Ruairí Ó Brádaigh told the Árd-Fheis that

[273] John Conroy, *War as a Way of Life* (London, 1987), pp. 155-156.
[274] IEL: PSF Department of Publicity, *Freedom Struggle in Ireland* (February 1982). Emphases added.
[275] Alonso, *IRA and Armed Struggle*, 80, 97; Taylor, *Provos*, 135, 139. Alonso and Taylor record the testimonies of Shane O'Doherty, Breandan Mac Cionnaith, Martin Meehan and Brendan Hughes, all pointing to their beliefs that, in 1972, the war was military winnable, especially after the prorogation of Stormont in March 1972.
[276] English, *Does Terrorism Work?*, 105-106.

the Provisionals could now 'regard British disengagement from Ireland as inevitable'.[277] In Andersonstown, the local PSF cumann newsletter in 1974 also drew strength from the 'flagging morale of the [British] troops' and deduced that the British 'can't stand much more from the Irish revolutionaries'.[278] Through the 1970s Ruairí Ó Brádaigh reiterated his confidence in the Provisionals' trajectory towards victory, describing a British withdrawal as 'inevitable' in 1977 and telling the Árd-Fheis of 1980 that 'the game is up for British interests in Ireland… we are winning'.[279]

In numerous public orations, the Provisionals continued to reiterate throughout the 1980s the belief that a British withdrawal was imminent – often with an enduring emphasis on the military aspect of the campaign. Addressing an Easter commemoration in Derry in 1983, Martin McGuinness described the Provisional IRA 'in its final thrust to remove British imperialism from our land'.[280] Danny Morrison said in a republican commemoration at Milltown Cemetery on Easter Sunday 1984 that 'it'll not be so long before we have the Brits out of here, and we will see Margaret Thatcher begging for negotiations with the leadership of the IRA'.[281] Later in the year, at the funeral of PIRA volunteers Willie Fleming and Danny Doherty in December 1984, McGuinness spoke of republicans entering 'the final phase of the struggle' and pronounced that 'the time is fast approaching when the Irish people will have realised the dream of all our fallen volunteers: a united socialist republic'.[282] In his oration in Dungannon on the twentieth anniversary of the first civil rights march, in September 1988,

[277] White, *Ó Brádaigh*, 243.
[278] EHM: 'Victory', *The Volunteer: Newsletter of the Cahal Brugha PSF Cumann, Andersonstown*, 98 (1974).
[279] 'Changing mood of Provisionals', *Sunday Telegraph*, 2 January 1977; 'Provisional Sinn Fein Ard Fheis', *Irish Independent*, 21 January 1980.
[280] 'IRA support claim', *Derry Journal*, 8 April 1983.
[281] HVA D00770 Tape 63: *Brasstacks: The Armalite and the Ballot Paper* (17 July 1984).
[282] HVA D00810 Tape 65: BBC Northern Ireland News (8 December 1984).

Gerry Adams said that partition was terminally ill, was kept alive only by 'a life-support machine of British repression', and was unable to recover.[283]

But republican optimism was not purely a rhetorical device; in fact for many PIRA volunteers on the ground the belief in the possibility of an imminent victory sustained their motivations. A former PIRA volunteer believed, 'up to 1976, 1977', when he was imprisoned, that the conflict would end 'with images like Vietnam, with [British] troops forced onto the boats at Derry Quay and Ireland would be free by military force', and only afterwards did he reconsider.[284] Nuala Perry, who joined the PIRA in West Belfast in 1975, felt at the time of her being sworn in during the ceasefire that victory

> was kind of in the bag. I worked in the [ceasefire] incident centre then, which meant I actually would have been on the phones, and if there had been any breach of the ceasefire, the [British] Army would have phoned up. You were talking to people who were your enemy, and they accepted you as a person, not just as these… Irish troublemakers and disturbers. I thought at that stage, something could give here.[285]

Tommy McKearney's assessment that Provisionals on the ground dismissed the prospects of victory being attainable after such a situation had not materialised by 1974 evidently has its limitations.[286]

## V.III Micro and macro: the personal and the universal in stimulating popular support for republicanism

Throughout the republican campaign a significant number of republicans joined paramilitary organisations for highly personal reasons, their involvement triggered by

[283] David McKittrick, 'Marching to the beat of the Armalite', *Independent*, 5 September 1988.
[284] Former PIRA volunteer interviewed by the author (September 2015).
[285] Nuala Perry interviewed by the author (Belfast, March 2016).
[286] McKearney, *Provisional IRA*, 141.

traumatic responses or a sense of injustice to individual events. Such individuals had not, of course, existed hitherto in a vacuum; in many cases, such personal trauma and outrage may have been just one final, albeit decisive, factor in stimulating active support for republicanism. But the importance of personal experience in driving support for republicanism should not be underestimated. Such motivations transcended time across the Troubles and were not specific to any particular geography. Just as, in Belfast and Derry, respectively, Thomas Cosgrove and Charles English joined the PIRA in the wake of the killing by the British Army of friends and relatives,[287] so rural republicans such as Brendan McCaffrey of Roslea, county Fermanagh, and Francis Hughes of Bellaghy, county Derry, joined the republican movement after receiving savage beatings from the British Army and RUC respectively.[288] The sister of PIRA volunteer Charles Breslin, shot dead by the British Army in Strabane, county Tyrone in 1985 said in the aftermath of the killing of eight PIRA volunteers at Loughgall two years later that the British campaign against the Provisionals had simply strengthened republican resolve: 'You can't take foreign guns and foreign armies coming into your country and shooting you down. It just makes you more determined'.[289] The trauma experienced in communities through tragedies during the conflict often had wide-ranging impacts upon young people locally. The killing by the British Army of 18-year-old Jake McGerrigan on Armagh City's Windmill Hill housing estate in 1973 had driven McGerrigan's brother Sean into the PIRA. Freddie Toal, later to join the blanket protest as a Provisional prisoner, also cited the killing of McGerrigan as a motivation for his republicanism:

[287] Alonso, *IRA and Armed Struggle*, 61-62; The Irish Freedom Movement, *The Irish War* (London, 1987) [First edition 1983], pp. 44-45. Cosgrove's childhood friend Danny Barrett had been killed by the British Army in Ardoyne, while English's brother Gary English had been killed by a careering British Army landrover in Creggan.
[288] Fáilte Cluain Eois, *Their Prisons, Our Stories* (Castleblayney, 2015), p. v; Conroy, *Belfast Diary*, 174.
[289] Joan Phillips, 'Assassins: SAS shoot-to-kill at Loughgall', *The Next Step: Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly*, 18 (15 May 1987).

> At [McGerrigan's] wake, I knew I had to avenge his death. The first thing I did [afterwards] was join the Fianna Éireann. Before that, I just rioted and threw stones, but then I wanted the gun.[290]

In cases such as that of Toal, a republican inclination and boyhood experience of what Thomas Bartlett has called the 'recreational' rioting of the early Troubles antedated the traumatic episode which finally committed the individual to republicanism.[291]

Traumas occasioned by specific incidents throughout the conflict served, often at a local level, to politicise individuals who had, hitherto, held a range of opinions on republican politics, incurred by personal connections with bereaved or the families of bereaved Catholics. Events of such major contemporary moment as Bloody Sunday (1972) and the hunger strikes (1980, 1981) were exceptional in that their stimulating republican sympathies transcended geography across Northern Ireland and the border counties. The political impact of these episodes in the conflict reached far beyond their own geographical loci, that is Derry City and the homes of the hunger strikers – although there was clearly a particular resonance in those areas. In Derry City itself, the 17-year-old Raymond McCartney – whose cousin, Jim Wray, was among those killed on Bloody Sunday – had been on the civil rights march and recollects that 'in the aftermath of it you just sort of knew that things were never going to be the same'.[292] Patrick Magee recalls being in Belfast on the evening of 30 January 1972 and the intensity of confusion, anger, and despair caused by the reporting of events earlier that day some eighty-five miles away in Derry. Magee described the impact of Bloody Sunday as 'pretty universal… and the anger was palpable'.[293]

Evidently not all repressive violence was necessarily escalatory: Margaret Doherty, the sister of Barney McGuigan was killed on Bloody Sunday, was one of five women who

[290] Sean O'Hagan, 'Hunger: The real Maze men speak', *Observer*, 19 October 2008.
[291] Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 513.
[292] Raymond McCartney interviewed by the author (Derry, September 2015). Raymond McCartney, born Derry, 1954; joined PIRA, 1972; interned, 1972-1974; PIRA prisoner, 1977-1994.
[293] Patrick Magee interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015).

launched a peace campaign in Derry just four months after those tragic events, and argued, perhaps optimistically, that 'none of those thirteen families [bereaved on Bloody Sunday]' wanted 'another killing in the name of the dead'.[294] But the momentousness of the impact of the day's events were felt acutely across Derry and beyond: a crowd of some 25,000 people gathered in the Creggan to witnessed the removal of the dead from the church on 2 February 1972.[295]

The hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981 had a similarly universal impact in heightening a republican sense of injustice and increasing popular support for republicanism. Innumerable ex-volunteers have cited the period as crucial in heightening republican consciousness. Localities were significant in shaping perceptions of the hunger strikes, for instance Conor Murphy of Camlough, county Armagh points especially to local PIRA man Raymond McCreesh's joining the hunger strike as an important factor in his subsequent PIRA involvement,[296] and a south Armagh by-election on 30 September 1981, when the late McCreesh's father James polled some 3,830 votes from the people of Crossmaglen, Forkhill and Camlough to win the election, highlights the extent of local sympathies.[297] Similarly, several residents of the tiny village of Cappagh, county Tyrone, joined the PIRA in the wake of the death of local volunteer Martin Hurson.[298]

But the rising tide of republicanism's popular support was by no means limited to, or even especially concentrated in, the hometowns and villages of the hunger strikers. While the home villages and towns of the hunger strikers witnessed marches in support of the prisoners of sizes inordinate to the places themselves – a crowd of 3,000 marched under a PSF banner

[294] Swan, *Official Irish Republicanism*, 354.
[295] English, *Armed Struggle*, 150.
[296] Conor Murphy interviewed by the author (Newry, September 2015). Conor Murphy, born Camlough, county Armagh, 1963; joined PIRA, 1981; imprisoned, 1981-1984; PSF councillor, Newry and Mourne District Council, 1989-1997; MLA, 1998-present; MP, Newry & Armagh, 2005-2015.
[297] PRONI NIO/12/254: 'Meeting with Mr John Hume, Stormont Castle, 10 August 1981'. The note reports on a meeting between John Hume and James Prior.
[298] Taylor, *Provos*, 266-267. They include Declan Arthurs, later killed at Loughgall.

in the tiny county Derry village of Mayogall on the fifty-seventh day of local Provisional Francis Hughes's strike[299] – the political impact of the strikes across the region was remarkable. Riots erupted as far away as Derry and Strabane on the day of Belfast volunteer Bobby Sands's funeral.[300] The torch-lit marches which had rallied enormous crowds at the outset of the first hunger strike in October 1980 drew some 55,000 people in Belfast on 26 October, and another two thousand in Dungannon, county Tyrone the following day. The marches touched areas as diverse as the small towns and villages of Ardboe, county Tyrone and Dungiven, county Derry, as well as Newcastle (county Down), Lurgan (county Armagh), and Strabane (county Tyrone), within the following week.[301]

Republican veterans who had earlier distanced themselves from republican politics were drawn back into militant action once more. Writing from Derry City in May 1981, Bishop Edward Daly wrote privately to a British civil servant that 'active support for the Provos [was] growing, and men released from the Maze who had hitherto kept out of trouble were slipping back into [the] PIRA'.[302] Speaking with experience of a significant portion of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland's second city, Daly recorded in a private letter written after the deaths of Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes that he felt British policy through the hunger strikes had 'succeeded in putting the IRA back into business as regards recruits and support'.[303] Leading Provisional Danny Morrison reflects on the period as one in which the PIRA almost enjoyed

[299] HVA D00320 Tape 8: ITV News (10 May 1981).
[300] HVA D00320 Tape 8: BBC News (10 May 1981). A black flag protest in Derry's Bogside the same day drew a crowd of approximately 3,000.
[301] ILA: 'Mass resistance on the streets', *IRSP Hunger Strike Bulletin*, No. 2 (1980).
[302] PRONI NIO/12/197A: 'Call on Bishop Daly: Note concerning a recent meeting with Bishop E. Daly' (1 June 1981).
[303] PRONI CENT/1/10/36A: 'Letter from Bishop E. Daly, then Catholic Bishop of Derry, to Lord Elton, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), regarding the ongoing Republican Hunger Strike in the Maze Prison' (18 May 1981).

> too much support… Hundreds of *young* people wanted to join the IRA; but what could the IRA do with them? It was run by guerrilla warfare, secrecy.[304]

The Provisionals were not alone in experiencing a rise in popular support through the hunger strikes. The IRSP grew exponentially, too, with membership increasing rapidly especially in south Derry, Strabane and also two new IRSP cumainn in West Belfast, while three new cumainn were formed in Derry City in April 1981 and a further one in Ballyshannon, county Donegal, too.[305]

### V.IV The formation of allegiance and intra-republican relations

But scholars have done little to address the issue of determinants of popular allegiance to a particular wing of republicanism. Ties of personality, kinship, and territory were important in shaping individual allegiance. A republican who joined the INLA in 1982 said he joined the organisation

> as opposed to the IRA for no great political ideology… but because at that time the INLA in Andersonstown, where I lived, were a lot more active. You seen them on the streets every day, armed, getting stuck into the British army and the RUC. The INLA claimed to be a very left-wing organisation. I didn't even know what the IRSP [acronym] stood for… so I had no great left-wing ideology.[306]

Although a former Official internee has maintained that the Provisional movement tended, in the earliest years after the IRA's split, to attract more socially conservative 'united Irelanders' than a more leftist Official movement, he accepts that 'it was the need' for weaponry and military action in certain areas of Belfast which played a significant part in determining allegiance to one wing of republicanism over the other. He recalls one former associate joining the perceived more militant Provisionals over the Officials in spite of certain political

[304] Danny Morrison interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015).
[305] McDonald & Holland, *INLA*, 175.
[306] Former INLA volunteer interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015).

nuances, and simply because the individual came from the nationalist enclave of Ardoyne, 'in other words, surrounded by loyalists, and politics didn't matter as much as survival… Sometimes it boiled down to whatever area you lived in'.[307] Patrick Magee considered that the Provisional-Official divide was largely 'territorial. A lot depended on families, individuals going with them… every area had its character'.[308] Although Mickey McMullan considered himself a radical socialist whose politics were perhaps more akin to those of the Officials, he joined the PIRA since he perceived the Provisionals to be better armed.[309] Tommy McKearney in the Moy, county Tyrone, reflects on an unusually quiescent Provisional-Official relationship in the rural area – 'actually the antagonism [between Provisionals and Officials] never really surfaced in Tyrone' – but still maintained that his siding with the Provisionals was not 'decide[d] in terms of "are the Officials more or less left-wing?" That didn't occur to me at all. It was in many ways a question of efficiency and effectiveness [militarily], and who was seen to be best striking back at that stage'.[310] Even the notorious county Armagh INLA volunteer Dessie O'Hare, whose obscure courtroom references to himself as a 'republican militant' opposing 'international capitalism' and 'Freemasonry Unionist ruling classes in the six counties' would seem to portray him as an ideologically radical socialist,[311] only joined the INLA in the late 1970s after a series of personal clashes with the leadership of the south Armagh PIRA, of which he had been a member since 1973.[312]

The primacy of military effectiveness in determining, for many republicans, their wing of allegiance was reflected in the aftermath of the Officials' ceasefire of May 1972. The future hunger striker Patsy O'Hara had joined the Officials in Derry in the aftermath of

[307] Former Official republican internee interviewed by the author (Belfast, March 2016).
[308] Patrick Magee interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015).
[309] Alonso, *IRA and Armed Struggle*, 34-35.
[310] Tommy McKearney interviewed by the author (Armagh, September 2015).
[311] Anton la Guardia, 'Defiant Border Fox jailed for a record forty years', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 April 1988.
[312] Cormac O'Keeffe, 'Notorious Des O'Hare to leave jail', *Irish Examiner*, 10 December 2002.

Bloody Sunday but soon left the grouping after the ceasefire, later re-joining the more militant INLA.[313] Another future hunger striker, John Nixon of Armagh City, had joined the Officials on grounds of territoriality – there had been an OIRA presence in his neighbourhood – but later joined the INLA after the Officials had suspended their military activities.[314] Personalities remained important in cementing allegiance to particular strands of republicanism when republican groupings came under pressure militarily. Frustrated with what he perceived to be the Provisionals' loss of direction and unwelcome embroilment in a series of sectarian retaliatory operations in 1976, senior Belfast Provisional Brendan Hughes came close to defecting to the INLA, but was ultimately prevented from doing so by pleas made by his friend Gerry Adams.[315]

The importance of ties of friendship and kinship in allying the individual to a particular wing of republicanism was augmented by the acrimony and mutual distrust which characterised much of the relationship between the Provisionals, Officials, and INLA. Numerous Provisionals recall the feelings ranging from contempt to dismissal which broadly encapsulated Provisional assessments of the INLA. A former PIRA volunteer remembered:

> We never had much time for them [the INLA]… Number one, we viewed them with suspicion since they'd developed from the Official IRA… They weren't looked upon as partners, but as a nuisance that occasionally got in the way.[316]

A former INLA volunteer from Belfast substantiates this case:

> The Provos never respected any other organisation. They were the one true legitimate army of Ireland, and the only legitimate opposition to British rule: that was their elitism. There wouldn't have been respect.[317]

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[313] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH2284: Wolfe Tone Society, *The 1981 hunger strikers: biographical sketches* (London: Wolfe Tone Society, 1982), p. 13.
[314] ILA: *Hunger Strike Bulletin*, No. 1 (IRSP, 1980).
[315] Ed Moloney, *Voices from the Grave: Two Men's War in Ireland* (London, 2010), p. 193. Hughes perceived that the 1975 ceasefire had 'virtually destroyed' the PIRA and recorded anger at the Provisionals' involvement in 'stupid sectarian operations' in the mid-1970s: Bean & Hayes, *Voices*, 58, 77.
[316] Former PIRA volunteer interviewed by the author (Derry, September 2015).

Fra Halligan, a member of the IRSP in Belfast since 1984, recalled how the Provisionals had 'showed their absolute hatred of us on more than one occasion'. Halligan in turn suggests that there was present within the Provisionals 'a sectarian element' since the Provisionals had been 'formed as a reaction to the sectarian pogroms'.[318] The experience of incarceration was exceptional in engendering a mutual respect between Provisionals and INLA volunteers which had not been apparent on the outside. Former PIRA prisoner Séanna Walsh reflected that although the 'working relationship within the jail' between PIRA and INLA prisoners 'was, on the whole, fairly relaxed and fairly okay', on the outside of the prison

> we [PIRA] would have been very dismissive of the INLA and we would have considered them to be mavericks and cowboys with no central control, no discipline, and no strategic overview of the struggle… They were not an effective fighting force in any way, and so on a strategic level we didn't give them any sort of recognition, I suppose, or acknowledgement.[319]

Nuala Perry noted that the Provisional mentality had been elitist: 'We thought we were the supreme army'.[320] Institutional distrust was apparent between the PIRA and INLA. When four masked INLA volunteers appeared at a PSF-led Bobby Sands commemoration event in 1984, they were forcibly removed by Provisional stewards and jeered by the assembled crowd,[321] and later that year Gerry Adams called for the INLA to disband – an imploration he repeated during the INLA's feuds of 1987, at which point he described the grouping as 'totally disorganised', 'degenerate', and 'anti-republican'.[322]

Just as personal politics played a significant role in stimulating support for republicanism, so the same personal politics shaped organisational identities and inter-group conflict. The following chapter turns its attention to the place of these diverse wings of Irish

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[317] Former INLA volunteer interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015).
[318] Fra Halligan interviewed by the author (Belfast, September 2015). Fra Halligan, born Belfast, 1968; joined IRSP, 1984.
[319] Séanna Walsh interviewed by the author (Belfast, August 2015).
[320] Nuala Perry interviewed by the author (Belfast, March 2016).
[321] 'INLA cause angry scene', *Irish Independent*, 7 May 1984.
[322] 'Adams tells INLA factions to disband', *Irish Press*, 28 February 1987.

republicanism in relation to the institutions and political phenomena dominant in contemporary society, including the Catholic Church, alternative political organisations, and the grassroots nationalist communities.

## Chapter 2: Irish republicanism and its place in wider society, c.1970-c.1994

### I.I 'Rosary beads republicanism'? Early Provisionals and the Catholic Church

Through much of the conflict, the relationship between republicanism and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church was marked by acrimony. Richard Davis's perceptive argument that republicans, while not necessarily personally concerned by clerical attitudes, often sought to present themselves as occupying political positions compatible with orthodox Catholic opinion is partially a compelling one in regard to the Provisional wing of republicanism in the early 1970s: the Provisionals tended, with some exceptions, to seek to avoid confrontations with the Catholic hierarchy early in the conflict. But Davis's analysis has significant limitations, especially considering some notable public conflicts between republicans and clergy, sometimes conducted in the columns of newspapers. Davis's argument also misses the more constantly and overtly hostile relations between the Catholic Church and those republicans allied to the Official and IRSM wings of republicanism.[323]

To some extent, as Davis has argued, Provisional republicans managed their relationship with the Catholic Church with strategic deftness, seeking to avoid alienating moderate Catholic opinion from their cause, especially in the early 1970s: one *An Phoblacht* editorial described the aim of the campaign being 'to promote social order based on justice and Christian principles'.[324] Early Provisional publicity's highlighting the movement's support from Catholic priests such as Father Patrick Fell and Brother Bartholomew Burns pointed to the Provisionals' understanding of the political capital to be gained by illustrating Catholic support for their movement.[325] Maria McGuire, an early PIRA recruit who later published her memoirs after leaving the movement, alleged that leaders Ruairí Ó Brádaigh

[323] Davis, 'Irish Republicanism v. Roman Catholicism', 34.
[324] Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, *Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA* (1973), p. 11.
[325] Joanne Wright, *Terrorist Propaganda* (Basingstoke, 1991), p. 121.

and Dáithí Ó Conaill strategically prevented her from making public her atheism since they were concerned not to alienate Catholic opinion.[326]

But characterising even the early Provisional movement as dominated by 'rosary beads republicanism' exaggerates the harmony of relations between Provisionals on the ground and the Church. As early as 1972 the Provisionals from Belfast's Ardoyne district spoke defiantly in a local bulletin against the moderating influence of the Church: 'No amount of condemnation from the Catholic Heirarchy [sic] or any other source shall sway us from our ideals'.[327] A respectful but firmly argued letter signed by two hundred republicans in the area further expressed lay Catholic distance from the opinions of the parish priest who had accused the Provisionals of 'intimidating' the local population.[328] Republican rioting at grassroots level was not orchestrated entirely by an older generation of 'rosary beads republicans', but rather by spontaneous young activists who ignored protestations from clergy in 1969 and 1970 in their pursuit of weapons.[329]

After Cardinal Conway, the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, had condemned the Provisionals in September 1971, the Provisionals had replied contumaciously that 'a war of self-defence is quite justified on the principle of self-defence'.[330] Leading Provisional Seán Mac Stíofáin called on a crowd of 2,500 at the Derry City Cemetery on Easter Sunday 1972 to reject calls from Cardinal Conway, the head of the Church in Ireland, for republicans to accept concessions: 'Concessions be damned, we want our freedom', Mac Stíofáin declared.[331] Even senior republican Ruairí Ó Brádaigh criticised Cardinal Conway publicly in 1973, portraying the churchman as unqualified for political comment:

[326] Maria McGuire, *To Take Arms* (Basingstoke, 1973), p. 71.
[327] EHM: 'We have the right', *Ardoyne Freedom Fighters: Freedom 1972 Bulletin*.
[328] Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy*, 94, 97.
[329] Bishop & Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 71, 88.
[330] Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, *Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA* (1973), p. 41.
[331] Clarke & Johnston, *McGuinness*, 72.

> Did [Conway] at any time visit the men [in Long Kesh] or in Magilligan or Crumlin Road, or on board the Maidstone? Did he ever make the few minutes [sic] walk from Ara Coeli to Armagh Jail to visit the young women serving up to 12 years there?[332]

The Provisionals' north-west executive was similarly unequivocal when responding to criticism from Ballyshannon priest Father Patrick Gallagher in December 1971, condemning the 'ignorance, bigotry and venom of Father Gallagher's statement' after the cleric had accused the Provisionals of exhibiting 'fanatical nationalism' and 'false emotionalism'.[333] Provisional public interactions with clergy were seldom far from breaking into overt mutual hostility.

### I.II 'Reactive nationalism': The Church hierarchy and republicanism

While there had been a voluminous lobby among clergy against internment and British repression from August 1971 – in November 1971 a group of 387 priests, representing some 80 percent of Northern Ireland's Catholic clergy, had signed a letter against 'immoral and unjust' internment and brutalisation of prisoners at Hollywood Barracks[334] – such protests were by no means redolent of any more wholesale alliance between republicans and the Church. Father Des Wilson's claim that a majority of Catholic clergy in the north, with significant popular support, would have readily accepted a republican revolution in the mid-1970s appears overstated.[335] When the four priests of St Mary's in Derry's Creggan estate produced a statement in June 1974 accusing the British Army of using excessive force and reckless violence in the area, it was the impact of the Army's actions on the community at large, rather than on republicans per se, which the clergy addressed:

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[332] NIPC P1355: Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, *Our people, our future: What Eire Nua means* (Dublin: PSF, 1973). Initially published in June 1973 (2,000 copies) and re-issued in December 1973 (3,000 copies), the PSF leader's criticisms were widely distributed.
[333] 'Ballyshannon priest criticised I.R.A. methods', *Ulster Herald*, 1 January 1972.
[334] NAI Public Records TSCH 2002/8/494: Statement signed by over 350 priests demanding the end of torture and brutality being inflicted upon persons interned in Northern Ireland (1971).
[335] Des Wilson, *An End to Silence* (Cork, 1985), p. 56.

> Eight houses in four different locations… were shot at by the British Army… The ordeal of the people was terrible… *for all in the vicinity*.[336]

Clerical outrages against the crown forces usually stemmed from dismay at the consequences for civilians rather than from any more fundamental republican convictions.

A broad swathe of Catholic clergy exhibited what might be termed 'reactive nationalism', responding publicly to some of the perceived worst excesses of the British military and security services, or the most repressive of government policies. A group of sixty-five Belfast clergy, constituting half of the city's churchmen, accused the British Army of brutality and the use of excessive force in November 1972,[337] while Bishop of Derry Edward Daly criticised both the SAS and the army's Royal Anglian Regiment in 1978 and 1982 respectively, speaking after the SAS's apparently summary killing of PIRA man Patrick Duffy,[338] and after the army's 'callous murder' of unarmed PIRA volunteer Eamonn 'Bronco' Bradley. Daly railed against the scarcity of criminal charges and convictions brought against security forces.[339]

Controversial British judicial and penal policies also drew the ire of otherwise moderate clergy: the contentious supergrass system was condemned by Cardinal O Fiaich in 1984 as tantamount to 'another form of internment',[340]while the strip-searching of female republican prisoners in Armagh brought the nuns in Monaghan out in support of the prisoners.[341] The popular clerical position on the hunger strike was one of concern at the social strife attendant with such political tension, and criticism of the British government's intransigence. But clergy broadly stopped short of absolute support for the prisoners' five demands. The Conference of Major Religious Superiors, representing some 18,000 priests,

[336] 'Priests accuse army of "violence against Creggan people"', *Derry Journal*, 7 June 1974. Emphases added.
[337] Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy*, 137.
[338] Urban, *Big Boys' Rules*, 67.
[339] 'Eamonn 'Bronco' Bradley remembered thirty years on', *Derry Journal*, 24 August 2012.
[340] 'Supergrasses used 'like internment'', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 December 1984.
[341] Fáilte Cluain Eois, *Their Prisons*, 218.

nuns and brothers, settled on the moderate position of supporting the statements made by Cardinal O Fiaich on the H-blocks and the hunger strike.[342] The grouping calling themselves the Lawyers and Priests for a Humanitarian Alternative criticised the government's position on the hunger strike, arguing plainly that 'British inflexibility… has caused the hunger strike' and calling for a coalition of the Church, trade unions, workers and the media to 'help the hunger strikers by bringing international pressure to bear on the British government', but seemed to have reached this position as an expedient measure to save the lives of the hunger strikers and avert the immediate crisis, rather than from any more fundamentally republican standpoint backing the prisoners' five demands.[343]

Informal and temporary alliances between the Catholic hierarchy and republican groupings occasioned by outrages committed by the security forces were founded upon the Catholic Church's fears of *all* violence from all sources proving self-perpetuating and giving rise to further social turmoil, rather than out of any inherent belief that the republican campaign held any political or moral legitimacy. When numerous Catholic churchmen condemned the Thatcher government during the hunger strike of 1981, they did so on the basis that the socio-political turmoil occasioned by the deaths of the ten republicans inflamed social divisions and heightened sectarian tensions. When two separate groups of priests from the north, numbering eighty-four in total, wrote to the Prime Minister in May 1981 calling for negotiations to bring the hunger strike to an end and accusing Thatcher of having shown 'little humanity', the priests expressed their ultimate rationale being 'to prevent loss of life

[342] NIPC PH2927: Father Piaras O Dúill, *Hunger Strike: The children of '69* (n.p., 1981). O Fiaich had not called for the implementation of special-category status, but rather for the British government to move to make intermediate concessions in a bid to bring the hunger strike to an end. PRONI NIO/12/121A: 'Meeting with Cardinal O Fiaich' (1 July 1981).
[343] NIPC P2859: Lawyers and Priests for a humanitarian alternative, *Hunger Strike* (Dungannon, 1980).

and *turmoil in the community*'.[344] Clergy would hardly have been expected to express support outright for the PIRA or INLA in pleas addressed to ameliorate the situation with the British government, but the point stands in a wider context, too: at the funeral mass of Francis Hughes, the second hunger striker to die, Father Michael Flanagan told the congregation that violence was 'wrong' and community reconciliation was needed as a matter of urgency, while Cardinal O Fiaich commented generally on 'the cruelty and violence in our midst, which spares neither Protestants nor Catholics, neither security forces nor paramilitaries'.[345] Clergy lamented the hunger strike as a catalyst for socio-political fragmentation, rather than as an indictment of the prisoners' five demands.

For some senior clerics, the 'shoot-to-kill' episodes were lamentable chiefly since they perceived such incidents to delay the return of 'normality' and law and order in society; such churchmen sought an immediate ceasefire and the establishment of a peaceful Northern Ireland, rather than any republican revolution. Archbishop Cahal Daly's opposition to what he perceived to be heavy-handed security force methods was based on his belief that such incidents would merely reinvigorate republicanism. Daly regretted the RUC's shooting of Catholic demonstrator Sean Downes in August 1984 on the grounds that Downes' killing would do 'a disastrous disservice to the cause of peace' and would, Daly said, aid 'IRA propaganda'.[346] Speaking after the ambush of three PIRA volunteers by the SAS in Coagh, county Tyrone in 1991, Daly said that such acts of 'all-out war on the IRA' were 'misguided' as they would 'only play into the hands of the terrorists'.[347] While Father Faul, reflecting in 1991, blamed the British government as the root cause of 'most of the problems in the 1980s', Faul ultimately regretted that the Provisionals, who he regarded as 'Christians gone

[344] PRONI CENT/1/10/36A: A. K. Templeton, 'Northern Ireland Office: Protests and Second Hunger Strike' (21 May 1981). Of the clergy, sixty represented the Diocese of Armagh and twenty-four the diocese of Dromore. Emphases added.
[345] Ibid.
[346] HVA D00780 Tape 63: BBC Northern Ireland News (14 August 1984) .
[347] Owen Bowcott, 'Unionists approve hard line as army shoots IRA team', *Guardian*, 4 June 1991.

astray' or 'prodigals', had not been 'wiped out… long ago'. Faul's anger with the security forces rested upon his belief that it was the lack of 'proper discipline' among 'the RUC, the British army and the UDR' which had allowed republicanism to be sustained.[348] When he criticised the SAS for the summary killing of PIRA volunteer Seamus McElwaine in April 1986, characterising the unit as 'another assassination squad', he was quick to consider them 'the same as the IRA and the UVF' in their ruthlessness.[349]

Although in 1982 a large delegation of Catholic priests from West Belfast told the NIO that they 'lacked confidence in the security forces', especially the UDR, who 'would never be accepted' by the Catholics of Northern Ireland, and drew particular attention to the British Army's harassment of local youths, the broader tenor of the clergy was concern at the rise of PSF, for whom 'the way was left open' since the clergy-favoured SDLP had been given 'nothing to offer to their supporters' through the Assembly elections.[350] That the clergy lamented the corrosion of moderate nationalism by the forces of radical republicanism underpins the broadly moderate position of the hierarchy on 'the national question'.

### I.III Deteriorating Church-republican relations in the 1980s

Republican anger at the Catholic Church leadership's seeming quiescence in the constitutional status quo combined with resentment of the complex role of Father Faul during the hunger strike of 1981 to produce a rising tide of public Provisional anti-clericalism in the 1980s to an extent hitherto exhibited only by the Officials and IRSP. A Provisional writer in the movement's organ *Iris* was especially critical of the 'Catholic hierarchy' in 1983 for its 'meaningless calls for public enquiries' into 'shoot-to-kill' controversies,[351] while in 1981

[348] David McKittrick, 'Priest puts faith in justice to overcome Troubles', *Independent*, 8 August 1991.
[349] HVA D00910 Tape 75: BBC Northern Ireland News (26 April 1986).
[350] PRONI CENT/1/10/38: J. M. Lyon (Private Secretary, NIO), 'Note of a Meeting between the Secretary of State and a Deputation of Roman Catholic Priests from West Belfast in Stormont Castle on 8 November 1982'.
[351] Peter Hayes, 'Shoot to kill: the unchanging face of repression', *Iris*, 5 (March 1983).

Danny Morrison heralded the rise of the northern Provisional leadership with hostility to the Catholic establishment:

> The [Provisional] Republican movement is a secular organisation… We disagree with the special place that the Catholic church has in the present 26 county state.[352]

Gerry Adams described Bishop Edward Daly's opposition to the hunger strike as 'completely irrelevant', since republicans took their mandate from the 'people… on the streets in force' in support of the hunger strikers.[353] An anonymous PIRA volunteer who had joined the Provisionals at the time of the hunger strike of 1981 remarked upon the 'hypocrisy of the Catholic hierarchy' and explained that her twelve months as a PIRA volunteer had seen her 'understanding of Irish society… changed immediately'.[354] Republican anger towards the Church also encompassed the pro-abstentionist rump in RSF, a party supporter in 1988 condemning the stance of Irish bishops on the national question and accusing the hierarchy of double standards, attacking only republican violence and ignoring the violence of the security forces.[355]

So pervasive was the alienation between Catholic laity and the religious authorities occasioned by the Catholic hierarchy's position on the hunger strike, that some traditionally religious republicans disowned the Church's politics. On 8 September 1981 the broad-based NHBAC criticised the Church for applying pressure to hunger strikers exhorting them to end the strike, 'rather than urging the Government to concede the prisoners' demands'.[356] At a meeting in the Lake Glen Hotel in West Belfast later that month, relatives of two of the hunger strikers, Bernard Fox and Jackie McMullan, verbally abused Father Faul for what

[352] NIPC P7488: Bob Rowthorn, 'Ireland's intractable crisis: interviews with the UDA and the Provisional IRA', *Marxism Today* (December 1981), p. 32.
[353] Maev-Ann Wren, 'H-Block group priest opposes hunger-strike', *Irish Times*, 3 March 1981.
[354] 'A people's army', *Iris*, 4 (November 1982).
[355] Letter from Maighréad Murphy, Armagh. *Saoirse*, 9 (January 1988).
[356] PRONI CENT/1/10/62: A. K. Templeton, 'Northern Ireland Office: Protests and Second Hunger Strike' (10 September 1981).

they perceived to be his role in undermining the strike.[357] Numerous individuals with republican connections grew increasingly antipathetic to the Church's role in the traumatic situation: the sister of INLA hunger striker Mickey Devine argued retrospectively that 'if the priests had told from the pulpit to go out and march [in support of hunger strikers], they [the hunger strikers] would have won the demands'.[358] Although Bernadette McAliskey traced her original disagreements with the Church hierarchy on the national question back to her student days in the late 1960s when she believed the Queen's University chaplain to have been too reluctant to support civil rights causes,[359] she considered the actions of the Catholic clergy in Coalisland, county Tyrone on the night Bobby Sands died in May 1981 to be 'the last vestige of betrayal'.[360]

Even that leading republican Gerry Adams, writing in 1990, reflected that 'as a lay member of the Catholic Church' he considered

> the hierarchy of that Church [to] have been found somewhat lacking in their contribution and in their *attitudes to the resolution of the situation* in which we find ourselves.[361]

Former PIRA prisoners Laurence McKeown, John Pickering, and Peadar Whelan have all described their resentment of the Church's role during the hunger strike, Whelan going so far as to hold Father Faul equally responsible with Margaret Thatcher for the tumultuous events of 1981.[362] Mairéad Farrell said the Church had 'let down' and 'disillusioned' the prisoners

[357] Clarke, *Broadening the Battlefield*, 198.
[358] Eileen Fairweather, Róisín McDonough & Melanie McFadyean, *Only the Rivers Run Free: Northern Ireland – The Women's War* (London, 1984), p. 107.
[359] NIPC P6192: *The Church and the Irish Struggle: a discussion with Gary Mac Eoin, Bernadette McAliskey and Des Wilson* (May 1994), p. 6.
[360] NIPC P5935: Speech in New York for NHBAC by Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, 21 November 1981. McAliskey recounted how as the local people gathered in prayer on the streets, anticipating Sands's imminent death, the local priest had 'warned people in the church to be careful of whom they stood with, who they prayed with, warned people in the church to be careful of whom they stood with, whom they prayed with, lest their prayers be construed as political support for terrorism'.
[361] Gerry Adams, *Cage Eleven* (Dingle, 1990), p. 101.
[362] Campbell, McKeown & O'Hagan, *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*, 244, 258, 265.

and ‘shown their true colours when Faul intervened’ in the hunger strike.[363] A private internal PSF document of 1981 advising party representatives that ‘it is sensible to facilitate religion’ in republican politics and commemoration events was paid little obeisance by Provisionals angered at the historical and contemporary gulf between republicans and Church policy.[364]

In the aftermath of the hunger strikes, the acrimony between republicans and sections of the Church leadership intensified. Writing in the *Irish News* in 1982, Father Faul reiterated the ‘protection of human life’ as ‘the most sacred duty of the Catholic people’, encouraging the families of republicans to give information to security forces to ‘render acts of murder impossible’. Republicans from both the Belfast Republican Press Centre and the Derry Relatives of Prisoners in H-Blocks and Magilligan replied on 18 May 1982 in the same newspaper attacking the ‘unwitting allies’ of Britain among ‘the Catholic clergy’. Faul was undeterred, calling again in December 1982 in the aftermath of the INLA’s Ballykelly bombing for relatives of republican paramilitaries to seek to dissuade their relatives from further involvement, since the campaigns had ‘no moral or political purpose’.[365] The Provisional organ *Iris* was especially critical of Bishop Cahal Daly for his ‘studious silence’ on the supergrass controversy, with Father Faul blamed for ‘concentrat[ing] much of his efforts on vitriolic attacks on Sinn Féin’.[366] But despite the overt acrimony between republicans and sections of the clerical hierarchy, the Provisionals did not entirely cease to present their politics as compatible with radical Catholic positions. Even in attacking Father Faul, the Provisionals still cited the views of the ‘Sandinista cleric’ Ernesto Cardenal as vindication for the republican position.[367] A Provisional statement of May 1983 made plain

[363] Jenny McGeever, ‘A woman’s place is in the struggle: An interview with Mairead Farrell’, *Spare Rib*, 204 (August 1989).
[364] NIPC P982: PSF, *Towards a Policy on Culture/Dréacht pholasaí ar chultúr* (Dublin, 1981). The document was drafted for discussion and review by ‘all levels of SF’ with feedback to be given to the party’s education committee thereafter.
[365] ‘“Withdraw from IRA and INLA”, priest appeals’, *Ulster Herald*, 11 December 1982.
[366] ‘Catholic hierarchy: propping up the Orange State’, *Iris*, 6 (July 1983).
[367] Sluka, *Hearts and Minds*, 259-261.

Provisional republicans' recognition of the societal importance of clergy, irrespective of political differences. When a Father McCorry of Andersonstown's Oliver Plunkett parish compromised a planned PIRA bomb attack on the Army barracks in the area, the PIRA's Belfast Brigade exercised relative leniency:

> Contrary to our stated position of dealing severely with touts, no action was taken against this priest as we felt that, at that time, people would not have fully understood the necessity for action *against this particular person*.[368]

Provisional appreciation of the ongoing, albeit significant corroded, importance of Catholicism in terms of public relations was, however, largely overshadowed by the increasingly fractious Provisional attitudes towards clergy and Church hierarchy.

As relations between Church and republicanism became more unequivocally antagonistic through the 1980s, the credence which some churchgoers with republican connections had hitherto paid towards religious authorities became corroded. Even accepting Paul Badham's optimistic estimation of some 90 percent of Catholic laity still attending weekly mass in the north of Ireland in 1988,[369] it is important to consider how the politics of the Church were refracted, challenged and contested at lay level.[370] The devoutly religious mother of PIRA volunteer Jimmy McMullen from the Clonard area of West Belfast agreed in principle with the Pope's call for exclusively non-violent political initiatives, but through her direct experiences of the desperate blanket protests in the H-blocks she came to separate, to some extent, the salvific and political aspects of the Church and said she would no longer, by the turn of the 1980s, be reticent about criticising individual clergy with whose political

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[368] 'Informers warned', *Iris*, 6 (July 1983). Emphases added.
[369] Paul Badham, 'The Contribution of Religion to the Conflict in Northern Ireland', *International Journal on World Peace*, 5 (1988), p. 47.
[370] While Callum G. Brown's argument, positing that religion in a secularising world takes on different purposes and roles in society, retaining a 'social significance' irrespective of church attendance, is undoubtedly helpful, this thesis posits that the Catholic community did not simply absorb and acquiesce in Church edicts and pronouncements. Callum G. Brown, 'A Revisionist Approach to Religious Change', in Steve Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernization* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 39, 50-52.

standpoints she disagreed.[371] Lily Fitzsimmons of Turf Lodge retained her beliefs, but through her perception of clerical inactivity as a mother of internees and PIRA volunteers during the blanket protests and hunger strikes she came to 'ignore' the *political* declarations of the Church since the hierarchy, she said, 'sided with the [British-unionist] establishment'.[372] The former Provisional internee Roseleen Walsh's poem, 'To my silent church', registered her frustration as an ardent Catholic who felt during her incarceration 'that we [republicans] were… let down a lot by the Catholic Church'.[373] Asked whether she thought it had been compatible for Catholic republicans to retain a personal faith while exercising their own conscience on political matters, Nuala Perry replied in the affirmative and remarked that she thought many republicans 'closed one door and opened another' where religiosity and politics were concerned, and 'it was as if the two never really met'.[374]

Even the steadfastly religious PIRA prisoner Ray McCreesh had spoken out against the charismatic priest Father Neal Carlin during Mass in H5 in February 1981 when Carlin had offended the prisoners by implying that the Provisionals had been 'conned' into going on hunger strike in October 1980.[375] The devoutly Catholic parents of PIRA volunteer Mairéad Farrell in 1980 were outspoken in their criticism of the Church over its refusal to allow PIRA volunteer Kevin Delaney's coffin into the church with the tricolour draped.[376] It was relatively commonplace for Catholic laity to walk out of anti-republican sermons in disgust during the 1980s.[377] In a televised debate with UUP representative Robert McCartney in February 1983, Provisional Danny Morrison said that republicans 'don't take their politics from Rome. They take their religion from Rome, but they take their politics from their hard

[371] Coogan, *H-Block Story*, 89.
[372] Shannon, 'Catholic Women', 239.
[373] Roseleen Walsh quoted in Whalen, *Contemporary Irish Republican Prison Writing*, 122.
[374] Nuala Perry interviewed by the author (Belfast, March 2016).
[375] Campbell, McKeown & O'Hagan, *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*, 141.
[376] Coogan, *H-Block Story*, 98.
[377] Henry McDonald, 'Cardinal Cahal Daly, former leader of Ireland's Catholics, dies at 92', *Guardian*, 1 January 2010.

experience on the ground, and that's the way it should be'[378] – a position Morrison repeated in interview with the political-cultural magazine *Magill* in 1989, by which point the PSF representative cast the Catholic Church as entirely opposed to the Provisional movement.[379] The research conducted by anthropologist Jeffrey Sluka in his work in Divis Flats in the early 1980s pointed to this burgeoning bifurcation of the religious and political positions of the Catholic Church. Sluka found that some 58.9 percent of his sample thought that clergy should be 'listened to and their advice heeded', but it was ultimately 'not essential' to follow their directives – while some 54.5 percent thought it 'not very important' to follow clerical advice.[380]

**I.IV The radical republican left and the Catholic Church**

Some left-wing republican groupings were exceptionally hostile towards the institution of the Catholic Church and its hierarchy's political standpoints, casting the societal prominence of the Church as the mark of a backward-looking society. The Officials were notably outspoken in their retaliatory confrontations with the Catholic hierarchy, describing in their literature in 1972 the political sway of the Church's agenda as 'one of the curses of this area' and defending their 'secular… brand of republicanism' which would 'fight to destroy' the privileged position of the Catholic Church.[381] Officials exhibiting a flagrant distaste for the Catholic Church and its politics even in the early 1970s included Eoin Ó Murchú, who asserted in 1971 that 'the Catholic Hierarchy has been the staunchest defender of the English social system in Ireland, the capitalist system'.[382]

[378] HVA D00570 Tape 37: *Counterpoint* (3 February 1983).
[379] Danny Morrison quoted in *Magill* (March 1989).
[380] Sluka, *Hearts and Minds*, 248.
[381] ILA: OSF, 'Communism, the Church and the IRA', *SP* (Derry: n.d. [1972]).
[382] ILA: Eoin Ó Murchú, *Culture and Revolution in Ireland* (Dublin: Repsol Pamphlet No.2, July 1971), pp. 8-9.

The IRSP-INLA established at its first Árd-Fheis in May 1975 an agenda which prioritised the abolition of Church involvement in education, in favour of a 'secular, integrated [across denominations], co-educational comprehensive' education system.[383] INLA chief of staff Seamus Costello went so far in an interview with an Italian journalist as to condemn the contemporary education system across Ireland as inherently 'sectarian'.[384] An early IRSP publication branded the Catholic hierarchy as colluders with a 'peace at any price lobby' and accused the Church of sinister machinations in 'engineer[ing] the Feakle talks' as part of a 'whole peace campaign [which] delighted the British Army'.[385] The INLA in Derry was especially prepared to confront the Church, going so far as to threaten priests with violence after clergy in the Shantallow area of the city in 1981 had disarmed two INLA volunteers during a riot: 'Under no circumstances will this type of partisan behaviour be tolerated', an INLA statement warned.[386]

The People's Democracy retained an overtly anti-clerical position throughout the conflict, most outspokenly in the 1980s, citing the very influence of the Church in a partitioned Ireland among their reasons for seeking Irish unity. Partition, the PD declared in 1987, 'has created a situation where the Church and State have become so close' that Church influence 'is insuperable'. The PD demanded 'the separation of Church and State' in a pamphlet promoting women's reproductive rights and pregnancy counselling services.[387] The PD also rallied in 1983 in support of the proposed amendment to the Republic's constitution on abortion, and called for the Provisionals to 'transform their policy of opposition to the amendment', the PD describing themselves as 'willing to fight to separate Church and State

[383] 'IRSP Ard Fheis', *SPAC*, Vol. 1 No. 3 (June 1975).
[384] NIPC P7004: *I owe my allegiance only to the working class: selected writings and speeches of Seamus Costello* (San Francisco: Irish Republican Socialist Committees of North America, 1995).
[385] Church split?', *SPAC*, Vol. 1 No. 4 (July 1975).
[386] 'Bishop hits INLA threats to priests', *Irish Press*, 12 May 1981.
[387] NIPC P6570: People's Democracy, 'What is at stake in the clinics campaign?' in *Women in Struggle* (Dublin, 1987).

and demand a democratic secular society'.[388] The PD in 1987 had accused the Church of holding 'archaic attitudes' and posited the Church as a semblance of a 'colonial feature' of British rule in Ireland, dissuading and disabling the 'native' Irish from opposing partition.[389]

### I.V 'Provo priests'? Radical clergy and the national question

Roman Catholic clergy were not automatically or unanimously opposed to republicanism. Historians have neglected the significant minority of clergy, often at a junior level or located in rural areas across the north of Ireland, who displayed a far greater degree of sympathy for militant republicanism than the pronouncements of the hierarchy would suggest throughout the conflict.[390] Father Sean McManus of county Fermanagh had given his support to the Provisionals in 1971 when he argued that 'the Six County state… is illegally sustained by force, against the will of the Irish people'.[391] Although never involved in republican militarism, the socio-political activist Canon James McDyer of Glencolumncille, county Donegal, had been a vocal supporter of the Provisionals' *Éire Nua* proposals in 1971.[392] Father Des Wilson of Ballymurphy, meanwhile, had argued prior to Bloody Sunday that nobody had the right to condemn republican militarism unless a viable alternative could be offered.[393]

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[388] Pat Donnelly, 'A chance to reorganise', *Socialist Republic: Paper of Peoples' Democracy*, Vol. 6 No. 2 (1983).
[389] P6570: *Women in Struggle* (Dublin: People's Democracy, 1987), p. 5.
[390] Duncan Morrow goes too far when he argues that 'the vast majority of clergy have consistently opposed political violence in NI and among many Nationalists they are regarded as the strongest 'internal' opponents of the IRA'. Duncan Morrow, 'Churches, Society and Conflict in Northern Ireland', in Arthur Aughey & Duncan Morrow (eds.), *Northern Ireland Politics* (Harlow, 1996), p. 193.
[391] Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, *Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA* (1973), p. 42.
[392] 'Canon McDyer', *Saoirse*, 9 (January 1988).
[393] Davis, 'Irish Republicanism v. Roman Catholicism', 50.

Clergy harbouring republican sympathies were not as exceptional as some scholars have argued;[394] some radical clergy in remote parishes even gave active support to the armed struggle. There is much evidence pointing to the involvement of a Father James Chesney in the PIRA's bombing of the county Derry village of Claudy in 1972. Chesney had served as a curate in the rural parish of Cullion, near Desertmartin, county Derry.[395] The authoritative journalist and commentator Henry McDonald has pointed to cases of at least three other priests involved with the PIRA in rural north Antrim in the early 1970s.[396] In May 1972 two Cistercian monks based in Belfast were fined after pleading guilty to aiding escaped prisoners from Crumlin Road Jail to evade capture.[397] Former PIRA volunteer Sean O'Callaghan has alleged that he encountered as a republican operative 'certainly six priests' who 'helped the Provisional IRA' to commit 'violent acts', not least through a parochial house run by two priests as a PIRA safe-house, used by O'Callaghan himself after he had killed an RUC constable in Omagh, county Tyrone, in August 1974.[398] Father Vincent Forde, whose parish lay in the republican countryside area of south Down, was exceptional among clergy insofar as he favoured the Official wing of the republican movement. Forde, from county Sligo, was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment in 1981 for his role in an OIRA bank robbery.[399]

[394] Martin Dillon, *God and the Gun* (London, 1997), p. 93. Dillon describes the Catholic Church making 'strenuous efforts' to turn young Catholics away from paramilitary activity and to criticise republicanism. Dillon's assessment is better suited to the Church hierarchy than necessarily to all clergy at grassroots level, especially in rural parishes.
[395] Rosie Cowan, 'Does this letter prove a priest was behind IRA bombing?', *Guardian*, 21 September 2002. A letter from an anonymous priest, who signed off only as 'Father Liam', emerged in 2002 in which the author claimed to have spoken with Chesney later in 1972 when Chesney admitted involvement.
[396] Henry McDonald, 'Three more IRA priests in Claudy link', *Observer*, 22 December 2002. Among the men in question were Father Patrick Fell and Father John Burns. Fell served over ten years in an English jail over a conspiracy to cause explosions in Coventry during the early 1970s, after being convicted alongside Frank Stagg and Michael Gaughan, two IRA men who died on hunger strike in English prisons.
[397] 'The Past Two Weeks', *Fortnight*, 40 (25 May 1972).
[398] NIPC P10559: An interview with Sean O'Callaghan for '60 Minutes' (1997).
[399] 'Priest held in Eire swoop', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 January 1980.

At grassroots level some clergy demonstrated considerable sympathy for the republicans in their respective parishes. Father Brian McCreesh, the brother of PIRA hunger striker Raymond McCreesh, was staunchly sympathetic to the republican campaign, and Brendan Hurson, brother of PIRA hunger striker Martin Hurson, recalled that the reality of clerical behaviour and attitudes on the ground during the hunger strike were far more varied than the intransigent statements of the Church hierarchy would suggest: Hurson recalled local clergy calling at the family home to offer their help and moral support during the hunger strike.[400] Former PIRA H-blocks O/C Brendan McFarlane, who had himself trained in a Welsh seminary, recalled a particularly sympathetic priest, a Father Crilly, for whom McFarlane had 'the greatest admiration' for his efforts 'to be of assistance' during the blanket protests and hunger strike.[401] Giving the annual James Connolly commemoration mass in 1974 in Irish, Father Piaras O Dúill, who went on to chair the NHBAC, said that 'love of [one's] country is part of the love of God', and even warned against any 'slavish' acceptance of an unsatisfactory peace which did not include a socialist revolution as well as an answering of the national question.[402] In the late 1980s O Dúill aligned himself with the abstentionist rump of Republican Sinn Féin, exhorting the party in 1987 to serve as the vanguard for 'the common ground of ending British rule and occupation'.[403]

Republican funerals represented a culturally significant interface between the politics of republicanism and clergy on the ground.[404] Even among non-republicans such as Bridie Deery in Derry, attendance of republican funerals was considered an important social duty: 'The war's over for them. They're entitled to be buried in peace, and to be noticed'.[405] Although in the 1980s public relations between republicans and Church hierarchy reached a

[400] Padraig O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave* (Boston, 1990), pp. 268, 271.
[401] Campbell, McKeown & O'Hagan, *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*, 204.
[402] 'Love of country', *Republican News*, 13 July 1974.
[403] 'Bundoran call to fight extradition', *Saoirse*, 5 (September 1987).
[404] Mulholland, 'Irish Republican Politics', 412.
[405] McCafferty, *Peggy Deery*, 98-99.

new nadir, many rural clergy were especially quick to praise the ideological motivations and intrinsic personal qualities of republicans 'killed in action'. At the funeral of PIRA volunteer Gerry O'Callaghan in the rural townland of Tullysaran, county Armagh in May 1987, Father Patrick Campbell told mourners that the 'violent reaction' of republicans was inevitable 'as long as injustice exists' in the north of Ireland, and that the 'immoral' and 'gross injustice' visited upon 'we Catholic Nationalists of the North' was 'intolerable'. The funeral in Dungannon, county Tyrone, of Provisional Patrick Kelly, who was killed by the SAS alongside O'Callaghan at Loughgall, witnessed Father Brian MacNiece describing Kelly as 'an upright man' who 'loved his family, his Irish culture, and his country'.[406] The priest officiating at the funeral in Scotstown, county Monaghan of Fermanagh PIRA O/C Seamus McElwaine, shot dead by the SAS at Roslea in April 1986 after a failed culvert bomb attack, said that God would 'reward' the 'good boy' McElwaine for his dedication to the cause since his youth.[407] Similarly, at the funeral in 1984 of Derry PIRA volunteer Richard Quigley, Quigley's cousin, the priest Father James Shiels from rural Ardara, county Donegal, described Quigley as 'good, kind and considerate and an example to others'.[408]

Radical clergy who deviated from the Church hierarchy's positions registered frustration with the Church's perceived failure to minister to the political grievances of the northern nationalist community. Inspired by the liberation theologian Jose Porforio Mirana, Father McVeigh in 1978 quoted the radical theologian Jose Maria Gonzalez Ruiz: 'The Christian Churches are too established and too laden with social, economic and political compromises'. McVeigh embraced Paolo Freire's 'pedagogy of the oppressed' and even hinted at personal support for, or at the very least tacit acceptance of, the armed struggle. 'If we rule out the bomb and the gun as being incompatible with the Christian gospel, how do we

[406] 'Loughgall sympathy', *Saoirse*, 2 (June 1987).
[407] Colm Tóibín, *Bad Blood: A Walk Along the Irish Border* (London, 2010) [First edition 1987], p. 136.
[408] 'Priest's funeral remarks attacked', *Derry Journal*, 1 May 1984.

go about effecting the kind of radical changes that we believe are necessary?'[409] Writing in 1982, McVeigh joined forces with Father Wilson to denounce the Catholic hierarchy:

> Catholic bishops have failed to criticise this unjust political system which condemns their people to poverty and inferior citizenship. They condemn the actions of the PIRA and encourage people to inform. To simply appeal for reconciliation and a change of attitudes is to ignore the political institutions which keep people apart.[410]

McVeigh's perception in 1991 of 'growing dissatisfaction within the Catholic Church… about the way that the Catholic bishops have… failed to condemn the British government which is responsible for harassing Catholic people on a daily basis' reflected the capacity of radical clergy to criticise autonomously the policies and practices of their institution. McVeigh fundamentally denied the loyalists' their veto on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, and attacked pacifist clergy for their 'superficial and dishonest analysis' seeking straightforward 'reconciliation' within a partitioned island.[411]

Father Wilson was especially angered by Faul's 'ill-advised and damaging' calls for the families of republicans to inform the security forces about paramilitary operations and arms. Wilson considered Faul's implorations emblematic of the Church being 'sucked into the state machine'. In such a position of subservience to the British government, the Church could 'only suffer'.[412] Wilson, who resigned from the Diocese of Down and Connor in June 1975 after accusing his superior, Bishop Philbin, of failing to recognise the brutality of British troops,[413] continued to criticise the Catholic hierarchy throughout the conflict, accusing the Church in 1988 of assisting the British in a campaign of 'social control' and, in

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[409] NIPC P5080: Joe McVeigh, *Thoughts on the Liberation of Ireland* (Monaghan: Borderline Press, 1978), pp. 16-17.
[410] NIPC P1331: Des Wilson & Joe McVeigh, *British occupation in the north of Ireland: Two priests speak out!* (1982), pp. 2, 5.
[411] NIPC P4475: Joe McVeigh, *Tackling the root causes: the only way to peace* (Omagh: Community for Justice, 1991).
[412] 'Confidentiality and the clergy', *Iris*, 6 (July 1983).
[413] 'Church split?', *SPAC*, Vol. 1 No. 4 (July 1975).

1994, reflecting on how, over 'the last 25 years… every peaceful initiative I personally was associated with has been undermined very largely by church people'.[414] Wilson had past experience of defying the edicts of the Catholic hierarchy. When three West Belfast Catholic churches had attempted to prevent the tricolour-covered coffin of PIRA volunteer Kevin Delaney, killed by his own bomb in 1980, entering the churches, Father Wilson intervened to disobey the hierarchy, saying Mass and holding the funeral in the Delaneys' family home.[415]

Fr Piaras O Dúill exhibited similar contempt for clerical moderation in December 1988 after the funeral of Kevin Agnew, a longstanding Maghera republican and former NICRA chair. When Agnew's express wishes to have Ó Dúill conduct the funeral service were ignored by a parish priest, Ó Dúill wrote in the strongest terms to RSF's journal, attacking the 'arrogance of the Church' which had 'completely ignored' the 'spirit of Mr Agnew' and his politics.[416] As with republican politics, it is important to make the distinction between hierarchy positions and grassroots practical realities in understanding the complex relationship between republicans and the Catholic Church.

**II.I Republicanism and 'nationalism': mainstream republicans and the SDLP**

It is perhaps a paradox of the Troubles that, although the politics of the SDLP became 'greener' through the 1970s into the early 1980s, the acrimony between the Provisionals and the SDLP became more acute through the 1980s. Shorthand depictions by commentators and scholars of the SDLP as 'moderate nationalists' oversimplify the complexity of that broad political church.[417] Although P. J. McLoughlin has argued compellingly against overstating

[414] 'Church role exposed', *Saoirse,* 18 (October 1988); NIPC P6192: *The Church and the Irish Struggle: a discussion with Gary Mac Eoin, Bernadette McAliskey and Des Wilson* (May 1994), p. 2.
[415] 'Volunteer Dee Delaney laid to rest', *AP*, 26 January 1980; 'Kevin Delaney', *AP*, 28 January 1999.
[416] Funeral of Kevin Agnew', *Saoirse*, 22 (February 1989).
[417] Tim Pat Coogan, *1916: The Mornings After* (London, 2015), p. 178. Kenneth Christie's claims that the 'moderate' SDLP always 'accepted in their program that Northern Ireland existed with the consent of the majority' and that reunification was only a fringe ambition in the SDLP programme fail to consider the radicalism of sections within the party. Christie, *Political Protest*, 152.

the ‘greening’ of the SDLP in the immediate aftermath of the party’s leaving Stormont in protest in July 1971, the party’s increasingly nationalistic pronouncements and heightened hostility to British rule through the ensuing decade must be taken into consideration. While the SDLP remained prepared, even at the time of internment’s introduction in August 1971, to settle temporarily for a British military presence for ‘the protection of people and areas against sectarian attacks’, the party was clear that the British military would be tolerated only ‘pending a political solution’.[418] By 1973 the party self-defined as a ‘radical socialist party’ which believed in a ‘secular state’, taking inspiration from the great trade unionist James Larkin and united Irelander Michael Davitt, and the ultimate direction of the party’s three-step plan (‘reform’, ‘reconciliation’, and ‘reunification’) towards the overthrow of partition pointed to the party’s gradual shift towards more overtly nationalist positions through the decade.[419]

Any study of Irish republicanism which does not consider the SDLP inevitably falters. Scholarship which casts the SDLP as an entirely middle-class party, acquiescent in British directives and weak on the national question, draws a false dichotomy between the ‘moderate’ nationalists of the SDLP and the ‘radicals’ of militant republican organisations; the SDLP was a heterogeneous organisation with a radical republican hue to its politics. Despite numerous contemporary slurs from the left portraying the SDLP as quintessentially ‘middle-class’ and reactionary in its politics,[420] in the mid-1970s the party had proposed a conference motion recommending the expansion of the agricultural cooperative movement,

[418] NAI DFA 2001/43/1396: SDLP statement on introduction of internment (9 August 1971). See Demand No. 4.
[419] NIPC P1093(A): SDLP, *Blueprint for Change* (Belfast: SDLP, 1973).
[420] The IRSP in Derry sought to smear the SDLP with the trappings of being socially disinterested members of the ‘middle class’ whose politics amounted to the role of nothing more than ‘tame collaborators’. NIPC P703: Derry Comhairle Ceantair IRSP, *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (Dublin: Starry Plough Publications, 1978), p. 6. Provisional publicity, especially during the 1980s, was often directed towards lambasting John Hume’s party. See below in thesis, pp. 103-106.

and the increase of public ownership of farmland.[421] Through the 1970s the party's hostility towards the British presence in the north increased gradually, the annual conference of 1978 passing a motion regarding 'British disengagement from Ireland [as] both *inevitable and desirable*' and presenting a British withdrawal as an essential 'part of an overall political solution'.[422]

Several scholars have allowed the party leadership's consistent repudiation of political violence to obscure the ardently socialist-nationalist sections of the SDLP. Just as the SDLP had left Stormont in July 1971 remarking upon their 'deplor[ing] and condemn[ing] outright' the deeds of 'violent men',[423] so party leader John Hume remarked in an address to an audience at St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast in March 1982 that republican paramilitaries 'subvert not only the hope and the meaning of unity but the integrity of their own tradition'. But the key point in Hume's oration lay not in the party's official opposition to the tactics of the Provisionals and the IRSM, but rather in the SDLP's defiant nationalism: Hume argued unequivocally that

> Britain is as responsible today for our ills as [ever before] and there will be no resolution until she, like us, takes a new view of the interests of all of us.[424]

While SDLP assemblyman Hugh Logue reiterated in election literature in 1982 that the 'violent ways' of the PIRA and INLA 'are not our ways and never will be', he also spoke of 'confront[ing] the British Government's attempt to bring back the old Stormont' with the Prior assembly.[425] Cillian McGrattan's assessment of the SDLP 'greening' through the 1970s perhaps goes too far in claiming that the party came to 'prioritise reunification' – consider the three-stage doctrine of reconciliation, reform, reunification: the overthrow of partition, while

[421] NIPC P4388: SDLP, *5th Annual Conference Report* (1975), p. 33.
[422] NIPC P1036: SDLP, *Strengthen Your Voice* (1979). See Motion 70.
[423] NAI TSCH/3/2001/43/1396: SDLP statement announcing its withdrawal from the Northern Ireland Parliament (16 July 1971).
[424] NIPC P4393: John Hume, *The way forward as I see it* (Address to St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, 2 March 1982 and Servite Prior, Benburb, 3 March 1982).
[425] NIPC P3991: SDLP, *Election Special* (Derry: SDLP, 1982).

held as desirable, was not a matter of temporal urgency for the SDLP – McGrattan's reading nevertheless has much to recommend in its realisation of the strength of nationalistic sections of the party through the 1970s.[426]

*Pace* Jennifer Todd's portrayal of the SDLP as disinterested in the national question and invoking northern Catholics' 'right' to Irish identity merely as a political panacea, the party remained largely hostile to British rule through the 1970s and into the following decade.[427] Far from the stooges of the British which radical republicans portrayed, sections of the SDLP continually repudiated engagement with the British government. Speaking at the party conference in November 1983, Paddy Duffy proposed a motion which 'deplore[d] the shabby attempts by Jim Prior to involve the SDLP in the [devolved] Assembly'. Duffy's nationalist agenda cast the Assembly as merely a 'meaningless charade'.[428] The party retained an abstentionist position towards the Prior Assembly in both series of elections in 1982 and 1986.[429]

Despite their stated opposition to the armed methods of the Provisionals and the INLA, the SDLP engaged with humanitarian concerns such as prison conditions affecting 'physical force' republicans. After the burning of Long Kesh in 1974, SDLP assemblyman Michael Canavan led a party delegation to the cages and afterward rallied against the 'intolerable' conditions there,[430] and fourteen years later a Derry City Council delegation including SDLP councillors John Tierney and Teresa Coyle put aside electoral competition to accompany PSF's Mitchel McLaughlin to meet the governor of Durham prison, where PIRA prisoner Martina Anderson had campaigned against the appalling conditions.[431] Similarly in November 1990 the five SDLP councillors in Derry City sent a message of support to the

[426] Cillian McGrattan, 'Dublin, the SDLP, and the Sunningdale Agreement: Maximalist Nationalism and Path Dependency', *Contemporary British History*, 23 (2009), pp. 61-62.
[427] Jennifer Todd, 'Northern Irish Nationalist Political Culture', *Irish Political Studies*, 5 (1990), p. 39.
[428] PRONI CENT/1/12/2A: Note of the 12th Annual Conference of the SDLP' (31 January 1983).
[429] O'Connor, 'Labour', 61.
[430] 'Long Kesh conditions "sub-human" says SDLP man', *Derry Journal*, 8 November 1974.
[431] 'Derry delegation to visit Durham prisoner', *Derry Journal*, 21 October 1988.

republican anti-extradition demonstrators in Dublin and signed a petition urging Dublin to free PIRA man Dessie Ellis.[432] Speaking at the SDLP party conference of November 1981, party chairman Sean Farren condemned the unionist veto over Northern Ireland's constitutional status as 'colonial' in nature and contrary to 'progress', while mid-Ulster representative Paddy Duffy reiterated his nationalistic commitment to Irish unity by dismissing the Prior proposals for a devolved parliament: 'We are not in the business of looking for an Assembly which would only govern Northern Ireland'.[433] Fermanagh SDLP councillor Tommy Murray defied the initial orders of the party leadership to sign Bobby Sands's nomination papers in 1981.[434] Although Henry Patterson has highlighted the SDLP's militancy on the national question at spells in the 1970s,[435] the historiography has not addressed the radicalism of the SDLP in the following decade.

Detailed study of the degree of variation *within* the SDLP across a heterogeneous geography points to the quality of nationalism in sections of the party – even in parts of Northern Ireland in which nationalists constituted a distinct minority. At the party's seventh annual conference in 1977, the Newcastle and District branch – hailing from a coastal area of county Down not noted for its republican tendencies: standing in the Westminster election for South Down in 1983, PSF's Paddy Fitzsimmons won just 7.9 percent of the vote, while unionist firebrand Enoch Powell topped the poll with 40.3 percent[436] – called for the conference to 'condemn and counteract the blatant propaganda campaign carried on by the British Authorities', striking at the very core of the British military's claims to 'be acting as

[432] The petition was signed by Derry SDLP councillors John Tierney, Annie Courtney, Gerry Toland, George Peoples and Jimmy Clifford. 'SDLP and Dessie Ellis', *Ulster Herald*, 17 November 1990.
[433] PRONI CENT/1/10/93A: Stephen J. Leach, 'Note for the Record: SDLP Annual Conference, 13-15 November 1981'.
[434] '1981: When division was at its deepest', *Impartial Reporter*, 1 April 2011.
[435] Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939*, 223, 235-236, 254: Patterson recognises a 'greening' of the SDLP in the wake of internment and Bloody Sunday, and again in 1978-1979. Also see Henry Patterson, 'Nationalism', in Arthur Aughey & Duncan Morrow (eds.), *Northern Ireland Politics* (Harlow, 1996), pp. 39-47.
[436] See Ark website at http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/bsd.htm (Accessed 9 August 2016).

referees and therefore neutral in what they attempt to portray as a religious conflict'. That the branch fundamentally repudiated the British government's ostensible rationale for its presence in Northern Ireland underpins the SDLP's nationalist fervour, exhibiting a considerable degree of sympathy with local republicans' motivations, if not necessarily their deeds. A motion from Ballycastle, county Antrim – an area which would yield the Democratic Unionist Party's strongest electoral performance in the Assembly elections of October 1982, winning 45.8 percent of votes in North Antrim[437] – 'condemn[ed] the present high level of [British] Army brutality'. Strabane, county Tyrone went further in calling directly for 'the British Government to declare its intention of withdrawing'. Although far more moderate factions existed within the party – the North West Fermanagh branch, for instance, sought a 'rapport with the RUC' to the end of the eventual 'acceptance of the regular police force by the party' – the genuine nationalism of parts of the SDLP even in otherwise largely politically quiescent areas merits attention.[438]

The defections of SDLP politicians into PSF highlights the political closeness between sections of the parties. Former SDLP councillor Brendan Martin defected to PSF in 1982, alongside his brother. The Martins, who had been instrumental in founding the local SDLP branch ten years earlier, explained that they had lost faith in the SDLP during the hunger strike period.[439] Mary Nelis of Derry City made the same move from the SDLP to PSF and went on to hold elected office on for PSF on Derry City Council.[440] The heterogeneity of nationalist-republican organisations and their memberships is further illuminated by the case of the short-lived Irish Independence Party, established in 1977 as a party seeking 'to secure a British withdrawal by non-violent means' with which the party

[437] See Ark website at http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/cna.htm (Accessed 9 August 2016).
[438] NIPC P2885: 'Scopoli' (1977). The document is an IRSP critique of the SDLP featuring a detailed analysis of the SDLP's contemporary politics. See Motions 52, 74, 90,
[439] HVA D00770 Tape 63: *Brasstacks: The Armalite and the Ballot Paper* (17 July 1984).
[440] 'Mary, the people's champion', *Derry Journal*, 28 August 2015.

manifesto 'disagree[d] strongly'.[441] Yet IIP member Oliver Hughes, a Magherafelt councillor and brother of the late PIRA hunger-striker Francis Hughes, transferred his allegiance to the Provisionals, still firmly supportive of the PIRA's armed struggle, in the mid-1980s before the IIP was dissolved.[442] The discrete gulfs between 'moderate nationalists' and 'radical republicans' which historians have portrayed are overdrawn.

The 'greening' of the SDLP engendered bitter political competition between the SDLP and the Provisionals through the 1980s – especially after Sinn Féin's entering into northern electoral politics from 1981 – and witnessed a distinct worsening of relations between the two parties in public discourse. The SDLP's attempts to distance themselves from the armed campaign of the newly electorally-inclined Provisionals were orchestrated principally in local politics, especially in Derry City, a prime crucible of intra-nationalist competition. That the leading Provisional assemblyman Martin McGuinness challenged SDLP leader John Hume to a public debate in the city in June 1983 suggests the increasing sense of political conflict existing between the two parties. Although McGuinness said he could 'understand the feelings of the people who support the SDLP', who he thought to be 'frightened' to 'stand up to the British Army and the RUC', Hume's bitter attack on the Provisionals – 'there is nothing new about the Provisionals… their target has been the destruction of the economy and Sinn Féin is now trying to exploit that [electorally]' – reflected the growing tendency in SDLP politics to distance themselves at every opportunity from Provisional tactics – while not disowning, crucially, their aims.[443]

When the Provisionals on Derry City Council proposed to confer the freedom of the city on Nelson Mandela in 1986, SDLP councillor Teresa Coyle said that although her party

[441] NIPC P1716(A): Irish Independence Party, *Irish dialogue: the first step – Central Policy Document* (1977).
[442] Ross, *Smashing H-Block*, 183.
[443] Clarke & Johnston, *McGuinness*, 138.

was entirely opposed to apartheid, their thirteen councillors could not back the PSF proposal since

> the citizens of Derry would not appreciate someone being given the Freedom of the City until they themselves had freedom to go shopping without being bombed or shot, freedom to go to work without being kidnapped or intimidated, freedom from unjust courts… and freedom from all types of violence.[444]

That the Derry SDLP councillors chose to fuel a furore by repudiating so fiercely the Provisionals' armed struggle on an otherwise consensual position points to the party's keenness in the city to cast the Provisionals as beyond the pale for political representation. The four SDLP councillors on Moyle District Council went further in December 1987 by supporting a motion to expel from the council and from competition for council seats anybody who had, within the ten years preceding election day, been sentenced to any term of imprisonment of three months or more[445] – ruling out a significant section of would-be Sinn Féin councillors with convictions for PIRA activity, in a move orchestrated by the SDLP with a clear view to competition for council seats.

The antagonism between the SDLP and Provisionals in the 1980s was perpetuated by the Provisionals' casting aspersions on the supposedly 'anti-nationalist' aspects of SDLP policy, concentrating especially on the party's stance during the hunger strike of 1981. A PSF poster of the early 1980s featuring a photograph of Hume made the point especially bluntly, urging voters to 'DUMP THIS TRAITOR' and 'REJECT THE SDLP', making reference to Hume's remarks discussing the idea of 'making proper use of internment' to 'deal with the Provos'.[446] Announcing the termination of the hunger strike of 1981, the Provisional blanketmen condemned the SDLP as traitorous, describing how Hume's party had 'consistently refused' to withdraw from council chambers and instead had 'preferr[ed] to

[444] 'Angry exchanges at council meeting', *Derry Journal*, 7 March 1986.
[445] 'SDLP heed their masters' voice', *Saoirse*, 9 (January 1988).
[446] See http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/posters/election/poster37r.jpg.

cling tenaciously to their role of imperialist lickspittle'.[447] While some PIRA prisoners genuinely held such views of the SDLP – hunger striker Bobby Sands had registered similar contempt for the party he described as 'falling over themselves to help [the British]'[448] – the Provisionals' public denigration of the SDLP was mainly articulated in official PSF literature as an electoral smear.

In 1983 the Provisionals dismissed Hume's party for 'ineffectual' tactics in 'horse-trading and wheeling-and-dealing' in 1983, a PSF refrain which cast their rivals as self-interested and incapable of satisfying a nationalist agenda.[449] A somewhat confused PSF press briefing in the run-up to the Westminster general election of June 1987 directed party representatives to discredit the SDLP by casting Hume's party as uncommitted to traditional nationalist-republican principles, with PSF dogmatically reiterating that 'Westminster is no place for a republican to be' in an attempt to cast the SDLP as British stooges at a time of clear political competition between Hume's and Adams's parties.[450] A Provisional publicity campaign of 1987 in south Armagh also portrayed the SDLP in connivance with the British and oblivious to the will of the nationalist majority on the ground, accusing the SDLP of giving the British a free hand to continue building military fortifications in south Armagh, against the wishes of the local population.[451] Provisional slurs towards Hume's party almost always presented the SDLP as out of touch with an alienated nationalist population and either unwilling or incapable of producing an effective response to the national question.

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[447] NIPC P16288: *Why we ended the hunger strike: the full text of the H-block blanket men's statement announcing the end of the hunger strike* (1981).
[448] Bobby Sands, *Writings from Prison* (Cork, 1998), p. 186.
[449] 'Broadening the base', *Iris*, 5 (March 1983).
[450] NIPC P8054: PSF, 'Why the SDLP don't believe in attendance at Westminster' (29 May 1987). The same press briefing contradicted itself in seeking to discredit the SDLP as a 'west-British' party in league with the British establishment by making the point that leading SDLP members such as John Hume and Seamus Mallon made very few appearances in Commons debates on the north.
[451] NIPC PPO0389: PSF, 'Keep Building – says SDLP' (1987). This Provisional poster seeks to discredit the SDLP. The poster depicts British military fortifications in south Armagh and says that the SDLP are imploring the British to 'keep building', against the wishes of the 'people of South Armagh'.

Hostility to the SDLP was not restricted to the Provisionals and IRSM. Numerous left-wing republican groupings publicly depicted the SDLP as timid or disinterested on the national question, especially citing the hunger strike to denigrate the party. The People's Democracy movement was particularly virulent in its opposition to the SDLP, somewhat unfairly holding up the rather atypical party veteran Gerry Fitt's personal opposition to the hunger strikers' five demands as emblematic of the entire party's position. The tenor of the PD attack posited the SDLP as blind to grassroots issues and working-class politics, casting Fitt as 'a parliamentary politician with almost no involvement in the day-to-day struggle of the people'.[452] Immediately after Bobby Sands's death, the PD declared in their newssheet that the SDLP should be considered alongside Fianna Fáil as 'junior partners in imperialist exploitation'.[453] PD candidate and NHBAC member John McAnulty was also quick to criticise the SDLP's Paddy Devlin, another figure on the party's less nationalistic wing, for Devlin's allegations in May 1981 of Provisionals 'intimidating' councillors by asking them to withdraw from local councils in support of the hunger strike.[454] The far-left Revolutionary Marxist Group, whose manifesto included calls for an end to partition, withdrawal from the EEC, minimum and maximum wage levels and the separation of Church and state,[455] had denigrated the SDLP since the mid-1970s, blaming the party for its involvement in the Constitutional Convention causing 'the re-establishment of a loyalist-dominated administration in the North'.[456] Despite commonality of major objectives across nationalism-republicanism, crucially aiming for the unification of Ireland with a socialist settlement, the

[452] NIPC P1010(A): PD, *From Reform to Collaboration: The History of Gerry Fitt* (1981).
[453] ILA: 'Imperialism murders Bobby Sands: How did it happen?', *Socialist Republic: Emergency Bulletin* (n.p., 1981).
[454] ILA: 'Devlin challenged', *Socialist Republic: Emergency Bulletin* (n.p., 1981).
[455] ILA: 'A programme of action', *Socialist Republic: Paper of the Revolutionary Marxist Group*, 1 (1975).
[456] ILA: 'SDLP capitulates to loyalism: if the sash Fitts, wear it!', *Socialist Republic: Paper of the Revolutionary Marxist Group*, 1 [1975].

SDLP endured a torrid public relationship with those fellow nationalists who supported the use of the armed struggle.

### III.I Republicanism and the far left

The major republican groupings of the Provisionals and the IRSM experienced similarly fractious interactions with some fringe left-wing republican organisations, whose support for the PIRA and INLA in turn was never granted entirely without qualification. Somewhat ironically, a range of left-wing movements which exhorted a far more coercive approach towards intransigent unionists in the north than did the Provisionals or the IRSM, also expressed far greater reservations on the issue of the armed struggle. The Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI) in 1974 condemned 'Orangeism' as 'the most reactionary philosophy in Ireland' and called for hard-line unionism to be 'isolated and destroyed' – a far cry from the more accommodating pronouncements of the Provisionals in the contemporary Éire Nua proposals. Yet the SPI agreed at their first national congress in December 1973 that the existence of such 'Orangeism' was to be blamed on the republican armed campaign, which 'frighten[s] away the northern [unionist] working class from taking part in any political activity other than 'defending' what they *imagine to be their 'country*''.[457]

While the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) held an anti-partitionist position which denounced 'unionists' as the 'agents of monopolies' manipulating a stagnant economy and called for a mass campaign to keep unionists out of electoral power, the CPI's republicanism was diluted insofar as the party prioritised no fewer than ten other policy points in its manifesto of 1970 and made no overt reference to the burgeoning republican armed

[457] NIPC P1464: Socialist Party of Ireland, *The Socialist Future: Programme of the Socialist Party of Ireland* (Dublin, 1974), p. 15. Emphases added.

struggle.[458] Writing in the party organ in 1970, CPI chair Betty Sinclair took a dismissive approach towards loyalist politician '[William] Craig and his cronies' and scorned the unionists' 'shout[ing] about their loyalty to Britain'.[459] But speaking at a conference in republican Andersonstown in February 1978, Sinclair went so far as to implore the PIRA to suspend its campaign to expedite 'the conditions of peace which [would] enable us to empty all the jails'.[460] By 1989 the CPI, while still allied to the aim of Irish reunification, called firmly for an end to the PIRA campaign, which had 'no political justification' and had become defined by 'aimlessness' and 'political bankruptcy', and which the party argued was guilty of 'keep[ing] the two parts [of the country] apart'.[461] A CPI statement said the 'sectarian' PIRA and INLA campaigns were 'polaris[ing] the community further and let[ting] the British government off the hook, giving it a justification for the escalating repression in the North'.[462] Like the SPI, the CPI remained wedded to the ideal of Irish unification – the party continued to demand 'a British disengagement from Ireland' into the late 1980s[463] – but shared no enthusiasm for the methods of the Provisionals and the INLA.

Other marginal left-wing groups such as the Irish Socialist League and the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist) dissented on doctrinal grounds against the prevailing tendency among the far left of significantly qualified support or outright hostility to the republican armed struggle, and gave unequivocal support to the campaigns waged by the PIRA and INLA. The Irish Socialist League expressed support for the armed struggle in 1985, rejecting 'all forms of Stalinism and revisionism' – referring to the 'two nations'

[458] NIPC P1508: Communist Party of Ireland, *Unite – Defeat Unionism!* (Belfast, 1970). The CPI's discussion in its manifesto includes the following issues, in order: "DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS; JOBS & PUBLIC OWNERSHIP; AGRICULTURE; HOUSING; FISHING; TRANSPORT; EDUCATION; COMMON MARKET; LIVING STANDARDS; PEACE & SECURITY", leaving the republican armed campaign off the agenda and unmentioned.
[459] Betty Sinclair, 'Paisleyites in government', *Irish Socialist,* 95 (April 1970).
[460] Clarke, *Broadening the Battlefield,* 91.
[461] 'Casualties?', *Irish Socialist,* 310 (May 1989).
[462] 'Sectarianism divides people' and 'Call for a ceasefire', *Irish Socialist,* 310 (May 1989).
[463] 'Key to peace lies in a British withdrawal', *Irish Socialist,* 310 (May 1989).

theorists and the 'ultra-reactionary' NILTUG and CPI 'with scorn'. Although the ISL acknowledged 'we have the deepest political differences with Sinn Féin' – suggesting that the ISL did not trust the Provisionals' claims to a socialist agenda – the group still exhorted electoral support for PSF since they represented 'the only party' which stood 'for Irish unity, one of the unshakeable precepts on which our own movement… is based'.[464]

The CPI (M-L) similarly dissented against the CPI's two nations theory in the late 1980s and instead resolved plainly that 'the British imperialists are nothing but the most implacable enemy of the Irish nation and her rights'. While making little mention of the PIRA or INLA with whose manifestos they appeared to be in league, the CPI (M-L) railed against partition as a 'violation [of] the national rights and integrity of Ireland and the Irish people'.[465] Although numerically minor, Belfast anarchists also shared republicans' 'reject[ion] of the authoritarian, imperialist, and unionist state'. But the anarchists, whose ideal revolved around a '32 County libertarian communist country' framed their ambitions in terms of an 'international' revolution and, aside from marching alongside NHBAC representatives on anti-criminalisation rallies and theoretically opposing the state's deployment of plastic bullets against protesters, the anarchists provided negligible practical support to republicans.[466]

### III.II Changing relationships: Provisionals, Officials and the People's Democracy

The changing dynamics of the relationship between the Provisionals and the People's Democracy movement, hinging principally on the radicalisation of the PD grouping from the mid-1970s onwards, are worthy of detailed attention. Only from the building of the NHBAC in the late 1970s and the broad-based rallies against the criminalisation of republican

[464] 'Elections result is blow against imperialism and stalinism', *Irish Marxist Review*, 1 (July 1985).
[465] 'Protest against Britain's crimes against Irish people!', *Marxist-Leninist Weekly: Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist)*, Vol. 18 No. 3 (3 February 1988).
[466] 'Aims & Principles', *Ainriail: A Belfast Anarchist Monthly*, 1 (August 1985), pp. 10-11.

prisoners did the Provisional movement endorse alliances with the PD; hitherto the Provisional stance towards the PD had been characterised by dismissiveness and denigration. Although PD leader Michael Farrell had been complimented by the Provisionals' *Republican News* in June 1973 'as a man of great personal courage' and 'a fearless opponent of the Unionist regime' for his speech at a Sinn Féin-organised rally in Andersonstown against political repression,[467] such a perception was exceptional. Withdrawing from the multi-party Political Hostages Release Committee in 1977, Sinn Féin cited 'the weak quasi-revolutionary politics of PD', after earlier rejecting out of hand an offer in February 1976 from the PD to launch a joint campaign against criminalisation.[468] Even when Farrell and fellow PD member Tony Canavan launched a thirty-five-day hunger strike in protest against the British criminalisation policy, the Provisionals dismissed them as 'pseudo-revolutionaries'.[469]

But the PD were no silent junior partners in the republican chain of command; the organisation retained the capacity to censure aspects of Provisional policy on the ground. Although the PD by the mid-1970s self-identified as a Marxist organisation supporting 'the workers' right to defend themselves against the violence of Imperialism', the PD in the late 1970s, like the LCR a decade later, criticised the perceived military elitism of the Provisional strategy: 'We do not accept the ideology of militarism – the belief that armed groups can substitute themselves for the masses and win freedom for them'. Instead the PD remained committed to the principles of democratic centralism according to Leninist theory holding the party to be the rightful superior of the army, and thus the grouping considered the Provisionals' military elitism unacceptable and unproductive.[470] To a considerable extent the PD's concerns with the 'armed struggle' of the mid- to late 1970s were born of the contextual aspects of the PIRA campaign at that particular time, when seemingly sectarian

[467] 'Ex-Minister of Home Affairs sends Michael Farrell to jail', *Republican News*, 27 June 1973.
[468] Ross, *Smashing H-Block*, 13, 24.
[469] Clarke, *Broadening the Battlefield*, 87.
[470] 'People's Democracy: What we stand for', *Socialist Republic: Paper of Peoples Democracy*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (1979).

assassinations such as the UVF's Miami Showband massacre (July 1975) and the PIRA's Bayardo Bar attack (August 1975) caused the PD to take an especially pessimistic view of the contemporary republican movement and the state of the conflict more broadly:

> The Anti-Imperialist movement seems powerless to halt the steady and inexorable drift towards the restoration of Loyalist rule in the North… We are in retreat.

The PD registered particular disdain for the South Armagh Republican Action Force's killing of ten Protestant civilians at Kingsmill in January 1976: 'The Kingsmills [sic] killing was simply military terror again'.[471] The PD had also criticised the republicans for the 'disastrous blunder' of the Birmingham bombings in November 1974, and reflected in later years that through the mid-1970s 'the military campaign of the IRA was going from one disaster to another and alienating Catholic support'.

At the Coalisland conference of January 1978 the PD argued that the Provisionals must realise that 'it was not possible to build a mass united campaign on the basis of support for the IRA military campaign', and thus recognise the need to mobilise a broader base of anti-imperialists who did not necessarily support the PIRA.[472] The PD defended this position in subsequent years, concluding at their annual conference in 1983 that 'elitist methods such as militarism' would do little towards the 'winning of radicalism workers' to the republican cause.[473] In 1973 the PD had condemned the 'weak and muddled politics [of] Provisional and Official Republicans' alike, condemning Provisional leader Dáithí Ó Conaill for his praise for the 'discipline' of the UWC lockout and urging instead that 'there can be no compromise or alliances with Loyalist para-military groups', which the PD held to be fascist in orientation. The PD's censure of the mainstream republican movement held that the Provisionals and Officials had been 'fooled by the Loyalists' 'working-class' image and phony radicalism, into

[471] 'Militarism vs. mass action: which road for Irish struggle?', *Unfree Citizen* (March 1976).
[472] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH1367: PD, *Prisoners of Partition: H-Block/Armagh* (1980).
[473] 'P.D. discuss the crisis', *Socialist Republic: Paper of People's Democracy*, Vol. 6 No. 2 (1983).

seeing their deadliest enemies as friends'.[474] *Pace* Richard English, it was the fringe movements of republicanism, in the PD and on the far left, far more than the Provisional movement, which tended to equate loyalism with the politics of fascism.[475]

While the PD provided important support for the Provisionals in the early 1980s – railing first against criminalisation as 'internment in a different form',[476] and later joining the Provisionals in establishing public meetings to coordinate opposition to the Assembly in 1982[477] – the organisation never adopted a position of uncritical sycophancy towards the Provisionals. When the Provisionals and PD eventually formed an alliance in October 1979 after an anti-criminalisation conference in Belfast, it was the Provisionals who ceded ground to the PD's arguments to establish a 'single issue campaign in support of the prisoners' demands' rather than attempting to attract the public to wholesale support for the Provisionals' agenda.[478]

The PD exerted a significant influence on the NHBAC campaign, positing forcefully that the issue should be taken up by political parties wholesale, and arguing in 1981 for the development of the H-Block/Armagh campaign towards a broader anti-imperialist front.[479] The PD successfully lobbied the Provisionals to engage the GAA as part of a mass movement in the NHBAC in 1981, exhorting the Provisionals to allow the NHBAC to 'adopt a broader and more democratic structure' and 'build up workplace delegations'.[480] The hunger strike occasioned PD critiques of the Provisionals' emphasis on militarism and 'political

[474] NIPC P1003: PD, *Fascism and the Six Counties* (Belfast: People's Democracy, 1973).
[475] English, *Does Terrorism Work?*, 111.
[476] NIPC P998: PD, *Internment '71, H-Block '81: The Same Struggle* (1981), p. 3.
[477] 'Sinn Fein call', *Socialist Republic: Paper of People's Democracy*, Vol. 6 No. 2 (n.d. [1982]).
[478] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH1367: PD, *Prisoners of Partition: H-Block/Armagh* (1980), pp. 9-10.
[479] NIPC P1008: PD, *H-Block Struggle: Irish Revolution on the March* (Belfast: n.d. [1981]), p. 5. Reflecting on the NICRA position of non-political party alignment, the PD argued in 1981 that 'we don't want to make the same mistake with the H-Block Campaign', suggesting an openness to gradually moving the NHBAC towards more stridently anti-British positions than merely being hostile to the criminalisation programme.
[480] 'Now more than ever support the prisoners', *Socialist Republic: Paper of People's Democracy*, Vol. 4 No. 7 (August 1981).

sectarianism' during the NHBAC campaign. The PD also cast aspersions on the Provisionals' commitment to socialist principles: '[PSF's] lack of a clear socialist programme means that it has a very confused attitude to the bourgeois nationalist parties'.[481] Even while acknowledging the growing political common ground between the two organisations in 1984, PD representative James Gallagher remained circumspect towards aspects of Provisional policy, inveighing against PSF's continued abstentionism in Westminster, and condemning the return in the mid-1980s of the PIRA's car bomb, a 'very unwelcome' development cutting 'against the need for mass mobilisation'. Despite certain political similarities, the PD remained sharp-eyed critics of republican groupings such as the Provisionals and IRSM which neglected the need for 'permanent revolution' and instead fell into the 'reformist/stalinist [sic] death-trap of leaving socialism to the "next stage" [after national reunification]'.[482] Again, the far left of republicanism expressed distrust of the Provisionals and IRSM on their socialist credentials and military efficacy.

So significant was the political change within the rump of the Official republican movement that Sinn Féin The Workers Party (SFWP) (and, after the change of title of 1982, simply The Workers Party) had abandoned almost every semblance of past republican ideology after 1977. Although SFWP criticised the 'inhumanity' of a prison system in which bereaved republican prisoners would often be refused parole to attend family funerals, the party was fundamentally at odds with republicans' 'divisive "blanket" protest which seeks status and privilege for some prisoners at the expense of all others [i.e. non-political prisoners]' – and the Officials even criticised the republican protests for stalling the

[481] John North, 'Republican movement', *Socialist Republic: Paper of People's Democracy*, Vol. 4 No. 7 (August 1981).
[482] ILA: James Gallagher, *Our Orientation to the Republican Movement* (PD: Belfast, 1984). Dated 10 November 1984, Gallagher wrote this essay on behalf of the PD. In its remarks on the 'stage theory' of revolution, the organisation sounded a note similar to the theories of Official republicans who prioritised the need for the unity of the working class across all Ireland before the issue of overturning partition.

achievement of general penal reform across Ireland's prisons.[483] SFWP party leader Tomás Mac Giolla had compared the Provisionals to the notorious Black and Tans during the party Árd-Fheis of 1978, and SFWP refused to participate in the broad front of the Coalisland conference against repression in 1978 on the grounds that they would not work alongside the Provisionals.[484] In 1984 party chairman Seamus Lynch captured contemporary WP sentiment on the conflict in his pronouncement that 'each and every act of violence, regardless of who the perpetrator or who the victim, increases intolerance'.[485] By the end of the 1980s the party described its campaign for 'peace and class unity' against 'tribalism' in the north.[486] The WP had left the republican stage and, through the late 1970s onwards, had set about attacking republicanism as a mindless military cult whose violent activities precluded any possibility of positive reform. Reflexively, the electoral fortunes of the WP suggested the party's political isolation, with only two of the WP's candidates in the Assembly election of October 1982 winning more than 5 percent of first-preference votes in their respective constituencies, and the hitherto lauded Tom French suffering a shock poor result in Armagh, where he came in seventh on first-preference votes.[487]

### IV.I Cross-party republican organisations

The cohesion of republican umbrella movements operating across several organisations increased sharply through the late 1970s and 1980s. Early in the conflict, alliances between republican groupings held weakly and often suffered from the elitism of Provisionals eschewing support or cooperation offered by smaller organisations. The Northern Resistance Movement, instituted in October 1971 as an umbrella anti-internment

[483] 'N.I. prisoners and civil rights', *UI*, Vol. 32 No. 9 (September 1979).
[484] Hanley & Millar, *Lost Revolution*, 383, 388.
[485] 'Grass verdicts 'a sign of hope'', *Irish News*, 29 December 1984.
[486] IEL: WP, *Students: Everything you wanted to know about the Workers' Party* (1990).
[487] PRONI CENT/1/11/51A: D. Blatherwick, 'Assembly Election Results' (25 October 1982). British intelligence had forecast a strong electoral showing for French.

grouping including members of both the Provisionals and the PD, and chaired by the independent Enniskillen republican Frank McManus,[488] disintegrated in the bloody year of 1972 over the divisiveness of the PIRA campaign, to which many NRM members with PD backgrounds were vehemently opposed.[489] The Provisionals demonstrated similar distaste for the PD's sensitivities in 1977, withdrawing from the broad front Political Hostages Release Committee, an anti-criminalisation organisation, after rejecting an offer from the PD to launch a Provisional-PD anti-criminalisation campaign, and citing the 'weak quasi-revolutionary politics of PD'.[490]

But through the 1980s, after the seminal rise of the NHBAC as a coordinator of prison protests, the Provisionals became active in a range of broad umbrella groupings which drew together republicans of various hues as well as more moderate politicians and even clergy. The impact of the Provisionals' new involvement in such organisations was to bring the Provisional movement into the political mainstream to some extent through association with a diverse range of alternative groups with some shared concerns, mobilising on issues affecting both active republicans and the wider nationalist community as a whole, such as strip-searching in prisons, the 'shoot-to-kill' allegations, and the supergrass trials. Such umbrella organisations drew their strength from the singularity of their focus and the breadth of their appeal.

The Stop the Show Trials Committee, for example, described itself as comprising 'relatives of show trial victims, members of political groups and concerned individuals from the nationalist community'. Instituted in Dungannon, county Tyrone, in October 1983, the StSTC rallied against 'the carefully planned miscarriage of justice', and the front's publicity gives an insight into the breadth of the population it addressed. An StSTC pamphlet of June

[488] NIPC P998: PD, *Internment '71, H-Block '81: The Same Struggle* (1981), p. 13.
[489] Kelley, *Longest War*, 162.
[490] See above in thesis, p. 109.

1985 explained in its 'note on terminology' that the group used 'supergrass' rather than 'paid perjurer' to describe the individuals at the centre of the trials since 'paid perjurer' was 'not widely used outside nationalist areas'. While the StSTC's publicity evinced the nationalist position of the group – enjoying membership from both PSF and the IRSP, and insisting that the Provisionals' pejorative 'paid perjurer' label was a 'more accurate description' of informers who cooperated with the security forces[491] – the organisation was keen to attract interest and support from broader sections of society than merely active republicans.[492] The popular lobby expressing revulsion against the strip searching of republican women in Armagh jail drew support from groups as diverse as the Provisional movement; members of a Monaghan convent,[493] as well as Father Denis Faul, who detested the 'degradation' of young Catholic women in the prison; and the Organisation of Concerned Teachers, who called upon trade unionists and women's groups to join the lobby in 1983.[494]

The strength of the NHBAC campaign rested upon the committee's self-defining as a 'single issue' and 'peaceful' campaign seeking the end of the hunger strike without loss of life. That no more elaborate or long-term ambitions were elucidated enabled the organisation to command a remarkable breadth of support. NHBAC chairman Piaras O Dúill's pamphlet of April 1981 evoking the cause in emotive humanitarian terms and representing 'a *peaceful single-issue* campaign' did not call for overt support for the armed struggle, or even necessarily for principled support for the prisoners' five demands; the campaign was open to a humanitarian position seeking simply to preserve life. Father O Dúill himself readily admitted his personal opposition to the principle of hunger strikes in general. O Dúill's

[491] Ross, *Smashing H-Block*, 181.
[492] NIPC P266(A): Stop the Show Trials Committee, *Victims of the "Supergrass" system: 4000 years on the word of Christopher Black* (Belfast, 1985), pp. 18, 28.
[493] See above in thesis, p. 80.
[494] NIPC P530: Denis Faul, *The stripping naked of the women prisoners in Armagh prison, 1982-1983* (Armagh, 1983), p. 6.

elucidation of the diversity of positions within the grouping underpins the sustained success of the NHBAC in 1981 as a truly broad front:

> As far as the rights and wrongs of the hunger strike are concerned, every member of our committee [NHBAC] is free to make judgement: it has nothing to do with our campaign on the resolution of the prison issue.

Even the Provisional activist Owen Carron, a leading NHBAC member, strikingly claimed on BBC television in September 1981 that the NHBAC 'does not support those type [sic] of actions', when questioned about the PIRA and INLA's ongoing violence.[495] The NHBAC's publicity appealed to the primal humanitarianism of voters without engaging with broader controversies of republican politics: one NHBAC poster included 'a plea from a mother' for the lives of the hunger strikers to be saved and urged the voters 'don't let them die!'[496] The NHBAC's assertions of its detachment from party politics enabled the committee to attain some significant support from sections of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). The GAA's Central Council had ordered that sports clubs belonging to the GAA should not take a stance on H-block or hunger strike issues since the matters were 'party political' and thus banned under the GAA's Rule 7. But by emphasising their distance from the machinations of party politics – 'the National H-Block campaign and its committees are not party political, but work as a broad front of all individuals, groups, organisations… around common support for the prisoners' 5 demands' – the NHBAC attained support from such sections as the South Antrim GAA.[497] The NHBAC managed to bring issues stemming directly from republicanism into the political mainstream. But popular movements overtly opposing the republican campaign were also to bring challenges to bear for republican organisations.

[495] HVA D00370 Tape 12: *Nationwide* (17 September 1981).
[496] NIPC PPO1304: NHBAC, 'Don't let them die!' (1981).
[497] IEL: NHBAC, 'To all GAA fans: support the hunger strikers' (1981).

## V.I Republicanism and the Community of the Peace People

The emergence of the Community of the Peace People (CPP) in August 1976 as a popular movement for cross-community reconciliation and an end to violence constituted a striking challenge to republicanism. During the rapid rise of the movement in its earliest days, a Peace People rally departing from south Belfast's Ormeau Park drew thousands of supporters, many of them from severely troubled areas in the north and west of the city. The organisation attracted some 105,000 signatures for their Declaration of Peace over a two-day membership drive in November 1976,[498] rising to 300,000 by March 1977.[499] Some analysts have characterised the Peace People as excessively removed from the conflict in terms of geography, religiosity, and class, and thus unable or unwilling to understand republicanism. Malvern Lumsden has highlighted the movement's failure to deal explicitly at their Assembly of October 1977 with the issue of the British government or security forces as naïve and negligent of republican perceptions of the conflict.[500] Lumsden's case is not entirely without justification. The CPP's claim in early 1981 that the

> Provisionals and the [H-block/Armagh] protestors *do not have mass support in Catholic areas* for the campaign of violence, but the men on this [blanket and hunger strike] protest are cousins, brothers, friends and schoolmates to the people in these communities

was soon proved a hopelessly inaccurate assessment of contemporary politics.[501] The notion that the hunger strikers relied exclusively upon ties of kinship and friendship for their support base is clearly at odds with the 100,000 mourners at the funeral of Bobby Sands, and the anti-H-block/Armagh election candidates' polling of some 104,754 votes cumulatively in 1981.[502]

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[498] Ciaran McKeown, *The Passion of Peace* (Belfast, 1984), pp. 146, 203.
[499] Sarah Buscher & Bettina Ling, *Máiread Corrigan & Betty Williams* (New York, 1999), p. 78.
[500] Malvern Lumsden, 'Peace by Peace? Socio-Economic Structures and the Role of the Peace People in Northern Ireland', *Current Research on Peace and Violence*, 1 (1978), pp. 41-42.
[501] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH1868: CPP, *The H-block protest* (Belfast, 1981).
[502] Bobby Sands 30,493 (Fermanagh-South Tyrone by-election, 9 April 1981); Owen Carron 31,278 (Fermanagh-South Tyrone by-election, 20 August 1981); Kieran Doherty 9,121 (Cavan-Monaghan Dáil election, 11 June 1981); Tom McAllister 2,120 (Clare Dáil election, 11 June 1981); Mairéad

Eamonn Mallie's and Patrick Bishop's portrayal of the earlier peace movement, the Women Together organisation, as a predominantly middle-class grouping crossing the sectarian divide is also largely unjustified.[503] The Women Together had emerged from working-class Catholic areas of Derry. When Martha Crawford, a Catholic civilian, was killed in a gun battle in April 1972, a group of working-class Andersonstown women sought a meeting with PIRA chief of staff Seán Mac Stíofáin in a bid to terminate the campaign. Joy Henderson, press officer of the Women Together, emphasised in May 1972 that the organisation was 'at least 98% working-class'.[504] The Women Together later operated as a self-consciously cross-sectarian grouping which aimed exclusively at women for its support. Demonstration organiser Catherine Dunne, speaking at a Women Together peace rally outside Belfast's City Hall in January 1973, spoke of the 'awful longing among *women of all faiths* for peace in the community',[505] while a poster advertising the same rally targeted women only and based its appeal upon a primal distaste for all violence and its ramifications, rather than elaborating any more developed political analysis of the conflict: 'Women: Do you want peace?' The poster invited women who sought 'an end to the *senseless* violence and killings' to 'join all those *women* who hunger for peace'.[506]

Although public interactions between the CPP and republicans were often charged with suspicion, the CPP were not, *pace* Lumsden, entirely disengaged from any understanding of republican politics, especially in the group's early years of 1976 to 1978. After the death of Brian Stewart, a Catholic teenager killed by a plastic bullet in Turf Lodge in October 1976, the CPP ran a gauntlet of political tension in attending a meeting in the area

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Farrell 2,751 (Cork North-Central Dáil election, 11 June 1981); Tony O'Hara 3,034 (Dublin West Dáil election, 11 June 1981); Seán McKenna 3,860 (Kerry North Dáil election, 11 June 1981); Martin Hurson 4,573 (Longford-Westmeath Dáil election, 11 June 1981); Paddy Agnew 8,368 (Louth Dáil election, 11 June 1981); Joe McDonnell 5,639 (Sligo-Leitrim Dáil election, 11 June 1981); Kevin Lynch 3,337 (Waterford Dáil election, 11 June 1981) (Total 104,754).

[503] Bishop & Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 173.

[504] Letter from Joy Henderson, *Fortnight*, 39 (11 May 1972).

[505] 'Irish women rally', *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 3 No. 5 (January 1973), p. 19. Emphases added.

[506] See http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/posters/other/poster47r.jpg.

organised by local curate Father Paddy McWilliams, in which CPP representatives' remarks about the difficulties facing the security forces proved inflammatory, provoking an angry reception from local republicans.[507] Charges levelled against the CPP as disinterested in aspects of grassroots politics are equally ill-merited. The organisation passed a motion at their Assembly of April 1978 'promot[ing] integrated housing throughout Northern Ireland', and in the same year the CPP campaigned against Belfast's youth unemployment crisis, striking an egalitarian note in their publication *So What* against 'the wealthy' who were lambasted as 'useless' and 'callous' and enjoying a life of unjustifiable 'luxury'.[508] Leading CPP representative Ciaran McKeown, writing in 1979 in an attempt to find a resolution to the burgeoning H-block crisis, was content that the Provisionals were 'not the original cause of the current troubles' but that they were guilty of a 'murderous over-reaction to murder' and had 'become a substantial part of the CAUSE of the current situation'.[509] The group could hardly be accused of ignoring working-class or republican politics.

The peace movement's close involvement with prisoners, republican and loyalist alike, has been neglected and constitutes an important interface of relations between republicanism and the peace movement. A delegation of four CPP representatives first visited prisoners in Crumlin Road jail in early 1977 and fifteen prisoners requested a prolonged relationship with the CPP with a view to moving away from paramilitarism.[510] As late as 1987 the CPP provided the only non-sectarian bus to the prisons at Long Kesh and Magilligan, with the grouping spending over £10,000 of its pressurised budget on 'human services' including prison visits and support for prisoners' families between 1985 and 1986 alone.[511]

[507] McKeown, *Passion of Peace*, 181.
[508] NIPC P12164: 'Assembly of the Peace People, 6-8 October 1978', pp. 5-7, 10.
[509] NIPC P3813: Ciaran McKeown, *H-Block and Christian Responsibility* (Belfast, 1979), pp. 14, 15, 18, 20.
[510] NIPC P923: 'Assembly of the Peace People, 7-9 October 1977', p. 18.
[511] NIPC P2697: 'Programme and financial report of the Peace People, 1986-1987'.

That sections of the movement had an acute empathy towards republican sentiment was demonstrated in 1976 when Peace People protested against the arrival in the movement of the former Stormont Unionist MP Peter McLachlan. Some West Belfast Catholic CPP members – many of whom had participated in the mass march along the Falls Road in August 1976 – protested against the movement's acceptance of McLachlan's membership, in consideration of the Catholic community's suffering under the unionist regime.[512] Although the CPP approached republicans with an intrinsically opposing viewpoint on the conflict, it would be unreasonable to suggest that the Peace People ignored or neglected republican politics and their activists. Although, as leading CPP activist Ciaran McKeown acknowledged, the movement was divided on the republican prisoners' protests for special-category status, a sufficient lobby within the CPP including McKeown himself rallied from 1978 for the introduction of 'emergency status' for prisoners sentenced under 'emergency laws', demonstrating some understanding of republican grievances against the judicial and penal systems. While the CPP essentially took the position that 'political motives do not justify violence', the group also recognised the problem with any 'blanket "murder is murder" outlook' since the laws had 'not [been] uniformly applied… to the SAS [for example]'.[513] Though clearly differing vastly with republican thinking on the emotive issues surrounding political status, the CPP again demonstrated a measure of understanding of republican grievances.

But the Peace People's involvement with republicans and grassroots politics engendered a tumultuous relationship with republican groups who often sought to tarnish the movement with tags of religious delusion, class naiveté, and financial motivation. Some republicans criticised the CPP for inconsistency on the issue of violence and its agents,

[512] McKeown, *Passion of Peace*, 194-195.
[513] NIPC Tom Hartley Collection PH1868: CPP, *The H-block protest* (Belfast, 1981), pp. 12-13. The CPP called for prisoners to be re-tried after the lifting of emergency laws.

accusing the Peace People of ignoring the pernicious impacts of the security forces' deployment of violence and focusing inordinately on republican violence. The short-lived Independent Socialist Party, a splinter grouping of former IRSP members, declared the CPP 'finished' in 1978 since the movement did not 'oppose all violence in an even-handed way', with particular reference to the calls of Mairéad Corrigan for individuals to inform security forces about republicans, denounced by the ISP as 'a straight crib from any RUC hand-out'.[514] Implicit in the ISP's narrative was that the PP were ultimately no different to financially-motivated informers themselves. The Provisionals took an equally hostile stance against the CPP's exhortations to inform in September 1976, when a PIRA statement threatened retaliatory action if republicans were arrested as a consequence of collaboration between the security forces and the peace movement. The threats were realised when peace organiser Bridget McKenna was attacked just days later.[515] The Provisional stance towards the peace movement remained one of overt suspicion, with republican columnist Eibhlin ni Gabhann attacking the CPP as 'controlled and supported by the British, the media and the Church for cynical political reasons'.[516] Caroline Kennedy-Pipe's and M. L. R. Smith's presentation of the Peace People campaign significantly undermining republicanism underestimates the extent of resistance within republicanism to the PP's challenges.[517]

Even those without direct republican connections on the ground in Belfast viewed the peace movement with extreme suspicion: the mother of Leo Norney, a Catholic teenage civilian killed by the British military in Turf Lodge, said of CPP leader Betty Williams in 1977, 'I can tell you now that she [Williams] condones what the British Army does, because after all they set her up'. Belfast resentment of the CPP stemmed partly from the state's backing for the peace campaigners: 'We [bereaved mothers] couldn't get an office like

[514] 'Pounds, shillings and peace', *The Independent Socialist* (May 1978).
[515] Margaret Nicholson, 'Ireland: War and peace', *Spare Rib*, 52 (November 1976).
[516] Eibhlin ni Gabhann, 'A question of liberation', *Iris*, 7 (November 1983).
[517] Kennedy-Pipe, *Origins*, 78-79; Smith, *Fighting for Ireland*, 144.

[Williams] has and four or five buses for a march at the drop of a hat'.[518] The NIWRM, although not entirely republican in composition but with branches in republican heartlands in north and West Belfast areas such as Westrock, Moyard, Ballymurphy, and Turf Lodge, criticised the Peace People for their 'emotional, simplistic and naïve' agenda as 'Christians who literally beleived [sic] that if enough people shouted, or preferably prayed, for peace it would fall down from the sky',[519] even though the NIWRM had, at the time of the CPP's emergence, expressed 'general support' for the movement's objectives of terminating the conflict.[520] The NIWRM's charges were not entirely without substance: Ciaran McKeown said in 1979 that he considered himself a 'convinced Christian pacifist' who promoted 'concentrat[ion] on the personality of Jesus of Nazareth himself'. McKeown hoped that the 'churches could arrange big, generous acts of reconciliation, congregation to congregation'.

In view of the corrosion of societal deference towards the Church's political statements, it is perhaps unsurprising that devout attitudes such as McKeown's which privileged the Catholic hierarchy's position were held in broadly suspect regard by republicans. Although peace movements, most notably the Peace People, were not so remote in terms of class, geography and political empathy as some scholars and republicans suggest, the tendency of peace campaigners to dismiss the conflict as futile and, inadvertently, to appear in favour of a retention of a status quo unacceptable to republicans severely limited the traction such campaigners could gain among republicans.

### VI.I Feminist organisations and republicanism

Contrary to Christina Loughran's presentation of a republican movement largely detached from feminist groups and neglectful of their demands, organisations mobilising

[518] Joan Lally, 'Three Irish women talk about their sons' deaths', *Spare Rib*, 62 (September 1977).
[519] NIPC P13672: Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement, *Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement* (1980).
[520] Eibhlin ni Gabhann, 'A question of liberation', *Iris*, 7 (November 1983).

around issues of women's rights influenced republican policies significantly through the late 1970s. Although Loughran is justified in portraying a sometimes uneasy relationship between PSF and the Women Against Imperialism (WAI), it would be wrong to present the Provisionals as impervious to WAI agitation.[521] Mary Corcoran fairly acknowledges the WAI's success in achieving a 'gradual engagement between feminist and republican thinking'.[522] Carmel Roulston neglects the capacity of republican women to bring pressure to bear upon republican organisations on matters of women's rights.[523] The majority of feminist support for republican groups was given on a qualified basis, working as a directive influence seeking to shape republican organisations towards taking a progressive stance on women's rights. Feminist groups with republican sympathies spoke out even more stridently against the Catholic Church than did the Provisional republican movement. A WAI spokesperson in 1980:

> Religion in both North and South has been a guise used by the leaders in both parts of Ireland to consolidate their own economic position of power.[524]

The BWC also opposed the conservative political influence of the Catholic Church, and called for 'equality in marraige [sic] and in family life' and for the 'removal of all religious and sexist influences from schools'.[525]

The feminist group most successful in exercising such an influence within republicanism was the Women Against Imperialism, whose delegates at the Anti-Imperialist Feminist Conference in Belfast in September 1979 argued that women's rights ought to be framed '*as part and parcel* of the fight for national freedom', as well as for 'the freedom of

[521] Christina Loughran, 'Armagh and Feminist Strategy', *Feminist Review*, 23 (1986), p. 68.
[522] Corcoran, *Out of Order*, 143-144.
[523] Carmel Roulston, 'Equal Opportunities for Women', in Arthur Aughey & Duncan Morrow (eds.), *Northern Ireland Politics* (Harlow, 1996), p. 139.
[524] 'Republicanism: what our Irish sisters think', *Spare Rib*, 99 (October 1980).
[525] 'Statement of aims', *Women's Action*, Vol. 2 No. 3 (August-September 1978).

the *working class*'.[526] WAI member Anne Marie Loughran of West Belfast in 1979 cast the '[Provisional] Republican Movement' as politically 'more progressive than revolutionary'. Loughran highlighted the difficulties radical republican women faced:

> They're living on the little they get from the social services and they're really militant… Obviously we campaign for abortion and contraception, but the first and foremost struggle is against the British; that's how we see it.[527]

A WAI spokesperson in 1980 demonstrated the group's hostility to organised religion, arguing that for the 'socialist society' to be achieved, there would need to be an overthrow of 'religion in both North and South [which] has been a guise used by the leaders in both parts of Ireland to consolidate their own economic position of power'. The WAI lobbied the Provisionals, IRSP and PD on women's issues, and later took some credit for PSF's inaugurating a dedicated Women's Department – a claim substantiated in later years by Mairead Keane, the first head of the department.[528] Suzanne Bunting, a Protestant-born Belfast republican who married prominent IRSP figure Ronnie Bunting, had led a WAI campaign to overturn the ban on women entering republican clubs in the daytime on Sundays.[529]

A wide array of republican women who identified primarily with republican women's groups directed a series of criticisms at the seeming reluctance of the hierarchies of the Provisionals, Officials, and IRSM to acknowledge the importance of women to their campaigns and support greater demands for the advancement of women's rights. The Derry branch of the WAI, the Derry Women's Aid grouping, was especially emblematic of the branch of feminist republicanism which espoused support for republican organisations while retaining the capacity to criticise the same organisations' positions on social issues and the

[526] Loughran, 'Armagh and Feminist Strategy', 65.
[527] 'Ireland: women at war', *Women's Voice*, 33 (1979).
[528] 'Interview: Sinn Féin', *Off Our Back*, Vol. 19 No. 10 (November 1989), pp. 13, 26.
[529] 'A decade of struggle: Irish women's liberation', *Spare Rib*, 118 (May 1982).

economy. The DWA lamented that even those republican women who had risen through their organisations' ranks had 'adopted the male ideals, aims and discipline of the [republican] movement', resulting in 'the failure of the feminist issues to emerge as part of the overall policy of any of the [republican] movements'. The DWA was especially hostile to conceptions of a 'moral code' upheld by the Church and by certain circles within republicanism, blaming the tarring and feathering of 'soldier girls' upon 'the historical links between Irish Catholicism and Nationalism'.[530]

The republican feminists in the Belfast Women's Collective (BWC) included republican groups in claiming that

> few political organisations in the north have any comprehensive programme for, or understanding of, the necessity of fighting for the liberation of all women.[531]

The BWC did not grant unconditional support to republican paramilitaries; their observation that 'women in N.I. suffer through the presence of the British Army of occupation and the violence of the past ten years' and presentation of women as the 'silent sufferers' of the war, read nearer to a peace campaign's rallying against all violence than an overtly republican position. The BWC denounced 'British imperialism' but also criticised the republican movement's 'position on women' and 'stressed that [the national question]… should not and could not be put before other questions – there could be no liberation without women's liberation'.[532]

The Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement (NIWRM) and Socialist Women's Group (SWG) represented a separate strand of feminism largely opposed to militant republicanism. The NIWRM, focusing predominantly on issues such as domestic violence, abortion and divorce laws, described republicanism as a political creed reinforcing the

[530] 'Northern Ireland: Feminists and the IRA', *Off Our Backs*, January 1981, p. 9.
[531] NIPC P8847: *Scarlet Women*, 11 (June 1980), p. 6. The publication was the newsletter of the Scarlet Women Collective of North Shields. This particular issue was dedicated to the work of the BWC.
[532] 'Republicanism: what our Irish sisters think', *Spare Rib*, 99 (October 1980).

subjugation of women and prolonging community strife and its attendant burdens on women in society. After initially avoiding taking a formal stance on the national question in a bid to appeal to a spectrum of women across society,[533] the NIWRM opposed the republican prisoners' protests around Armagh Jail since they feared lobbying on such issues could prove divisive within the NIWRM.[534] The NIWRM celebrated the absence of the 'ultra-left' from its ranks, and having experienced an exponential growth in 1977 and 1978 with several new branches organising, the group focused its attention on issues far removed from the politics of the national question, including a number of domestic issues such as 'divorce law reform, domestic violence, infant mortality, women at work, women and education, women and social security'.

Far from sympathising with republican politics, the NIWRM identified itself as a product of the strife brought by the Troubles, with many of its activists thrust into roles as heads of families through the internment and imprisonment or death of loved ones. Even in the republican heartlands of West Belfast, the NIWRM Springfield branch, formed in 1978, directed its attentions against the 'pernicious' Payment of Debt Act, nursery school provision, and job opportunities, avoiding any stated position on republicanism.[535] The NIWRM moved, from 1979, to support a direct lobby for peace, with the organisation's principle number ten thereafter envisaging 'peace and universal brotherhood' for children of the next generation to be achieved by 'an immediate cessation of violence from whatever quarters it comes'.[536] By 1986 the NIWRM had prioritised the politics of pacifism and social accord over traditional feminist issues, with south Belfast NIWRM member Lynda Edgerton arguing for the

[533] Roulston, 'Women on the Margin', p. 226.
[534] Loughran, 'Armagh and Feminist Strategy', 70, 72.
[535] NIPC P13672: Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement, *Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement* (1980). In 1977-1978 groups emerged in Twinbrook, Upper Springfield, Craigavon, Newry and in 1979 also groups opened in County Derry, as well as the Andersonstown and Queen's University areas of Belfast.
[536] NIPC P8856: NIWRM, *A charter of child rights for Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1979). The document was presented at the International Year of the Child Conference held at Maysfield Leisure Centre on 27 October 1979.

prioritisation of 'the issue of peace'.[537] The Provisional-NIWRM acrimony was mutual: the Provisionals had castigated the NIWRM in 1976 for seeking reforms on British divorce and abortion laws and neglecting the national question.[538]

The SWG proclaimed itself equally unimpressed with republicanism. Although the SWG's manifesto of March 1976 placed the group theoretically in favour of the creation of an 'Irish Workers [sic] State', the SWG was equally concerned with childcare provision, equal pay and abortion. Only through the republican prison protests did the SWG mobilise significantly in republican circles, entering the Relatives Action Committees, most notably in Andersonstown, West Belfast.[539] Some unaffiliated radical feminists criticised the republican movement and even the WAI, arguing that republican brands of feminism 'alienated' Protestant feminists and that feminists making alliances with men, republican or otherwise, 'inevitably' caused a 'dilution of their feminism'.[540]

Feminist organisations during the Troubles were riven with division on the issue of the national question. Even those organisations which opposed the British presence in the north of Ireland, most prominently the WAI, DWA, and BWC, were far from uncritical of the republican groupings, while the NIWRM and SWG made studious efforts to avoid the politics of Northern Ireland's constitutional status.

### VII.I Republicanism and its communities: vigilantism and 'parochial populism'

The complex societal politics surrounding republican vigilantism, most commonly executed through the beating and kneecapping of 'antisocial' elements in society, has received considerable scholarly attention, but the popularity of republican vigilante actions in the Catholic community has seldom been considered. Peter Taylor's somewhat blithe

[537] Margaret Ward (ed.), *A Difficult Dangerous Honesty* (Belfast, 1986), pp. 11-12.
[538] Lynda Edgerton (NIWRM) quoted in McWilliams, 'Women in Northern Ireland', 95.
[539] Ward, *Difficult Dangerous Honesty*, 19.
[540] Pat Allen, 'Away with the second-hand analysis', *Scarlet Woman*, 11 June 1980.

assertion that republicans through the mid-1970s showed little consideration for the importance of public relations faces obvious limitations.[541] The most overtly militant and heavy-handed republican vigilantism against local criminality in Belfast and Derry was most pronounced during the earliest years of the conflict, predominantly in the years 1970 to 1972. The PIRA in West Belfast had acted vigorously in January 1971 in coordinating the public tarring and feathering of four local male youths accused of 'breaking and entering' and 'drug peddling', and a subsequent Provisional statement threatened further action against other miscreants.[542] The following year, republicans in Ardoyne threatened local criminals that they would be 'severely dealt with',[543] and in a particularly draconian case republicans in Andersonstown interrogated a 17-year-old for fifteen hours before kneecapping him when he let it be known that he supported the RUC.[544] The political maladroitness of such acts among republicans was largely confined to 1971 and 1972, however.

The political astuteness of Belfast PIRA leader Joe Cahill in interview in late 1971 pointed to the awareness among republicans of the sensitivity of vigilantism and republican policing methods. The Provisional leadership had even 'condemned' local units or independent republicans who had tarred and feathered 'soldier girls' who fraternised with British soldiers. Such actions had been carried out spontaneously by the local community rather than as a Provisional campaign.[545] The Derry PIRA in November 1971 also stood firmly against the 'dastardly' tarring and feathering of young soldiers' fiancées in the city, and the Provisionals' calls for 'the *mothers and daughters*' who were carrying out such attacks highlights the spontaneity and demographic of those vigilantes conducting the tarring

[541] Taylor, *Provos*, 194.
[542] Henry Kelly, 'The IRA: Sinister or Sad?', and 'The Past Two Weeks', *Fortnight*, 9 (22 January 1971).
[543] Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy*, 105.
[544] Conroy, *Belfast Diary*, 86-87.
[545] Christopher Macy, 'Sinn Fein and the IRA's [sic]: 1', *Humanist: Ulster Special Issue*, Vol. 87 No. 1 (January 1972), p. 19.

and feathering.[546] The Provisionals' awareness of the problems connected with republican vigilantism was recorded in an internal Sinn Féin document of 1974 entitled *People's Courts*, which noted the dangerous potential of personal grudges to influence the implementation of vigilantism in republican communities.[547] Throughout the conflict, senior Provisionals reiterated the republican hierarchy's reluctance to sanction vigilantism. An anonymous PIRA GHQ member commented in 1992 that 'the IRA takes no pleasure in having to deal with criminals', and argued that republicans' sole remaining reason for doing so was a recognition of 'the way in which criminals and gangster are used' by the intelligence services to provide 'low-level intelligence for the British Army/RUC'.[548] *Pace* Taylor's claims, the importance of public relations was integral to Provisional considerations.

Particularly in the housing estates of West Belfast in the 1980s, with rising levels of petty crime, drug abuse, and 'joyriding', republican vigilantism was strikingly popular at grassroots level, cutting against Kevin Toolis's conception of community policing carried out by 'local thugs turned community warriors' acting against the wishes of local people and Andrew Silke's notion of vigilantism as an especially problematic policy.[549] Although in 1982 and 1983 the Provisionals temporarily moved away from vigilantism – after the accidental killing in a punishment shooting of 26-year-old Colm Carey in Derry's Gobnascale estate in July 1982, Derry Sinn Féin leader Martin McGuinness had acknowledged that 'the IRA [now]… favours a socially involved solution' to criminality[550] – the popular clamour for republican action against thieves, drug dealers, and joyriders broadly outweighed any inherent desire within the republican hierarchy to impose such a policy. In one republican Belfast estate, local people on the residents' association called in 1984 for the PIRA to go further than kneecapping in their dealing with social miscreants, imploring the Provisionals to

[546] 'I.R.A. denounce tarrings', *Fermanagh Herald*, 20 November 1971. Emphases added.
[547] Andrew Silke, 'Rebel's Dilemma', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11 (1999), p. 76.
[548] 'The Irish Republican Army speaks', *Spare Rib* (August-September 1992).
[549] Toolis, *Rebel Hearts*, 68; Silke, 'Rebel's Dilemma', 81.
[550] Clarke & Johnston, *McGuinness*, 137.

execute joyriders and 'hoodlums'.[551] The Belfast Brigade had in September 1978 noted in a public notice that republican vigilantism had been carried out 'on request from you the Local Republican Population'. The PIRA in the city had 'canvassed opinion and are happy that you realise the necessity for this short-term though Imperfect Policy'.[552] West Belfast Sinn Féin councillor Joe Austin recalled a crowd of some 200 women with placards on the Andersonstown Road in protest in 1983 when the PIRA announced a suspension of its policy of punishment beatings and shootings, and Austin's fellow councillor Alex Maskey reflected on the 'major demands… made on republicans to handle crime problems, especially drugs' in the early 1990s.[553] Belfast Sinn Féin representative Richard McAuley in 1980 opposed a popular lobby in West Belfast for local gangsters to be shot dead, and while he acknowledged the 'considerable pressure on the IRA' to give in to such demands, McAuley said he 'hoped' the republicans would not take such action, since 'they'd just be playing into the hands of the Brits'.[554]

The sustained public approval and exhortation of republican policing methods gives little credence to the claims of republican informer Raymond Gilmour that the majority of Derry Catholics fervently disliked the vigilantism and intimidation of a corrupt PIRA,[555] and suggests that even the assessment of Eileen Fairweather, Róisín McDonough and Melanie McFadyean that popular consent towards PIRA policing was given reluctantly in the absence of viable alternatives fall somewhat short of appreciating the genuine enthusiasm of local communities for stringent republican action.[556]

The popular demand for extreme action against criminals stemmed from rising levels of criminality and social problems in Belfast. In 1982 some 77 percent of all cars stolen in

[551] John Darby, *Intimidation and the Control of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Dublin, 1986), pp. 108, 161.
[552] NIPC PPO0023: PIRA, 'Crackdown on Criminals' (1978).
[553] Silke, 'Rebel's Dilemma', 82.
[554] Conroy, *Belfast Diary*, 88.
[555] Gilmour, *Dead Ground*, 40, 182.
[556] Fairweather, McDonough & McFadyean, *Only the Rivers Run Free*, 35.

Northern Ireland were stolen in Belfast, with 37 percent of the province-wide total in West Belfast alone.[557] The NIWRM recognised as early as 1980 the growing problem of joy-riding, which over the previous year has seen 'scores maimed and scarred for life' for the offence.[558] In his noted study of Divis Flats conducted in 1981 Jeffrey Sluka found that some 76.9 percent of his sample felt there was a need for republican paramilitaries from both the PIRA and INLA to police the communities and provide a measure of 'social control'.[559]

The parochial appeal of republican vigilantism dovetailed with the populist agenda implemented by Provisional Sinn Féin members in urban localities. F. Stuart Ross and Liam Clarke have described the nascence of PSF activity in grassroots politics – including work on tenants' and housing associations and trade unions – and electoral experimentation as a watershed in Provisional relations with the communities of the north.[560] Tony Craig and Peter Taylor, meanwhile, have outlined compellingly the significance of the seven PSF incident centres instituted through the ceasefire of 1975.[561] Through the ceasefire of 1975, the PSF incident centres received a total of 967 complaints about British military conduct, 258 about security force harassment, 251 against arrests and a further 129 against security force foot patrols, establishing a wide-ranging series of channels of contact between the Catholic community in its broadest sense and the republican movement.[562] But the Provisionals' championing of populist causes designed to rally support in Catholic ghettos emerged earlier than scholars have allowed, with precedents as far back as the early 1970s, and went somewhat beyond merely liaising with the communities on matters of British Army conduct.

[557] PRONI HSS/13/43/21: Jean Craig, 'A Report on the West Belfast Auto-Project' (March 1983).
[558] NIPC P13672: Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement, *Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement* (1980).
[559] Sluka, *Hearts and Minds*, 119-120.
[560] Ross, 'Between Party and Movement', 337-354; Ross, *Smashing H-Block*; Clarke, *Broadening the Battlefield*.
[561] Taylor, *Provos*, 186. Incident centres opened in Enniskillen, Armagh, Derry, Newry, Dungannon, and Belfast.
[562] Tony Craig, 'Monitoring the Peace?', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26 (2014), pp. 313-314.

In the early 1970s a brand of Provisional republicanism remarkably lacking in any clandestine quality opened up broad channels of contact with the Catholic community through demonstrations of military strength, public meetings, recruitment drives and orations addressing local concerns. Joe Cahill was publicly introduced as a PIRA leader at a large-scale meeting in Belfast's republican Whiterock district on 13 August 1971, where Cahill reported on the movement's recent shortage of arms and the need for additional recruits.[563] In mid-July 1971, the week after the killing of Derrymen Dessie Beattie and Seamus Cusack, the Provisionals held a rally in front of a crowd of one thousand in Derry addressed by republicans such as Seán Keenan, Gerry O'Hare, Walter Lynch, Maire Drumm, and Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, at the conclusion of which listeners were implored to join the PIRA.[564] Provisional Joe O'Neill had incited crowds at anti-internment public meetings in Ballyshannon and Bundoran in September 1971 to join the PIRA.[565]

The visibility of the Provisional movement in republican strongholds was not limited to the campaign's early stages. In the summer of 1979, to mark the tenth anniversary of the arrival of British troops in the north, PIRA volunteers paraded openly in paramilitary uniforms in a demonstration at Belfast's Casement Park,[566] while in September of that year twenty armed PIRA volunteers took control of the village of Carrickmore, county Tyrone in a show of defiance against the escalating security force operations in the area.[567] Throughout the 1980s armed and uniformed PIRA volunteers were a regular and highly visible feature of republican commemorations and parades, not least the PIRA's marching as the focal point of Easter parades in West Belfast and county Tyrone in 1984 and 1985, and also during a show of strength in Derry's Bogside estate on the eve of Easter Sunday 1987, when a large unit of volunteers paraded a diverse arsenal of weapons to a rapturous crowd after a local community

[563] 'The Past Four Weeks', *Fortnight*, 23 (3 September 1971).
[564] White, *Ó Brádaigh*, 167.
[565] 'O'Neill set free after backdated sentence', *Donegal News*, 27 January 1973.
[566] NIPC P881(B): PSF, *Notes for Revolutionaries* (1982), p. 59.
[567] Michael McKinley, '"Irish Mist"', *Australian Quarterly*, 57 (1985), p. 206.

meeting chaired by McGuinness.[568] Some months before the ceasefire commenced in February 1975, a private internal PSF manual had exhorted party members to engage in a 'CONSTANT, REGULAR PUBLICITY EFFORT AT ALL LEVELS AND IN ALL PRACTICAL WAYS', to 'ensure the public is informed about our policies and activities'. Although historically some PSF members had 'tend[ed] to shy away from… public education', the manual pointed to developing the party along non-clandestine lines: members should not 'shroud SF in mystery'.[569] The party's wide-ranging involvement with grassroots politics antedated both the ceasefire of 1975 and subsequent electoral experimentation during the prison protests of the early 1980s.

The remarkable popularity of Provisional vigilantism was also aided by what might be described as the 'parochial populism' of republican threats. The PIRA in Derry appealed to notions of moral guidance during the ceasefire of 1975 by confiscating alcohol from local publicans who had supplied underage youths with intoxicating drink, and the Provisionals capitalised on the publicity value of the seizure by giving the offending bottles a prominent display in the Sinn Féin advice centre in the city's Bogside.[570] Vigilante policing remaining widely popular for longer than Rachel Monaghan has acknowledged.[571] In Belfast the PIRA kneecapped as many as eighty joyriders in 1987 alone, sustaining its campaign so determinedly that a group of twenty-one 'hoodlums' wrote to a local newspaper to return empty threats against 'the Provies'.[572] So established was the vigilante aspect of republican politics in Belfast's estates by the early 1990s that social scientists William Thompson and

[568] HVA D01030 Tape 82: RTÉ News (19 April 1987).
[569] PSF, *Lámhleabhar Poiblíochta/Manual of Publicity* (Dublin: Elo Press, June 1974), pp. 2-3.
[570] Craig, 'Monitoring the Peace?', 313-314.
[571] Monaghan casts the early 1970s as the zenith of vigilantism's popularity. Rachel Monaghan, 'An Imperfect Peace', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16 (2004), p. 440.
[572] David McKittrick, 'Life-and-death defiance of Belfast's 'joyriders'', *Independent*, 15 February 1988.

Brian Mulholland found within the Belfast 'hood' subculture a punishment shooting from republican paramilitaries was considered a rite of passage.[573]

The Provisionals' appeal to a strong sense of locality and shared hardship was reflected in the PIRA's threat of violence in March 1980 against police or electricity workers who planned to come to Belfast's Twinbrook estate to cut off electricity supplies to families in debt,[574] while in Derry in February 1993 the PIRA reacted to the cutting off of supplies in Rossville Street by Northern Ireland Electricity with threats of 'action' against NIE management figures. The accompanying PIRA statement pointed to the position of solidarity which the republicans hoped to present alongside the troubled community:

> We will not tolerate the situation, whereby people living in nationalist areas who are already the victims of economic and social deprivation, are further penalised by the arrogant and insensitive faceless men of NIE.[575]

Former Monaghan PSF councillor Owen Smyth recalled local PIRA leader Jim Lynagh successfully exiling from the town traveling loan sharks who were extorting exorbitant rates of interest from local people in hardship in the 1980s.[576] Through the 'parochial populism' of this Provisional policy, the PIRA appealed to the fears and concerns of embattled republican communities.

Explaining the sustainability of the relationship between republican politics and the communities in which republicans resided and operated presents a significant difficulty.[577] Especially in the 1970s the majority of human suffering produced by the conflict was borne

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[573] William Thompson & Barry Mulholland, 'Paramilitary Punishments and Young People in West Belfast', in Liam Kennedy (ed.), *Crime and Punishment in West Belfast* (Belfast, 1995), p. 57.
[574] Conroy, *Belfast Diary*, 79.
[575] 'Mayor lashes "gangsterism"', *Derry Journal*, 16 February 1993.
[576] Owen Smyth quoted in Loughgall20 Committee Commemorative Film, *Loughgall Martyrs* (2007). Copy in author's possession.
[577] Many commentators have attempted to square this circle by portraying republicanism as coercively forced upon a broadly hostile civilian population. Bishop & Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 2, 295; Urban, *Big Boys' Rules*, 32, 101; Frank Cooper quoted in Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War Against the IRA* (London, 2001), pp. 195-196; Gilmour, *Dead Ground*, 25; McKeown, *Passion of Peace*, 72; Kevin Myers quoted in *Magill* (January 1978).

by civilians rather than security forces or paramilitaries: civilians suffered 68 percent of injuries from 1971 to 1976, a trend most pronounced in the years 1975 and 1976 when civilians comprised 83 and 79 percent of the injured respectively.[578] The PIRA campaign impacted inordinately upon nationalist areas, with towns and cities of significant republican strength highest among those areas experiencing fatal incidents proportionate to the population. Through the 1970s the cities of Derry and Armagh were especially highly affected by PIRA militarism: in Derry 1.91 in every 1,000 people were killed while the figure for Armagh stood at 1.54. The largely republican towns of Strabane and Lurgan (1.49 and 1.00, respectively) were also majorly affected, while many predominantly unionist towns in the north-east went almost untouched by comparison.[579] The republican campaign and its attendant traumas on the people and property of the community was most pronounced in areas of significant popular support for republicanism.

Yet to a considerable extent republicans presented themselves as the keepers of law and order most successfully in precisely those areas where law, order and normality had broken down most acutely and persistently. Republican vigilante punishments and threats demonstrated the republicans' attempts to appeal to conceptions of moral strength. That the Provisionals understood, *pace* Taylor, the importance of public relations can be of no doubt. Such was the PIRA's Belfast Brigade's degree of concern when local gangsters unconnected with republicanism had used the name of the PIRA 'in vain' when conducting robberies in 1977 that the Provisionals went so far as to threaten execution of the 'local gangster element' involved, in the columns of a local newspaper.[580] The Belfast Brigade sought to impose discipline on the republican rioting which accompanied the hunger strike, criticising in mid-

[578] Marie-Therese Fay, Mike Morrissey & Marie Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles* (London, 1999), p. 160.
[579] Paul Arthur, 'Republican Violence in Northern Ireland: The Rationale', in John Darby, Nicholas Dodge & A. C. Hepburn (eds.), *Political Violence* (Ottawa, 1990), pp. 54-55. The figures of fatalities per 1,000 people were especially low in unionist Larne (0.16), Bangor (0.14), Ballymena (0.13), Antrim (0.07) in the period 1969-1981.
[580] *Andersonstown News*, 10 December 1977, quoted in Darby, *Intimidation*, 106-107.

May 1981 the 'sporadic, undisciplined' rioting which had 'inflicted no physical casualties on the Brits or RUC' and instead had only 'placed greater hardship on the residents of the [Divis] flats'. Republican rioting was to be more coordinated and would not involve the 'totally unacceptable… hijacking of private vehicles' and 'destruction of private property' which had taken place.[581] The PIRA's calls for a cessation of all rioting and 'street confrontations with the British Army or RUC' so as to lessen the burden on embattled local people in 1982 provided further evidence of the Provisionals' capacity to carve out a role as a welfare-minded 'people's police'. The societal weight of Provisional implorations is indicated by the fact that the order was broadly obeyed, with only one major flare-up in the internment resistance events of early August 1982.[582] The Provisionals' self-appointed role as the arbiters of acceptable protest in republican communities was exercised again in 1987, when, after two days of rioting in West Belfast, Adams claimed credit on behalf of PSF for controlling the violence, which he did 'not condone'. Without the Provisionals controlling the disorder, Adams told a press conference, many people could have been killed.[583]

[581] Sluka, *Hearts and Minds*, 271-272.
[582] 'Behave, say IRA', *Irish News*, 3 August 1982.
[583] HVA D01040 Tape 82: ITV News (9 May 1987).

## Conclusion

### I

This thesis has addressed a wide array of historiographical controversies in analysing the heterogeneity of republican politics and the changing places of those strands of politics in society through the period in question. Drawing upon a range of archival sources, historical newspapers, and oral history, in approaching Irish republican organisations as 'social movements' in the Tillyan tradition,[584] the dissertation has drawn inspiration from the work of Gregory Maney and Gianluca de Fazio, who have placed the emphasis of their social movement research upon 'intra-movement' competition.[585] Across a series of themes from socialism, feminism, and civil rights politics, the complexity of republicanism has been assessed. A number of important themes emerge.

Throughout the conflict, the Provisional republican movement by far surpassed their peers in the IRSP-INLA, Official movement, and PD in achieving political flexibility and consistently appealing to as wide an audience as possible. The breadth of the Provisionals' public profile was especially pronounced during the 1980s, with the Provisionals appealing to 'parochial populism' in local urban politics, playing leading roles in mass appeal campaigns against criminalisation, rubber bullets, and supergrass trials, and adopting civil rights politics as central to their agenda – while coming to appear as promoters of cross-sectarian equality in seeking 'peace with justice' and an end to the internecine conflict.

As in the late 1960s, the Provisionals cultivated an image as defenders of Catholic property and the opponents of elitist unionist rule. The Blumerian conception of political

[584] See above in thesis, pp. 6-7.
[585] Gregory M. Maney, 'The Paradox of Reform', *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, 34 (2012), pp. 3-26; Gianluca de Fazio, 'Intra-Movement Competition and Political Outbidding as Mechanisms of Radicalisation in Northern Ireland, 1968-1969', in Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou & Stefan Malthaner (eds.), *Dynamics of Political Violence* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 115-136.

movements invoking symbolism and quasi-mythic reputations among populations is especially helpful in understanding Provisional politics, with the organisation tapping into folk memories and collective identities at local levels in constructing a series of political identities.[586] The early Officials had also established the most developed and enduring association with civil rights politics, calling for reform of the police and backing a bill of rights towards their end of achieving class unity and societal harmony. Adopting civil rights causes as an initial instrument towards ultimately challenging the state, the early Provisionals and Officials held up civil rights abuses among what Doug McAdam has termed the 'systematic grievances' with which radical groupings seek to appeal to broader audiences with a view to ultimately delegitimising the state.[587]

The Officials, IRSP-INLA, and PD demonstrated far greater disregard for what might be termed the 'establishment' of the Catholic community, espousing anticlerical positions not solely against individual clergy but against the very institution and political sway of the Catholic Church and championing socially contentious issues such as women's rights on abortion and contraception. But the shared political objectives of these organisations, specifically centred upon the desire for a united Ireland, should not be forgotten; much of the Provisional-IRSM and early Provisional-Official rivalry was born not so much out of seismic gulfs in ideological agenda, as David Johnson and L. N. Diab theorise,[588] but rather of

[586] Herbert Blumer, 'Social Problems as Collective Behaviour', *Social Problems*, 18 (1971), pp. 298-306. Blumer held that through processes of 'symbolic interactionism', social movements were able to project themselves in a certain manner to a mass audience through a form of 'image-making'.
[587] Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago, 1982).
[588] David W. Johnson, 'The Use of Role Reversal in Intergroup Competition', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 7 (1967), pp. 135-141; L. N. Diab, 'A Study of Intragroup and Intergroup Relations among Experimentally Produced Small Groups', *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 82 (1970), pp. 49-82.

complex adversarial organisational identities and crucial ties of friendship and kinship along the lines posited by Henri Tajfel.[589]

The Provisional hierarchy's management of significant shifts in policy was largely necessitated by the severe divisions within the organisation on important issues such as electoralism and abstentionism, women's rights, socialism, and military strategy. This dissertation contends that commentary on the subject has failed to recognise the complexity of the changes in PSF politics and strategy through the 1980s and early 1990s. PSF's movement was not a binary shift from the politics of war to the politics of peace, but rather a series of incremental shifts. The electoral experimentation of 1981 had divided the Provisional movement, with many Provisionals – some of whom have since become leading politicians at the fulcrum of what Kevin Bean has acerbically termed 'New Sinn Féin'[590] – hostile to any electoral participation. The evidence suggests no coherent theorising in the early 1980s among a Belfast leadership intent on wholesale involvement in constitutional politics; only through the party's impressive polls in 1981, 1982, and 1983 did enthusiasm for the initiative slowly grow – and even then, on a far from unqualified basis, as the division over Dublin abstentionism (1986) and the advent of the League of Communist Republicans (1987) demonstrated.

Even in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Provisionals did not prematurely disown the campaign which the PIRA had fought since 1970. Instead, the political agenda of PSF grew ever broader and tended increasingly towards populism: standing in defence of public sector provision of health and education especially; focusing to a greater extent upon issues of local politics; and offering a 'peace with justice' platform which the party was incapable of truly delivering – if 'justice' was read to imply the traditional ambition of a British

[589] Henri Tajfel, 'Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour', *Social Science Information*, 13 (1974), pp. 65-93.
[590] Kevin Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin* (Liverpool, 2007).

withdrawal. The politics of the armed struggle were not abandoned in the years immediately preceding 1994. *Pace* M. L. R. Smith, the Provisional movement did not become solely preoccupied with the sheer sustenance of the military campaign; rather, the armed struggle became subtly relegated down PSF's ever more extensive agenda.

The Provisionals enjoyed widespread grassroots political involvement from the very advent of their campaign – contrary to assessments locating the advent of such involvement in the ceasefire of 1975 or the hunger strike campaigns – and operated with little clandestineness within their communities. Electoral experimentation, grassroots urban activism, and vigilante appeals towards addressing parochial concerns – complemented, through the 1980s, with lobbying on popular social issues and broad front campaigns – all aided the Provisionals in cementing their position as pillars of the anti-establishment. The breadth of the Provisional church can hardly be overstated. As Timothy Shanahan has argued, the politics of republicanism had capacity for those who held Irish unity to be intrinsically desirable, alongside others for whom the removal of partition promised gains in terms of the extension of democracy and civil rights, of socialism, and of cultural revival.[591] This dissertation contends that republican appeals to widespread support grew more voluminous and successful as the conflict progressed through the 1980s – if at the cost of diluting central aspects of past strategy, specifically with regards to the centrality of the armed struggle. But even if the movement resorted increasingly to populist politics, the Provisionals did not become isolated and societally marginalised in the manner in which Marc Mulholland has suggested. The Provisionals' seeking a broad base was also expressed through the movement's near-constant readiness to at least consider engagement in negotiations with the British government – if on unrealistically demanding terms which betrayed a pervasive Taberian optimism in the insurgents' capacity to wrest major concessions from the state.

[591] Shanahan, *Morality of Terrorism*, 80.

The thesis has also demonstrated extensively the complexity of Irish republicanism's variegated character, following Mayer Zald and Michael Berger in recognising the significance of intergroup conflict *within* social movements.[592] Divisions within republican organisations cannot be understood purely as existing along urban-rural or religious-secular fault lines. The differences on matters of social policy such as abortion between republicans in neighbouring rural towns, the existence of 'traditionalist' republicans who backed RSF after the split of 1986 and maintained absolute abstentionism but also continued to support a radical Éire Nua agenda, and the existence of Marxist-Leninist and Maoist tendencies in counties Tyrone and Monaghan – as well as the strength of the IRSP-INLA in rural south Derry – all point further to the limitations of interpretations casting dichotomies of intransigence versus malleability, military primacy versus political primacy, along straightforward urban-rural fault lines in northern republicanism. Every republican organisation experienced significant intra-organisational rifts, with a section of the Official movement opposing the ceasefire of May 1972 and the increasingly reformist tendencies of the following years and breaking away to form the IRSP-INLA in 1974 and 1975. The IRSP-INLA, in its turn, came to fragment significantly in the late 1980s after the development of a vicious power vacuum created by the imprisonment of some of the movement's foremost theorists. Divisions over personal conflicts and the issue of the supremacy of the army or the party caused the fracturing of the grouping and the birth of the short-lived IPLO.

The skilful deftness with which PSF's leadership, not shy of entering into public disputations with individual clergy but seeking to avoid wholesale condemnation from the senior Church hierarchy, eschewed tags of radical Marxism in the late 1970s has distracted scholars from the truly radical quality of PSF's socialism in the organisation's earliest years. Accounts homogenising the politics of PSF as entirely in thrall to the supposed positions of

[592] Mayer N. Zald & Michael A. Berger, 'Social Movements in Organisations', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83 (1978), pp. 823-861.

Gerry Adams and his leading staff in the 1980s neglect the organisation's plurality. The envisaging in the Éire Nua proposals, first published in 1971, of large-state socialism had a lasting impact upon the Provisional movement, which contained within its ranks significant sections of Marxist radicals through the 1980s, not least among its prison population and its departments for education, women's rights, and foreign affairs. Such groups exhibited revolutionary ambitions in regard to their admiration for the revolutionary governments of the contemporary developing world and their criticism of the more conservative aspects of party dogma, for instance on women's rights. Throughout the conflict a critical mass of republican women supporting the armed struggle lobbied republican organisations on women's rights. By comparison to the divided Provisionals, though, the Officials, IRSP-INLA, and PD took far more fully developed and assuredly feminist positions on women's rights.

A crucial theme emergent through the thesis concerns the nature of the relationship between republican groups and the communities in which such organisations enjoyed most support. It is something of a paradox that organisations as internally hierarchical and authoritarian in one respect as the Provisional movement – with severe punishments for opponents and dissenters, and security concerns preventing the meeting of an entire Provisional Army Council meeting for some sixteen years[593] – could simultaneously be remarkably responsive to community politics and sensitive to popular concerns. The Provisional paradox sits uncomfortably with the assessment of Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani who hold that modern social movements tend to be decentralised in nature.[594] The Provisional movement featured simultaneously a hierarchical structure and internal authoritarianism; and significant sections within the organisation deviating from the 'party line'. Local PSF cumainn and PIRA units enjoyed a considerable degree of de facto

[593] Feeney, *Sinn Féin*, 331. The PIRA held a General Army Convention near Navan on 20 September 1986.
[594] Donatella della Porta & Mario Diani, *Social Movements* (Oxford, 2006), p. 203.

autonomy in addressing a populist agenda which included vigilante actions and lobbying housing associations, while presenting the movement as the final bastion against the threat of British or loyalist repression. The Provisional movement splits Eduardo Canel's helpful dichotomy of resource mobilisation theorists falling into two groupings: those promoting a 'political-interactive' model considering political power, group solidarity and intra-group networks as the key to understanding collective action and mobilisation; and those promoting an 'organisational-entrepreneurial' model which tends to assign greater agency to the leadership of organisations in determining courses of action.[595] Both the centre and the periphery contested for power and refracted policy designs in the Provisional movement.

The dissertation also criticises the misleading semantic dichotomy between 'nationalism' and 'republicanism', according to which an organisation which eschews the divisive 'armed struggle', such as the SDLP, is ergo considered simplistically a 'moderate nationalist' organisation. It has been demonstrated above that sections of the SDLP, while never going so far as to preach support for the PIRA or INLA campaigns publicly, were as resolutely hostile to British rule and its impacts in the north of Ireland, and as ardently socialist, as other significant 'republican' groupings. The scholarly focus on organisations' means and methods rather than their ultimate ends has caused the SDLP and PSF to be considered poles apart, despite sections of both organisations sharing considerable common political ground. The thesis also highlights the qualitative potency of the politics of far left organisations giving qualified support to an anti-partition agenda and the armed struggle, including the Independent Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Marxist Group, and the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist).

[595] Eduardo Canel, 'New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilization Theory', in M. Kaufman & H. Dilla Alfonso (eds.), *Community Power and Grassroots Democracy* (London, 1997), pp. 198-221.

In explaining republicans' motivations, the Tillyan conception of state repression as a chief cause of insurgency rebellion is well placed in this case study.[596] Republicans' motivations often stemmed from highly personal grievances and experiences of the perceived injustices of British rule, manifest through the practices of the judicial system, the deployment of emergency laws, and the deprivation which vast sections of the nationalist community endured. Especially in urban settings, strongly established notions of community identity and collective memory were of critical importance in refracting partition and its attendant politics as an assault on a particular community, its people, and their culture. The thesis follows the work of Henri Lefebvre in considering the nature of space as contested and 'produced'.[597] John Nagle's work suggesting the potential of physical and imagined territories to be invested with political meanings provides a helpful framework for understanding the pervasiveness of collective conceptions of locality and community in this context.[598] The Provisionals were most successful in recognising the importance of community politics and presenting themselves throughout the conflict – contrary to tangible evidence undermining their actual capacity to make good their promises – as the defenders of communities, supported by rhetoric of imminent victory which was reiterated and reified throughout the period in question. Such rhetoric did not serve merely as routine oral protocol but sustained morale and republican motivations. Although personalised grievances were of major importance in stimulating republicanism, republican motivations also operated at a community level. The more straightforward, cost-benefit analysis which mobilisation theorists such as William A. Gamson and Anthony Oberschall have propounded does not do full justice to the range of factors underpinning republican mobilisation.[599]

[596] Tilly, Tilly & Tilly, *Rebellious Century*.
[597] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Paris, 1974).
[598] John Nagle, 'Sites of Social Centrality and Segregation', *Antipode*, 41 (2009), pp. 326-347.
[599] William A. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Homewood, Illinois, 1975); Anthony Obserschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (Eaglewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973).

Much of the burgeoning scholarship on modern Irish republicanism has been shaped by a series of historiographical tropes often unexposed to rigorous research and contributing little towards challenging our understanding of the phenomena concerned. This thesis has sought to address such 'received wisdoms' afresh with reference to a rich array of primary sources. Numerous commentators and historians have often held that republicanism was dominated by popular belief in the likelihood of an imminent victory only in the earliest years of the conflict; that republicans' ardent pursuing of a united Ireland has meant their political organisations have been rigid and unmalleable; that Provisional Sinn Féin only commenced notable endeavours in the 1980s with the advent of the electoral strategy, from which point onwards the movement was led on an intractable high road to constitutional politics and peace. The dissertation has demonstrated the sustenance and perenniality of Provisional republicans' rhetoric and popular belief in the possibility of imminent victory over the British government, albeit within the parameters of strategic shifts through the 1980s; that the politics of republican organisations have in fact been remarkably broad and often responsive to the dynamics of community politics; that PSF had established a valuable network of grassroots politics connections from the very dawn of the conflict and retained these contacts in developing highly effective communications strategies and populist tactics. Anthony McIntyre's paradigmatic position, critiquing the tendency of scholarship to draw a false dichotomy between the 'political' and 'military' facets of republicanism, is especially instructive: the boundaries between political agitation and militarism are evidently extremely blurred and often scarcely extant.[600]

## II

[600] McIntyre, 'Modern Irish Republicanism'.

In the context of late-twentieth-century history, the experience of republicans in Northern Ireland stands as something of a unique case – despite republicans' somewhat high-minded designs in invoking comparisons with the PLO's aspirations towards 'liberating occupied territories' and the ANC's efforts against an acutely unpopular regime. The complex tripartite quality of the Northern Ireland conflict, including not only republicans and the British government but also the loyalist paramilitaries – and with each military grouping mirrored by equally variegated political fronts – marked the objectives of Irish republicans as especially vexed. With no seismic shift in the policy of the British government – unlike the Mozambican FRELIMO's benefiting from the Portuguese military's coup d'état in 1974 putting General de Spinola in power, or the ANC's gains from de Klerk government's lifting the ban on the ANC and SACP and facilitating a democratic process in the wake of the collapse of the USSR[601] – Irish republicans were left to revise their strategies through the 'long war' over twenty-five years in the face of a broadly intransigent opponent. Although Irish republicanism bears little fruitful comparison with the Hamas militants of the Palestine/Israel conflict fighting a religious war of 'jihad… for the cause of God' – Hamas were equally far removed from Irish republicans in their disinterest in more temporal political matters of women's rights, economics, or culture[602] – republicans did share with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine internal strife on the issue of target selection, with the Official republican movement in the years 1972 to 1975 experiencing similar fracturing processes to the PFLP in the early 1980s, with sections of the organisation opposing the leadership's increasing constraints on the deployment of violence.[603]

[601] Luis B. Serapiao & Mohamed A. El-Khawas, *Mozambique in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1979), p. 100; John Iliffe, *Africans* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 286.
[602] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas* (Washington, D.C., 2000), pp. 49, 254.
[603] Stephen Charles Nemeth, 'A Rationalist Explanation of Terrorist Targeting', PhD (University of Iowa, 2010), p. 165.

Irish republicans did, however, share the FRELIMO's hostility to the Church's perceived role as the upholders of the constitutional status quo,[604] and the ANC's justification of their armed struggle in Tillyan terms as the only, regrettable, alternative to state repression of their campaign.[605] Republicanism in Ireland was also riven with a wide range of intra-republican controversies over issues such as the deployment of the movement's resources and the balance of power within the organisation, on similar lines to the schism within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in 1991, when three leading SPLM/A commanders formed a breakaway faction establishing more radical demands for south Sudanese independence and the ending of the Dinka tribal group's dominance of the south Sudanese liberation struggle.[606] Irish republican women experienced similar aspects of frustration at the failure of their organisations to take more overtly progressive stances on matters of women's rights as did the female minority in the Basque nationalist ETA,[607] although on balance it appears that women in the PSF-PIRA and IRSP-INLA experienced positions of greater seniority with far greater frequency than did their Basque counterparts.

The 'community defence' footing on which Provisional and Official republicans alike first came to prominence in the early 1970s, sustained by the Provisionals throughout the conflict, bore remarkable similarities to the position of localised militias under the banner of the nascent umbrella Black Power movement acting against the KKK in the southern states of the USA, such as the Deacons for Defense and Justice and the Tuscaloosa Citizens for Action Committee – with the caveat that the Provisionals and Officials did not, rhetoric aside, restrict themselves solely to 'self-defence', instead embarking on offensive campaigns of their own by 1971. Republicans enjoyed similar popular adulation for their role as 'defenders' of their

[604] Serapiao & El-Khawas, *Mozambique*, 71.
[605] Mark A. Uhlig, 'The African National Congress', in Mark A. Uhlig (ed.), *Apartheid in Crisis* (London, 1986), p. 152. The ANC pointed to such episodes as the Sharpeville Massacre of March 1960 in a similar manner to how Irish republicans would often point to Bloody Sunday.
[606] Øystein H. Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government* (Uppsala, 2005), pp. 34-35.
[607] Carrie Hamilton, *Women and ETA* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 116, 155.

communities as did the Black Power organisations, while seeming to have been far less effective in actually fulfilling these roles.[608]

## III

The heterogeneity of Irish republicanism and its changing place(s) in wider society are issues worthy of sustained scholarly attention, consulting not only the sources produced by the leadership of the republican movements (*An Phoblacht/Republican News*, *Starry Plough*, and *United Irishman*) but also considering the output of particular departments of republican organisations and local branches. Community newsletters and bulletins from grassroots republican cumainn on the ground, of the sort held in the Eileen Hickey Republican History Museum in Belfast and, it is to be hoped, in private collections across Ireland, are invaluable in developing a more nuanced and complex understanding of republicans' tapping into localised identities and memory, of the autonomy enjoyed by localised republicans further from the nerve centre of their organisations, and of the importance of populist and grassroots political programmes in explaining republicanism's popular support.

Oral histories provide an equally precious source. In-depth interviews along the lines of della Porta's 'life histories' are ideal since, in accentuating the experience of the individual through anecdotes and personally-constructed positions as relative, *qua* discourse theory, to other republicans and the republican hierarchy, oral testimonies can illuminate something of the heterogeneity of republicanism, the networks within which republican politics were contested, and the determinants of the outcomes of disputation in particular settings and circumstances. As with any modern historical research, the indelible impact of contemporary

[608] Simon Wendt, 'The Roots of Black Power?', in Peniel E. Joseph (ed.), *The Black Power Movement* (London, 2006), pp. 145-166. Wendt presents autonomous black self-defence organisations as extremely successfully in stymying and deterring KKK attacks against civil rights activists in the mid-1960s.

political events upon modern-day oral testimonies is of crucial importance. In the interests of breadth of research and understanding, it is desirable for oral evidence to feature republicans of as many different hues as possible – especially transcending those who are both supportive and those who are opposed to the current 'peace process' in Northern Ireland, whereas the interviews conducted in this dissertation relied inordinately upon those belonging to the former category. Psephological research could also be useful in developing the local histories of republicanism which this thesis promotes, while local newspapers provide an indispensable insight into the machinations of local politics and the framing of regional identities and shared values.

While it is beyond the ambit of this thesis to consider in extensive depth the dynamics of politics in localities transcending all of Northern Ireland and the Republic's border counties, further research into the Official and IRSM wings of republicanism is certainly needed, while the termination of the PD's book-length historiography in 1973[609] – after which the movement shifted crucially towards more overtly republican positions – represents an especially glaring lacuna. The diversity of Irish republicanism cannot be fully appreciated and understood until the historiography moves to consider a wider array of organisations, pays deeper attention to the autonomy of groups within republican organisations operating within specific departments or localities, and assesses more fully the changing place of republican politics in wider society.

As the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (1998) draws nearer, the conflict in the north of Ireland recedes further into the chronological distance. The incremental release of caches of government papers from London and Dublin, the political détente which the 'peace process' has largely facilitated, and the availability in Ireland and online of vast swathes of newspapers, political documents, bulletins, ephemera,

[609] Paul Arthur, *The People's Democracy, 1968-1973* (Belfast, 1974).

and video archives all bode extremely well for fruitful, original, and timely research into modern Irish republicanism, its heterogeneity, and shifting position within society. Northern Ireland's unofficial status among the most intensively studied areas in the world appears under little threat.[610] But it remains incumbent on scholars across a multitude of disciplines, from historians to social geographers, sociologists to political theorists, to advance research into this multifaceted and controversial conflict.

[610] Paul Dixon & Eamonn O'Kane, *Northern Ireland Since 1969* (Abingdon, 2014), p. 154.

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*Donegal Democrat*

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*Feminist Review*

*Fermanagh Herald*

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*Gralton*

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*Humanist*

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*The Independent*

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**WORD COUNT: 49,541**