

7th International Eyup Bas Symposium for Unity of Peoples against Imperialist Aggression

Friday, April 15, 2016

Session I.

Isolation and Resistance to Isolation

STATEMENT FROM I.R.A PRISONERS OF WAR, MAGHABERRY

We the Continuity IRA Prisoners of war would like to extend our complete solidarity with Halk Cephesi and to our comrades in Palestine engaged in revolutionary activities to achieve freedom, and to all of our brothers and sisters throughout the world who suffer under the yoke of imperialism.

Please let us state with great pride the tremendous gathering of this forum every year, it is as always a pleasure to have this statement read out in the presence of true revolutionaries.

We must strive to break the grip, we must not turn and look the other way we must strike when we are strong and never be weakened through the dirty tricks of the imperialist oppressor. Day in day out our comrades across Ireland fight for true liberation and freedom for our people, do not be fooled into believing there is a peace in Ireland or that Ireland as a nation is united and free, we continue to be entrenched both by imperialist in Britain and in Brussels.

We will continue our struggle by emphasising one word and that word is resistance and we pledge never ending resistance to imperialist powers of the world, we wish you to do the same.

O/C Irish Republican Army POWs, Roe 4, Maghaberry

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EXPERIENCE OF A POW IN MAGHABERRY

In August 2010 after five months of dirty protesting which was the result of Republican prisoners being brutalised day in day out Republican Prisoners brought the jail administration to the negotiating table, we then made a robust agreement our only mistake turned out to be trusting the administration to live up to their end of it.

Over the next year we seen a gradual give small and take big strategy come into effect with the screws continually hampering any effort made on our part to see a conflict free environment achieved within the jail. The first regression of our achievements came in the summer of 2011 when the jail administration alongside their P.O.A cohorts devised a scheme which would cut our association time. Considering the year before we had been guaranteed unfettered association and freedom of movement around our living space, this was a major attempt to undermine our struggle for political status.

We of course resisted this and began a protest of refusing to lock up under the new dispensation but locking under the time we had agreed to in 2010. This was met with visceral attacks and verbal abuse, culminating in a week of savage assaults dealt out by the riot team and the hated search team. After they realised we were willing to stand strong against them and take them on, they simply refused to open our doors one morning, this continued until we guaranteed that we would not continue this course of action, we got out and regrouped and began planning our next move.

We were now contemplating what measures needed to be taken; we decided that all avenues of negotiation needed to be exhausted before we could consider protest action. After all attempts to break the deadlock failed, controlled movement was in full force and as restrictive as ever and the brutal policy of strip searching was still in effect and no plans were made for its replacement.

In the month of July 2011 all Republican Prisoners where now on a full dirty protest for political status. Living in their own filth day in and day out for 18 months we had seen guarantees of less restrictive movement and a replacement scheme for the strip searching. A trial scheme, completely bias and compromised by unionist politicians, failed to resolve the issue of strip searching. The stage was now set for something far more drastic, events out of our control but influenced by our conditions, a screw by the name of David Black was executed for the criminal brutality dished out by his bosses in the jail administration. We then took the decision to allow the administration to see the error of their ways and enter into constructive dialogue; once again we had brought them back to the negotiating table.

We continue to struggle for political status.

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Session III.

Democratic Revolution – Armed Revolution

Imperialism's Policy of Disarming Peoples

- **Armed Struggle or Elections?**



Comrades, I wish to thank the organisers for inviting Sinn Féin Poblachtach to attend on behalf of the Republican Movement in Ireland. Such platforms are vital for aiding solidarity and understanding among anti-imperialists worldwide.

Speaking on *Armed Struggle or Elections* I wish to provide comrades here this weekend a background and update to the present situation in Ireland. As many of you are aware since 1998 there has been a so-called 'Peace Process' underway with a power sharing executive at Stormont maintaining the British presence in Ireland.

This Process is nothing more than the playing out of Britain's long term strategy in Ireland of Ulsterisation, Criminalization, and Normalisation. The Belfast Agreement of 1998 commonly known as the Good Friday Agreement was sponsored by the US Government and British Government with the full collaboration of the 26 County State. There were two separate votes to accept this agreement, one in the occupied six counties and the other in the 26 counties, both on separate but conjoining issues. As a result the Irish people were denied as they have been since 1918 the right to vote as a single unit on the future of their country. In 1998 Sinn Féin Poblachtach was the only political organisation opposed. We viewed those votes as illegitimate from the outset.

Today in Ireland a growing number of people in traditional republican heartlands are returning to the traditional position of revolutionary republicanism.

It was argued by us as far back as 1986 when the Provisionals' under the Gerry Adams / Martin McGuinness leadership embarked down the reformist path that they would eventually be subsumed into the 26 County neo-colonial political system. To quote former IRA Chief of Staff and Sinn Féin Poblachtach President Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, ***"You cannot ride two horses going in different directions."*** And so it played out that the Provisionals would leave behind altogether the armed struggle for the liberation of Ireland to enter into the reformist institutions set up to maintain British rule.

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The Republican Movement had throughout the 20th century been wrought by splits as to whether or not armed struggle or elections was the way to go towards achieving a British withdrawal. Five times we seen splits in the Movement and every time the former revolutionaries who left behind armed struggle became embroiled in the enemies system, eventually turning on former comrades to maintain their new found positions of limited power within the system.

At the end of the day unless the job of removing the British Government from Ireland has been attained it is futile to enter into elections, the only language throughout 800 years of Irish history the English have listened too is the language of militant force.

The last significant split came in 1986, every branch of the Republican Movement was re-organised, and SINN FÉIN Poblachtach carried on the traditional Sinn Féin message abandoned by the Provisionals. The women's organisation Cumann na mBan, the youth scouting organisation Na Fianna Éireann has in recent years gone from strength to strength, the youth of Ireland always have and will answer the call for a free and liberated Ireland. And the Irish Republican Army (Óglaigh na hÉireann), under the authority of the Continuity Army Council continues to strike at British Crown forces.

These then are the conditions at a national level for the struggle, we have had large sections of the nationalist community who were war-wary and were led with all kinds of promises down the path of elections; and yet now the position for revolutionaries is gaining traction. Despite the small numbers and setbacks of the last two and half decades our message is based upon a revolutionary ethos so solid many thousands have died for it in confidence rather than live under British rule.

At a local level across Ireland there is a growing disenchantment with the political system based on British and capitalist values which serves only to make the rich wealthier at the expense of the working classes.

We have seen the 26 county state introduce Water Charges despite the popular demand of the people to scrap the charge they forced it through and ignored the people. Numerous activists of Sinn Féin Poblachtach have been arrested and brought before the courts for blocking the installation of water meters outside of peoples' homes.

In 2014, 100,000 thousand people marched the streets of Dublin demanding they be scrapped, the call was ignored, this is the nature of the capitalist vultures in power who dance to the tune of the European Super state in Brussels. While they increase taxes and sell off the nations natural and national resources they gave themselves pay rises and bailed out private bankers to the tune of billions while tens of thousands of Irish youth including myself had to emigrate to far sides of the world to find work.

Rural Ireland is being crippled by this system of centralised capitalism, youth unemployment and emigration are at all-time highs, in urban areas political apathy

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among the youth is matched to deathly effect for communities by high levels of drug use/addiction and growing gangland violence.

The Republican Movement is determined to build up its ranks, to educate the next generation and to make the connection between the local, national and international dimensions of the fight against imperialism and how it effects not just every nation but every person within every community.

All of these interconnected issues bring us to the point of examining what is the best direction to take, armed struggle or elections. There are three determining factors; One, democracy is denied, two the demands of the people are ignored by a wealthy and corrupt political class, and three referendums regarding key issues of sovereignty have been passed where the people initially voted No!

On the first issue we do not have democracy in Ireland, the people of the 32 Counties of Ireland are denied due to the British occupation a right to decide on the future of their country acting as a single unit. This will invariably bring as it has the Irish people into direct armed conflict with the British State.

On the second issue, there have been in the last five years in the 26 Counties popular worker' based campaigns to abolish Household Charges, Water Taxes etc... which saw across the State hundreds of thousands of people mobilise. The people were ignored completely and were met with a smart smug reaction from a political elite afraid to defy Brussels.

This brings us to the third, the elected representatives of the Irish State no longer represent the interests of the Irish people. With two EU referendum, the Treaty of Nice in 2001 and the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 the Irish people voted No only to be made vote a second time until it was passed. Such Treaties have further eroded Irish democracy in effect making the 26 County State illegitimate representatives of the Irish people.

As Irish Republicans we adhere to the revolutionary path, perhaps the oldest continuity of revolutionary struggle exists in Ireland beginning in the 1790s, we are part of an old tradition, whilst we have faced many setbacks we are determined to strike a blow against the enemies of our nation and our cause, to establish a Federal Democratic Socialist Republic where the working class is put first and the nations national and natural resources are brought under public ownership.

We have no time to waste for with every passing year the resources of our country are further depleted. The time has come in Ireland for the re-emergence of a solid militant movement, the Republican Movement is the vehicle that has continued to strike against imperialism, we are confident in its victory.

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- **Peace Negotiations by Armed Organisations, And What Came After!**

As I touched on in the previous topic after the Peace Negotiations, what came after was the former revolutionaries becoming embroiled in the enemies system, today the Provisional Movement led by Adams / McGuinness directly implements British rule. While they have gained constitutional/electoral strength it has been at a significant cost.

In the 1998 Belfast Agreement part of it was the release of all political prisoners. But this was at a price, all Prisoners were only out on Licence, if they become critical of the direction of the so-called 'Peace Process' they may be re-arrested. Political Status was signed away. This arguably was the first major compromise as it played directly into English hands regards criminalising the Irish struggle.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strikes led by Bobby Sands which won back for revolutionaries Political Status. That year 10 of our Volunteers died on Hunger Strike, 22 in total since 1917.

Today our POWs are engaged in a battle with Prison Authorities to regain recognition and respect as Political Prisoners, in Maghaberry Prison things are currently on a knives edge. The August 10' Agreement was never implemented and abuse against prisoners continued worse than ever with controlled movement and strip searches being the favoured method of control by the screws (prison officers).

As a result of these methods, two prison officers in recent times were executed by comrades of the POWs on the outside. The sad reality is such actions put the prison staff in their place and quell even for a time the harassment. It is often the only action will bring them to the negotiating table. So we see on the prison front what came after the peace negotiations was nothing more than a process of normalisation.

Of course, in order to get into the 'system' the Provisionals had to engage in the greatest act of surrender when they decommissioned of arms in 2005. Everything since then has been an appeasement to the Unionist minority who now hold a full veto over the future of Ireland.

Comrades, from the Irish experience all we can say is stick to your ideals, do not compromise on matters of principle, to do so is to surrender to your enemies. Our slogan is Continuity not Compromise, and continue we will, every generation has risen to play their part in the fight for Irish freedom, we are not far off, the power sharing executive at Stormont is built on sand, in reality a sectarian head count and the next consistent campaign will smash it for good, the 26 County Neo Colonial State will fall with it and out of the ashes we will build a New Ireland, the Socialist Republic which will cherish all the children of the nation equally.

Indeed, we will not be victims of imperialism, we will be its executioners!

Victory to the Internationale, Victory to all Nations fighting Imperialism!