

Creating the Ideal Republican: Northern Ireland Prison Writings as Propaganda

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History 400: Senior Thesis Seminar  
April 15, 2002

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## Introduction

In 1976 a political cartoon entitled "Portrait of a Terrorist" appeared in a magazine in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Instead of depicting one of the menacing black-hooded figures typically associated with the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the cartoon showed "a bemused, unthreatening teenager, average in every way."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, when the Provisional Irish Republican Army<sup>2</sup> began its initial period of recruitment, this image was accurate; the typical Republican paramilitary was a teenage male from the Catholic ghettos, whose lack of clear political belief was outweighed by his eagerness to participate in some political movement. Therefore, it was the role of Republican propaganda to mold this young man into the Republican image.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis will examine the ways that the Republican movement used propaganda to create an image of the ideal Republican, which served as a template for the organization's members to follow. In the chapters that follow, I will analyze the propaganda value of the prison writings of three high-profile Republican figures —Bobby Sands<sup>4</sup>, Gerry Adams<sup>5</sup> and Danny Morrison.<sup>6</sup> These men used carefully chosen tactics to develop a picture of what it meant to be a Republican. This image changed to reflect the shifting strategy of the movement, from a focus on an entirely armed strategy, to a combined policy of armed and political strategies, to primarily politics, to peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Cartoon appeared in *Fortnight Magazine*. Belfast, 1976; Reprinted in John Darby. *Northern Ireland: Managing Difference*. United Kingdom: Minority Rights Group, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> The armed wing of the Republican movement during the Northern Ireland Troubles.

<sup>3</sup> This thesis will focus on the image created for young men involved in the Republican movement. However, young women were also involved in the conflict. During the earliest years of the Troubles their participation was limited to Cumann na mBan, the women's auxiliary wing of the PIRA. The role of this organization was primarily to play a supportive role in the movement, without direct involvement in violence. However, as the movement progressed, some women were actively involved in violence. Female prisoners also participated in the dirty protest and hunger strikes of the 1980s. However, women were not represented in the leadership or decision-making of the PIRA. Sources that explore the role of women in the nationalist struggle include: Anne Crilly. *Mother Ireland* (Documentary). Ireland: Derry Film and Video, 1988; Margaret Ward. *In Their Own Voice: Women & Irish Nationalism*. Dublin: Attic Press, 1993; Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. New York: Zed Books, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Sands, Bobby. *Writings from Prison*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Adams, Gerry. *Cage Eleven*. Dingle, Ireland: Brandon Book Publishers, 1990.

I have chosen these three writers because they all held leadership positions in the Republican organization. Also, their books are the most widely recognized first-hand accounts of the Republican prison experience.<sup>7</sup> The writings span the three decades of the recent Troubles. They represent three different trajectories that were possible for individuals involved in the Republican movement. Each of these began with paramilitary activity and was followed by imprisonment; however, the writers chose different paths following their release from prison. Sands died in prison as part of a Republican protest, becoming a Republican martyr. Adams took the path of legitimate political involvement with Sinn Fein, becoming one of the most widely recognized politicians in the conflict. Morrison's time in prison began his slow movement away from Republican activity. Following his release, Morrison withdrew from active involvement with both the armed and political wing of the Republican organization; he became a full-time writer and journalist. All three men joined the movement as teenagers, sacrificing a considerable portion of their life to the cause; however, the prison experience had a different effect on the way that each elected to continue their involvement in the movement.

I have chosen to divide my thesis into two sections. The first section will provide the background for my analysis of the Republican prison writings. Chapter 1 will examine the roots of the recent Northern Ireland troubles. Chapter 2 will discuss the relationship between the Republican organization and its imprisoned members, focusing on the role that prison played in the trajectory of paramilitaries' experience with the movement. Chapter 3 will discuss the term propaganda and its meanings, as well as looking at the various considerations propagandists encounter in the development of propaganda. This chapter will also discuss the goals of the Republican movement's propaganda.

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<sup>6</sup>Morrison, Danny. *Then the Walls Came Down: a Prison Journal*. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1999.

<sup>7</sup>Others first-hand accounts include: Brian Campbell, Laurence McKeown and Felim O'Hagan. *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*. Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 1998; Laurence McKeown. *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners 1972-2000*. Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2000.

The second section of this thesis will discuss the different images of the ideal Republican that are depicted in the writing of these three men. Chapters 4-6 will look at each of the men's writing, examining the audiences addressed, the symbols invoked and the intended goals. Because each man's writing created a different image at the time of its initial writing than at the time of its eventual publication, these points in time will be discussed separately. Written and published at different points in the Republican movement, each man's writing outlines one way in which individuals could choose to participate in the movement. Republican propaganda created an image that was meant to teach the audience how to be Republican. The Conclusion will examine how this picture changed in relation to the evolving strategy of the movement, as demonstrated by the writing of these three prisoners.

## Chapter 1 Background to the Troubles

The period of Northern Ireland Troubles (ca. 1969-1998) constitutes the most recent outbreak in a conflict that has been present on the island for more than eight hundred years. This conflict began in 1169 with the Norman invasion of Ireland.<sup>8</sup> This event was prompted by Irish King Diarmuid MacMurchada's<sup>9</sup> request that Henry II assist him in putting down local opposition to his kingship. This request enabled the Norman invasion by giving the Normans an excuse to send a large armed contingent to Ireland. The defense of the MacMurchada's crown was successful. Strongbow, the Norman warrior responsible for securing the king's throne, was promised succession to the throne after MacMurchada's death. Gradually Normans replaced other Irish rulers, until Norman control of the island was widespread, allowing the King of England to declare himself the King of Ireland as well.<sup>10</sup> This began the series of Irish Troubles of which the Northern Ireland Troubles are a part.

In current discussions of the Irish Troubles, much reference is given to the religious dimension of the conflict. The terms nationalist and loyalist are frequently conflated with the religious distinctions of Catholic and Protestant. The propaganda employed by the Republican movement assumes that the link between Catholicism and Republicanism is an immutable fact. However, the conflict is not a question of religion. Nor is it accurate to directly equate nationalism and Catholicism, or loyalism and Protestantism. When Britain began its involvement in Ireland in the twelfth century, the Protestant had not yet been established—both colonizer and colonized were Catholic societies. Yet religion has played a role in the conflict, beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with King James I of England's decision to establish Protestant plantations in six northeast counties in the province of Ulster. The availability of land

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<sup>8</sup> While some Norman incursion into Ireland occurred earlier in that decade, 1169 is recognized as the official date of the Norman invasion of Ireland.

<sup>9</sup> MacMurchada was King of Leinster, one of four provinces recognized in early Ireland. Leinster encompassed much of the middle/eastern shore of Ireland, with Connacht in the middle/west, Ulster in the north and Munster in the south.

encouraged English and Scottish<sup>11</sup> immigration to Northern Ireland, establishing a Protestant land-owning aristocracy that displaced the primarily Catholic population of these counties. Thus began the perception that the native Irish community faced a religious-based oppression at the hands of the Protestant ascendancy. This oppression was marked by discrimination against Catholics in land-ownership and employment practices. The result was a series of violent conflicts that resembled religious wars, with Catholic up-risings being put down by Protestant colonists supported by British forces.

The late eighteenth century gave birth to the Irish Republican movement. In 1791, Theobald Wolfe Tone, a Protestant of middle-class origin, founded the Society of United Irishmen. The United Irishmen, whose membership was almost entirely composed of Protestants, sought to unite Catholics and Protestants in an Irish Republic that would separate from England. Wolfe Tone is considered to be the father of Irish Republicanism; the United Irishmen are considered to be the first Republican organization in Ireland.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the Republican movement was born with the establishment of a Protestant organization founded by a Protestant individual challenges the assertion that nationalism and Catholicism are necessarily synonymous. Following a rebellion led by Tone in 1798, which was quelled by the British, Ireland was officially brought into the British union. The Act of Union of 1800 united Great Britain (which included Britain, Scotland and Wales) and Ireland as the United Kingdom.

The early nineteenth century was marked by new conflict between Protestants and Catholics. Following the Act of Union, the Anglican Church, which was already established as the official Church of England, also became the established Church of Ireland. As a result, Irish Roman Catholics were expected to pay tithes to the Protestant Church of Ireland. This resulted in the tithe war, a period of protest by Catholics against the Church of Ireland. The result of this

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<sup>10</sup> Tim Pat Coogan. *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966-1996 and the Search for Peace*. London: Arrow Books Limited, 1996. 1-5.

<sup>11</sup> Both these groups considered themselves to belong to a Protestant sect; at this time the English primarily belonged to the Anglican church, while the Scottish were Calvinists.

war was the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland in 1871.<sup>13</sup> This act was part of the larger Catholic Emancipation, which consisted of a series of laws passed during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The earliest of these laws enabled Catholics to acquire land and to freely practice their religion. The most important period of the emancipation occurred between 1800 and 1830, under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell, a Catholic. As a result of the laws passed during this period, Catholics gained the right to be elected to British Parliament and to hold public office.<sup>14</sup> O'Connell became an important figure in Irish Republican history. Following his success in gaining Catholic Emancipation, he began organizing public demonstrations to demand the repeal of the Act of Union. While the Repeal Movement itself failed, it served as a rallying point for the nationalist organization.

From its point of inception to its role in the Northern Ireland Troubles, Irish Republicanism has undergone several transformations, with changing ideology, tactics and membership. A major conflict within the movement was the question of constitutional versus military tactics for achieving independence. During the Repeal Movement and the Home Rule Movement the focus was primarily constitutional. Under the leadership of Protestant Member of Parliament Charles Stuart Parnell and his successor John Redmond, the Home Rule movement sought an arrangement in which Ireland would be given control of many aspects of the country's administration, while officially remaining under the rule of the British crown. However, this focus on constitutional nationalism necessitated an increase in military nationalist activity, rather than preventing it. In opposition to the Home Rule movement, Ulster Unionists formed the Ulster Volunteer Force, a military organization dedicated to the prevention of Irish independence.<sup>15</sup> If Ireland had been granted Home Rule, the unionist population would have come under the control of the Catholic majority. Afraid that this would lead to Protestant oppression at the

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<sup>12</sup> Coogan 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ireland, Church of. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Available On-line: <http://search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=43711&tocid=0&query=catholic%20tithes%20in%20ireland> (4/5/02).

<sup>14</sup> "Catholic Emancipation." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Available On-line:

hands of the Catholic community, the Unionists refused to accept Home Rule. Thus religion played an important role in the conflict not because the whole of Ireland was unremittingly Catholic, but because Ulster was staunchly Protestant. In response to the formation of the UVF, the Irish Volunteer force was formed in 1913. The volunteers prepared to militarily defend the implementation of Home Rule. This began the organization of the nationalist movement's armed wing.

In 1916 the Irish Volunteers, in collaboration with the Irish Republican Brotherhood,<sup>16</sup> staged the Easter Rising. While the rising did not result in a military defeat of the British by the Irish, it did serve as a rallying point for public opinion. The execution of the rebellion's leaders, as well as the haphazard arrest policies of the British shifted Irish public opinion in favor of Irish independence.<sup>17</sup> This opinion was further influenced by British threats to include Ireland in its conscription plan.<sup>18</sup> The opposition to conscription, as well as the backlash against the execution of the Easter rebels, was channeled into a newly emerged Republican political organization, Sinn Fein. In the 1918 general election, Sinn Fein won seventy-three seats, replacing Home Rule as the primary Irish nationalist parliamentary party. The Irish Volunteers was succeeded by the Irish Republican Army, which was technically independent from Sinn Fein but shared a common membership.<sup>19</sup>

For the South of Ireland, the struggle for independence came to a close following the Irish War of Independence. This conflict, largely a series of guerilla-style skirmishes in Ireland between the IRA and the British security forces, brought Britain and Ireland to the negotiating

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<http://search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=22159&tocid=0&query=catholic%20emancipation> (4/5/02).

<sup>15</sup> Coogan 547.

<sup>16</sup> The Irish Republican Brotherhood was a secret society formed in 1858;. Tim Pat Coogan credits the IRB with forming a body of revolutionary ideas concerning republicanism, separatism, identity and a consciousness of being Irish whose historical hour did not strike until the following century. (Coogan 13).

<sup>17</sup> Coogan 23.

<sup>18</sup> Conscription is mandatory participation in the armed services, also known as a draft. It was implemented in Britain during World War I, when the great loss of lives diminished the number of men voluntarily enrolled in the armed forces, and necessitated the institution of plans for compulsory service. While many Irish voluntarily enrolled in the British army, Irish public opinion opposed the extension of conscription to Ireland.

<sup>19</sup> Coogan 24.

table in 1920. The treaty that resulted provided for a twenty-six county Irish Free State in the South, which would be ruled by its own parliament<sup>20</sup>, but would maintain an oath of allegiance to the British crown. In Northern Ireland six counties of Ulster<sup>21</sup> would also be granted their own parliament<sup>22</sup>, separate from the southern parliament. This partition was a compromise meant to pacify the nationalist and unionist communities. However, it did not pacify the entire Republican community; the organization split over the terms of the treaty, causing a civil war within Ireland. The pro-treaty forces eventually prevailed and partition became a reality in 1921. The Irish Free State quietly evolved into the Republic of Ireland, while Northern Ireland remained a part of the British kingdom.<sup>23</sup>

For the next forty years the island maintained a state of relative peace. The Irish Republican Army continued to exist, carrying out intermittent acts of violence. However, its membership was small. Sinn Fein refused to recognize Dail Eireann, Stormont or Westminster, making it impotent as a political party. The party became known as the political wing of the IRA; it concerned itself with the generation of Republican propaganda, with fund-raising, and with maintaining a non-violent image.<sup>24</sup> The peaceful state of affairs changed in 1968 when the issue of civil rights resurrected the Republican movement. In Northern Ireland, under the rule of Protestant-controlled Stormont, the Catholic community was being denied access to adequate housing, employment, and educational opportunities. Because suffrage was dependent upon home ownership, widespread Catholic poverty also resulted in Catholic exclusion from electoral

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<sup>20</sup> Dail Eireann is the name of the Republican of Ireland's parliament.

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<sup>22</sup> Stormont is the name of Northern Ireland's parliament.

<sup>23</sup> Coogan 23-25.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Arthur. *The Conflict. Frontline: The IRA and Sinn Fein*. PBS, 1998. Transcript available On-line: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ira/conflict>. The relationship between Sinn Fein and the IRA is an issue of contention. Sinn Fein maintains that the IRA is an entirely independent organization, while the party's opponents claim that a vote for Sinn Fein is a vote for the PIRA. Northern Irish historian Paul Arthur contends that the two organizations might at one time have been the same entity, but that the emergence of Gerry Adams as a legitimate political figure has led to a complete separation of the two organizations. However, during the early period of the Northern Ireland Troubles, Sinn Fein and the IRA were collaborating bodies in the Republican movement. Given the fact that the two organizations have an overlapping membership, and that many current Sinn Fein politicians have a history of PIRA military involvement, the link between the two is undeniable.

participation.<sup>25</sup> In response to this situation, the civil rights movement was launched. Inspired by the United States Civil Rights movement, the Catholic community adopted tactics of civil disobedience to herald their cause.

The goal of the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland was Catholic equality, not Northern Irish independence. However, as Catholicism was historically linked with Republicanism, Northern Irish Unionists feared that the Civil Rights movement was a resurgence of separatist Republicanism in disguise.<sup>26</sup> Thus Civil Rights mass demonstrations were met with Unionist protest. In order to prevent serious outbreaks of violence, the Northern Ireland government banned a planned 1969 march in Derry; when the march proceeded despite the ban, the Royal Ulster Constabulary<sup>27</sup> used their batons to disperse the crowd.<sup>28</sup> This incident became known as the Battle of Bogside. In response to growing violence, the British army was sent to Northern Ireland to maintain order. What began as a movement based upon non-violent protest quickly disintegrated into sectarian violence. The physical violence that Catholics met, at the hands of the British army and the predominantly Protestant Northern Ireland police force, raised issues of national and religious identity. The Catholic community began to question whether it would ever gain equality in Northern Ireland; perhaps an independent, united Republic of Ireland would be the only solution to the problems the community faced.

With nationalist sentiment expanding, the Republican organization was forced to re-evaluate its position in Northern Ireland. During a 1969 meeting of IRA leadership in Belfast, a split occurred between the supporters of non-violent tactics and those members who believed that the IRA's passive stance had left the Catholic communities in Northern Ireland

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<sup>25</sup> Arthur. The Conflict.

<sup>26</sup> Coogan 74.

<sup>27</sup> Northern Ireland police force.

<sup>28</sup> The Civil Rights Campaign. CAIN Web Service. Available On-line: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html> (3/18/01).

unprotected.<sup>29</sup> Thus the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Provisional Sinn Fein emerged.<sup>30</sup> The new organization's message was that Catholic equality could not be attained in a British controlled Northern Ireland; however, it would certainly be possible in a united Republic of Ireland. The newly formed organization used growing Catholic dissent to sow the seeds of a rejuvenated Republican movement. While the mass movement had not begun as a nationalist movement, it began to become one

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<sup>29</sup> Arthur. *The Conflict*.

<sup>30</sup> The non-violent political organization that remained following the split was referred to as Official Sinn Fein and Official IRA. Official IRA disbanded in 1972; Official Sinn Fein became the Worker's Party. For the remainder of this thesis, Provisional Sinn Fein will be referred to as Sinn Fein, the name by which it is recognized in Northern Ireland. The Provisional IRA will be indicated with the abbreviation PIRA.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Role of Prison in the Republican Movement**

With the birth of a Republican paramilitary organization dedicated to the violent pursuit of a united Ireland, the prison system took on an inevitable importance in the organization. Prison was an unavoidable aspect of Republican involvement. The British policy of internment without trial allowed individuals to be jailed simply on the suspicion of Republican involvement. Because PIRA recruits were generally young and untrained in the art of guerilla warfare, they were not capable of avoiding capture. Therefore, prison became a standard component of the Republican paramilitary experience. Yet, during the Northern Ireland Troubles, the PIRA argued that rather than being a deterrent to Republican activities, the imprisonment and internment<sup>31</sup> of its members was put to a positive end in the Republican movement. The organization recognized that members of the PIRA could continue to serve the movement despite their imprisonment. Rather than being isolated, the prison community was an extension of the battlefield. Prison was the site of political and tactical training. It was a place where social networks were formed. Prison was also seen as a possible rallying point for public sentiment, as members of the community protested against the mistreatment of the prisoners. Republican prisoners were able to play a central role in the continuing fight for a united Ireland. Once in prison, new recruits gained an education that turned them into technically skilled, politically dedicated Republican guerilla fighters. As a result, prison was depicted as a necessary component of Republican experience. It was because of the importance of the prison in the Republican movement that the writings of Sands, Adams and Morrison were influential in creating an image of Republicanism.

### An Overview of Northern Ireland Prison Policies & Republican Responses

Over the period of 1969 to 1996 the typical prison experience of Republicans underwent several radical changes. The difference across time in these experiences was largely a result of the Republican reaction to the changing British policies. In August of 1971, in response to growing violence in Northern Ireland, the British instituted a policy of internment; this allowed men and women to be imprisoned without trial on the suspicion of Republican or Loyalist paramilitary involvement. Suspects did not pass through the traditional judicial system; instead they were tried in Diplock courts, a juryless judicial system created in 1973 to handle alleged terrorist offences.<sup>32</sup> During the period of internment, Republican prisoners were housed in complexes similar to army barracks. Internees enjoyed the rights to free association, wore their own clothing, were excluded from prison work, and had generous visitation and parcel privileges.<sup>33</sup> The PIRA prisoners even maintained an internal command structure within the prison. Prisoners were under the authority of commanding officers (OCs), prisoners chosen by the organization to make decisions and deal with prison officials on behalf of the hut.<sup>34</sup> Republicans detained under the policy of internment were considered Special Category Prisoners. They were differentiated from criminal prisoners both conceptually and geographically. It is under these circumstances that Gerry Adams wrote the articles for *An Phoblacht/Republican News* that would later be compiled to create the book *Cage Eleven*<sup>35</sup>.

While internment without trial ended in 1972, men arrested for PIRA activities after this point were still considered to be Special Category prisoners. In March 1976 the Special Category status was eliminated. The change was a result of Britain's realization that political status legitimized the PIRA's violence by recognizing the situation as a war of independence,

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<sup>31</sup> Within this thesis, internment is specifically used to identify the period between 1971 and 1976 when internment without trial and Special Category prisoner status were in existence. Imprisonment refers to the period following 1976 when PIRA members were considered Ordinary Decent Criminals.

<sup>32</sup> Coogan 271.

<sup>33</sup> Coogan 263.

<sup>34</sup> Padraig O Malley. *Biting at the Grave*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990. 18

<sup>35</sup> Gerry Adams. *Cage Eleven*. Dingle Ireland: Brandon Book Publishers, 1990.

rather than an unwarranted campaign of terrorism. Criminalization sought to "change the context of the conflict to redefine the problem in terms of law and order and to label militant Republicans as terrorists, criminals without a political dimension to their actions."<sup>36</sup> However, Republicans continued to be tried by the special Diplock courts. Even though they were convicted by a non-traditional court system, the PIRA prisoners were expected to adhere to traditional prison discipline. The rights they had enjoyed as Special Category internees were revoked, and men were moved from internment camps to cell block prisons. The largest portion of these prisoners was housed in the H-Blocks of Maze prison.

The first man imprisoned under ODC status was Kiernan Nugent. Nugent refused to wear a prison uniform, stating, "they will have to nail the clothes on my back."<sup>37</sup> In place of a uniform, Nugent wore the only other thing available to him, a prison blanket. This began the PIRA blanket protest, in which men wore only blankets or towels. The protest intensified when the prisoners, angered that they were not given an additional towel to use for the shower, refused to wash themselves. As a final progression in the protest, the PIRA prisoners began to smear their feces on the walls rather than use the buckets provided to them by the prison. The dirty protest continued for four years; by 1980 it is estimated that over 400 prisoners were involved in this protest.<sup>38</sup>

The blanket and dirty protest were portrayed by the Republican movement as an attempt to undermine the authority of the prison officials. Prisoners imagined the worst humiliation that the prison officials could inflict on them and chose to "inflict a hardship of at least equal severity on themselves, thus devaluing the system's power to intimidate them. Their willingness to deprive themselves undermined the authority of the regime to do so."<sup>39</sup> At any time the prisoners could have improved their condition by agreeing to conform to prison regulations.

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<sup>36</sup> O'Malley 19.

<sup>37</sup> Coogan 265.

<sup>38</sup> Coogan 265.

<sup>39</sup> O'Malley 23.

However, this would have meant accepting that their crimes were not political, which would have undermined the legitimacy of the Republican cause. As a result, the blanket protest "changed the criteria of prestige from military success to blanket stamina."<sup>40</sup> Perpetrating acts of violence was less important than enduring humiliation. The Republican perception of this period is given in Bobby Sands' writings,<sup>41</sup> which were compiled into the book, *Writings from Prison*,<sup>42</sup> in 1981.

In October of 1980, after four years "on the blanket," PIRA leadership in the prison decided that the protest was no longer sending a strong enough message. Also, the conditions were beginning to wear on the health and mental status of the prisoners. The prison leadership made the decision to escalate the protest to include a hunger strike, believing this would hasten a resolution of the situation. The hunger strike was not a new undertaking for the PIRA. Between 1916 and the onset of the 1980 hunger strike, twelve Irish nationalists<sup>43</sup> starved themselves to death in pursuit of some Republican ideal.<sup>44</sup> Hunger strikes have been a popular form of protest in Ireland because they fuse elements of the legal code of ancient Ireland, of the self-denial that is the central characteristic of Irish Catholicism, and of the propensity for endurance and sacrifice that is the hallmark of militant Irish nationalism.<sup>45</sup> Thus the hunger strike was a means of protest frequently adopted by Republican prisoners.

In order to devote full attention to the hunger strike, the prisoners brought their other protests to an end. The hunger strike consisted of seven prisoners. They had five demands: the right to wear their own clothes, the right to abstain from prison work, the right to free

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<sup>40</sup> Stevenson 115.

<sup>41</sup> As the prisoners were not permitted to possess paper and writing implements, this and other writings were written on toilet paper using pen refills the men kept hidden inside their bodies. Like all communications, Sands' work was smuggled out of the prison through a crude system in which items were wrapped in cling film and kept inside the anus of prisoners until they could be given to family members during monthly visits.

<sup>42</sup> Bobby Sands. *Writings from Prison*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1997.

<sup>43</sup> These men include Thomas Ashe, who died in 1917 as a result of forced feeding following a hunger strike for political prisoner recognition; Terence MacSwiney, who died in 1920 after 74 days without food; Billy McKee, whose mass hunger strike in 1972 brought about the political recognition that prisoners enjoyed from 1972-1976; Frank Stagg, who died in 1976 while seeking repatriation to Ireland from Britain. (O Malley 26-28, Coogan 269-270)

<sup>44</sup> Ed Blanche. An Ancient Irish Form of Protest Confronts Britain. *Associated Press*, 5/23/81.

<sup>45</sup> O Malley 25.

association within their cell block, the right to recreation and education, and the restoration of remission.<sup>46</sup> To the prisoners these rights equaled political status even without the return of official title. After fifty-three days, following discussions by a team of negotiators,<sup>47</sup> both parties made concessions that brought the strike to an end. However, there was confusion as to the exact details of the agreement; it became clear that the five demands had not been met to the degree that PIRA negotiators had initially believed. Based on the feeling that the British had intentionally misled negotiators, Republican anti-British sentiment intensified within the Republican community.

At the same, Bobby Sands and other PIRA imprisoned leaders recognized that the hunger strikers themselves were partly to blame for the failure. Poor planning and a lack of firm agreement about the goals of the strike limited its effectiveness from the beginning. Thus, on March 1, 1981, Sands was the first man to enter a second hunger strike. This time the strikers did not all begin at once; rather their entrances into the strike were staggered so the eventual deaths would have a more drawn-out effect.<sup>48</sup> This hunger strike was begun with the conviction that it would be carried out until political status was granted, even if this meant multiple deaths. The external Republican leadership did not completely support the hunger strike, believing that the failure of a second strike so soon after the first would undermine the position of the PIRA. However, the leadership also knew that if the prisoners chose to strike, the organization would have to support them in order to avoid a public split within the Republican camp.<sup>49</sup> The hunger strikes were a period in which the wishes of the prison community overrode those of the external PIRA leadership.

From the beginning of the hunger strikes, Margaret Thatcher assured the Republican organization that there would be no negotiations; if they chose to starve themselves to death,

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<sup>46</sup> Remission, the shortening of prison sentences available to all prisoners based upon behavior, was taken from the prisoners as a punitive measure during the dirty protest. (Coogan 271)

<sup>47</sup> The negotiators included PIRA OCs Bobby Sands and Brendan Hughes, senior officials from the Northern Ireland Office, the governor of the prison, and a non-PIRA affiliated priest. (O Malley 30-31)

the British government would not stop them.<sup>50</sup> Thatcher's position remained firm, even in the face of Bobby Sands' election to a seat in the Westminster Parliament in April of 1980. The Republican organization hailed the election as a sign that public opinion was shifting in its favor.<sup>51</sup> It also believed that it would place pressure on Margaret Thatcher to begin negotiations. However, the hunger strikes continued without British intervention. Sands died in May, followed by nine of his fellow prisoners. The deaths were spread across seven months. On October 3, 1981, the strike ended as a result of family intervention and the declining impact of the deaths.<sup>52</sup>

The hunger strikes provided the Republican movement with ten new martyrs to be offered up to other paramilitaries as an example of the intensity of self-sacrifice the Republicans were expected to accept. It also emphasized the glory that awaited martyrs. During the hunger strikes, Bobby Sands redefined the role of the Republican as the suffering hero. Sands was described by Republican leader Gerry Adams as:

An ordinary young Irish man who lived and died in the extraordinary conditions which exist in the occupied part of Ireland. In the course of his short life he came to challenge these unjust conditions in an extraordinarily heroic and unselfishly courageous way.<sup>53</sup>

Before the fast, Sands was little known outside his family and circle of friends; at the time of his death, his picture was posted throughout Catholic neighborhoods in the North and appeared in newspapers worldwide.<sup>54</sup> Sands' funeral procession drew a crowd of seventy

<sup>48</sup> O'Malley 33-34.

<sup>49</sup> Coogan 276.

<sup>50</sup> O'Malley 278.

<sup>51</sup> O'Malley 60-61. Joanne Wright. *Terrorist Propaganda*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. 137-148.

<sup>52</sup> As the number of deaths increased, the public began to feel apathetic toward the fate of the hunger strikers. Pádraig O'Malley explains about the death of Mickey Devine, the final hunger striker to die, "It was a statement of futility and meaningless rather than purpose. Nor did his death excite much interest. Media coverage was cursory. There was little violence in either Derry or Belfast, and there were few protestors on the streets. Apathy had begun to take the place of anger; the anger had exhausted itself, leaving only a cynical indifference." (O'Malley 133). The Republican movement began to receive negative press for allowing the death toll to continue rising; therefore it became necessary for the strike to be called off before public opinion shifted drastically against the Republicans.

<sup>53</sup> Gerry Adams Foreword. Bobby Sands. *Writings from Prison*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1997. 7

<sup>54</sup> Jeff Bradley. Sands Seen as Hero or Terrorist. *The Associated Press*, 5/5/81.

thousand.<sup>55</sup> The ten men who followed him also took their place within the legacy of Irish martyrdom.<sup>56</sup>

The hunger strikers are credited with improving the prison situation for those who followed them. Three days after the strike was called off, the prisoners were granted permission to wear their own clothes and remission was reinstated. Eventually the remaining demands were met as well, returning to prisoners the advantages of special category status that they had enjoyed previous to 1976, without the actual return of political status.<sup>57</sup> The H-Blocks during this period closely resembled the old barrack system used during Gerry Adams's time in prison. Each wing of the prison had access to its own recreational and athletic facilities. Prisoners enjoyed access to television, VCR, stereo and library privileges. Prisoners had constant access to a pay telephone. Cell doors were never locked. Once again an internal command structure was the dominant authority within the cellblocks; for the most part PIRA prisoners were self-regulating.<sup>58</sup> The old system of informal education was replaced by a formal system through which prisoners could receive secondary school equivalency diplomas or work towards their Bachelor degree.<sup>59</sup> Thus 1990-1992 prison environment that Danny Morrison wrote about in *Then the Walls Came Down*<sup>60</sup> was quite different than the experience depicted by Sands and Adams.

#### Prison as a battlefield: Links between prisoners & the movement

In Northern Ireland, prison could remove PIRA members from active participation in violence, but it did not isolate them completely from the movement. The reality is that most of the leading figures in the Republican movement spent time in jail at some point. It became

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<sup>55</sup> O'Malley 157.

<sup>56</sup> Of the "ten men dead," Sands is the most frequently invoked of the hunger strike martyrs, primarily because his death was the first, the publicity surrounding it was the most abundant, and the availability of his writings made him a more human figure. Sands came to embody the hunger strikes; the ten deaths are frequently condensed into the single representative figure of Sands.

<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Stevenson. *We Wrecked the Place*. NY: The Free Press, 1996. 103.

<sup>58</sup> Stevenson 105.

<sup>59</sup> Stevenson 104-107.

<sup>60</sup> Danny Morrison. *Then The Walls Came Down*. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1999.

necessary to develop strategies for paramilitaries' continued inclusion in the struggle because, at any one time, a large number of them were in prison.

The prison experience has been cited as strengthening individuals' commitment to the Republican movement in several ways. Following interviews with fourteen Republicans who served time for their involvement with the PIRA, Jonathan Stevenson concludes that, "Most Republicans before going to jail had only an impressionistic view that Unionism hurt them where a united Ireland would help them. Jail gave their experiences some context."<sup>61</sup> In an interview with PBS, Republican Jim Gibney said of his prison experience: "I think it had a huge impact on me. I think that it was probably instrumental in me remaining a Republican from then until now, which is over 20 years. I was there for just under 2 years and I think that's where I got my early years of political education."<sup>62</sup> For the Republican prisoners, prison freed them from the responsibility of daily life, allowing them to devote all their attention to the conflict. It also provided them with a more formal education in the intricacies of the movement. During the period of Special Category Status, free association with fellow internees allowed internment to become a training ground for the Republican movement. Bringing together recent PIRA recruits with seasoned Republicans ensured that recent recruits were taught the history and philosophy of the Republican struggle. Classes in Gaelic were held so men could become fluent in their native language; also, it was a means of ensuring privacy for the internees' conversations, as the prison guards did not speak Gaelic.<sup>63</sup>

Conflict with the prison guards was another important aspect of young paramilitaries' prison experience. Jackie McMullan, a member of the H-block blank protest recalls, "I never hated anybody in my life until I was sentenced and was on that protest and experienced the

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<sup>61</sup> Stevenson 110.

<sup>62</sup> "Interview with Jim Gibney." *Frontline: The IRA and Sinn Fein*. PBS, 1998. Transcript available On-line: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ira/inside/gibney.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Stevenson 110.

brutality and ill treatment.<sup>64</sup> The prisoners' situation and their alleged oppressors in prison were tangible. While they still felt that the entire Unionist community was oppressing them, the prisoners made prison guards and officials the direct target of their anger. Through daily and sometimes trivial confrontations with prison officers, the prisoners were able to maintain their morale.<sup>65</sup> This was carried out in the verbal abuse of the guards, threats of violence to the guards' families, and even the murders of eighteen off-duty guards.<sup>66</sup> Making the prison establishment their enemy of choice allowed the prisoners to channel their energies into a form of protest rather than despair at their situation.

Through these instances of formal and informal education in what it meant to be a Republican, seasoned revolutionary thinking was created from the youths' crude, unchanneled energy. New paramilitaries frequently joined the PIRA without firm political convictions; however, for many of them prison served as a site of political education that transformed them from individuals who were eager to believe in any cause to individuals dedicated to the Republican project.

In addition to refining the political beliefs of young paramilitaries, prison served as an important site for the creation of skilled fighters. Informal classes were held in guerilla warfare tactics such as bomb building, intelligence gathering and covert operations.<sup>67</sup> The inexperience that had contributed to the prisoners' arrests was replaced with technical knowledge. The shared experience of hardship trained the men to depend upon one another, developing a trust in the collective that would be important when released prisoners returned to active duty. The building of a close-knit community was an important aspect of internment and imprisonment. Gerry Adams reflected on this experience in the introduction to *Cage Eleven*: We did our time on each other's backs, and at times we may have got each other down but mostly we enjoyed

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<sup>64</sup> Stevenson 95.

<sup>65</sup> Wright 163.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Von Tangen Page. *Prisons, Peace and Terrorism*. NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998. 61.

<sup>67</sup> Stevenson 93.

one another's company and comradeship.<sup>68</sup> After the revocation of Special Category Status, the idea of camaraderie was of central importance in building the prisoners' morale and maintaining their willingness to carry on the blanket protest. In his story *One Day in My Life*, Bobby Sands explains that his will to carry on was fueled by his peers: "There were forty-three of my comrades in the wing in exactly the same predicament as myself."<sup>69</sup> Prisoners were encouraged by the knowledge that they were not alone. They also were aware of the ignominy that awaited men who chose to leave the blanket protest and comply with prison regulations. Men who chose to leave the protest were labeled with the pejorative term "squeaky-booters," which referred to the sounds the prison issue footwear made on the floors. These men became alienated from the movement because they chose to abandon their participation in the collective protest in favor of their own well-being.<sup>70</sup> While these individuals improved the details of their daily existence, in doing so they removed themselves from the body of individuals on whom they had depended for support. Therefore, individuals' drive to continue the protest was fueled by affection for their comrades, as well as by a fear of isolation from these comrades. Internment and imprisonment created networks among the prisoners.

The situation inside the prisons also strengthened the cohesion of the Republican community outside the prison. As Duncan McLaughlan, a Northern Ireland prison deputy explains: "We recognize that you can't divorce prisoners totally from the outside world. In Northern Ireland, prisoners are much more a part of the community, and we recognize the value of prisoners in public relations."<sup>71</sup> As Pdraig O Malley explains, the prisoners' mentality permeated the broader Republican community:

For every prisoner there were mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, children, girlfriends, networks of friends and relatives who fed off the prison culture, adopting its values, cultivating its

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<sup>68</sup> Gerry Adams. *Cage Eleven*. Dingle, Ireland: Brandon Book Publishers, 1990.

<sup>69</sup> Bobby Sands. *Writings from Prison*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1997. 33.

<sup>70</sup> Stevenson 115.

<sup>71</sup> Stevenson 109.

resentments, their perceptions of reality mirroring and often magnifying the perceptions of the prisoners themselves.<sup>72</sup>

This was especially true during the hunger strikes, when prison became the central focus of the Republican movement; rather than merely being an extension of the battlefield, the prison actually became the battlefield. However, even when the role of the prison in the larger movement was not this evident to the outside community, prison always served as an important aspect of the Republican experience.

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<sup>72</sup> O'Malley 107.

### Chapter 3 Propaganda: Meaning and Methods

In the Northern Ireland Troubles, propaganda played a vital role in the building and maintenance of public support for the Republican cause. It also played a role in regulating the way in which active Republican paramilitaries viewed the movement and their place within it. In his book *The Media and Political Violence*, Richard Clutterbuck argues that the Northern Ireland conflict was primarily a propaganda war supported by a shooting war; he argues that the Republican's propaganda arm was always more vital to its survival, and hence more effective, than its combat arm.<sup>73</sup> Despite the negative connotations that the term propaganda has amassed, the term does not by definition include deception.<sup>74</sup> The word propaganda denotes the deliberate manipulation, by means of symbols, of other people's thoughts or actions with respect to beliefs, values, and behaviors which these people regard as controversial.<sup>75</sup> It endeavors to persuade its subject or public of one point of view, and close off other opinions.<sup>76</sup> The term derives from the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, a Catholic commission formed in 1622 to regulate the activities of missionaries. This first official propaganda organization was charged with improving the dissemination of a group of religious dogmas<sup>77</sup>; their mission was one of proselytizing, as they attempted not only to spread information about their religion, but also to encourage conversion to it. Initially used as a verb to indicate the spreading of an ideology, the word propaganda has come to be used as an indicator for the ideology being spread, the organization spreading the ideology, and the methods used in the dissemination of

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<sup>73</sup> Richard Clutterbuck. *The Media and Political Violence*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1981. 87-88.

<sup>74</sup> Propaganda in modern times has come to imply something morally evil: dirty, underhanded, cynical, manipulative, deceptive techniques of persuasion if not outright lying. (Ralph K. White. "Propaganda: Morally Questionable and Morally Unquestionable Techniques." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1971. 398:26) The term first came to be viewed with suspicion as a result of World War I, when Britain, France, Germany and the United States supplemented military action with government organized propaganda efforts. (Harold Laswell. *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1927) However, it was during World War II, largely the result of Nazi propaganda, that it has come to have such pejorative associations. (Sills 579).

<sup>75</sup> David Sills. "Propaganda." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. New York: Macmillan, 1968. 11: 579-586. 579.

the ideology.<sup>76</sup> By definition, propaganda is an intentional attempt at influencing others. It is created to produce a desired reaction that is presented as being beneficial to both the originator and the recipient.

#### Considerations in the Employment of Political Propaganda as related to the Republican Propaganda Project

During World War II, the nature of political propaganda shifted dramatically from indiscriminately bombarding the reactors to placing the shots.<sup>79</sup> Effective political propaganda attempts to elicit the greatest possible output through the most efficient means. In order for this to occur, several factors must be considered. The first of these is determining to what end the propaganda is being employed. Once the goal has been established, other factors can be addressed. This means determining *what audience* will receive *which significant symbols* through *which channels*.<sup>80</sup>

Propaganda is an appeal to the emotions of the audience. Joseph Goebbels<sup>81</sup> said of propaganda I cannot convince a single person of the necessity of something unless I know the soul of that person, unless I understand how to pluck the string in the harp of his soul that must be made to sound.<sup>82</sup> It is impossible for the propagandist to gain this insight into every individual that he hopes to reach. Therefore, he must depend on its knowledge of collective identities. The propagandist must restrict himself to dealing with the individual as a standard member of some groups or sub-groups which he differentiates upon the basis of extrinsic evidence.<sup>83</sup> This extrinsic evidence is provided through knowledge of the individual's association with ethnic, religious, political and social groups. This tactic is based on the premise

<sup>76</sup> David Welch. Powers of Persuasion. *History Today*. 49.8 (August, 1999): 24.

<sup>77</sup> Welch 24.

<sup>78</sup> Welch 24.

<sup>79</sup> Sells 183.

<sup>80</sup> Sells 183.

<sup>81</sup> Goebbels served as the German Minister for People's Enlightenment for the Nazi party. As the official propagandist of the regime, it was during his reign, and largely a result of his practices, that propaganda amassed the negative connotations it has today.

<sup>82</sup> Joseph Goebbels. Speech, Nuremberg, 3/33. Cited in Welch 24.

that individuals seek out opinion formers from within their own class or sex or for confirmation of their own ideas or attitudes ;<sup>84</sup> opinions are formed through interaction with reference groups with which the individual feels that he is at home and is surrounded with a certain degree of intimate emotional response and personal protection."<sup>85</sup> It is through appeals to these groups that propaganda is able to reach individuals. Because of the links between Catholicism and Republicanism discussed in Chapter 1, as well as the fact that the troubles in Northern Ireland arose in response to Catholic oppression, Irish Republican propaganda frequently targeted this community. Thus, references to Catholic imagery, Catholic beliefs and Catholic traditions were common in the Republican propaganda during this time period.

At the most basic level, the reference groups with which an individual identifies will position that individual in one of three relationships with a political movement: pre-disposed, neutral or antagonistic.<sup>86</sup> It is the role of the propagandist to intensify the attitudes favorable to his purpose, to reverse the attitudes hostile to it, and to attract the indifferent, or, at the worst, to prevent them from assuming a hostile bent.<sup>87</sup> However, theorists argue that an antagonistic individual's initial relation to a political ideology is unlikely to be reversed by propaganda. It is agreed that propaganda confirms rather than converts; it is most effective when its message is in line with the existing opinions and beliefs of those it is aimed at (sic).<sup>88</sup> This intra-group propaganda exists to consolidate an existing attitude, and not, like the extra-group propagandas, to assume the additional burden of proselytizing.<sup>89</sup> The extent to which propaganda addresses the antagonistic audience is dependent on the prospect of achieving conversion; in the Northern Ireland troubles, it is presumed that attitudes toward the conflict are so engrained that conversion from Unionism to Republicanism, or vice versa, is unlikely. As a

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<sup>83</sup> Harold Laswell. "The Theory of Political Propaganda." *The American Political Science Review*. 21:3 (August 1927): 627-631. p. 629.

<sup>84</sup> Welch 28.

<sup>85</sup> Sills 585.

<sup>86</sup> Sills 586.

<sup>87</sup> Lasswell 629.

<sup>88</sup> Welch 24.

result, Republican propaganda is primarily directed to those individuals who are pre-disposed or neutral toward the Republican ideology.

In *Terrorist Propaganda*, Joanne Wright divides the audience for terrorist propaganda into the categories uncommitted, sympathetic and active. Wright argues that all terrorist propaganda is generated based on these divisions. The uncommitted audience is composed of members of society who neither explicitly support nor oppose the ideology of the terrorist group. Wright identifies two components of this audience: the general public of the country in which the terrorist group is operating and international opinion.<sup>90</sup> Because this audience has the potential to commit on either side of the conflict, propaganda is especially important in maintaining their neutrality or shifting their support to the terrorist group. For the Irish Republican movement, this audience consisted of the general population of Great Britain and members of the international audience who are not of Irish descent. Propaganda directed at the uncommitted audience attempted to depict the British involvement in Ireland as unjust, to justify PIRA violence, and to elicit support from individuals who were in a position to exert pressure on the government of Britain to withdraw from Ireland.<sup>91</sup>

The sympathetic audience of a terrorist group is composed of individuals who have a broad historical or ideological sympathy with the aims of the terrorist group.<sup>92</sup> During this period in Northern Ireland, the sympathetic audience encompassed a range of Republican supporters. Individuals who provided supplies, money or shelter to PIRA members belonged to this audience, as did individuals who favored a united Ireland but condemned PIRA violence. Also included in this group were individuals with ancestral ties to Ireland, or Irish communities abroad.<sup>93</sup> The Republican movement had several goals when creating propaganda directed at the sympathetic audience. First, the sympathetic audience had to be convinced that the current

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<sup>89</sup> Lasswell 629.

<sup>90</sup> Joanne Wright. *Terrorist Propaganda*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. 77.

<sup>91</sup> Wright 79.

<sup>92</sup> Wright 78.

political conditions were unacceptable. The sympathetic audience had to be convinced that it was the victim of oppression at the hands of the British. Second, the propaganda needed to present Republicanism as the only possible alternative to the current arrangement. The sympathetic audience had to not only believe that injustice existed, but also had to accept that a united thirty-two county Republic of Ireland was the best solution to that injustice. Third, the PIRA had to justify its use of violence to achieve its desired solution. This meant depicting the violence as morally acceptable, done only in reaction to British violence, and necessary to achieve the desired result. This goal was especially important because individuals frequently agreed with the Republican ideal, but opposed violence. Republican propaganda had to rule out all other possible paths.<sup>94</sup>

The active audience of propaganda is comprised of those individuals who have direct political involvement in the terrorist program. Once individuals chose to enter the PIRA, propaganda played a role in maintaining their allegiance. In Northern Ireland self-confessed members of the PIRA were regarded as members of the active audience for Republican propaganda. Wright argues that propaganda directed toward this audience was meant to bind the individual to the cause. This was accomplished through three tactics: emphasizing the importance of the collective over the individual, maintaining morale, and extolling the virtues of martyrdom.<sup>95</sup> Once individuals participated in Republican violence they were officially initiated into the Republican fold; at this point they became responsible for maintaining the image of Republicanism. Republican propaganda also bore the burden of creating this image for Republican active members.

Another goal of Republican propaganda was the conversion of sympathetic audience members into active audience members. Part of the motivation for justifying violence was to convince potential active individuals that joining the PIRA was an acceptable path for them to

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<sup>93</sup> Wright 78.

<sup>94</sup> Wright 102.

follow. By convincing the sympathetic audience that it was the victim of oppression, the PIRA was able to present itself as a champion for the oppressed. This made the role of the paramilitary appear heroic and glamorous. It also depicted a paramilitary's life as a preferable alternative to a life of subjugation at the hands of Irish Protestant and British oppressors.

Once the target audience has been identified, the next consideration for the propagandist is what symbols will be most effective in reaching this group. Significant symbols are objects which have a standard meaning in a group.<sup>96</sup> They can be words, gestures, flags, images, monuments, music or other objects whose references are established within the web of a particular culture.<sup>97</sup> Therefore each set of symbols is particular to the culture of the audience to which it is directed. Republican propaganda utilized Irish history, Irish folklore, Irish traditional music, the tri-color flag and the Gaelic language in its propaganda, because these things were thought to embody Irishness. These symbols and their history are significant to the Irish because they establish the fact that Ireland has a distinct culture that pre-dates British control of the island. While the British argue that British control of Ireland is legitimate because the two people share the same ethnic and cultural origins, these symbols question the legitimacy of British rule by showing the differences between British and Irish culture. Therefore, when used in Republican propaganda, these objects were meant to represent the idea of Irish independence from Britain in a united Ireland.

Symbols are selected by determining which values are most integral to the identity of the audience. As Harold Lasswell argues in *The Theory of Political Propaganda* :

Every group has its vested values. An object toward which it is hoped to arouse hostility must be presented as a menace to as many of these values as possible if the plan is to draw out positive attitudes toward an object, it must be presented, not as a menace and an obstruction, nor as despicable or absurd, but as

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<sup>95</sup> Wright 140.

<sup>96</sup> Lasswell 627.

<sup>97</sup> Lasswell 627.

the protector of our values, a champion of our dreams, and a model of virtue and propriety.<sup>98</sup>

Hopes, goals, conceptions of right and wrong, and standards of propriety are examples of such values. Based on this idea, Lasswell introduced the triple-appeal principle as a guiding theory in the selection of symbols. This principle states that propaganda is most effective when it appeals to three aspects of the audience's psyche: the ideas that it proposes are rational, pleasurable and moral.<sup>99</sup> The propaganda will not appear threatening to the audiences' lifestyle, but will offer the promise of an improved existence. Through the manipulation of symbols, the propagandist is able to achieve the "multiplication of those stimuli which are best calculated to evoke the desired responses, and...the nullification of those stimuli which are likely to instigate the undesired response."<sup>100</sup>

Another determination that must be made by the propagandist is what channels will be used to circulate propaganda. The choices here are numerous, ranging from mass media to organization newsletters to word-of-mouth. The most effective channels are those that do not raise suspicion in the audience, as "most persons tend to resist messages that reach them through media that they do not especially trust and enjoy."<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, not all audiences will have access to the same channels. The Republican movement used several different channels to distribute its propaganda, with decisions about which channels to employ based primarily upon the audience being targeted. Within the Northern Irish community, individuals antagonistic or uncommitted to the Republican movement were not as likely to read *An Phoblacht/Republican News*<sup>102</sup> as the sympathetic and active audiences were. Therefore, those

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<sup>98</sup> Lasswell 630.

<sup>99</sup> Sells 584.

<sup>100</sup> Lasswell 630.

<sup>101</sup> Sells 584.

<sup>102</sup> *An Phoblacht/Republican News* is an Irish Republican political newspaper. Previously the newspaper was two separate publications, Dublin's *An Phoblacht* and Belfast's *Republican News*. In 1979, under the impetus of Gerry Adams, the two papers were merged, with Danny Morrison as editor. The readership of *APIRN* is composed of supporters of the Republican movement in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the United States. Under the guidance of the Republican Press Center, *An Phoblacht/Republican News* has served as the primary source of

not already sympathetic to the Republican project had to be through channels that they are unable to easily avoid.<sup>103</sup> Public demonstrations, murals, billboards and other public displays of symbols associated with the PIRA reached all audiences, as did television and radio broadcasts.

Because the movement could not continue to exist without the approval of the active and sympathetic audiences, the propaganda effect of every Republican action was a necessary consideration in the formulation of Republican strategy. The chapters that follow will examine the way in which the Republican prison writings served as propaganda that encouraged participation in the movement, whether this participation was active or passive.

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Republican propaganda directed at the sympathetic and active audiences. (David Sharrock & Mark Devenport. *Man of War, Man of Peace?* London: Macmillan Publishers, 1997. 163; Wright 79).

<sup>103</sup> Wright 118.

## Chapter 4

### Bobby Sands: As Typical Republican and Ideal Hero

Bobby Sands joined the PIRA for many of the typically cited reasons. Sands' family had been driven out of its home in a predominantly Protestant suburb in Northern Ireland after its neighbors learned the family was Catholic. Sands was an average student with no more than fair athletic ability; there was little to set him apart from his peers. At fifteen he left school to work as a barman, later becoming an apprentice coach-builder. Sands left this job two years later, after his co-workers threatened his life because of his religious affiliation.<sup>104</sup> Sands did not have any outstanding future prospects; thus, in 1972, he joined the PIRA. He would later explain his motivation: "I had seen too many homes wrecked, fathers and sons arrested, neighbors hurt, friends murdered. Too much gas, shooting and blood, most of it our own people's."<sup>105</sup> Like most other young paramilitaries, Sands went almost directly to prison. Six months after joining the group, Sands was arrested when four handguns were found in a house in which he was staying. He was sentenced to Cage 11 in Long Kesh.<sup>106</sup> When he was released four years later, he had undergone the same transformation during internment as many other young recruits; Sands was "no longer a naive eighteen-year-old but a committed proponent of Republican separatism with a newly developed sense of self-awareness."<sup>107</sup> Six months later he was arrested again.<sup>108</sup> By this time Special Category Status had been abolished, and Sands was sentenced to serve fourteen years in the H-Blocks. Sands immediately joined the blanket protest.<sup>109</sup> It was at this point that Sands began writing.

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<sup>104</sup> Padraig O Malley. *Biting at the Grave*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990. 40-42.

<sup>105</sup> Quoted in O'Malley 45.

<sup>106</sup> This is the same cage in which Gerry Adams was jailed. Cage 11 was reserved for prisoners who had been convicted of crimes, not simply interned under suspicion of Republican activity.

<sup>107</sup> O Malley 48.

<sup>108</sup> Sands' second arrest took place immediately following a PIRA bombing. Sands' car was stopped and a gun was found in the vehicle. While Sands and the three men in the car could not be directly linked to the bombing, it was suspected that they were the perpetrators. All four were charged with possession of the same firearm, and each received the same fourteen-year sentence (O'Malley 49).

<sup>109</sup> O'Malley 47-49.

Sands initially intended his writings to be heard by his fellow prisoners and active Republicans, both members of the active audience. His work was published under the pseudonym Marcella<sup>110</sup> in *An Phoblacht/Republican News*. Later, at the onset of his hunger strike, a collection of Sands' writings was published for sale in the Catholic neighborhoods of Northern Ireland.<sup>111</sup> Sands' writings helped to build the powerful public image of him as the typical Republican. Tim Pat Coogan describes this as follows:

The character of Sands himself made a powerful impression on the country as a whole. The circumstances of his life and his treatment in Castlereagh<sup>112</sup> could have served as the stereotype for the thousands of Catholic lads whom Sands came to symbolize in Northern Ireland.<sup>113</sup>

Sands was a powerful symbol because he was ordinary; he could have been any young Irish man. It is because of this position that Sands' writing was so effective in creating an image of the ideal Republican that other young men could strive to replicate.

#### Bobby Sands and the image of an active Republican

Each night after lock-up, Sands read his writings aloud for his fellow prisoners. Because of the importance of oral communication within the prisons, these stories were passed on from one cellblock to another, reaching more prisoners than just those who had direct contact with Sands. Danny Morrison called Sands' writings the prisoners' only entertainment, "a beautifully rendered articulation of their own plight."<sup>114</sup> Sands is credited with masterfully putting into words the condition of his fellow prisoners. However, this writing was not merely intended to serve as entertainment but also had value as propaganda; Sands' writing played an important role in showing the importance of self-sacrifice to members of the PIRA.

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<sup>110</sup> PIRA members frequently had nicknames that were used to ensure privacy in internal communications. However, because of the close-knit nature of the Republican community, active and sympathetic members of the movement's audience frequently knew the real identity of these pseudonyms. Therefore, when Sands wrote as Marcella for *An Phoblacht/Republican News* and Gerry Adams wrote for *Republican News* as Brownie, the general readership would have known the actual identities of the writers.

<sup>111</sup> "Sands Writes of Struggle." The Associated Press. Belfast. 5/3/81.

<sup>112</sup> This refers to the seven days Sands spent in the Interrogation Center at Castlereagh, where he claimed to have been the victim of physical and psychological ill-treatment. (O'Malley 49).

<sup>113</sup> Tim Pat Coogan. *The IRA*. London: Fontana, 1987. 28.

As the success of the Republican movement was dependent on the perseverance of its individual members, Sands used his writing to glorify individual strength as a fundamental element of the movement. This can be seen in a passage from "One Day in My Life" that is frequently quoted in Republican literature:

"Tomorrow would only bring more pain and torture and suffering, boredom and fear and God knows how many humiliations, inhumanities and horrors but just as sure as the morrow would be filled with tortures would we carry on and remain unbroken Nothing really mattered except remaining unbroken. They had nothing in their entire imperial arsenal to break the spirit of one single Republican political prisoner-of-war who refuses to be broken, I thought, and that was very true. They can not or never will break our spirit."<sup>115</sup>

In this passage Sands emphasizes the important role that every individual plays in the movement. As long as one single Republican refuses to concede to criminalization, then the spirit of the entire cause will remain unbroken. If one individual is strong enough to endure the entire imperial arsenal, then this individual will inspire others to persevere. A collective of individuals with this level of personal determination is bound to attain victory. On the other hand, one individual's weakness has the potential to permeate the entire movement, assuring the collective's eventual defeat. Therefore, every individual plays an equally important role in the success or failure of the movement.

Sands' writing acknowledges the difficulty of self-sacrifice. Sands writes, "I feel like the only person left in the world. I'm so isolated,"<sup>116</sup> and "There is no place more lonely than the prison cell."<sup>117</sup> When the prisoners feel this sense of isolation, Sands encourages them to gain strength from the knowledge that many others join them in their suffering. Sands conveys this idea in his writing: "I circled the cell floor like a guinea pig, stopping here and there for a moment or two to identify the scratched names on the door and walls; the simple testimony and

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<sup>114</sup> Quoted by Gerry Adams. "Introduction." *The Writing of Bobby Sands*.

<sup>115</sup> Bobby Sands. "One Day in My Life." *The Writing of Bobby Sands*. 80-81.

<sup>116</sup> Sands. *Alone and Condemned*. 162.

reminder that others had been and still were in my position."<sup>118</sup> Relenting would mean that the sacrifices of past and present prisoners have been in vain. Sands reminds his fellow prisoners that they are not solitary revolutionaries, but members of a larger organization. This larger organization will benefit from their willingness to sacrifice their quality of life. Because Sands was seen as a typical prisoner his writing was meant to inspire others —if an individual as ordinary as Sands was able to prevail, then they too had the ability. The prisoners were thus compelled to continue their fight.

In keeping with the Irish tradition of glorious defeat, Sands measures triumph by the amount of suffering that the prisoners can endure without relenting. The image of the ideal Republican is one who possesses a defiant spirit and an ability to persevere. These qualities are recurring themes in his writings, as seen in the following examples:

"I fought a monster today and once more I defeated the monster's army. Although I did not escape, I survived to fight another day. It was hard; harder today than ever before, and it gets worse everyday. You see I am trapped and all I can do is resist."<sup>119</sup>

"Over a hundred men in H Block have fallen and in their nakedness lie brutalised and savaged and beaten to pulp but I feel calm and unafraid as my blood bleeds and my heart breaks. But my spirit cries out, arise and, dear God, is there no end? And I arise, for the risen people can never be put down and so life in this living hell goes on."<sup>120</sup>

In his tales Sands does not actually overtake the prison officials; each day he knows that the next day he will remain in prison under the same conditions. However, success lies in his determination not to concede. Suffering is not depicted as an incidental by-product of the prisoners' fight for a united Ireland, but as the central tactic for victory. Sands reminds his comrades that Republicans will be victorious because they have been willing to endure suffering. As long as the prisoners are able to carry on their daily protest, Sands considers them to be victorious.

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<sup>117</sup> Sands. *A Tribute to Screws*. 165.

<sup>118</sup> Sands. "One Day in My Life." 30.

<sup>119</sup> Sands. "I Fought a Monster Today." 159.

Sands' writing promises true victory in the future for those individuals who are willing to sacrifice themselves in the present. This assurance that the Republican movement will one day prevail served as a means of maintaining morale. The prisoners would have been unable to continue in their protest if they did not believe that it was a battle they would win one day.

Sands' writing promises that victory is forthcoming, both in the prison and in the larger movement. He writes of reassuring himself following an altercation with the prison guards: "We'll get those bastards someday, I told myself. We'll see how big they are then, I thought, as I spat out a mouthful of blood into the corner. We'll see how great they are then."<sup>121</sup> Speaking again of the monster, Sands writes, "I know some day I will defeat this monster."<sup>122</sup> In "One Day in My Life" Sands recounts the rallying cry of the prisoners, a motto representing their determination to succeed in their battles within the prison and without. This battle cry is the Gaelic phrase "Tiocfaidh ar la," which means, "Our day will come." Sands describes the importance of this phrase in the prison:

*"Tiocfaidh ar la!* bounced and rebounded in frightening echoes off the walls, shattering the silence like the impact of a brick crashing through a window, raising hearts, bitterness and hate riveted to every single syllable. 'Our day will come!' That's what it meant and our day would come, I told myself."<sup>123</sup>

Embedded in this vignette is the Republican belief that the movement will inevitably be rewarded for the sacrifices made by its members. Thus individuals are encouraged to endure a little longer.

Appealing to the prisoners' spirituality, Sands promises that the prisoners will be rewarded in heaven for the suffering they endured on earth:

For we have been imprisoned,  
since conceived, within the womb,  
But freedom's fruit will blossom too

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<sup>120</sup> Sands. "And So Life in the Living Hell Goes On." 195.

<sup>121</sup> Sands. "One Day in My Life." 28.

<sup>122</sup> Sands. "One Day in My Life." 159.

<sup>123</sup> Sands. "One Day in My Life." 46.

In the darkness of the tomb.<sup>124</sup>

Sands compares the sacrifice of Irishmen to that of Christ, as seen in the following examples:

Blessed is the man who stands  
 Before his God in pain  
 And on his back a cross of woe  
 His wounds a gaping shame  
 For this man is a son of God  
 And hallowed be his name.<sup>125</sup>

To walk the lonely road  
 Like that of Calvary  
 And take up the cross of Irishmen  
 Who ve carried liberty.<sup>126</sup>

Martyrdom is promised as a reward for those individuals who do not live to see the Republican movement attain its goals. Martyrs are an important aspect of the Irish Republican tradition. The suppression of nationalist uprisings in 1803, 1848, and 1867 changed the criteria of success for the nationalist movement from actual victory to endurance in the face of certain failure. Defeat "fed into the myths of unending rebellion, of ennobling failure."<sup>127</sup> No longer was it necessary to defeat the British; the willingness to shed blood for the cause became a stronger rallying point for the cause of Irish freedom than victory. There was widespread belief that " the chosen few who are prepared to take upon themselves the burden of history can themselves make history, that blood sacrifice is a noble and a cleansing thing, that a glorious defeat is a prerequisite to prevailing, that in death there is victory."<sup>128</sup>

Sands invokes the names of Republican martyrs as a reminder to his fellow prisoners of the importance of being willing to die for the cause. He writes of the esteem that surrounds martyrs: I remember, and I shall never forget, how this monster took the lives of Tom Ashe,

<sup>124</sup> Sands. "The Torture Mill/H-Block." Stanza 15, Lines 3-6. 137.

<sup>125</sup> Sands. "The Torture Mill/H-Block." Stanza 18, 55, 88. 137.

<sup>126</sup> Sands, as quoted by Pdraig O Malley 51. O Malley does not provide a specific citation for these lines, but credits the pamphlet *Prison Poems* (Dublin: Sinn Fein Publicity Department, October 1981) in his bibliography.

<sup>127</sup> O'Malley 13.

<sup>128</sup> O'Malley 23.

Terence MacSwiney, Michael Gaughan,<sup>129</sup> Frank Stagg, and Hugh Coney.<sup>130,131</sup> Finally, Sands warns his fellow prisoners that the martyrs of the past are important, but that new martyrs will be needed:

It is terrible to think that the blood of countless patriots has not been enough, that a new and blind generation demands fresh blood to open their eyes to the monster that has them by the throat, tearing their hearts out.<sup>132</sup>

In this passage Sands tells his fellow prisoners that more bloodshed will further the Republican cause. Central to the importance of martyrs in the Republican cause is the belief that their deaths awaken a revolutionary spirit in the uncommitted members of the population. Therefore, through death, individuals can strengthen the entire movement.

The overall effect of Sands' writing for the active audience is to stress the importance of each individual. Every individual's allegiance contributes to the success or defeat of the movement; therefore, every individual can make an important contribution. Sands describes himself, and by extension his comrades, as "an Irishman fighting for the freedom of my oppressed people."<sup>133</sup> Sands' writing depicts every Republican as a hero. Pdraig O Malley explains the positive influence that Sands had on his peers:

"Every evening after lock-up Sands would entertain the block with his compositions, articulating what many of the prisoners could only feel, providing them images and interpretations of their behavior that reassured and helped them to persist, making the world in which they lived less sordid and less obviously degrading, imbuing their situation with hope and rationality and the prospect of victory, linking their actions to the larger history of Republican resistance."<sup>134</sup>

### Bobby Sands and the image of a sympathetic Republican

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<sup>129</sup> Michael Gaughan was a PIRA prisoner who died in 1974 as the result of complications from force-feeding during his hunger strike for political status. (Tim Pat Coogan. *The Troubles*. London: Arrow Books, 1996. 270).

<sup>130</sup> Hugh Coney was shot in 1974 during an escape attempt from the Long Kesh internment center. (David Byrd. *The New York Times*. New York. 12/7/74: 1.)

<sup>131</sup> "I Fought A Monster." 160.

<sup>132</sup> "Thoughts from the Shadows." Bobby Sands. *The Writing of Bobby Sands*. 205.

<sup>133</sup> "Fenian Vermin, Etc." Bobby Sands. *The Writing of Bobby Sands*. 97.

<sup>134</sup> O'Malley 55.

The role that Bobby Sands played among his fellow prisoners was an unofficial one. However, he also served as the prison press relations officer for the PIRA, coordinating all communications coming from the prison. This meant that Sands was officially recognized as a propagandist for the movement.<sup>135</sup> In 1979, as part of this role, Sands began writing a column for *An Phoblacht/Republican News*. In May of 1981, toward the end of his hunger strike, Sinn Fein published *The Writings of Bobby Sands: A Collection of Prison Writings*. The collection became a best seller in the Catholic neighborhoods of Northern Ireland, selling nearly six thousand copies in the first two weeks of its release.<sup>136</sup> Through these channels, Bobby Sands was able to reach the PIRA's sympathetic audience, teaching them how to be involved in the Republican movement without active involvement in paramilitary activities.

Sands' main project with the sympathetic audience was to encourage support for the Republican movement. This support might have come in the form of money, housing, or other material means of supporting the armed struggle. Supporting the PIRA might simply have meant maintaining secrecy about PIRA activities that an individual had witnessed. As Sinn Fein became more active, the sympathetic audience could participate in the Republican movement by giving their votes to Republican candidates. Finally, because families had a good deal of influence on young men's decisions, the PIRA needed the sympathetic audience to accept and encourage its members to become paramilitaries. Therefore families needed to believe that the Republican goal was worth the sacrifice of their sons. In order to gain these types of support from the sympathetic audience, Republican propaganda had to convince the Catholic community that they were the victims of oppression that would only end in a united Republic of Ireland. The Republican organization also had to convince its sympathetic audience that the Republic military and political project was the only means of attaining this goal.

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<sup>135</sup> O Malley 53.

<sup>136</sup> Jeff Bradley. "Poems, Essays by Bobby Sands an Instant Best-Seller." The Associated Press. Belfast. 5/1/81.

The PIRA believed that the Irish public was blind to the injustice that it faced; therefore it was the duty of active Republican rebels to awaken a wider recognition of Catholic oppression. In his writing Bobby Sands argues that the residents of Catholic ghettos in Northern Ireland are no more free than the prisoners themselves. Rather, they are enslaved by British colonialism.

Sands writes:

"How many more lives would be lost before the British had decided they had murdered enough and were ready to get out of Ireland forever? Inside and outside of Gaol it was all the same—oppression bearing down upon you from every direction. Every street corner displaying an armed British soldier, every street having endured its share of suffering and grief at their hands."<sup>137</sup>

In his poem "Weeping Winds," Sands describes the Irish as a people born into captivity:

Oh! whistling winds why do you weep  
When roaming free you are,  
Oh! is it that your poor heart's broke  
And scattered off afar?  
Or is it that you bear the cries  
Of people born unfree,  
Who like your way have no control  
Or sovereign destiny?"<sup>138</sup>

In order to gain support for the Republican movement, the organization needed the Catholic community to accept the argument that it was an oppressed people. The community also had to accept Republicanism as the best alternative. The excerpts above link oppression with British occupation, and Irish sovereignty with freedom from that oppression.

As a means of gaining passive support from the sympathetic audience, the PIRA frequently chose a single issue around which to consolidate support. During Bobby Sands' time in prison this issue was the prison conditions in Northern Ireland. In 1979 Bobby Sands wrote an official memo to the Republican leadership in which he criticized the movement's failure to amass sufficient popular support. Sands writes, We have failed to reach a broader

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<sup>137</sup> "One Day in My Life." 44.

<sup>138</sup> "Weeping Winds." 86, Stanza 2.

base of support, therefore we have failed to engage any active support outside of our own immediate hardcore.<sup>139</sup> In order to rectify this situation Sands suggested a Smash H-Block campaign, in which the PIRA would advertise prison conditions in hopes of gaining public sympathy. Sands believed that by focusing on the suffering of the prisoners the organization would create an atmosphere of mass emotion,<sup>140</sup> which could be used to gain greater political support. In his interview with PBS, Jim Gibney recalls: "If you wanted to support the prisoners, support their demands, then implicitly you had to support the IRA."<sup>141</sup> Once support was gained for an issue related to the Republican cause, the focus of that support could be widened to the larger movement. This campaign demonstrates the tactic of selecting a single issue for use as propaganda directed at the sympathetic audience.

Sands attempted to create this atmosphere of mass emotion through his vivid depictions of the conditions in the H-Blocks. The following are two examples of Sands' descriptions of prison life, meant to induce sympathy in the sympathetic audience:

"How much we must suffer, I thought. An unwashed body, naked and wrecked with muscular pains, squatting in a corner, in a den of disease, amid piles of putrefying rubbish, forced to defecate upon the ground where excreta would lie and the smell would mingle with the already sickening evil stench of urine and decaying food waste. Let them find a name for that sort of torture, I thought, rising and moving towards the window to seek fresh air, the beatings, the hosing down, starvation and deprivation, just let them bloody well put a name on this nightmare of nightmares."<sup>142</sup>

"In short, imagine being entombed, naked and alone, for a whole day. What would it be like for twenty torturous months? Now again, with this in mind, try and imagine just what it is like to be in this situation in surroundings that resemble a pigsty, and you are crouched naked upon the floor in a corner, freezing cold, amid the lingering stench of putrefying rubbish, with crawling, wriggling white maggots all around you, fat bloated flies pestering your naked body, the silence is nerve-wracking, your mind in turmoil."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>Sands, as quoted by O Malley 54.

<sup>140</sup>Sands, as quoted by O Malley 54.

<sup>141</sup>"Interview with Jim Gibney."

<sup>142</sup>"One Day in My Life." 41.

<sup>143</sup>"The Battle for Survival." Bobby Sands. *The Writing of Bobby Sands*. 151.

Sands hoped that his descriptions of the physical and psychological discomfort that the prisoners faced would generate sympathy. In order to transfer this sympathy into tangible benefits for the cause, Sands needed to incite the public to take action against these conditions. At the end of his essay "The Battle for Survival," from which the second excerpt above was taken, Sands makes an exhortation to the public to join the fight against the prison conditions. Sands writes: "With that in your mind, I will leave off. Think about it, but just don't leave it at that."<sup>144</sup> In "I Fought A Monster Today," Sands praises the positive effects of family and community support:

"From somewhere afar I hear those familiar voices which keep me going: we are with you son, we are with you. Don't let them beat you. I need to hear those voices. They anger the monster. It retreats. The voices scare the devils. Sometimes I really long to hear those voices. I know if they shout louder they will scare the monster away and my suffering will be ended."<sup>145</sup>

This passage suggests that support of the sympathetic audience uplifts the prisoners. However, it also shows that the sympathetic audience has the potential to make a greater contribution by taking a more active role in the protest. By creating an outcry against the prison conditions the public might be able to overturn one aspect of British policy in Ireland. This victory will be an important gain in the fight for a united Ireland. Sands encourages his readers to become involved in a focused Republican-led protest, hoping that eventually their support can be transferred to other areas of the Republican movement. Through his writing Sands attempted to show the sympathetic audience that it was their duty as Republicans to protest against the treatment of Republican prisoners.

Sands' notoriety was also important in galvanizing the support of another segment of the sympathetic audience—that of Irish communities abroad. During and after the 1845-1849 potato famine in Ireland, an estimated 1.5 million Irish emigrated, creating a large population of individuals with Irish heritage living outside of Ireland. PIRA leaders hoped that Irish

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<sup>144</sup> "The Battle for Survival." 152.

communities abroad would influence the governments of their nations to put political pressure on Britain. This was particularly true of the United States where, by 1981, an estimated 32 million Americans self-identified as being of being Irish descent, while the combined population of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland was only 5 million.<sup>146</sup> At that time, many men and women in influential positions in the United States were of Irish descent.<sup>147</sup> Thus, the PIRA recognized the Irish-American community as an important source of political support, as well as monetary donations. Sands' work reached this sympathetic audience through subscriptions to *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, through word of mouth from friends and relatives residing in Northern Ireland, and through international mass media attention. Thus Sands writings showed individuals with Irish ancestry that they too could participate in the Republican movement by influencing their own governments to take action against the British occupation of Ireland.

When Sands' died on hunger strike, his image changed from the typical Republican to the ideal Republican. Because he had been cast as "every Irishman," his slow death through hunger strike invoked strong feelings in members of the Republican community; even if they did not know Sands personally, he could easily have been someone that they loved. To other paramilitaries, as well as to other young Irishmen, Sands was proof that an average young man could make an extraordinary impact in the Republican movement. For the sympathetic audience Sands became a martyr to mourn; for the active audience he served as a model to which its members could aspire. Through his writing, Sands was able to play an important role in the Republican propaganda project during his life and after his death.

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<sup>145</sup> "I Fought A Monster Today." 160.

<sup>146</sup> Dennis Anderson. "IRA and Irish-Americans." The Associated Press. Washington, DC. 9/2/81.

<sup>147</sup> During Bobby Sands' time this included Senators Edward Kennedy and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, as well as Speaker of the House Thomas O'Neill and New York Governor Hugh Carey. These four men formed the Friends of Ireland, a group of twenty-eight United States politicians who promised to assist in the pursuit of Irish unity. Other influential Irish-American groups included New York Representative Mario Biaggi's Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs and Rev. Sean McManus' Irish National Caucus (Anderson 9/2/81).

## Chapter 5 Gerry Adams: From Prison to Politics

Gerry Adams used the same writing in two separate time periods to convey two distinct impressions of the Republican movement. His writings show to different ways an individual can be involved in the movement. From August 1975 to February 1977, Adams wrote articles for *Republican News* under the pseudonym Brownie. These articles were written from prison, describing the life he and his comrades led in Long Kesh. In 1990, after Adams was already a well-established political figure, he selected a number of these articles to be compiled into the book *Cage Eleven*. Many factors in the Republic movement had changed during the thirteen years that had passed between the time Adams wrote the articles and their subsequent re-release. The hunger strikes had changed the status of prisoners, Sinn Fein had won electoral recognition, and the country had begun tentatively moving toward the peace process. More important Adams himself had made the transition from paramilitary to politician. Therefore, the intended propaganda effect of Adams' writings was different at the two points of their publication. The difference between these intentions shows the changing strategy of the Republican movement, primarily its gradual transition from an entirely armed focus to a combination of armed and political tactics. With this changing strategy, the image of the ideal Republican changed.

Gerry Adams is the most notorious example of the progression from active PIRA service to prison to the political sphere. Adams joined the PIRA at age 16, after the police removal of a Gaelic tri-color flag incited rioting in his West Belfast neighborhood. Unlike Bobby Sands, Adams family had a long Republican heritage; numerous males from both sides of Adams family had been involved in Republican activities. Serving time in 1972 on the Maidstone<sup>148</sup> for suspicion of Republican activities, Adams was re-arrested in 1973 and was interned until 1977

in Long Kesh. During this time Adams was involved in an escape attempt, leading to a conviction for criminal. No longer a political internee, Adams was transferred to Cage Eleven, the area of Long Kesh reserved for paramilitaries serving official sentences. Rising to a leadership position within the prison, Adams was selected OC of the cage. It was during this period that Adams began writing for the *Republican News*.

Adams was released in 1977. He was arrested again in 1977 and 1980, but was not convicted either time. By this time Adams had begun to strongly advocate a strengthening of political activity and a de-escalation of violence. He was one of the primary strategists in Bobby Sands campaign for Westminster in 1981. In 1983 Adams' own involvement with official politics began when he was elected MP of West Belfast. During the same year he was selected as President of Sinn Fein. Adams refused to take his seat in Parliament following the Sinn Fein policy of abstentionism.<sup>149</sup> However, he held the seat until his 1992 defeat by a more moderate nationalist.<sup>150</sup> Adams continued to be a high-profile figure in Northern Irish politics, particularly for his role in the peace process that led to the 1996 Good Friday Agreement. As reflected in the use of his writings, the Gerry Adams of the 1970's—a young Republican with paramilitary involvement—represented a much different image of Republicanism than the one later created by his political career.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> The Maidstone was a British prison ship anchored in the Belfast Lough. According to Adams, the ship ceased to be used as a prison following a solid food strike by the prisoners in protest of the unhealthy conditions on the ship (Adams 2).

<sup>149</sup> Since 1922 Sinn Fein had maintained a policy of abstention from British Parliament because they refused to take the mandatory oath of allegiance to the Queen that part of the swearing-in process. They also abstained from the Republican of Ireland Dail, arguing that the partition of Ireland was not legitimate, and therefore the Dail was a meaningless body. In 1986, under the impetus of Adams, Sinn Fein overturned this policy in regards to the Republic. The decision caused a split in the movement, resulting in the formation of the separate Republican Sinn Fein, whose members still supported the abstention policy. However, both Sinn Fein and Republic Sinn Fein continued the policy of abstention from British parliament.

<sup>150</sup> Joe Hedron of the Social Democratic Labor Party was the winner of this election. The SDLP is a Nationalist constitutional party that believes that a united Ireland can only be the result of a majority of public consent. (Coogan, 1996. 545).

<sup>151</sup> Biographical information about Gerry Adams compiled from the following sources: Gerry Adams. "Foreword," *Cage Eleven*. Boulder, CO: Robert Rinehart Publishers, 1997. 1-5; David Sharrock & Mark Devenport. *Man of War, Man of Peace?* London: Macmillan Publishers, 1997; "Profile of Gerry Adams." Sinn Fein, 1997. On-line:

### Gerry Adams & *Republican News*

Gerry Adams first wrote in prison as a means of reaching the sympathetic and active audiences, creating for each audience an image of what it meant to be a Republican. By writing articles about prison life for *Republican News*, Adams was able to address the active audience outside the prison. He attempted to make light of prison conditions, showing that serving time for the cause was not an entirely unpleasant experience. Along similar lines Adams tried to undermine the power of prison officials by depicting imprisonment as beneficial to the movement. The overall message of Adams writing was that internment was difficult, but not impossible to endure. Therefore, the benefits of internment outweighed the costs; individuals could positively impact the Republic by serving their time without becoming discouraged. . Prison was depicted as an important Republican experience.

Prison conditions during the period of Adams internment were much more humane than during the later period in which Sands wrote. As discussed earlier, the treatment of prisoners before the revocation of political status was not overwhelmingly negative. Adams descriptions of recreation activities, the freedom to move about the compound unrestricted, the freedom to decide one's own daily schedule without established times for evening curfew or morning wake-up, the privilege to receive food parcels from outside, and the unrestricted rights to free association, paint a rather rosy picture of life in Long Kesh. In his writing Adams depicts the daily living conditions of Long Kesh as being quite bearable for the prisoners.

In addition, Adams showed that the Republican prisoners during this period were able to use certain aspects of their imprisonment to their advantage. Adams highlighted these aspects throughout his articles. The prisoners were able to talk a great deal and engage in a little sedition, which is mainly trying to understand the political situation which has us in here in Long

Kesh.<sup>152</sup> He explained that prison was a place for prisoners to practice rebelling. Adams writes:

Mostly we save up our resentments for the prison administration. We mess up head counts, make hurling sticks out of prison timber, protest regularly, organize our own structures, read books they don't understand, ignore their instructions, try to escape, succeed in escaping. Generally we just do our own thing."<sup>153</sup>

Prison was therefore part of the learning process for Republicans. Adams' description of life in Long Kesh supported the assertion by many former prisoners that internment presents an opportunity for building camaraderie, solidifying political beliefs, and preparing men for their return to active service by providing the opportunity for small-scale revolutionary activities against prison officials. By showing the ways in which prison could be used to the benefit of the movement, Adams' writing emphasized the importance of internment in the Republican movement.

Adams' articles in *Republican News* also played an important role in creating an image of the typical Republican for the outside world. This image was meant to gain the support of the sympathetic audience. If this audience viewed Republicans as terrorists and criminals, they would not offer the types of passive support needed by the movement. Thus, the image of Republican created by Adams showed that the prisoners were not unlike their free counterparts; they were not terrorists, but individuals concerned with achieving a more ideal political arrangement for Northern Ireland. In order to prove this, Adams depicted the prisoners as sharing the same interests, fears, and troubles as the general population. These men were described as enjoying radio, television, conversation, singing, knitting, writing letters, smoking, drinking, keeping pets and in all ways engaging in normal recreational activities.<sup>154</sup> Adams stressed to the men suffered from ordinary troubles: On the outside marriages break up,

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<sup>152</sup> Adams. *Cage Eleven*. *Cage Eleven*. Boulder, CO: Robert Rinehart Publishers, 1997. 11.

<sup>153</sup> Adams. *Cage Eleven*. 11.

<sup>154</sup> Descriptions of the men's recreational activities are found throughout Adams' writing and are too numerous to cite individually. For the best example of these activities see the selection "A Festive Back-Stab," Adams 37-41.

parents die, children get sick; all normal worries intruding into our impotent abnormality.<sup>155</sup> In addition to helping maintain the support of the sympathetic audience, this depiction of the prisoners also showed possible recruits that anyone could be a PIRA paramilitary. The typical Republican was simply an ordinary young man who believed that he was a victim of injustice as a result of the political situation in Northern Ireland.

Adams' writing argued that even those prisoners who were serving time for actual crimes as all the men in *Cage Eleven* were should not have been held accountable for their actions because they would not have committed them but for extreme circumstances. Adams writes:

"After all, we're only here because of bad luck, stupidity, miscarriages of justice, being in the wrong place at the wrong time. And of course, because our respective parents conceived us in or near that part of Northern Ireland which is under British occupation, at a time when we were assured of reaching imprisonable age just when some citizens of this state decided they had had enough of it."<sup>156</sup>

To some extent this belief was already present in the sympathetic audience, which was willing to recognize the fact that many PIRA paramilitaries were respectable young men who had the misfortune of being born into the middle of the conflict. Adams depicted the prisoners as both ordinary and extraordinary. They were not cold, unfeeling criminals, but experienced the same emotions as the sympathetic audience; however, because of their dedication to freeing Ireland from British occupation they were forced into a prison cell. Thus the typical Republican was an average man willing to sacrifice a normal life for the Republican ideal.

Like Sands, Adams' writing attempted to convince the sympathetic audience that it was the victim of British oppression. In his article *The Change Will Do Us Good*, Adams writes that, for the indeterminable future, the British troops, Ulsterized or Anglified,<sup>157</sup> will still patrol catwalks in concentration camps and back-streets or country roads in that greater prison

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<sup>155</sup> Adams. *Cage Eleven*. 10.

<sup>156</sup> Adams. *Cage Eleven*. 11.

<sup>157</sup> The phrase *Ulsterized or Anglified* speaks of Britain's use of her native armed forces, as well as the British-controlled Northern Ireland police force (the RUC), to patrol Northern Ireland.

outside.<sup>158</sup> Adams compared Catholic oppression to prison. For Adams and his fellow prisoners, being free from internment was of no great importance so long as Northern Ireland was under the rule of Great Britain. By highlighting Catholic oppression as one of the causes of the Republican movement, Adams argued that all Catholics were Republicans, even those reluctant to accept the label.

Another central concern of the PIRA was justifying its use of violence. For active members uncertain about their participation in violence, as well as for the sympathetic audience, the necessary use of violence was an important component of the Republican image. Republicans were not terrorists or criminals, they were freedom fighters and revolutionaries. One tactic for creating this image was to place the blame for PIRA violence on the British. The sympathetic audience was more likely to support the PIRA if they believed that all violent acts were simply a necessary reaction to British violence. The best example of this strategy is seen in a Brownie article that does not appear in *Cage Eleven*, but has been quoted in current criticisms of Adams. Adams writes:

Republicans involved in physical force in Ireland are always portrayed as if they, and they alone, are the men of violence. Sure, we use force, but it's not a role we choose or a conflict we welcome. The IRA aren't the cause of violence in Ireland. They are a symptom of it. If this was a normal society, we wouldn't have the violence we are now having to endure."<sup>159</sup>

"Rightly or wrongly, I'm an IRA volunteer and, rightly or wrongly, I take a course of action as a means to bringing about a situation in which I believe the people of my country will prosper. The course I take involves the use of physical force, but only if I can achieve the situation where my people genuinely prosper can my course of action be seen, by me, to have been justified."<sup>160</sup>

The message given by these statements was that Northern Ireland would have been a normal society if it had not been under British rule. The British were in a position to end the violence

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<sup>158</sup> Adams. *The Change Will Do Us Good*. 121.

<sup>159</sup> Adams, as cited in Sharrock. 132.

by withdrawing their rule from Northern Ireland. As a result of their failure to do this, the PIRA was forced to participate in violence in which it did not wish to take part. Therefore Adams argued that the British were to blame for all of the violence in Northern Ireland.

In an article about the abandonment of political status, Adams attempted to convince the Republican audience that the British policy of criminalization should not change the image of a Republican. Britain's attempts to depict the prisoners as criminals did not mean that they actually were criminals. In the selection "Beware the Ides of March" Adams writes:

British direct ruler Merlyn Ree's new act came into being at twelve midnight and suddenly we stopped being political prisoners. That's as clear as day. As soon as the legislation came into effect, Irishmen and women in the jails all over the North became criminals. It was like an act of God.

Here Adams uses sarcasm to show the arbitrary nature of British policy. He tells the reader what the intended effect the legislation is meant to be, hoping that by highlighting the British motive for instituting criminalization he will be able to undermine the policy's effectiveness.

Adams writes:

Merlyn knows he has the power to change people's motivation, people's reasoning, people's attitudes. All he has to do is get a law passed and we are all compelled to obey it. It's as simple as that. After all, you can't support criminals, and there is nothing we poor Irish can do if the might British government passes legislation to prove it.<sup>161</sup>

The feeling that Adams attempted to convey to the reader was that criminalization was simply another example of British oppression of the poor Irish; in order to overturn British policy, the sympathetic audience was urged to continue to support the prisoners, despite the arbitrary label of criminal that had been attached to some of them. The prisoners themselves were encouraged to fight the label of criminal and to demand political recognition.

At the time of their writing, Gerry Adams' articles served a number of purposes. They contained several strategies for recruiting new active members, maintaining the allegiance of

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<sup>160</sup> Adams, as cited in Sharrock & Devenport. 132.

the current active membership, and raising levels of sympathetic support for the Republican movement. Adams depictions of prisoners changed them from mysterious, unknowable figures into human beings. This created a tangible image of Republican that individuals could support, or aspire to become.

#### Gerry Adams & *Cage Eleven*

By 1990 Gerry Adams was a different figure from the image he had created for himself in the 1970s. Following his election in 1983, Adams' persona changed from a young, brash Republican paramilitary to a political figure with a strong belief in the power of the ballot box. By 1990, Gerry Adams had come to be seen as the acceptable face of Republicanism, an image that his book attempted to maintain. *Cage Eleven* supported the Republican organization's growing participation in organized politics, while continuing to maintain the necessity of the armed struggle. For the benefit of the active audience, *Cage Eleven* presented politics as a possible path for those individuals no longer able to participate in paramilitary activities.

The publication of *Cage Eleven* in 1990 was important because it allowed Adams to reach the public despite a ban restricting him from television. In 1988 the British government banned television and radio stations from airing interviews with members of eleven Republican and Loyalist organizations. This was with the hope that preventing these organizations from directly accessing the public would decrease the effectiveness of terrorist acts. The ban included Sinn Fein, despite the organization's claims that it was a legitimate political organization. The publication of *Cage Eleven* gave Adams direct access to the population, allowing him to circumvent the broadcast ban.

The greatest aim of Adams' book at the time of its publication was to gain support for the Republican organization's growing emphasis on a combined strategy of politics and violence.<sup>162</sup> After several decades of attempting to rally support for the armed movement, the Republican

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<sup>161</sup> Adams. *Beware the Ides of March*. *Cage Eleven*. Boulder, CO: Robert Rinehart Publishers, 1997. 62.

organization now wanted to shift support to its political project. The publication of *Cage Eleven* was an attempt to attain this goal by creating an image of continuity within the movement; the Republican community needed to view the armed movement and the political movement as a unified project, rather than exclusive strategies. Therefore the political project had to be linked to the history of Republican armed struggle in Northern Ireland. The content of *Cage Eleven* portrayed Adams involvement in the PIRA armed struggle. At the time of its publication Adams was associated with politics. Adams attempted to create a persona for himself that embodied the connection between violence to politics. The message conveyed by the publication of *Cage Eleven* was that the move toward politics was not an abandonment of the Republican ideal, but a change in strategy for attaining that ideal.

As the Republican movement made this move toward a more political strategy, it was important for Adams to prove that he was a good candidate for the role of political figure, despite the fact that he had served time in prison. In order to accomplish this, Adams did not try to erase his prison record; rather he attempted to remove the stigma from this record. In the introduction to *Cage Eleven* Adams presented prison as a respectable part of the Northern Irishman's experience. Adams argued that despite the imprisonment of every male in his family, perhaps even because of this fact, his family was not unusual. He writes: "Ours is a perfectly normal family, and we are by no means unique. Long Kesh is full of our friends and the north of Ireland is coming down with families just like ours, all with a similar British penal experience."<sup>163</sup> Adams maintained that having served prison time could not be a badge of dishonor. He writes: "Everyone in the nationalist community in the North of Ireland knows someone who is or has been in prison. None of us is immune."<sup>164</sup> Thus, just as Adams' earlier articles were an attempt to humanize the prisoners in the 1970's, *Cage Eleven* was an attempt to lend Adams

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<sup>162</sup> In 1989 and 1990, Sinn Fein suffered significant losses in local and national elections, suggesting that the political arm of the Republican movement was failing to amass public support.

<sup>163</sup> Adams. Foreword. 2.

<sup>164</sup> Adams. Foreword. 2.

respectability in the face of questions concerning his past. Adams used the introduction to argue that as a Republican he should be rewarded for having served his time in prison, but that as a political figure he should be judged by his political performance rather than by his paramilitary past.

By establishing himself as a political figure, Gerry Adams presents a possible alternative means of serving the Republican movement. As the members of the active audience that entered the movement during the Civil Rights era began to age, it was no longer practical for them to continue their involvement in violence. However, having sacrificed their opportunities for a normal life, many had no clear options upon leaving active service. This was especially true for men who had served a stretch in prison, as they were unable to gain legitimate employment because of their pasts. Once Adams was able to remove the stigma of imprisonment for Republicans, he opened up a new path for these men. A political career allowed them to continue their involvement with the Republican organization, while lessening the sacrifice that had been required by paramilitary involvement. Adams' shift toward politics showed a maturation in the ideology of the Republican movement, as well as an aging of its ranks.

Jonathan Stevenson emphasizes the frequency with which the progression from prison to official politics occurred. Citing the examples of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, Stevenson argues: "The Republican tradition was to serve one's time in an IRA active service unit, do a stretch in Long Kesh, and then go legitimate in Sinn Fein."<sup>165</sup> Republican Jim Gibney confirmed this routine in an interview, stating: "If you look at the political leadership today of Sinn Fein, most of them were in prison at one time in their lives they used their period of imprisonment to develop their political ideas and so when you then come back outside again,

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<sup>165</sup> Jonathan Stevenson. *We Wrecked the Place*. NY: The Free Press, 1996. 161.

you bring those political ideas into the party and into the struggle."<sup>166</sup> In addition to Adams, other PIRA paramilitaries went on to a political career with Sinn Fein. These included former IRA chief of staff Martin McGuinness, who became Sinn Fein's Chief Negotiator with the British Government and Jim Gibney, who became a member of the Executive Committee of Sinn Fein following his release from prison.

As a result of the image Gerry Adams created for himself, jail came to be viewed as a "rite of passage for a Sinn Fein career."<sup>167</sup> *Cage Eleven* contributed to this image of the prisoner turned politician. The publication of *Cage Eleven* also showed a change in the recruitment strategy of the Republican movement. The shift toward politics lessened the need for new paramilitaries, as the role of violence in the Republican strategy began to diminish. The publication of *Cage Eleven* in 1990 was not a recruitment tactic. In the introduction to the book Adams writes: I hope too for most of my readers this book is the closest they ever get to finding out what a prison camp or any other jail is like.<sup>168</sup> Unlike his earlier articles for Republican News, which showed young men the advantages of joining the movement, *Cage Eleven* did not attempt to attract new recruits to the armed struggle. The book was more concerned with encouraging current paramilitaries to turn toward politics.

By 1990 Gerry Adams' writing was serving a different purpose for the Republican movement than it had during his internment in the 1970's. The intended effect of *Cage Eleven* was to depict the Republican movement in a state of transition. Engaging in the armed struggle or being imprisoned for violence were no longer the only ways to serve the Republican movement. The Republican image was now broadened to include paramilitaries, prisoners and politicians.

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<sup>166</sup> "Interview with Jim Gibney." *Frontline: The IRA and Sinn Fein*. PBS, 1998. Transcript Available On-line: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ira/inside/gibney.html>.

<sup>167</sup> Stevenson 114.

<sup>168</sup> Adams 5.

## Chapter 6

### Danny Morrison: The Journey Away from Activism

Of the three men explored in this thesis, Danny Morrison held the most official position in the Republican movement's propaganda projects. Having served as the editor of *An Phoblacht/Republican News* and as Sinn Fein's national publicity director, Morrison was recognized as a gifted propagandist. Unlike the writings of Adams and Sands, Morrison's prison journal, *Then The Walls Came Down*, as well as the letters that comprise it, was to recruit support for the Republican movement. While Gerry Adams and Bobby Sands wrote in prison as a means of strengthening active and sympathetic support for the movement, Danny Morrison's writing encouraged individuals to lessen their involvement in Republican activities, especially violent activities. Morrison also argued for the abandonment of separatist demands, in favor of a compromise more likely to gain British and Unionist acceptance. This chapter will explore the reasons why *Then the Walls Came Down* can be considered propaganda, but as a propaganda that delivers a message discouraging young men from entering the Republican military fold. \ Morrison's writing presented to the audience an alternate image of what it meant to be Republican. This image was one of support for the Republican movement without direct involvement in it.

Danny Morrison was imprisoned from 1972 to 1975 in Long Kesh for suspected Republican activities. Upon his release from jail, Morrison served as editor for *Republican News*. When the paper was merged with *An Phoblacht* in 1979, he became editor of the combined publication. During the same year Morrison was appointed national publicity director for Sinn Fein. This role was especially important during the hunger strikes, as he was responsible for playing the role of external spokesman for the protesters. Even Morrison's opponents recognized his skill, as evidenced by the statement of a senior civil servant, who said of Morrison, Despite what he represents, one has to give him credit to his information/

communications expertise. Danny was a good old manipulator.<sup>169</sup> He is most remembered for his 1981 speech at the Sinn Fein national convention where he proclaimed, Who really believes that we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object if, with the ballot paper in this hand and an armalite<sup>170</sup> in this hand, we take power in Ireland?<sup>171</sup> This speech has frequently been used to describe the two-pronged strategy adopted by the Republican movement. Morrison served as a propagandist in an official capacity until 1990 when he was arrested for his involvement in the abduction of an IRA informant.<sup>172</sup> He served five and a half years of his eight-year sentence, imprisoned in both the Crumlin Road jail and Long Kesh. It was during this imprisonment that Morrison wrote the series of personal letters that would later be combined to form the 1999 book *Then the Walls Came Down*.

#### Danny Morrison s prison correspondence

What differentiated Morrison s initial prison writings from that of Adams and Sands was the intended audience. Unlike the articles his predecessors wrote for *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, which were intended to reach a large audience, Morrison s writing was directed toward individuals. *Then the Walls Came Down* is a compilation of letters written during the first three years of his prison sentence. These prison letters served no propaganda purpose at the time of their publication. The bulk of this correspondence was between Morrison and his girlfriend.<sup>173</sup> The only way letters written to her could have been intended to serve as propaganda is if a larger audience had access to them. Morrison did not write them with the expectation that they would serve this purpose. He writes: On the issue of letters: the ones I have written to you are

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<sup>169</sup>Derek Henderson. The Propaganda King. *The Associated Press*. 4/8/91.

<sup>170</sup> A type of lightweight assault rifle frequently used by the PIRA.

<sup>171</sup> As quoted in Joanne Wright. *Terrorist Propaganda*. New York: St. Martin s Press, 1990. 156.

<sup>172</sup> This informant was Alexander Sandy Joseph Lynch. Lynch was a former member of the PIRA who went on to serve as an informant to the police about Irish National Liberation Army and PIRA activities. Morrison was charged with false imprisonment and conspiracy to commit murder, but was found guilty on only the former charge.

<sup>173</sup> The book contains seven letters that were not written to Morrison s girlfriend. These include one letter to Gerry Adams, two letters to David McKittrick, the Irish correspondent for the London newspaper *The Guardian*, and four letters to Irish author Tim O Grady.

yours to do with you as you will.<sup>174</sup> Later, during a temporary break in their relationship,<sup>175</sup> Morrison informed her that, Regarding my letters: you should destroy them but please make sure you do it thoroughly!<sup>176</sup> Morrison did not write these letters with the intention that they would reach any audience greater than the individual to whom they were addressed; therefore their usefulness as propaganda was minimal.

The one selection in Morrison's book that was written to serve as propaganda is an article intended for publication in *An Phoblacht/Republican News*. This article is included amongst Morrison's correspondence because he enclosed a copy of it in a letter to his girlfriend. Included in correspondence dated April 12, 1992, the article *A Bitter Pill* is Morrison's analysis of the electoral defeat of Gerry Adams. Unlike his letters, this article was intended to reach the sympathetic and active audiences.<sup>177</sup> However, the writing was more critical of the armed portion of the Republican movement than supportive of it. In it Morrison questioned the continued use of violence, believing that the PIRA campaign of violence had become ineffective. Morrison writes:

If the IRA does not raise the quality of its campaign the struggle could go on forever, and if it cannot raise the quality of its campaign it should consider the alternative.<sup>178</sup>

Morrison went on to express his fear that the loss of political support for Sinn Fein would result in a renewed commitment to violence. He writes:

There may now be a big temptation, because of frustration and alienation, for many republicans to abandon even their limited faith in politics and place all their trust in armed struggle. The emotional reaction should be resisted. It is no guarantee of success. It is to go in the wrong direction.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Morrison 58.

<sup>175</sup> Morrison and his girlfriend broke up during his period of imprisonment. However, they reconciled while Morrison was still in prison and were married following his release.

<sup>176</sup> Morrison 309.

<sup>177</sup> Based on its intended publication in *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.

<sup>178</sup> Morrison 288.

<sup>179</sup> Morrison 289.

Rather than interpreting the defeat of Gerry Adams as a sign that the public wished to see the movement move toward greater armed action rather than toward political action, Morrison viewed the defeat as a sign of overall decline in support for the Republican cause. He writes:

The fortunes of Sinn Fein and the IRA are inextricably linked: they have the same cause and the ultimate objectives and their memberships are drawn from the same pool of support. The decrease in the SF vote has to be a cause of serious concern to the IRA. It is a situation out of which it cannot simply bomb its way.<sup>180</sup>

Finally Morrison suggested that the loss of electoral support for Sinn Fein was a sign that the Republican movement should begin to consider entering the peace process. While a united Ireland might still be the desire of the Republican movement, this solution was an unreasonable expectation. Morrison compared the Republicans to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, who were forced to admit that a point came where the pragmatism of the head had to take precedence over the principle of the heart.<sup>181</sup> He argued that it would have been better for the Republican movement to begin negotiations from a position of relative strength, before it lost its entire base of public support. He writes:

We should never allow the situation to decline to the extent that we face such a decision from the depths of an unpopular, unseemly, impossible to end armed struggles or from the point of brave exhaustion-another one of the glorious defeats with which our past is littered.<sup>182</sup>

The overall effect of Morrison's article discouraged a continuation of the armed movement. It also criticized the goals of the political movement. While Gerry Adams' writing was intended to recruit support for the political process from those individuals supportive of the armed movement, Morrison's writing discouraged continued participation in either segment of the

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<sup>180</sup> Morrison 291.

<sup>181</sup> Morrison 291.

<sup>182</sup> Morrison 291.

Republican movement. Morrison believed it was time for peace in Northern Ireland, even at the cost of abandoning the Republican goal of a united Ireland.

While Morrison's article is Republican propaganda, it is not official Republican propaganda. It expresses Morrison's individual view concerning the future of the movement rather than a statement crafted as a means of increasing support for the Republican establishment. The article raises ideas that challenge the Republican party-line point of view. The idea that the article does not fit within the official Republican propaganda project is supported by the fact that *An Phoblacht/Republican News* refused to print the piece. Morrison recognized the fact that his article ran counter to the Republican propaganda project, saying "I've just finished rewriting and retyping my article. I'll be surprised if it is published, even though this version is much milder than the first draft!"<sup>183</sup> If I was the editor of *An Phoblacht* I'd probably not print such an article.<sup>184</sup> This article was an attempt by Morrison to express a growing sentiment within the Republican community that challenged the official platform of Sinn Féin and the PIRA. However, the fact the Morrison's propaganda was not officially mandated does mean that it was not propaganda.

#### Danny Morrison and the publication of *Then the Walls Came Down*

As was the case in the publication of Sands' and Adams' writing, Morrison's initial audience was different from the audience he intended to reach through the later publication of his book. Morrison's letters, when compiled into *Then the Walls Came Down* in 1999 and made available to a wider audience, displayed his movement away from the Republican movement. Morrison's letters were filled with his personal opinions about the status of the movement, rather than with statements crafted to deliver a Republican message. The writing was more critical of the Republican movement than supportive of it. Following his release from prison in 1995,

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<sup>183</sup> Morrison 288. This statement shows Morrison's talent as a propagandist. He admits that he has toned down the message of the article so that it will be more acceptable to the newsletter's editors and, as a result, more likely to reach the intended audience. However he also recognizes that any writing that criticizes the Republican organization, no matter how subtly, will not be published in *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.

Morrison distanced himself from the Republican movement. While still a professed Republican, Morrison ended his active involvement with Sinn Fein to pursue a full-time writing career and to marry the woman to whom his prison letters were addressed. At the time of the book's publication, Morrison was working as an author, journalist, political commentator and literary critic; while he continued to write articles expressing his opinions about the Republican movement, he no longer maintained any official position with Sinn Fein. Two years before the publication of his book Morrison made the following statement about his political involvement:

Till the day I die, I will not accept that Britain has a right to be in Ireland Every thinking person has the choice of three different relations with the politics of their society: to participate, to flee or to transcend.<sup>185</sup> I have participated. I have no intention to flee, just at the moment I m transcending.<sup>186</sup>

This notion of transcending is Morrison's way of describing his conscious movement away from the Republican organization. It is also Morrison's presentation of an alternative to active Republican participation. While still holding a number of Republican beliefs, Morrison suggests that he is now choosing not to blindly follow the Republican program presented by Sinn Fein and the PIRA. Therefore, Morrison intended the publication of *Then the Walls Came Down* to introduce a new vision of Republicanism, one in which an individual could be a Republican patriot without being a revolutionary. This vision challenged a central tenet of the Republican organization, the belief that Irishmen were obligated to join the Republican movement because it was impossible for them to live a normal life in British-occupied Northern Ireland. Both Sands' and Adams' writings supported this idea; the two men claimed that they joined the movement because it was the only option open to them. Unlike Sands' writing, which was meant to encourage young Irish men to take up the Republican cause because it was their duty to do so, Morrison's writing criticized the amount of unnecessary sacrifice undertaken by individuals. Morrison writes:

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<sup>184</sup> Morrison 288.

<sup>185</sup> Here Morrison is paraphrasing Chinese writer Zhang Xianliang.

The unreality of the way we Republicans live our lives completely and indefinitely subordinated to the pursuit of this struggle can sometimes come home to you with a jolt which is felt in the very foundations of the political convictions which to date have sustained you. When that happens, the principles and objectives which you embraced so nobly and passionately all those years begin to feel like so much dead weight, an obstacle to freedom of movement.<sup>187</sup>

While his predecessors wrote with the intention of recruiting new individuals to the official Republican organization, Morrison discouraged individuals from this type of participation. He also suggested that public support in the Republican organization was waning as a result of the continued reliance on a mantra of glorious defeat. He writes:

The only way the natives could tolerate successive defeats was to celebrate them and put a philosophical smile on the face of woe and humiliation. Republicans now are fed up glorifying past defeats and are determined to show something substantial for the sacrifices.<sup>188</sup>

The project of Morrison's publication of his earlier letters from prison was to show that Republican activism, whether military or political, was *not* the only available option; rather, it was possible for Northern Irish men and women to lead fulfilling lives without engaging in Republican violence or politics. This choice did not mean repudiating Irish nationalism, but accepting a different form of it, one in which individuals could benefit the Northern Irish community by working, raising families, and participating in normal activities. It is this very picture of Irishness that Sands and Adams tried to destroy in their writings, as they argued that this lifestyle was impossible for any individual who believed in the Republican cause.

Morrison writing was also critical of the Republican movement's strict adherence to the goal of a united Irish Republic. Morrison believed this goal to be unattainable. As a result, the

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<sup>186</sup> Bennett, Ronan. Danny Morrison Comes out Writing. *The Independent*. London: 2/28/97.

<sup>187</sup> Morrison 71.

<sup>188</sup> Morrison 96.

sacrifice and violence connected to this goal were not justifiable. In a letter to Gerry Adams, Morrison writes:

Believe it or not I think we can fight on forever and can't be defeated. But, of course, that isn't the same as winning or showing something for all the sacrifice. I despair of the Free State and the contortions we've been through attempting to build a base.<sup>189</sup>

Instead of clinging to its demands of a united Ireland, the movement would be more successful, and the Northern Irish equally well served, by accepting a less drastic solution. Morrison writes, "If we lower our demands and our expectations a peg or two we might find more agreement. Politically we might be able to agree upon a society in which to live in relative harmony; who knows?"<sup>190</sup> *Then the Walls Came Down* depicts the development of Morrison's belief that living a normal life in a peaceful Northern Ireland under British rule might be superior to continuing the violence and sacrifice in pursuit of a united Ireland. By expressing this belief Morrison attempted to convince others to accept it as well, even at the cost of repudiating the policy of the Republican organization.

This publication of Morrison's book of letters from prison came at a time when the political situation in Northern Ireland forced individuals to consider disengaging from the Republican movement, because the possibility of a lasting peace made their futures as revolutionaries uncertain. *Then the Walls Came Down* was released one year after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Thus its publication came at a time when militant Republicans were continuing to demand a united Ireland, despite the political wing's acceptance of a temporary solution that permitted Britain's continued rule of Northern Ireland. *Then the Walls Came Down*, with its criticisms of the Republican movement, was intended to impress upon readers the practicality of the Good Friday Agreement. In a book review in the *Irish Times*, reviewer Mary Holland calls Morrison's book, "A readable and convincing account of the long journey away from violence towards the ballot-box, and is particularly timely just now when the

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<sup>189</sup> Here Morrison is referring to a base of public support. Morrison 240.

enormous hopes vested in the Belfast Agreement seem to be under threat.<sup>191</sup> Morrison's book of letters from prison, *Then The Walls Came Down*, delivered the message that the time had come for Republicans to accept that a united Ireland was not a realistic solution. Violence and political activities surrounding the attainment of this goal were therefore futile. Morrison's writing encouraged the Northern Irish to get on with their lives rather than clinging to an unattainable ideal. While it was not official Republican propaganda, it was Republican propaganda in its own right.

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<sup>190</sup> Morrison 91.

<sup>191</sup> Mary Holland. One Man's Painful Journey Away from Violence. *The Irish Times*, 10/21/99.

## Conclusion

### The Changing Image of Republicanism

One of the main projects of Republican propaganda was to create an image for the organization's members to follow. Through their prison writings, Gerry Adams, Bobby Sands and Danny Morrison created three different images of what it meant to be a Republican during the Northern Ireland Troubles. The differences in these images can be accounted for by the changing needs of the movement. While the armed and political movement was still in need of active and passive support, Gerry Adams and Bobby Sands used their writings to encourage Republicans to make sacrifices for the movement. Following the Good Friday Agreement, Danny Morrison reversed the tide of Republican recruitment by advocating a return to normal life for Northern Irish men.

In 1976, when the PIRA split from Official IRA, the newly formed organization needed new recruits who were willing to pursue its project of attaining a united Ireland through armed struggle. During the period in which the PIRA was beginning to recruit, most young men in Catholic ghettos in Northern Ireland faced dim prospects for the future. The Civil Rights Movement's failure to bring about equality in educational, employment and economic opportunities meant that the majority of young males in the working class Catholic community left school around the age of fifteen with limited choices for the future. Thus the PIRA needed only to exploit the feelings of frustration already present in this demographic. By romanticizing the role of the paramilitary, making it appear glamorous and heroic, the PIRA presented life as a guerilla soldier as an attractive alternative to the life that otherwise awaited these young men. J. Bowyer Bell explains: Those with no property, no prospects, no vocation for a post-industrial society were especially qualified to go underground where faith, not capacity, counts, where war

is learned on the job, where sacrifice assures internal reward, where power comes not from things or certification but from a sense that service enhances life.<sup>192</sup> PIRA volunteers did not need to possess any skills. They did not even need to understand the Republican ideology. The organization could teach them what to believe and how to fight. This is the message conveyed by the articles Gerry Adams wrote for *Republican News*. The Republican image that Adams' account of Long Kesh creates is of young men still in the process of learning the Republican ideology, history and military tactics, while strengthening their relationships with their comrades. This initial recruitment strategy was effective; the reborn PIRA's numbers grew, peaking in the mid-1970s with a membership of about 1,500.<sup>193</sup>

However, at the same time that the membership of the PIRA was peaking, the organization's leadership realized that its current structure was becoming ineffective. A growing number of members were being killed in action as a result of accidents caused by a lack of training—bombs blew up too early, members were ambushed by security forces or Loyalist paramilitaries. Between 1972 and 1980, two hundred paramilitaries were killed in these types of circumstances. In addition, the number of active Republicans in prison was growing. This was largely a result of improvements in British intelligence and the use of PIRA informants. During a period of eighteen months in 1980, three hundred suspects were arrested based upon information provided by thirty informants.<sup>194</sup> The secret army was having extreme difficulty maintaining its secrecy. As a result the leadership decided to abandon its existing brigade structure in favor of a smaller cell structure.<sup>195</sup> At the same time it developed the Green Book, a training manual for recruits. By the end of the 1970s the PIRA was less willing to accept any recruit vaguely interested in military service; active Republicans now needed to know and

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<sup>192</sup> J. Bowyer Bell. *The Secret Army: A History of the IRA*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974. 462.

<sup>193</sup> Abstract on Organizations. CAIN: Conflict Archive on the Internet. University of Ulster. Available On-line: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html> (3/18/01).

<sup>194</sup> Bell 485.

<sup>195</sup> Each cell consisted of four men who performed operations together, with only one man in contact with the higher authorities. By reducing the number of people knowledgeable about each operation, the PIRA hoped to eliminate the problem of security leaks.

believe in the Republican ideology. They also had to be willing to make greater sacrifices to the movement.

Bobby Sands' writing shows the shift in the image of the Republican that occurred following this change in structural organization. Sands represented the Republican figure that was committed to the cause so completely that he was willing to accept extreme personal hardship in pursuit of the Republican goal. The period of prison protest and hunger strike showed a shift in the Republican image from those willing to carry out violence to those willing to endure suffering. The Republican of this period was based upon the image of Terence MacSwiney, whose death in 1920 during a hunger strike elevated him to martyr status in Republican lore. Shortly before his death MacSwiney stated, "It is not those who inflict the most, but those who suffer the most who will conquer."<sup>196</sup> In order to combat the Northern Ireland community's growing concern about the morality of violence, Sands and his comrades recast the Republican as a hero and martyr. Only individuals who truly believed in the Republican cause could fill the roles of hero and martyr; the image of Republican created by Bobby Sands was of a young man better trained, more knowledgeable, and more dedicated than his predecessor.

The hunger strikes also began the shift toward greater political focus. With attention drawn away from PIRA operations and toward the achievement of goals through other means, the Republican movement began its return to political action. In 1981 Danny Morrison made his now famous ballot box and armalite speech, introducing the Republican movement's new two-pronged approach. This move towards politics was fueled by the Republican leadership's growing concern that the fight for a united Ireland couldn't be won by violence alone. In order to gain electoral support for the party, leading Republicans had to convince voters that former men of violence could become respectable politicians. At the same time, in order to maintain unity within the Republican movement, the political wing had to maintain the allegiance of the

men still involved in violence. As a result, Gerry Adams, who led the return of Sinn Fein into legitimate politics, had to reconcile the images of paramilitary and politician. The publication of *Cage Eleven* illuminates the way in which Adams was able to negotiate this difficult position.

In 1998, Adams won the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in negotiating the Good Friday Agreement. His actions also brought the criticisms of Republicans who were unwilling to accept any compromise that did not gain a united Republic of Ireland. However, Adams quest to bring peace to Northern Ireland was representative of the opinion of a majority of the Republican leadership. To men who had sacrificed their entire lives to the Republican cause, victory no longer seemed possible without a more drastic escalation in violence than they were willing to make. Escalating would require another round of recruitment. The Republican leadership had spent their entire adult lives in prison or on the run, in Sinn Fein or in active service, serving the dream, consumed by the faith.<sup>197</sup> Thus they understood that bringing new young men into the movement would mean new lifetimes of violence. The Good Friday Agreement was made with the recognition that the only way to bring peace to Ireland was through compromise.

The Good Friday Agreement, while bringing relative peace to Northern Ireland, put the Republican image into question. While Adams and his fellow Sinn Fein politicians were able to make a post-army life for themselves in politics, this was not a viable path for all Republicans. There were not enough political positions to provide for the nearly five hundred<sup>198</sup> PIRA members left without an occupation following the peace agreement. For these men, Danny Morrison offered his views on the future of the Republican image. It is this image that prevails today, that of an individual still holding Republican beliefs, but engaging in a normal daily existence.

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<sup>196</sup> O'Malley 26.

<sup>197</sup> Bell 634.

<sup>198</sup> CAIN. Abstract on Organizations. CAIN: Conflict Archive on the Internet. University of Ulster. Available On-line: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html> (3/18/01).

Despite the 1996 peace settlement, Northern Ireland was still experiencing conflict in September of 2001, as attempts by Protestant protesters to prevent Catholic children from reaching school resulted in renewed sectarian violence. Following the new outbreak of violence, which brought the fear that the Good Friday Agreement would be destroyed, the first real steps toward decommissioning were taken by the major paramilitary groups on both sides of the conflict. By the beginning of April 2002, the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning confirmed that the PIRA had put a substantial portion of its arms beyond use. However the existence of splinter groups<sup>199</sup> that still oppose the peace process assures that the conflict is not yet over. Four years after the Good Friday Agreement, thirty-three years after the onset of the recent Troubles, and almost eight hundred fifty years after the Norman invasion of Ireland, peace has still not come to Northern Ireland. The current image of the typical Republican is of an average Northern Irish nationalist, who supports the peace agreement, but who is prepared to return to active political or armed duty should a Republican organization resurrect the fight for a united, independent Republic of Ireland.

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<sup>199</sup> These include the Continuity IRA and the Real IRA, militant groups formed from former members of the PIRA, and The Red Hand Defenders and Orange Volunteers, loyalists groups formed by dissenting members of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF). These groups oppose the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement.

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