



Nonviolence in Irish History

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It is carried here in its original text (but without illustrations) except for the following additions/corrections; 1) this new introduction 2) corrections for typographical errors and one or two errors of fact, and 3) omission of outdated information, e.g. addresses of organisations and biographical notes on contributors.

While there would have been the option of updating some of the material, particularly the “Peace groups since the ‘thirties” piece, it was felt more desirable to leave it basically as it stood. The story of the Peace People to 1987 appeared in a Dawn Train pamphlet, “The Peace People Experience” which is available on this website and also available as a printed pamphlet from INNATE.

Dawn

DAWN, ‘an Irish Journal of Nonviolence’ was a monthly magazine produced from 1974-1985 covering ‘*nonviolent action, civil liberties, and movements for change*’; it also produced the occasional publication *DAWN TRAIN*. *DAWN* was an associate publication of the War Resisters International among other international connections. INNATE is, in effect, a successor organisation to *DAWN*.

Contents

Nonviolence in Irish History - Dawn Analysis.....	3
Daniel O’Connell and Nonviolence	6
Philosophical Background.....	6
Constitutionalism.....	7
Campaign for Catholic Emancipation 1823-28.....	7
Repeal.....	8
Conclusion.....	9
References and further reading.....	10
Quaker Non-Violence In Irish History	11
Philanthropy	11
1798 Uprising.....	11
Anti-Slavery	11
Famine Relief	11
Soup Kitchens	12
Other Relief.....	12
Diversification.....	13
Rectitude	13
Twentieth Century.....	13
Civil War.....	14
Conclusions	14
Congenial Puritanism	15
Money Morality.....	15
Notes	16
The First Boycott.....	17
Michael Davitt and the Land League	19
Land Nationalisation	19
Boycott Instead of Outrage.....	20
The ‘Other’ Irish in America.....	22
1. Abolitionist Movement.....	22
2. The Radical Temperance Movement.....	23
Newspapers and the Land League.....	24
4. Internationalism and Politics	24
5. The New Imperialism.....	25
6. The Communards	25
7. Conclusion.....	27
Non-violent political action and Irish politics in the early Twentieth Century	28
Libertarian Socialism	28
1913 Lockout.....	29
Sheehy-Skeffington's Activism	29
After 1916	30
Failure Of Ideals.....	30
Notes	30
Bibliography.....	31
Peace Groups Since The 1930’s.....	32
Introduction	32
The ‘Thirties And World War Two	32
Voices in The Wilderness: After the War	34
The ‘Sixties	34
Commentary	41
Footnotes/ References	41

Nonviolence in Irish History - Dawn Analysis

“Nonviolence in Irish History” – a somewhat pretentious title in that it is not a comprehensive survey of the topic – but there we are. First of all, this is not intended as a ‘good news with no bad news allowed’ publication. That would be ridiculous, when it is so obvious what role violence has played – and continues to play – in our country. But we would like to point to some aspects of nonviolent activity which we consider worthy of attention

‘Nonviolence’ can of course mean different things. It can mean simply that which is not violent, without any commitment in the long term to continuing to use nonviolent means or to pacifism. By ‘nonviolence’ we would mean a commitment to the positive use of nonviolent means, that means and ends are one. Some people would distinguish between the former kind as ‘non-violence’ with a hyphen, and the latter as ‘nonviolence’

But as well as looking at past nonviolent actions, we believe that we should also look at past violent actions. It is often said within nonviolent circles that ‘nonviolence’ is seen to have failed after being employed in a particular struggle for a couple of months, while ‘violence’ may have been tried for centuries without anyone saying ‘violence has failed’. This may be somewhat simplistic, but it is certainly true of Ireland.

The mythologies of the past still live with us, whether it be of the loyalist paramilitary organisation of 1912 or the republican rising of 1916. The loyalists of 1912 were prepared to fight the Crown if that proved necessary; though reactionary in the political and militaristic sense they were fighting to defend what they saw as their way of life, ‘the British way of life’ or, more precisely, ‘the Ulster Protestant way of life’. In the case of 1916, a small group were prepared to make a symbolic gesture, believing that the destiny of Ireland was in their hands, that history would vindicate them. Those who participated in 1916 must be seen in the context of their times, and of the Great War which was supposedly fought over defending small nations. The idea of blood sacrifice was common throughout Europe, even if the slaughter of the Great War was to make it somewhat more difficult to justify than before. The rebels of 1916 were making a gesture without having a worked out social and political plan.

The major political parties in the Republic still pay lip service to 1916, though much muted since the troubles began in the North. It is possible to speculate that the leaders of 1916 would have categorically repudiated the campaign of bombing and shooting by the Provos in the North today. Certainly the majority of those who were involved either in 1916 or the War of Independence do reject the Provos. In 1916 the symbolic sacrifice was mainly of themselves; Pearse and Connolly called off the rising when the civilian population was threatened. Even if the Provos began as a defensive reaction, in the North today it is principally the bystanders who are threatened.

But the problem is that if it is possible to claim not to need a democratic base, through such concepts as ‘the vindication of history’ and ‘the destiny of Ireland’ (or indeed ‘defence of the Ulster/British way of life’ among loyalist groups), a group like the Provos has a perfect reason for bombing and shooting. Casualties of such a war become not the casualties of the individual gunman or military group but rather casualties of history. It is this anti-democratic thinking which we reject most forcefully. And until such, an ideology which gives rise to such phrases like ‘the vindication of history’ is erased from our culture there will continue to be groups who will utilise it in such a way as will actually increase hatred, bitterness and military conflict.

While 1916 is an example of elitist action, we must be fair in pointing out that it is not just republican militarists who are elitist; it applies to loyalists, and it applies to nonviolent groups (the latter particularly in terms of size and class). Nevertheless, nonviolent groups have a commitment to persuading people rather than forcing a result through the barrel of a gun

In the ‘national struggle’, violent and non-violent means have usually gone hand in hand. Sometimes people have been tactically non-violent, waiting for the opportunity to use violence. At other times there have been those who wanted to use constitutional means, or non-violent means (the two are not synonymous), and others were prepared to go further and use violence (e.g. the Young Irelanders, though O’Connell himself was somewhat ambivalent in relation to at least using the threat of violence). Often the non-violent aspect of the struggle has been ignored, though it was Ireland which gave the English language the term ‘boycott’. (Admittedly, the Boycott case and the Land League are quite well documented). Take for example the building up of an alternative administration during the War of Independence – the parallel institutions to the British, the first Dail, and the local councils switching their allegiance – these are classic anti-imperialist but non-violent tactics, in our case going hand in hand with a military campaign, followed by a civil war of a

limited nature. It must be pointed out, however, that the Sinn Fein courts at that time took over the conservative property laws in opposition to workers' attempts at control; here the alternative institutions were used in a counter-revolutionary fashion

We believe in nonviolence in Ireland. That is not to judge those around the world who have decided that violence is the only way; it does not necessarily imply moralising about violence. But in trying to build a new Ireland we believe that means and ends are one, that violence cannot but further alienate our 'enemies' or those who conceive of themselves as our enemies. The violence of recent years has once more driven the people of the North further apart. This again is not to ignore institutional violence, the violence of discrimination, the dole queue or malemployment. But because the overt physical violence has caused so much anguish and driven people further apart they are not in a position to unite to fight the institutional violence (though that does not assume such would automatically happen if there was an absence of overt physical violence).

We must not assume that the North before 1968, or the Republic today, are non-violent. The social ills in the Republic are worse than in the North: unemployment is as bad, housing worse, welfare payments lower, and there is no greater feeling of involvement in society or control of their lives by the vast majority of the population. 'Peace' is often a meaningless catch word, but for those who believe in nonviolence it must include the potential for personal fulfilment on the part of the vast majority of the population. Of course this is an idealistic definition of 'peace', but the word needs to be reclaimed from those whose definition amounts to 'no change'.

The state of those groups who openly profess nonviolence in Ireland is disappointing. It is ironic that the movement which brought 'peace' and 'nonviolence' so much into the public eye should also have alienated so many people. (This was partly the fault of the Peace People themselves and partly public over-reaction both in favour and against them, magnified by the media). As Ray Davey of Corrymeela quotes, "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness"; but we should in no way be content. On a wider sphere in the North, the radical alternatives which were being discussed in recent years – such as community policing, or even independence for the North – seem to have disappeared into the safety-net of direct rule from Westminster. And that safety net seems to cause complacency and unwillingness to risk. Perhaps the situation has never been so desperate or drastic that people were prepared to risk everything. And in the South the way of life is conservative, and there is a fairly narrow 'moral community'. Neither South nor North is there any viable and strong left wing party, a most remarkable absence.

The failure of many of the nonviolent groups in Ireland has been because their social composition has been narrow and they have perceived their task as a narrow one. Too many groups by doing what they expected themselves to do (protesting against physical violence or propounding pacifist views) have failed to get around to things that really matter. Other groups, still, have tried to do everything, and resultantly have done nothing – often where there were already other non-violent groups working on the same issues. Until the 'peace movement in Ireland is prepared to ally itself with the non-sectarian left and with social change movements in general (as in some continental countries) it can make very limited progress.

Of course there are certain things, in terms of the propagation of nonviolence as an idea and a viable option, and training for nonviolent action, that we must continue. But we must not be afraid to strike out, if we wish to avoid being considered irrelevant. In another way it is possible that we may have to be relegated to the periphery in order to strike out; at times the best contribution believers in nonviolence can make is through being involved in other, not specifically nonviolent, groups. Sometimes it is not banner waving but behind the scenes foot slogging that counts.

Allying with the non-sectarian left and with other social change movements will lose the peace groups some current supporters. There are those who conceive of 'peace' as non-political, and these people could only with great difficulty accept such a change. DAWN is committed to the belief that nonviolence involves radical or revolutionary social change. We believe that this pamphlet shows that Irish nonviolence has been radical. Certainly there is a case for moving slowly and trying to take people with us, but there is no case for not moving at all. There comes a time when we have to stand up and show ourselves. Perhaps it is only when we do stand up that we will be taken seriously, that we will be seen as a viable alternative to the possibilities of 'violent change' or 'no change'. Because at the moment we deceive ourselves if we think that we are taken seriously by very many more than ourselves.

The contents of this pamphlet cover a fair spread from the 17th century onwards and speak for themselves: O'Connell, the Quakers, Davitt, Sheehy Skeffington. It is worth commenting on one article, however, Séamas Cain's on the 'other' Irish in America; by including this we are by definition broadening 'Irish history' to include the experience of the Irish outside of Ireland. The final article on peace groups is more introspective than the others and its attention is focussed on overtly nonviolent groups.

A final word about this pamphlet. In no way is it a 'finished product'; perhaps we could call it 'Dawn Nonviolent Historical Studies No. 1'. What is given here is just a few views by a few people on a few aspects of nonviolence in recent Irish history. Much of the material has been covered before, but without the specifically nonviolent perspective. We would welcome comments, suggestions and replies or articles on other aspects of our history for future publications of the same kind, and we would also welcome financial contributions towards publishing the same.

The Dawn Group

Daniel O'Connell and Nonviolence

By Angela Mickley

Irish politics have become famous in recent years for the continuing acts of violence committed in the name of the various political and religious persuasions. With the violent image of Northern Ireland in mind, it is one of the ironies of history that an Irishman should have been the first to develop and employ successfully the organisational mechanisms of a nonviolent political movement.

This man was Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), the "Liberator" who brought Catholic Emancipation and whose image has been distorted through historians of the Young Ireland Movement. They attacked him for his calling off the monster meeting at Clontarf in October 1843, when he could have given (and was expected to give) the final consent to a massive uprising, but declined from doing so out of his nonviolent principles.

He was one of the first Catholic lawyers to be admitted to enter the legal profession after the abolition of most of the penal laws against Catholics in 1793. His knowledge of the law combined with constitutional methods and liberal-utilitarian principles provided the basis for his nonviolent campaigns for Catholic Emancipation in the years 1823 to 1829 and for the Repeal of the Union with Great Britain from 1840 to 1847, the year of his death.

In the context of European history O'Connell is regarded as the most important politician among the subsequent adherents of what is classified as political Catholicism; at the same time he organised part of the Irish nation in a democratic mass campaign directed against the policy of the British government in the name of principles that every government claimed to uphold.

In his time O'Connell was one of the best known men in Europe and America, and his methods were copied eagerly for similar campaigns all over the continent until they became common knowledge among politicians of all persuasions.

In this article I will try to briefly analyse the methods and organisational approach of O'Connell's campaigns and the political philosophy behind these, and will leave it to the reader to draw the obvious conclusions out of this study for our present day politics, 150 years later.

Philosophical Background

The term '*nonviolence*' as a political concept describing a particular method of opposing government measures or conducting a campaign for political, social or religious aims did not exist at O'Connell's time. The practice of '*passive resistance*', though, was known and was used mainly by religious groupings and sects.

When studying law in London, O'Connell came into contact with radical and liberal thinkers and was particularly influenced by William Godwin's "*Enquiry into Political Justice*" (published 1793), the first detailed outline of the philosophy of anarchism, to which he gave his comment:

"His work cannot be too highly praised. All mankind are indebted to the author. The cause of despotism never met a more formidable adversary. He goes to the root of every evil that now plagues man and degrades him almost beneath the savage beast. He shows the source whence all misfortunes of mankind flow. That source he demonstrates to be political government." (30-1-1796)

For O'Connell this meant that political government should not be overthrown, but should be influenced towards adopting the principle of political equality of all men.

In accordance with Godwin, O'Connell saw the need for nonviolently exercising this influence on government, because the consequences of violent actions were by him regarded as even more disastrous than the actual act of violence:

"...when man falls by the hand of his neighbour. Here a thousand ill passions are generated. The perpetrators, and the witnesses of murders, become obdurate, unrelenting and inhuman. Those who sustain the loss of relations or friends by a catastrophe of this sort are filled with indignation and revenge. Distrust is propagated from man to man, and the dearest ties of human society are dissolved."

Revolutions are therefore seen as intrinsically dangerous for the whole society and as preventing beneficial progress of mankind. He places much importance on the gradual improvement of social and political institutions and systems, which has to be conducted in accordance with the state of general understanding and enlightenment.

O'Connell adopts this principle in his campaign and puts it into practice by constantly trying to educate the Irish peasant population towards a feeling of national identity and a political awareness. Throughout the years of agitation, O'Connell's main emphasis lay on the education of his Irish followers and he only launched a public campaign or petition when certain about the conscious support of the people concerned.

Constitutionalism

O'Connell's main principle was the concept of constitutional struggle for political change. This meant regarding the British Constitution as the basis and frame of his political work, e.g. acting as a member of the political system, acting through and respecting its rules and laws, while trying to change them. He thus fought the government on its own ground by following the letter of the law to the utmost. (Therefore he could be regarded as a more loyal member of the political scene than any English politician would ever have acknowledged). This led to rather funny contests of wits, like the one in 1830 when O'Connell formed an Anti-Union Association which was immediately declared illegal. Finally, after several changes of name, he called for "Repeal Breakfasts" for some "charitable benefit":

"If the Government think fit to proclaim down political breakfasts...then we will resort to a political lunch,... a political dinner,... tea,...until suppers also be proclaimed down."

O'Connell's phenomenal achievement lay in recognising the immense possibilities of this constitution and in using it to the advantage of the Irish people. But it must be remembered that without this constitution and without the conscious support of the Irish peasant masses he could under no circumstances have launched such a campaign and with such success. During the emancipation campaign and again during the repeal agitation, O'Connell managed to keep Ireland fairly quiet by promising further relieving legislation from the British Parliament; on the other hand he obtained this legislation through reference to the disturbed state of the country and the prospect of massive uprisings if England did not co-operate.

When presenting demands to Britain and when addressing his Irish followers, O'Connell therefore stressed the willingness of the Irish to be politically active loyal subjects to the king; thus he was literally hammering constitutionalism into their thinking and underlining the importance of the constitutional and legal conduct with references to the frequent acts of violence which often resulted in coercion laws being quickly enacted, and the strengthening of the "Orange faction":

"Alas! for poor Ireland! Her liberties depend upon the prudence of a people of the most inflammable passions, goaded almost to madness on the one hand by Orange insults and oppressions, and exposed at the same time to the secret seductions of the agents and emissaries of those very Orange oppressors! Do you wish to gratify the Orangemen? If you do the way is before you. You have only to enter into some illegal or traitorous association; you have only to break out into turbulence or violence, and the Orangemen will be delighted, because it will afford them the wished-for opportunity of rioting in your blood?"

(1813) "...if a single wish, inconsistent with loyalty, allegiance, peace, be expressed, our enemies will have an excuse, and a justification for their crimes and oppressions! The Habeas Corpus Act will again be renewed, and the cause of Ireland will be lost, and lost for ever... disloyalty to his sovereign would be double treason to his country; it would be perjury, aggravated by folly, and followed by the eternal extinction of the liberties of Ireland."

Campaign for Catholic Emancipation 1823-28

The basis of this campaign which also gave it a democratic quality hitherto unknown in political history, was the active involvement of thousands of small tenants and farmers who all paid their "Penny a Month" contribution to register as members of the Catholic Association.

The purpose of the scheme was to:

- Provide the association with a fund to enable it to work;
- Involve a major part of the population in political activity;
- Show the British government and public that the association had gained sufficient support among the Catholic population of Ireland
- Create an alternative to the previous – unsuccessful – trials by the Catholic aristocracy to gain emancipation through
- putting more pressure behind the annual petition to Parliament,
- offer a constitutional channel to peasant masses who often resorted to violence;
- Educate the Irish politically with a future independence of Ireland in mind where they would have to be capable of managing their own affairs, political, economic and cultural.

The association was structured in a way which secured the participation of all its members on a parish or county level. It consisted of small local groups in hundreds of little towns and villages which sent their delegates to the meetings in Dublin; these were called aggregate meetings because the law did not permit any delegatory assemblies outside Parliament.

Since O’Connell regarded the church as an important moral force in the education of the people, he engaged the local priests in his organisation, after having received the bishops’ consent, and made them the major factor in his agitation. In his handling of the relations with the government, O’Connell used tactics which Gandhi made famous a hundred years later; he always announced his actions previous to their being taken, he founded his association under a new name immediately after it had been proclaimed and frequently made the famous remark about the “coach and six” that he was going to drive through any act the government could enact to dissolve his campaign. He also threatened the British government with a prospect of a violent and massive uprising if emancipation was not granted. This prospect was a real one, since violence, secret societies, etc. continued to exist during the constitutional campaign.

In the 1826 election in County Waterford, the 40 shilling free-holders who had had the right to vote since 1793, surprisingly did not vote for their landlord, but for a candidate who had the support of the association. It is important to remember that ballot was open in those days and the unfaithful tenants had to face eviction if they did not conform to the practice of voting for “their” candidate.

The climax of these unruly votings was the election of O’Connell for one of the County Clare seats in 1828 which proved to the English public that the balance of power in Ireland had changed considerably.

To alleviate the horrible consequences of eviction for the tenants, the association collected money, a kind of insurance fund on the “penny a month” basis was set up to be used for the impoverished victims. These measures showed the peasants that they were not completely helpless and could, even without using violence against their landlords, continue the campaign successfully working together and showing solidarity.

The effect of these actions cannot be overestimated in their value for the political awareness of the “lower classes”. The newly developed methods could in future be used in other campaigns, though the terrible decimation of the Irish population during the famine years meant a demoralisation of their political consciousness that took decades to overcome.

Repeal

The main feature of the Repeal agitation in the years 1840 to 1843 – it started in 1841 to become a movement of considerable size, was for a year without O’Connell’s leadership when he was mayor of Dublin, and came to a climax in 1843 – was its emergence as an alternative social and administration system to the one controlled and dominated by the government.

When it became apparent that support for O’Connell in his effort to get a repeal of the legislative union with Great Britain was immense and that the people did not want to tolerate the oppression of the Protestant law courts and police force, O’Connell started to set up illegal law courts; they claimed to merely serve the needs of the people and certainly did not want to overthrow the government institutions, but in fact they constituted a complete and effective alternative system:

Law Courts: they provided a double alternative to the existing systems, the predominantly Protestant legal courts which were hardly accepted as institutions of justice, and the illegal underground courts of the violent secret societies, which were also contributing to the general unrest.

O’Connell’s Police served mainly during the monster meetings to keep people from drinking and starting fights, and to watch out for agents provocateurs inciting to violence.

Reading Rooms were installed in most towns or villages, with a "Repeal Officer" at hand, to provide information and education for the members of the movement.

The nonviolent element in these institutions was the fact that they were installed, respected and used by the people and that the people were in control of their ruling agencies – a precursor of Gandhi’s village communities and our present community politics which are all trying to create structures with a variety of channels to express discontent and not let pressure build up to violence. They also showed the people that their possibilities and success grew with their numbers and determination.

Conclusion

To judge the significance of nonviolence in O’Connell’s political work, a few questions have to be raised: was O’Connell a true adherent of nonviolence or was it just a welcome by-product of his constitutional campaigns? 2. What part did non-violence play in his methodical approach? 3. Did he have success?

O’Connell’s sincerity when stating his abhorrence of violence has often been doubted or at least questioned, but a study of his private letters reveals exactly the same picture. He and his younger brother had witnessed revolutionary violence in France and were forced to leave the Catholic college in Douay in 1793. In later years he observed events in France with much interest while his conviction of the necessity for a nonviolent political change grew and was further increased when violent uprisings in Ireland (1798 and 1803) showed him the futility of such attempts.

“The Irish people are not yet sufficiently enlightened to be able to bear the sun of freedom. Freedom would soon dwindle into licentiousness. They would rob, they would murder. The altar of liberty totters when it is supported only with carcasses.”

Later he was to elaborate in practice the implications of this fairly indirect statement about end and means. He followed William Godwin in the opinion that the aim of a particular campaign or agitation must already be discernible in the way in which it is conducted.

His abhorrence of physical violence did not prevent him from using verbal violence in his rousing speeches to the Catholic Association and to the many mass meetings in the Irish countryside.

Which leads us to the last question. It can be answered in two ways: He obtained emancipation, but not repeal. Success in a nonviolent struggle means, whether the people involved remain firm in their objection to violence and whether they convince their opponents of the legitimacy and peaceful intentions of their aims and means.

The situation O’Connell started from showed on the one side a government that regarded the peasant population of Catholic Ireland as unfaithful and not trustworthy subjects; and it showed on the other side a Catholic majority in Ireland which felt the strong pressure of economic exploitation and political oppression without being able to voice their grievances in an effective manner, or to change anything. O’Connell provided the missing link in this relationship – a relationship that existed nowhere else in the world and was to grow in future decades to a more democratic thinking in politics.

I see O’Connell’s main achievement in his determination to educate and agitate the Irish towards becoming citizens rather than subjects. Here his nonviolence was most important, because one of its basic elements is respect for every human being, friend or foe; this respect was lacking in both the British government and in the secret societies’ approach.

The constitutional and nonviolent campaign during these decades provided an example and a basis for further movements that haven’t yet been made full use of.

References and further reading

There are dozens of books on O'Connell or dealing partly with him. It shall be sufficient here to mention just a few which are either essential reading or welcome further information for the interested person

K. F. Roche 1949: *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*. In M. Tierney, **Daniel O'Connell. Nine centenary essays**. Dublin

M. R. O'Connell 1972-78: *Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*. 8 vols.

M. R. O'Connell 1975: *D. O'Connell and Religious Freedom*. In: **Thought** Vol. 50 No. 197.

S. O'Faolain 1938: *The King of the Beggars*

W. Godwin (1798): *Enquiry into Political Justice*. Edited by I. Kramnick, Penguin 1976

M. Brennan 1971: *D. O'Connell and Catholic Emancipation 1810-29*. In: **Peace News** 24-12-71.

A. Mickley 1976: *(Irish Nationalism and Roman Catholicism of D. O'Connell)*, M.A. thesis

Quaker Non-Violence In Irish History

by Garreth Byrne

Paradoxically, the Quakers (or Friends) came to Ireland between 1650 and 1680, during that colonising period of history known as the Cromwellian Settlement. For a generation or more they described themselves as English, but later adopted the land as their own. They have called Ireland their country ever since and have made a sustained, laudable contribution to its social history

One of the earliest Quaker settlers was William Edmundson from Westmoreland. He opened a shop in Lurgan and soon established a meeting (worshipping community) there in 1654. He and other Friends later migrated to Co. Cavan and took up farming as a career. By the end of the century it is estimated that some 700 Quaker families were living in Ireland.(1) During the Cromwellite wars refugees from both sides received food and shelter from individual Quakers. Thus began a tradition of disinterested relief activities for the poor and dispossessed which continues to this day.

Philanthropy

Anthony Sharp (born in 1643) was a Dublin businessman who during the famished years 1673-74 published a pamphlet making practical proposals for lessening the number of beggars in the streets. He later set up a woollen manufacture in the Coombe, employing 500 persons. The large number 'was partly at least prompted by philanthropic motives'.(2) Although not of the Established Church, Sharp was invited to become an alderman, and his scheme for building a workhouse, 'for all idle and vagrant beggars' was implemented.

1798 Uprising

As their religious convictions taught them to abhor war, the Quakers took steps to minimise the violence which they saw coming in the late 1790s. The National Meeting of Friends instructed members throughout the country to destroy all domestic guns, from 1796, lest they be seized and used by rival belligerents. When the 1798 Rebellion broke out the Friends were respected both by Crown forces and rebels. They gave relief to war victims in many cases.

Anti-Slavery

Individual Irish Quakers took an interest in efforts to abolish slavery during the first half of the 19th century. Some Friends actually gave up the use of sugar and other slave-grown products – a forerunner of contemporary boycotts of goods produced in apartheid South Africa. John Grubb attended a big anti-slavery meeting addressed by William Wilberforce at a London Freemasons' hall in May, 1823.(3) There is record of R.D. Webb, friend of the Temperance Crusader, Father Matthew, being active in the anti-slavery cause during the mid-century.(4)

Quakers were involved in an Anti-Slavery Society which was 'of all denominations'.(5) Another Irish Quaker who was also a friend of Fr. Theobald Matthew was William Martin. Isabel Grubb informs us (p.138) that Martin had some influence on the eminent founder of the Temperance movement.

Famine Relief

The most distinguished phase of non-violent activity by Quakers was undertaken during and after the tragic Famine which occurred in Ireland between 1845 and 1847. Irish and English Quakers had been involved in famine relief committees in 1822 and 1831-32.(6) In 1845 the early potatoes and the grain crop were successful, but the main crop potatoes failed. The British government of Peel took swift action to deal with the matter; alas the scientists were unable to diagnose the potato disease and in the following year there was a total potato failure. Millions of cottiers and small farmers were in peril, since the potato was virtually the only source of nourishment for persons in their poor economic circumstances.

A leaflet entitled *Distress in Ireland*, signed and dated 13 November 1846 by Joseph Bewley and Jonathan Pim, gives details about the appointment of 21 Friends to act as a Central Relief Committee (CRC) 'so long as their labours may be required, with power to add to their numbers...' The Dublin-based CRC contained two Allens, three Bewleys, four Pims and two Perrys. Some of their descendants are today well known in Dublin business and professional circles. 'Corresponding members' – 21 in all – from places as far apart as Lisburn and Limerick, were added to the list.

The Quakers felt the need to accumulate hard information from all around the country to help them distribute relief fairly and effectively. W. E. Forster, who had previously established soup kitchens in Norwich, came over to Ireland in the autumn of 1846 and made a six-week tour of distressed counties in the West, North-West and South-West. His detailed

reports were published by Friends in England and aroused much sympathy. (Years later, in 1880, his son W. E. 'Buckshot' Forster, enjoyed a very brief spell of popularity when he was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland by Gladstone.) R. Barclay Fox and James Tuke were two other English Quakers who separately toured Ireland seeking information in 1847 and 1848.

Soup Kitchens

The CRC opened a soup kitchen in Dublin in January 1847. This was to be a model for similar institutions throughout the country, some of them set up by the government. It should be emphasised here that the Quakers always encouraged local involvement and leadership in relief operations. They never sought advantage from their activities and often channelled funds to distressed areas through resident ministers and priests. The recipients of soup, clothing, seeds or fishing equipment were generally unaware that their ultimate benefactors were English and Irish Quakers.

Just how important the soup kitchens were in sustaining countless citizens during 'Black 47' may be appreciated by going through the pages of a Clonmel Famine Relief Committee document kept in the Dublin Friends' Historical Library. Scribbled hurriedly in a green, tatty little notebook, in fading brown ink, are entries like the following:

12.11.1846 *We have attended here since 10 o'clock this morning – tasted the soup and find it excellent – and the demand for it very brisk, we suggest for Friday's the manufacture of porridge made of Indian meal, oatmeal, water, pepper & onions with the additions boiled in it, also that 2 or 3 wooden seats would be provided for the attendants.*

(signed) Eliza Sargint & S H Strene

13.11.46 *...made without herring but well seasoned with pepper & onions – 50 gals were made and are going well.*

Jane S Jacob & Anne W Murphy

18.12.46 *150 gals porridge today – at 10 a great crowd of poor people were (sic) most eager to get relief.*

Jane S Jacob & Anne W Murphy

25.2.47 *porridge very good – 370 gallons sold off quickly.*

E Malcomson & Lydia Grubb

20.3.47 *Attended from 9 to 11 o'clock, 660 gallons of soup sold at 11 o'clock*

Jas. Grubb & E Boyd

12.4.47 *750 gallons sold this day*

(This was the final entry.)

Other Relief

In soup kitchens like the Clonmel one above it was the deliberate policy to sell the soup and porridge at a token price. The Quakers were aware that even the poorest of the poor had their dignity. The people were not to be deprived of their self respect.

The most detailed history of the Famine is entitled *The Great Famine – Studies in Irish History 1845-52* edited by R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (Dublin 1952). On page vii in the introduction of that work it is surmised that in the grim year of 1847 three million lived on charity throughout Ireland. The work of the Quakers is contrasted favourably with the efforts of the government:

The government relief schemes had no long term purpose and even in their immediate aim were not particularly successful. Far greater foresight was shown by charitable organisations, particularly the Quakers, in their relief efforts.' (p.258)

At this time the fishing tackle was in pawn due to outstanding debts. Assistance was given by the CRC to fishermen in Claddagh and County Antrim. The district of Ring in County Waterford had received Board of Works grants to build a quay in Baile na nGall in the 1820s through the intervention of the local Church of Ireland minister, Reverend Alcock, and a visiting group of Quakers. During the Famine the Rev. Alcock distributed grants received from the CRC and other

sources to the owners of 23 fishing boats which employed a total of 104 persons. The disinterest of Alcock in the matter is noted:

'...níor thrácht sé riamh ar chursaí chreidimh le muintir na háite, ná níor dhein sé aon iarracht riamh ar iad a mhealladh chun a chreidimh féin.'(8)

During the Famine 'soupers' – evangelical Protestants, mostly from Ulster, who distributed free soup to starving people who agreed to attend their services – operated in some areas of Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary, but they constituted a fringe minority whose activities embarrassed and were deeply resented by ministers of the Established Church. Men like Alcock were the rule rather than the exception. In later years special masses were celebrated in some Roman Catholic churches in memory of dead Protestant ministers who had worked in famine relief.(9)

Diversification

The Quakers were anxious to deal with more than the symptoms of the Famine. They knew that the nature of Irish farming was unbalanced. Excessive dependence on the potato to the neglect of other foods was partly the cause of the disaster. Agricultural productivity compared unfavourably with other European countries. William Bennett, a London Quaker, spent six weeks distributing seed purchased, by himself and others, in the West of Ireland in 1847.(10) A model farm was started in Colmanstown, County Galway, in order to teach improved farming methods. The farm had to be sold in 1863 due to acute financial difficulties, for a sum exceeding £2,000. This together with over £7,000 from the CRC was spent on famine relief during that time.(11)

Rectitude

There were only 2,500 Quakers in Ireland in 1845 – the entire population numbered about 8½ millions – yet the enormity of Quaker relief efforts was in inverse ratio to the size of this religious minority. On 8 May 1849 Joseph Bewley and Jonathan Pim signed an *Address to the Public* from the CRC summarising the relief activities of the previous two years. It reads somewhat like a statement by the Chairman of the Board to shareholders at an Annual General Meeting. The substantial returns on investments were calculated, no doubt, to cause a sharp rise in the share-price index:

contributions to the CRC 'amounted to £200,000, of which more than one half was sent from America.'

'more than forty thousand letters have been written or received by the Committee in Dublin.'

nearly 200,000lbs of turnip, carrot, parsnip, cabbage and other seeds were distributed.

other relief, apart from the CRC, amounted to over twelve million pounds e.g. British Government £10 million; British Relief Association £400,000 approx.; Local Committees in Ireland £300,000+

Fund raising committees in America and Britain preferred to channel money to Quaker organisations, since these could be relied upon to have money distributed equitably. The historian, T. P. O'Neill, sums up accurately:

'As a body they set an example of the greatest rectitude and most profound charity. Their assistance was given to the poor, irrespective of their religion, and there was not the slightest breath of suspicion cast on their motives.' (p.213; see footnotes)

Bewley and Pim looked to the future when another calamity might happen. They urged drastic changes in the laws regulating title to, and the conveyancing of, land. Bewley was to die of accumulated exhaustion in 1851 but other Quakers gave valuable evidence to a commission examining the land tenure laws in the following year. Obviously the colonial system had played a large part in the disaster. It remained for the radical Michael Davitt, in association with Charles Stuart Parnell, to mobilise in a later generation the necessary land revolution.

Twentieth Century

This narrative necessarily emphasises activities during the Famine. However, the tradition of relief during times of upheaval was sustained into the present century, and the next great task of Irish Quakers arose from the outbreak of the Great War and the political and military events culminating in the Irish War of Independence. Quakers in England and Ireland were active in defending and promoting conscientious objection. In the Friends' Historical Library is a letter by

one W. F. Douglas of Terenure giving details of conscientious objection methods for Interested Irish Readers. In the same folder are polite notes from the editors of the *Cork Examiner* and *Irish Independent*, dated April 1918, informing Mr Douglas that his letter was refused publication because of wartime censorship laws.

When the Home Rule crisis occurred in 1914 the *Friends Quarterly Examiner* No. 189 of that year carried articles on the subject by six Irish Friends. A Dublin Friend, J. G. Douglas, argued in favour of Home Rule saying that Irish Protestants would have nothing to fear. Two Northern Quakers argued an opposing viewpoint. In the pages of the same English magazine, in October 1920, J. G. Douglas advocated a treaty between Britain and Ireland to end the bloodshed between Sinn Fein and the Black and Tans. (FQE October 1920, pp.416-426). The same issue had an article by 'Two Ulster Friends' condemning Sinn Fein (pp. 407-416). During the War of Independence two English Quakers, Francis E Pollard and Samuel Graveson, called upon General Sir Nevil Macready and discussed the provision of crafts materials for internees. Quakers later visited the internment camps at Ballykinlar and the Curragh.(12)

Several Irish Quakers were active in the *Irish White Cross* which was formed towards the end of 1920 to alleviate sufferings arising from the conflict. The *Report of the Irish White Cross* to August 1922 indicates that in the South about 1,000 families had been made homeless and in Belfast some 10,000 workers had been expelled from factories and workshops arising from sectarian pogroms. (Report, p.36) Up to August 1922 'personal relief' distributed by the White Cross throughout the country amounted to £788,215 and twelve shillings (p. 139). Quakers made many lengthy journeys to obtain information. The Friends' Historical Library contains many detailed reports of such trips which can serve as valuable source material for a history of the period.

Civil War

The anti-Treaty forces occupied the Four Courts in Dublin in April 1922. The Free State forces opened fire with batteries supplied by the British Army in late July and thus commenced a short, bitter civil war which was to have such a divisive and politically distracting influence on the course of Southern life for another fifty years.

J.G. Douglas had been nominated a Senator by the W. T. Cosgrave soon after it assumed power under the terms of the Treaty. Douglas was later a member of the committee which drafted the Constitution of Saorstát Éireann. Some of his Senate speeches were published in pamphlet form in the 1930s. However, in 1923 Senator Douglas performed a humanitarian task which is succinctly described in a letter by his son, J. Harold Douglas, in a letter to the curator of the Friends' Historical Library in Dublin:

“...he was sent for secretly by de Valera, and he was the first person on the Free State side with whom de Valera had peace talks. After their first meeting Father (JGD) was not prepared to continue the negotiations on his own, and after considering a number of names de Valera agreed that Father should be joined by Andrew Jameson. These talks brought about the end of the civil war.” (13)

In recent years English and Irish Quakers have been unobtrusively engaged in peace activities connected with the conflict in Northern Ireland. In the Irish Republic members of the Bewley family and other Quakers have collaborated effectively with many others in resettling itinerants. The Bewley family in Dublin has pioneered a unique experiment in encouraging employees to take shares in the business firm. One assumes that Anthony Sharp would have approved of this Sarvodayan venture.

Conclusions

This essay has so far been concerned with facts rather than analysis; it might be now appropriate to conclude with some general remarks about the effect of Quaker ideology on the secular behaviour of Irish Quakers.

In the history of Ireland the Quakers have been a conspicuous minority. They have generally been artisans and merchants rather than soldiers and landlords. In economic terms they have been honest, skilful capitalists. It can be said that they have been part of the economic establishment, but of that benevolent, relatively non-exploitative part. They have constituted the most acceptable face of Irish capitalism.

In theological matters the Quakers went one step further than other Protestants. The Protestant revolution – the strictly spiritual aspect of it – which swept through America and Europe from the 16th century onwards, emphasised individual private judgement and the desirability of a personal relationship with God through the direct mediation of Jesus. The

Quakers agreed with these two tenets, but insisted that rigid church structures should not be erected in opposition to what Protestant revolutionaries regarded as the alienating, authoritarian structures of the Roman Church. The Friends emphasised the Inner Light and the Movement of the Spirit among the individual and collectivity. This Spirit was to be the deciding element in the structures that Quakers later did erect i.e. Meetings. (In the Quaker world Meeting with a capital M somewhat approximates to an ecclesiastical parish.) The movement of the spirit concept inspired the many individualistic relief and anti-war initiatives undertaken by Quakers in the history of Ireland.

Congenial Puritanism

Being part of the economic establishment – the better part – but not part of the political establishment, the Quakers were able to act as a critical communications medium between the colonial class and the millions of people who suffered the consequences of colonial dispossession. The Quakers belonged to neither class and were acceptable to both sides. This position of neutrality and mutual acceptability was to be a key factor in the saving of millions of lives during the Great Famine, but it was not influential enough to promote a nonviolent reconciliation between colonialism and its victims in later decades.

The Quakers were guided by the Spirit, generally a congenial Spirit, rather than by the Rhetoric of the Word, generally an awe-full Word, unlike the majority of puritan Protestants. Quakerism was puritanism with a human face. That Quakers, along with other Protestants, had feelings of guilt about the sinful human condition there is no doubt. They, along with other puritans, tried to redeem their sinful nature by means of abstemiousness, hard work, circumspection and thrift – the classical ingredients of Tawney's alleged 'Protestant Ethic' which coincided with, and is supposed to have given effect to, the rise of capitalism in Europe and America.

Money Morality

In addition many puritan Protestants chose Bible reading and fervid church attendance as their loci of personal salvation. The Quakers too have always held the Bible and Sabbath in reverence, but they have also attributed a special spiritual dimension to their business affairs. When the Society of Friends began to formalise itself in England and Ireland during the second half of the 17th century the practice of meticulous keeping of records developed. Minutes of Meetings, correspondence between members of different Meetings, notes on 'meetings of sufferings', detailed diaries recounting intense spiritual progress: all this emphasis on minute documentation was a carry-over from the business practices of a circumspect artisan and merchant class, amplified perhaps by a wish to record the redemptive activity mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

At the same time the notable money-making abilities of Quakers had to be reconciled with the ideal of plain, unostentatious, sober living habits extolled by George Fox and others. Consequently there emerged the idea of the stewardship of wealth – an idea that seems to have been taken up by Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave in twentieth century India. Money was not to be made for the sake of lavish spending; it was supposed to be held in trust for the well-being of others, for benevolence. The Quaker attitude to money may be illustrated by quoting from *Christian Doctrine, Practice, and Discipline*, an intriguing collection of 'advices and minutes' published by the yearly meeting of the Friends in Dublin in 1864. The first issue of the work appeared in 1811 and the last revision had been in 1840, so we may assume that Quakers involved in famine relief were acquainted with similar advices and minutes. On the love of money it is stated:

'The danger depends not upon how much a man has, but upon how much his heart is set upon what he has, and upon accumulating more... In all your business engagements...keep within the restraints of a tender and enlightened conscience, quick to discern where the desire to serve the Lord in all things ceases, and the service of self begins... Let them that have but little to give, give that little cheerfully according to their ability; and let those to whom a larger stewardship has been committed, be largely liberal in proportion to their means.' (p. 130)

The concepts of the stewardship of wealth and the desirability of circumspect business ventures, combined with the practice of meticulous documentation to effect a remarkable relief operation during the Great Famine. Services were volunteered; data was accumulated; money and food was collected from everywhere; thoughtful if not always successful enterprises were begun.

Not least remarkable was the enormous number of letters written to and from the Central Relief Committee and local and foreign relief committees. Millions of words were written concerning the distressed conditions in Ireland. And the Words became flesh, and dwelt amongst the stricken people.

NB I wish to thank persons in charge of the Friends' Library and the Friends' Historical Library in Eustace Street, Dublin, for their kindness in putting books and files at my disposal there. Opinions expressed in the essay are my own. GB

Notes

1. *Quakers in Ireland 1654-1900* (London 1927) by Isabel Grubb, p.36 This short, informative book is my source for Quaker history up to the end of the 18th century.
2. Ibid. p.47
3. *Guide to Irish Quaker Records 1654-1860*, by Olivia Goodbody (Dublin 1967), p. 102
4. Ibid. p. 131
5. Ibid. p.74
6. *Quaker Encounters, Volume I; Friends and Relief*, by J O Greenwood (York 1975) pp.26-27
7. Letters to John Hodgkin 30.11.1847 and 10.2.48 in the *Hodgkin Correspondence* SC I Folder 1, Friends' Historical Library, Dublin
8. *An Iascaireacht sa Rinn* ('Fishing in Bing') by Dóirín Bean Mhic Mhurchu, *Comhar* August 1974, pp.16-17.
Translation: 'He (Alcock) never discussed matters of belief with the locals, and never tried to entice them to his own Church.'
9. *Souperism: Myth or Reality?* by Desmond Bowen (Cork 1970)
10. *The society of Friends and the Great Famine*, by T P O'Neill; *Studies* 1950, p.210
11. Ibid. pp.212-213
11. Report of Dublin Committee, Friends Irish Relief, for three months, March to June 1921
12. Letter from J Harold Douglas to Olivia Goodbody, 30 September 1966

I have also found valuable an unpublished M.Litt. thesis in Trinity College, Dublin, by Jon Holt: *Quakers in the Great Irish Famine*, 1967

The First Boycott

Charles Cunningham Boycott, a blow-in from England, bought land and a house at Lough Mask near Ballinrobe in 1873. He became a magistrate and ran horses at the Curragh occasionally.

Up to and including 1879 there had been a succession of bad harvests. Tenants were finding it increasingly difficult to pay rents. The following brief chronology is based on the book *Captain Boycott and the Irish* by Joyce Marlow (London 1973).

16 August 1879: At a convention in Castlebar, Co. Mayo, Michael Davitt founds the National Land League of Mayo.

1 August 1879: Boycott finds a notice pinned to the gates of his estate warning him not to collect rents from Lord Erne's tenants (Boycott was the land agent) unless an abatement of between 20 and 25 per cent was allowed. Boycott was granted police protection from November until the following May.

31 August 1879: At Limerick Charles Stuart Parnell says it is the duty of Irish tenant farmers to combine among themselves, ask for rent reductions where this is necessary and if this is refused "it is their duty to pay no rent."

September 1880: Boycott tries to collect Lord Erne's rents, a 10% reduction being allowed for the bad harvest, but the tenants demand 25%. Eviction notices are served on 11 of them.

22 September 1880: The process server, whose job it is to deliver the eviction notices, is pelted with mud, stones and manure by angry women.

23 September 1880: Led by Fr. John O'Malley, a crowd marches on Lough Mask House, invades the building and 'advises' Boycott's servants – farm labourers, a coachman, herdsman and servant girls – to leave his employment immediately and never work for him again. There is some intimidation. All leave.

Within a few days the blacksmith and laundress have also withdrawn. The lad who delivers mail ceases operations. Ballinrobe shopkeepers are 'persuaded' not to serve the Boycott family. At the estate gates are left open; crops trampled down; cattle allowed out onto the public highway. Police protection is given. Members of the family who venture outside the grounds are hooted and hissed at.

Effectiveness of Boycotting

"The single most effective weapon forged by the Land League was boycotting, as its use in subsequent land agitation and its later world-wide application proved." Marlow p.261

Michael Davitt and the Land League

by Deirdre Vennard

Irish history is not credited with many examples of non-violent agitation but the case of Michael Davitt affords one such example. Mainly due to the book by F. Sheehy-Skeffington, who was himself a pacifist at the time of the Irish Rising, only to be shot on the orders of the insane Captain Bowen-Colthurst, we have an insight into the complex character of Michael Davitt. Despite the sometimes over-enthusiastic tone of the book, where the author seems to be making excuses for some aspect of Davitt's behaviour which might seem less than noble, Davitt's moral integrity shines through. Like Sheehy-Skeffington himself, Davitt was interested in labour questions, the status of women and ecclesiastical control of education. However, I would like to concentrate on two aspects of Michael Davitt which show his essentially humanitarian character; his attitude to prison reform and his use of non-violent agitation in the Land Amnesty Association for the release League.

Davitt's early life was far from happy. His family were evicted from their Mayo farm and went to Lancashire where Davitt worked as a child in the Mills until, at age eleven, he lost an arm in the machinery. However, this provided his escape from the Mills to lighter employment, and he had some education in a Wesleyan School. Davitt joined the Fenian organisation in England as a young man, but, although passionately devoted to Irish independence, he did not approve of the assassination methods employed by some members of the organisation.

He was tried and sentenced in 1870 to fifteen years' penal servitude for membership of the Fenian organisation. This was to have both a physical and moral effect on Davitt. His health was wrecked permanently, but he seemed to gain in moral stature because of his experience. Conditions in the English prisons were unspeakably brutal in those days; Davitt spent ten months first in Millbank, London, where prisoners were kept in solitary confinement observing strict silence and with only one hour's exercise each day; prisoners were even forbidden to walk up and down the cell. Davitt sums up the hopelessness of his situation:

'To leave the broad and cheerful light of day, and be immured in a solitary cell; to exchange the social amenities of life, home country and friends for an existence undreamt of by those who know not what a world of suffering is comprised in the meaning of the words 'solitary confinement' – is a feeling impossible to be expressed in words.'

Davitt was then moved to Dartmoor, where he was to serve six years' hard labour. The cells consisted of an iron framework in the centre of a large hall, the framework was thirty feet in height, divided into four tiers and each tier divided into forty-two cells, thus giving one hundred and sixty-eight cells for each hall. Each cell was only seven feet long, four feet wide and seven feet high and the ventilation (two and a half inch aperture under the door) was woefully inadequate. The food was bad in quality, and despite Davitt's physical disability he was set to hard labour such as stone-breaking, cart-labouring and 'putrid-bone breaking' that is: pounding the putrid bones from the prison meat into dust for manure. This delightful task took place beside the prison cesspool, and more than anything else contributed to the breakdown of Davitt's health.

Davitt was released on 19th December, 1877, through the energies of Isaac Butt, and although he re-joined the Fenian brotherhood, he had a wider vision due to his sufferings in prison. He felt the Fenians should abandon secrecy, should do more to enlist the common man's sympathies, and above all he became convinced of the importance of the land question. Unlike many prisoners who chose to forget their prison experiences once they were released, Davitt tried to persuade the authorities to humanise the system. Davitt campaigned on behalf of the Amnesty Association for the release of Fenian prisoners; he published in pamphlet form an account of what he had endured in prison and in 1878 toured England lecturing on behalf of the Amnesty Association. Largely because of the good reception Davitt's revelation received, a Royal Commission was appointed February 1878, to enquire into the administration of the Penal Servitude Acts. Davitt appeared before the Commission in June, and his suggestions of reform were in line with the gradual humanisation of the penal system in subsequent legislation (Davitt was especially concerned with the classification of prisoners, and the separation of young boys from older experienced criminals). Thus, Davitt's sufferings had a positive reforming result and we see his horror for the kind of institutionalised brutality which was, and to a lesser extent still is, so much a part of the penal system.

Land Nationalisation

Davitt's hatred of brutality and violence is also evident, when his part in the Land League activities 1879 to 1873 is

examined. Davitt was first and foremost a humanitarian and in the tradition of Finton Lawlor felt it was not fair to ask a man, burdened under the Landlord's system, to make further sacrifices 'for Ireland'. He said in his Boston speech (8th December, 1878) 'If the Nationalists want (the Irish farmer) to believe in, and labour a little for independence, they must first show themselves desirous and strong enough to stand between (him) and the power which a single Englishman wields over him.' The importance Davitt attached to the social side of politics was the deciding factor in his relations with the Fenians; the Supreme Body rejected his programme out of hand, although the Land League included many ordinary Fenians. Davitt's programme for the Land League passed far beyond the moderate 3 F's campaign of Butt and his followers. For Davitt the only solution to the social problems of Ireland was the land nationalisation:

'This change to lead up to a system of small proprietorships similar to what at present obtains in France, Belgium and Prussia. Such land is to be purchased or held directly from the State. The State (is) to buy out the Landlords and to fix the cultivators in the soil.'

The history of the New Departure is well known – the linking of the land question and the political quest for independence into one homogeneous body in 1879, under the leadership of Parnell. The League was born at the famous meeting in Irishtown 20th April, 1879, when the people demonstrated against the unjust exactions of Canon Geoffrey Burke, a priest and a Landlord. The meeting succeeded in establishing the movement but also showed the great power inherent in such determined demonstrations of the united tenantry; they secured a 25% reduction in Canon Burke's rentals. The movement spread rapidly over the country, the National Land League was organised in October 1879. Their objects were (1) to put an end to Landlord oppression and (2) to effect a radical change in the land system of Ireland so that every Irish farmer could become the owner, on fair terms, of the land he tilled.

After another wet summer in 1879, Davitt advised tenants to regard the payment of rent to the landlord as last in order of necessity; only to be paid if the families were first fed and clothed. He also initiated non-violent resistance to eviction; each eviction was to be carried out in the presence of an enormous crowd, all protesting against the harshness of landlord power. This interference with evictions, and the non-payment of rent undermined the basis of landlord power in Ireland.

Boycott Instead of Outrage

Davitt undertook another American tour 1880-1881, and during these few months he became alarmed at the increase in outrages accompanying the agitation in Ireland. His humanitarian spirit was revolted by the murders and attacks on farm animals carried out by the desperate tenantry. Davitt felt that the Land League should teach the people a better way to agitate and realised that this association with violence could only damage the reputation of the cause abroad. Davitt issued a circular to all branches of the Land League warning them against violence; he also undertook a pilgrimage against violence, touring the country, protesting the inexpediency and inhumanity of outrage in the movement. He exhorted people to abandon the old methods of revenge, and to adopt the new and more effective method of 'boycotting' (first used against Captain Boycott in Mayo, September 1880), which the League had now perfected into a system.

Davitt's third period of imprisonment was occasioned by his speech in Navan (November 1882) when he advocated the 'Plan of Campaign' which was to be adopted in 1886. During this time, he wrote to his Glasgow friend John Ferguson protesting against the 'outrage party' which was in danger of gaining the ascendancy in the American Land League. This party was committed to a policy of dynamite outrage in England, but Davitt condemned the group on every possible ground; humanitarian, moral, political and tactical. He despised those whose answer to the Irish question was to blow up some English town, thus killing and maiming innocent people, and exasperating previously disinterested English public opinion against the Irish.

Davitt died 31 May 1906 aged 60. As can be seen from this brief survey, he had an extremely harsh life, dogged by ill-health and poverty, from earliest childhood. However none of the harsh experiences meted out to him, for example in prison, destroyed Davitt's political and social beliefs, or incited him to violent retaliation. On the contrary he was dedicated to humanising the penal system, under which he had suffered so much, and in the Land League he was a consistent advocate for non-violent, well-organised agitation against the land system, which he saw as the root of Ireland's distress.

The 'Other' Irish in America

By Séamas Cain

The Irish people, as a people, and a mass of people, first encountered modern industrial society, not in Ireland, but in America. Under the impact of this encounter, the Irish Migration broke into two parts. One part became known as the "eastern" or "Boston" Irish, the other part became known as the "westward-moving" Irish, the "other" Irish. The geographical distinctions, for many years, have ceased to be helpful, clear, or correct. But the ideological and historic differences are still extreme. Archbishop Hughes (New York) and Archbishop Ireland (Minnesota), two men within the early Migration, projected differing philosophies which contributed to the formal division of the Migration. Hughes called for the Irish to remain in the eastern cities, to build up constituencies within the Democrat Party, to assimilate to Anglo culture, to passively assimilate to a competitive economic system, etc. Archbishop Ireland called for the Irish to abandon the eastern cities, to move westward and settle in rural country, to oppose the political parties of the establishment and support independent politics, to refuse to assimilate to Anglo culture, to support alternative economics, etc. Between the two men, and the two philosophies, there could be no compromise. The Irish Migration in America became divided between the 'Boston' Irish and the 'other' Irish.

1. Abolitionist Movement

The anti-Black racism and historic pro-slavery convictions of the Boston and New York Irish are well known. Unfortunately, the active tradition of Abolitionism amongst the 'other' Irish is not well known. Yet, as early as 1844 the Whigs blamed the defeat of Henry Clay on "abolitionists and foreign Irish".

Thomas D'Arcy McGee, one of the activists of the 'Young Ireland' revolution of 1848, and then a migrant, was disillusioned by a "land of the free which justifies Negro slavery and condones anti-Irish and anti-Catholic bigotry." (After the failure of a number of communes, he departed in 1857 for Canada. Archbishop Hughes denounced him as "a liar, a viper, and a slanderer.")

John Christopher Drumgoole was perhaps the most important Amero-Irish abolitionist. Brought to America by his widowed mother, he became a cobbler. He devoted his life to abolitionism, the Black freedom movement, and rebel poups of waifs and "newsboys". Thomas Augustine Judge and the illiterate yet creative Margaret Gaffney were abolitionist and pacifist militants amongst the "westward-moving" Irish.

Patrick Donohue, early editor of *Pilot* favoured emancipation of the slaves, and supported certain antislavery societies (those in which Black freedom was more important than Calvinism).

When the 'west' Irishman Mason Jones, in a lecture in New York in 1862, branded slavery as a blot upon the nation, and the freedom of the Irish interdependent upon the freedom of the Blacks, two hundred of his audience stalked out of the hall.

The Telegraph of Cincinnati was practically the only major daily paper of the Irish in America which opposed slavery. It was an uncompromising antislavery journal, justified Emancipation, gave space to pacifists, abolitionists and other radicals, and eagerly gave battle to the Boston and New York Irish press

Archbishop Hughes denounced the Amero-Irish abolitionists:

"As a general thing, whenever you find the 'other' Irish, you find abolitionists, you find radicals and pacifists, infidels and heretics. As a general thing, whenever you find a free-soiler, you find an anti-hanging man, woman's rights man, an infidel frequently, bigoted always, a socialist, a red republican, a black republican, a fanatical teetotaller, a believer in mesmerism, Rochester rappings.... You get in a rather dirty set, you perceive, when you join their ranks."

He particularly denounced the 'westward' Irish abolitionists as "fanaticks".

When Francis Meager, one of the exiled revolutionists of *Young Ireland*, advocated "citizenship for the Negro," the Boston Irish rioted and Meager fled to Montana.

At this time, the 'other' Irish in America engaged in a vigorous correspondence with Daniel O'Connell and other leaders of the emancipation movement in Ireland, and with Irish leaders of the labour movement in Britain. As a consequence, Daniel O'Connell, against the outcry and opposition of the "Boston" Irish, announced his support for the international antislavery movements. And the labour movement in Britain prevented the British government from entering the American civil war on the side of the Slaveholders

July, 1863, the New York Irish engaged in unprecedented mass rioting and violence against the Blacks. There were some Irish, however, as individuals, who had refused to join the rioters. Two of New York's Irish wards remained quiet, and their Black residents were not disturbed. In one ward, Irish porters and labourers formed a peaceful guard with their own bodies to fend off the racist mob. The 'western' Irish raised \$50,000 to rebuild the Negro orphanage which racist New York Irish had destroyed. The Cincinnati *Telegraph* denounced the riots.

When Daniel O'Connell, the "great liberator", approved of the world antislavery movements, he provoked bitter rejoinders from the "Boston" Irish. Archbishop Hughes joined in the hue and cry. O'Connell told them "to come out of the councils of the slaveholders and join in crushing slavery." (During the early 'Seventies, there were people who dismissed the Ulster civil rights movement as being a mere imitation of the American civil rights movement; these people are merely ignorant of the historic connections between the Black freedom movement in America and freedom movements in Ireland.

The struggles over Abolitionism and Black freedom movement created an absolute breakage between the "other" Irish and the "Boston" Irish. It was no longer a question of just philosophy, philosophy had stepped into the world, and history. Two new traditions were now begun, and the absolute of contradictions transcended all other oppositions, most particularly that between protestant and catholic Irish. This breakage still exists in our own day: in recent years, the Irish of South Boston have rioted against Blacks and allowed themselves to be exploited by racist demagogues, and there were grandchildren and great-grand-children of the 'other' Irish at the civil rights demonstrations in Selma and Birmingham, Alabama, and Wounded Knee in Dakota.

2. The Radical Temperance Movement

In 1849, Father Theobald Mathew of county Tipperary came to the United States. Among the causes in which he had been interested in Ireland were workhouse reform and boys' and girls' industrial schools, but he is best known, in Ireland and America, for his fight upon "demon rum".

Father Mathew soon encountered the opposition of influential members of the East Coast hierarchy:

he appeared on the same platform with protestant ministers,
he "entertained sentiments too liberal", and
he was charged with forgetting that there was but one true Church, and that its prayers and sacraments were
"more important than social reform". Bishops remained cold to his efforts. The bishop of Boston sharply attacked the Irish reformer for appearing at a meeting with "pacifists, red republicans, sectarian fanatics, Calvinistic preachers and deacons and other such"

Father Mathew replied: "the Priests have interfered with my Teetotallers". The temperance crusader travelled as much as 37,000 miles in America, and enlisted as many as a half-million westward-moving Irish in the battle against the drink-evil. While he did not inaugurate the movement, his two-year tour of America gave tremendous impetus to the Amero-Irish radical temperance movement.

The bishops of the East continued to question his fraternizing with reform groups, and radicalism. Archbishop Ireland, however, and the radical populists of Middle America, supported Father Mathew. Archbishop Ireland called for a "radical tidal wave of abstinence".

It may be difficult for people in Ireland today to understand, because Father Mathew's temperance movement in Ireland was largely a simple pietism, but in America, where the classical Temperance Movement was always vigorously interconnected with a variety of radical movements and causes, Father Mathew's movement became a means whereby masses of the 'other' Irish, the "westward-moving" Irish, were first introduced to and educated by radicalism in America: including abolitionism, pacifism, communitarianism. The classical Temperance Movement opposed dependencies of all

kinds, opposed the rum-gangsters and politicians, and sought pride of self, self-reliance, self-dignity, personal and community.

Newspapers and the Land League

At this time, newspapers became a most important vehicle in 'westward' Irish radicalism: *Crescent* in Appleton, Wisconsin; *Celtic World* and the *Irish Standard*, both in Minneapolis; *The Irish Times*, in the city of St Paul; and *The Irish World And American Industrial Liberator*. This publication was founded by Patrick Ford, favoured greenbacks and free silver. The publication honoured the abolitionist Wendell Phillips, criticized wage-slavery, advocated socialism, fought machine politics. Patrick Ford supported a public-land policy, denounced monopolists, bankers, and hard-money men who "plotted against the greenback". The paper advocated tax to wealthy income, and supported the Pullman strike and Eugene V. Debs of the Socialist Party. Patrick Ford was anti-militarist and anti-war. He believed that the System must be "wrenched from its intent to work injustice by war". The paper had 35,000 subscribers in 1876.

Patrick Ford was brought from Ireland to Boston in 1842 as an orphan and was educated in non-sectarian community schools. He later worked on abolitionist William Garrison's paper, and was an active abolitionist himself. He helped organize the Irish Land League in the United States, and *The Irish World And American Industrial Liberator* vigorously argued in favour of the "no rent" campaign, and movement-from-below of the people to bring about non-violent independence for Ireland

1878: Michael Davitt toured America. 1880: Parnell toured America. Archbishop Ireland and the Irish radical populists of Middle America announced vigorous support for the Land League. At a mass meeting in the city of St Paul, the Archbishop supported nonviolent methods: pacificly resist evictions, refuse to pay rents, shelter those who had been evicted, boycott the landlords. Bishop McQuaid, in the East, denounced "wild revolutionists" and Bishop Gilmour of Cleveland compared the rent boycott with communism.

4. Internationalism and Politics

The "westward-moving" Irish were internationalists. They advocated inter-national republicanism, rationalism and the enlightenment. The internationalists initially identified themselves with Kossuth's efforts to liberate Hungary and with Mazzini's to free Italy, etc. Irish speakers appeared on the same platform with German, Italian, Polish, and Hungarian orators, exiled rebels, exiled to America. The Irish internationalists sought an autonomous Ireland but only as one dimension of an international freedom.

Thomas Devin Reilly, one of the internationalists, was a native of Ulster. He opposed militarism, and military factions, substituting militarism and themselves in place of the struggles by the whole people. He wrote for *Nation*, and sought a decentralised and international independence. (He had been arrested in Ireland and outlawed for revolutionary activity.) After the collapse of *Nation* in America, he went to Boston to write for a labour paper and later became an activist in the co-operative movement. Archbishop Hughes denounced Reilly and the 'other' Irish as "red republicans". Reilly replied, refusing to be one of "the brainless ridiculous donkeys who bray and kick up the dust when poked with a crozier". Boston Irish refused to take part in a public reception for Louis Kossuth.

Thomas D'Arcy McGee was an internationalist republican. He came to the conviction that militaristic factions must be denied participation in the freedom movement.

Archbishop John Ireland was another republican internationalist. He came from county Kilkenny. His family went by covered wagon to Minnesota. He became an ardent reformer, and abolitionist. He was a total abstainer. His enemies called him "the Consecrated Blizzard". He fought municipal corruption. He was friendly to the labour movement, and he supported the Communalist movement.

Archbishop Ireland was responsible. The bishops of the East hated him. He never received the red hat of a cardinal (like a certain radical Archbishop of Brazil in our own day). He was denounced from pulpits as "the spirit of false liberalism". He supported, variously, the Radical Republicans, the Populist Party, the Bull Moose Party, etc., etc. He refused to condemn revolutionary societies (unless they were specifically anti-Catholic). Archbishop Ireland insisted the "the future of the Irish Race in this country depends largely upon their capability of assuming an independent attitude in American politics".

Mike Walsh was another 'internationalist'. He was brought to this country as a child from county Clare. He had no formal schooling. He worked as a deck hand. He organised a political club, "The Spartan Band". It was recruited almost entirely from Irish dedicated to the overthrow of Tammany Hall. Mike Walsh was an inveterate foe of special privilege. He published *Subterranean*, "dedicated to the cause of the common people". It became *Working Man's Advocate*. He opposed slavery. He also pleaded the case of the white wage-slave.

Although Tammany Hall (the structuralized power and corrupt power of New York Irish) has become a symbol in America for corruption, it should not be forgotten that 'other' Irish destroyed Tammany Hall. Mathew O'Rourke and James O'Brien took the first steps to expose boss Tweed and his crooked collaborators; John Foley got the first injunction against the grafters; and Charles O'Connor put them in jail. Nor should we forget the work of Thomas J. Walsh, investigator of the Teapot Dome scandal in the Harding Administration.

5. The New Imperialism

1898: president McKinley "roused the martial spirit to new experiments in imperialism". And war against Spain extended the battle line to the Philippines. Armies of the new American imperium invaded Cuba and Puerto Rico, and wrought the annexation of the Philippines. New Imperialism abandoned the old tradition in America of isolation from world imperial politics. The 'westward' Irish vigorously opposed the War.

William Jennings Bryant, Nebraska populist, of an Ulster Protestant family, and the only committed pacifist to ever be nominated to the Presidency by a major political party in America, condemned "imperialism, militarism, and the trusts, all branches of one plant". During the electoral campaign of 1900, in the Mid-West, crowds of Irish protesters demanded that "free silver is less serious than free slaughter".

Bryan addressed 20,000 anti-war Irish at a monster demonstration of the United Irish Societies in Chicago. John F. Finerty, pacifist, criticised McKinley and war imperialism: "Shall Porto Rico become America's Ireland?" And the "westward" Irish demanded that McKinley "stop the murdering of Filipinos". However, Bryan was defeated and Finerty's suspicion became fact.

6. The Communards

It is well-known that nineteenth-century America experienced many attempts at Utopian settlements: the religious communists of Amana, the Shakers, the Tolstoyans, the Fourierists, the Saint-Simonists, the Russian Mennonists, the Mormon Utopia of "Deseret" in the deserts of Utah, the Doukhobors, etc. Unfortunately, it is not well-known in Ireland that there were also many Irish attempts at communistic Utopia in America.

John Binns, protestant Irishman, came to Northumberland, Pennsylvania, in 1801 with a group interested in establishing a communitarian colony. Thomas O'Connor migrated to establish an Irish farming commune in Steuben County, New York.

On February 27th, 1858, a letter from San Francisco printed in the *Irish News* of New York proposed forming a communitarian company in the East to purchase one of the states of Mexico and establish a republic where the green flag might fly over an independent Ireland. A letter to Secretary of State Seward, in 1863, recommended building a "New Ireland" somewhere in the western territories, with Francis Meagher, refugee of 1848, as governor.

There were a number of attempts to plant entire Irish utopian communities in the West. And there were numbers of appeals and processes to get the Irish to settle in compact groups in rural west country. The Irish-speaking Communes, it was thought, could create a haven for Irish people in the days of "nativist" bigotry and mass violence.

The first serious effort to operate a communitarian colonization plan on a nationwide scale was made in 1855 and 1856, and it ended in failure. But the western colonization projects were a significant development in the radicalisation of the Irish. The driving spirit behind the first Communalist movement was Thomas D'Arcy McGee, journalist, orator. McGee was profoundly disturbed by what was happening in crowded American cities. McGee witnessed the battles, violence, between the Irish and the anglo 'nativists' over schools, jobs, human rights.....and the rioting in city streets during Know-Nothing and Ku Klux Klan days. He was frequently attacked as a radical by some of the hierarchy and by fellow journalists. He was bitter toward political bosses who snared the support of his people for their demagogic purposes.

Irish-speaking Communes in the west were denounced by the establishment, political and religious, as a "stampede of

asses". However, *Pilot* spoke favour-ably of an Irish hegira to the western America, hailing McGee and the communitarian plan as "the first practical movement for the benefit of our race on this side of the Atlantic". There was a nation-wide Convention in Buffalo in 1856 to discuss utopian colonisation projects. It was called "The Irish Emigrant Aid Convention". It met on February 12th 1856. Within a short time of the organisation's work, \$50,000 was subscribed, to buy land for the Communes, from Utopian socialists in Europe, followers of Fourier, and the Amero-Irish working class. The Convention never met again. Opposition rolled up from several directions, but from none more vigorous than that of the eastern hierarchy, spearheaded by Archbishop Hughes of New York.

Archbishop Hughes denounced D'Arcy McGee: "the radicalism of *Young Ireland* is even worse for Ireland than the potato rot". He regarded McGee as a dangerous radical, and the two men engaged in forensic battles. Hughes slanderously attacked McGee in newspapers without signing his own name.

At a public meeting in New York, Archbishop Hughes also rose to denounce Father Jeremiah F. Treacy, a priest from the West who was promoting a utopian socialist colonisation scheme in Nebraska. Hughes denounced the Irish utopians: "a Know-nothingism which calls itself Irish and assumes to be Catholic", Hughes disapproved of the clergy's becoming recruiting sergeants for a colony. He contended that settlers would be disillusioned and embittered if they actually went west. "Irishmen cannot know how to fell a tree". The hardships and hazards would be too great to bear. Archbishop Hughes denounced them all as "Mormons". They would brigade Irishmen into separate camps. (My grandparents always said that Hughes did not want to lose parishioners and revenue to an organised westward movement, and certainly not a radical movement besides).

30,000 Irish families moved west to the Communes, despite the anti-communism of Hughes, and despite the failure of D'Arcy McGee, and the agitation improved conditions somewhat for the Irish in the eastern cities.

James Shields, native of country Tyrone, at age of eighteen, in 1855, led a group of Irish to found a commune at Shieldsville, in Rice County, Minnesota. In 1872, John O'Neil decided "to build up a young Ireland on the virgin prairies of Nebraska and there rear a monument more lasting than granite or marble to the Irish Race in America". His settlements began on a very small scale, consisted largely of males. 1877: O'Neill and 25 families of Irish miners from Pennsylvania (escaping, persecuted Molly Maguires) started a new commune in Greeley County.

The Colonisation Bureau (1876) promoted the first Utopian socialist commune in Swift County, Minnesota. They secured railroad land, built a church, brought in a priest who understood farming, banished the saloon. Archbishop Hughes, meanwhile, in New York, told prospective communards that discontented wives would prove "far worse than the Colorado beetle". Within four years, the "Bureau" helped develop five colonies of over 300,000 acres of prairie wasteland. (Three of my grandparents came from Ireland as children to these colonies. The fourth grandparent was an IWW lumberjack who migrated to Northeastern Minnesota from Ireland by way of the old *Gaeltacht* in New Brunswick). However, through failure to furnish proper land-deeds to individuals, ground was prepared for the anti-red, anti-Irish Hearst Corporation attacks upon the communards, and the resulting scandal which destroyed the colonies.

Archbishop Ireland supported the communes, though he faltered under the Hearst attacks. Bishop Spalding also supported the colonies, and favoured the development of farmers' co-operatives, which they initiated. He addressed mass meetings in the east to advertise the project.

Farming in the hot summers and cold winters of Minnesota or Nebraska prairies was not easy. Conditions in America were very different from Ireland. Yet, by 1881, in the Swift County commune, there were 800 families in four villages, each with a church, a school, and a grain elevator.

Finally, the most controversial of the communitarian colonists was founded, the commune of the "Connemaras". Utopian socialists in Liverpool, England, funded the transporting of 300 families from the islands and the west of Ireland to Big Stone County in Minnesota for purposes of establishing an Irish-speaking utopian community. Dillon O'Brien, Irish pacifist in Minnesota, and activist in the communalist movement, assisted with the project.

Each family was supplied with clothing for two year's and provisions for two months. Then the surplus of all that had been collected was expended for fuel and food for the winter. "This was stored at Graceville to be distributed to the colonists as needed". From each according to ability to each according to need. The communards were devoted to this basic principle.

Winter set in, unusually early and severe. Rumours of great suffering among the “Connemaras” became afloat.

The Hearst Corporation newspapers began to attack all Irish people in America, and the communalist movement in particular. Because of the unexpectedly severe living conditions, the "Connemaras" were forced to take jobs in the towns. But the Anglo employers were suddenly antagonistic, swayed by the Hearst anti-red attacks.

The communards began to protest against the kind of work they were given to do, and against the treatment accorded them by their employers. "A Gaelic scholar was required to assist at the interviews". Finally, at the prompting of the Hearst newspapers, and hysteria engendered throughout America, all employers refused to hire Irish communalists.

The “Connemaras” were fisher people, tinkers, landless peasants. They could not cope with the environment in which they had been placed. They were fisher people in a waterless prairie. Even when food was available, the "Connemara" men were not able to transport it through the deep snows. There was a fuel famine. They literally froze to death in their prairie shanties. Their potatoes were frozen. Many starved to death.

“Numbers of them had holes for houses, scant clothing, no furniture, and little food. It is a hard season. Many of them died of starvation”. The Board of Trade of the city of Morris first reported the agonies of the "Connemaras".
“Famine was visible in their pinched and emaciated faces, and in shrivelled limbs, swollen bellies. Their features were squalid, wretched”

My grandmother, and other survivors of those times, said that even in the extremes of horror, and of agony, there was beauty in the ideas, and the ideas were never forgotten, and never given up. The communes were all destroyed. The survivors migrated north, eventually to work in the logging mills, forests and mines of the Arrowhead region. They became a force for founding the IWW, and the general strike of 1916.

Although the majority of American Irish remained in the cities, nevertheless the dream of Irish communes persisted and persists. 1904: *The Irishman* proposed establishing an Irish colony in the West, where Ireland's ancient system might be tried out. 1917: Irish commune was founded in Arkansas. 25 Irishmen from Iowa and Nebraska signified their eagerness to go. And today, there are grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the ‘other’ Irish working within "the Federation of Egalitarian Communities", and other utopian socialist networks.

7. Conclusion

I will conclude by quoting an official statement by the old Federalist Party, the "Anglo-men", who saw the ‘other’ Irish as: "Jacobins, wild Irishers, plotting rebellion, seditious spirits, panting after a more perfect society, a torment to America".

Non-violent political action and Irish politics in the early Twentieth Century

By Simon O'Donohoe

Looking back at the period in Ireland's history from the mid 1780s until 1922 it is the use of violence, and not non-violence, to achieve political ends which seems the dominant theme. And yet, this time also saw a flowering of non-violent political thought of a surprisingly radical nature. While it would be true to say that pacifism never managed to gain the support violent nationalism was to have; it would be wrong to dismiss non-violent political groups as totally ineffective.

It was both the greatest strength and weakness of non-violent political action at this time that it should have found such good spokesmen in Horace Plunkett, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and George William Russell (AE). They developed clear non-violent alternatives to the dominant political philosophies of the time. But their weakness was that they never had a strong non-violent political movement behind them. Once Sheehy-Skeffington was dead, and AE was ignored in an Ireland polarised over the Treaty, non-violent political action of a radical nature was forgotten. But in fairness neither of them would have wanted such a movement, they were much more concerned with influencing the Labour movement and the co-operative movement of small farmers, to bother about movements which would be organised solely on their own ideas

In order to understand AE it is necessary to say something about Horace Plunkett, the Liberal Unionist landlord, who had such an influence on him. Although a unionist, Plunkett believed Ireland needed to be economically independent from Britain. To this we may add that he considered the Irish incapable of self-government, not through any fault of their own but because centuries of repression had developed a lack of confidence and self-reliance in them. He wished to remedy this by developing a co-operative agricultural movement to give people control over their own lives. The co-operative movement paid its attention first to the distribution of agricultural produce in order to eliminate the middle-man. Soon Plunkett realised that production was of even greater importance. Consequently, the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society was founded in 1894 and within a decade had eight hundred societies and a trade turnover of £3,000,000 per annum. In 1897 Plunkett employed AE as an organiser for the IAOS. Russell was already a poet, mystic and theosophist but managed to combine these with the more mundane activities of the IAOS and in 1905 was appointed editor of the IAOS's journal, *The Irish Homestead*. Later Russell became Assistant Secretary of the IAOS but his approach differed in some fundamental ways from that of Plunkett.

Libertarian Socialism

To Plunkett the co-operative principle never had the all-embracing significance it had for AE, Russell would have been glad to see all of society run on co-operative principles but Plunkett looked mostly to rural areas and welcomed state aid. Russell expressed his vision in these terms:

'Working so, (with co-operatives) we create the conditions in which the spirit of the community grows strong. We create the true communal idea which the socialists miss in their dream of a vast amalgamation of whole nationalities in one great commercial undertaking. The true idea of the clan, or commune, or tribe is to have in it so many people as will give it strength and importance and so few people that a personal tie may be established between them.'⁽¹⁾

Plunkett, as his willingness to gain state aid shows, had no real all-embracing vision like Russell. Nowadays AE's views would probably be termed Libertarian Socialism or the belief in a society based on small, democratic, decentralised units, where most property would be communally owned. In proposing this, Russell believed he was harking back to the essentials of early Celtic Irish society based on the clann (a sign perhaps of the Gaelic League's influence and revived interest in Gaelic culture and history). Within the IAOS Russell was mainly responsible for organising credit unions while Plunkett was more concerned with re-organising the dairy industry on co-operative lines. Both these innovations are still very much a part of Irish society today.

The inspiration that Russell and also Plunkett received from the Gaelic League is revealing. Both Douglas Hyde's Gaelic League which attempted to revive Irish culture and Plunkett's IAOS were very much products of their time. The 1890s were a period in Ireland when there was disillusionment with party politics following the Parnellite spell early in that decade. Neither the Independent Irish Party, nor the Unionists appeared to be achieving anything worthwhile so there was a turning away from party-politicking and Westminster towards Ireland's internal problems. But increasingly it became clear that Ireland's constitutional status would have to be faced. In 1912 Plunkett, who a decade before had been a

unionist MP, declared himself a convinced Home Ruler.

1912 was also the year that violence came back to Irish politics in a big way. In January of that year, Carson formed the Ulster volunteers, pledged to resist by force the Home Rule Bill which the British Liberal government, backed by the Irish Party, looked like putting through. Carson claimed he would ignore the law, the democratic will of the Irish people and used pogroms against Catholics to ensure his goal. (Plunkett had published his 'noblesse oblige' in 1908 in a final attempt to persuade members of his own landlord class to accept Home Rule. But in vain, as the House of Lords rejected the Home Rule Bill in 1913. In 1914, he published another appeal called 'Appeal to Ulster not to Desert Ireland', but it had no effect.)

1913 Lockout

The following year, 1913, also saw another event which was to shape the future course of Ireland's history. This was the 'Lockout' by members of Dublin's Employers Federation of workers who had joined Jim Larkin's Irish Transport and General Workers Union. The ITGWU was established in 1909 as an attempt to unionise the unskilled and non-unionised workers in Ireland. It is not surprising that it posed such a threat to the Dublin Employers as the ITGWU had proven to be militant in defending the standards of living of working-class people. Its leader, Larkin, had earlier, in 1907, done what seemed impossible and united the Catholic and Protestant workers of Belfast into an effective Labour movement. The conditions of the working-class people of Dublin in 1913 were worse than those of contemporary Moscow and Calcutta so it is not surprising that there was so much discontent

A major impact on the 1913 Lockout was made, by George Russell whose letter to the *Irish Times* condemning the Dublin employers helped create popular sympathy for the workers. Another figure prominent along with Larkin, Connolly, William O'Brien and R J P Mortished, in organising the trade union struggle was Francis Sheehy-Skeffington.

Sheehy-Skeffington's Activism

Sheehy-Skeffington had been greatly influenced by Michael Davitt, the Land Leaguer, who had arranged just before his death in 1906 that Sheehy-Skeffington would work on his proposed Irish Paper. Skeffington combined an amazing variety of political and other philosophies, was not only a pacifist, but also a socialist, feminist, vegetarian, teetotaler, a non-smoker, and an anti-vivisectionist. During his days as a student at University College Dublin, he campaigned for equal status for women in university affairs. He published an essay on this topic along with James Joyce's banned attack on the leaders of the Irish Literary Revival. In 1905 he started a small paper, 'The Nationalist', along with Thomas Kettle. It supported Home Rule, Women's suffrage and better conditions for Dublin workers. He was also active in the Young Ireland Branch of the Home Rule Movement; this branch later broke away from the main movement but his most important activities began in 1913 when he was elected vice-chairman of the Irish Citizen Army which was formed to defend the workers from the police. When that body became an armed organisation he resigned on pacifist grounds and devoted himself to the suffrage issue. He had married Hanna Sheehy, a feminist, and they joined their names together on principle. Together they produced the '*Irish Citizen*', which became the main organ of the new women's movement. It was highly critical of the leaders of the Irish Party, some of whom opposed the idea of votes for women.

Despite his pacifist beliefs Skeffington never missed an opportunity to co-operate with those who believed in the use of physical force, nor did he even sink to self-righteous condemnations of their beliefs. In particular, he had a long-standing relationship with the Nationalist politician, Thomas Kettle, and also with Connolly and Larkin, the leaders of the Labour movement. In 1914, for example, Skeffington became involved in an anti-recruiting campaign for the First World War along with the Labour leaders. He said at the time 'By accepting this war we are helping to perpetuate war. If we want to stop war, we must begin by stopping this war. The best way to do this is to-stop recruiting.'⁽²⁾ While Kettle went off to fight in the British Army against German aggression in Belgium, Sheehy-Skeffington say this aggression was the same imperialistic policy that caused France's occupation of Morocco, Russia's of Poland, and Britain's occupation of Ireland.

In 1915 Sheehy-Skeffington was arrested under the repressive Defence of the Realm Act for speaking against recruiting. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour but went on hunger and thirst strike and was released after six days. He spent the next few months promoting the cause of Irish Independence in America and returned in time to be present during the Easter Rising of 1916. It was a difficult time for Sheehy-Skeffington, who in his famous letter to the Nationalist, Thomas McDonagh, had proposed that the revolutionary leaders choose instead of a military force:

“...a body of men and women banded together to secure and maintain the rights and liberties of the people of

Ireland, a body animated with a high purpose, united by a bond of comradeship, trained and disciplined in the way of self-sacrifice, and true patriotism, armed and equipped with the weapons of intellect and of will... prepared to suffer and to die rather than abandon one jot of their principles – but an organisation that will not lay it down as its fundamental principle: "We will prepare to kill our fellow-men."

Sheehy-Skeffington refused to participate in the violence of 1916 but he did organise a Peace Patrol to stop looting. He had no great regard for private property but did not want it claimed that the Rising was the work of hooligans. On Easter Tuesday he was arrested and brought to Portobello Barracks. From there a Captain Bowen Colthurst took him as a hostage on a raiding expedition and ordered that he be shot if they were attacked. In Rathmines Road, Sheehy Skeffington protested when he saw Colthurst shoot dead an unarmed youth. After the raid, Colthurst therefore had Skeffington shot and his body buried in quicklime. Colthurst was later court-martialled and pronounced insane.

After 1916

The work of Sheehy-Skeffington endured however, and the women's movement he had contributed to had a great influence on the Republican movement. The first woman elected to the Westminster Parliament was Constance Markievicz in 1918, although she never took her seat. A considerable number of women were involved in Irish life, perhaps more than even there are today; some in the academic sphere, others in politics. 1918 also saw an outcry against the introduction of compulsory conscription to Ireland.

The period was a difficult one for AE and Horace Plunkett also. Many of their co-operatives were destroyed during the Irish War of Independence in an attempt by the Black and Tans to destroy Ireland's economy. Some, such as the Knocklong Creamery, in Co Limerick, had been turned into Workers' Soviets in imitation of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

But both men continued to exert an influence on Irish affairs. They worked hard to gain clemency for the imprisoned leaders of the 1916 Rising. In 1917-18 Plunkett chaired the Irish Convention which had met to work out a settlement for Ireland. AE also participated in the Convention, but resigned because he believed it could achieve nothing since the convictions of unionists and nationalists seemed irreconcilable.

Plunkett founded an Irish Dominion Party in 1919 and was later appointed a senator in 1922 but soon left Ireland in despair when the IRA burned down his house, and the homes of several other senators. (Who did the burning is still unknown. It was probably the IRA because they had issued a general order for the burning of senators' houses.) AE however stayed on to edit the 'Irish Homestead' and to continue to promote the ideals of the co-operative movement.

Failure Of Ideals

AE's book, *'The National Being'*, published in 1918, became a cornerstone in the philosophy of the Irish Labour Party. It again advocated the ideals of co-operation. But, unfortunately, Irish politics turned to the right during the 1920s.

This resulted in a decline in the trade unions and Labour Party as well as a more conservative outlook among the new labour leaders. The ideals of co-operation were thus never put into practice. Had this happened, we may have had a pacifist, socialist labour movement which could have had a tremendous impact on Irish life. But the divisions in Irish society over partition have continued to dominate Irish politics north and south, until the present day.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the work of pacifists during this period. While it would be correct to say they failed to create the kind of society they wanted or even to take the gun out of Irish politics, they nevertheless influenced the course of events.

The purpose of this essay was not to create personality cults around the people involved, Plunkett, Sheehy-Skeffington or anyone else; they would not have wanted that. Nor was its purpose to dwell on the past for the sake of a simply academic interest. I hope I have shown the richness of non-violent political thought in Ireland and that pacifist politics can and has made a valuable contribution to Irish life, even during the most violent episodes in our history.

Notes

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Peace Groups Since The 1930's

By Rob Mitchell

This article is as comprehensive as time and space would allow, but there are obviously many gaps in it. With this in mind, references are given where possible for those who wish to follow up what is largely a forgotten story

'Peace' is of course by itself a vague word. This article is concerned with both those working 'non-violently' and 'nonviolently' for 'peace'; 'peace' being the absence of violence, physical or institutional, at home or abroad.(1) But to a considerable extent a group's self-definition is taken as the basis for inclusion here. It does not include community or voluntary work groups in general; dealing initially with pacifist groups and since the 'sixties more with reconciliation-oriented groups, there are many community groups today who might deserve inclusion within these parameters.

The chronological chapters given are only rough and for convenience, and a number of items appear at least partly outside the time of the chapter heading. The main bulk of the text has deliberately been kept as narrative as possible; some brief comments are made at the end.

Introduction

From start to finish (2) the story of nonviolent action in Ireland is closely connected with the Quaker story; with the Friends' 'historic peace witness' this is quite natural but no less note-worthy. For example, in the 1798 rebellion the Quakers showed courage and perseverance both in helping those in need and in responding nonviolently to physical threats. Because they had destroyed the weapons they had, and were not militarily involved, they were respected by and large by both sides, the rebels and the British forces.(3)

The nineteenth century was above all in this context the century of writing for peace, where learned men felt that they could influence the course of events by writing (this does not mean to ignore the important social and political movements in Ireland which were at least non-violent to some degree and some of which are dealt with elsewhere in this pamphlet). There was, for example, a Hibernian Peace Society in existence in the middle of the century, concerning itself with international affairs (e.g. a possible war between the U.K. and the U.S.A. in 1846 over Oregon, and the Crimean war in 1856).(4)

The twentieth century brought the Great War, the greatest slaughter in the history of humanity. Since conscription was successfully resisted in Ireland – on nationalist rather than non-violent grounds – those who would have been conscientious objectors had no fight on their hands, so to speak.

And after the Great War came the 'War of Independence', a limited guerrilla war and more a skirmish than what went as war on the continent. The constitutional, parliamentary nationalists were virtually wiped out in the nationalist areas in the upsurge of feeling for Sinn Fein, in the wake of repression and execution after the 1916 rising. 'Independence' in turn gave way to the bloodshed and bitterness of the Civil War; certainly the bitterness remained for the best part of 50 years, with resultant failures of reform in social and economic fields, but compared to the Spanish Civil War the Irish one was again a skirmish. And in the North the position quickly stultified in a different direction. But 'constitutionality' reasserted itself both North and South.

The early 1930's saw great fears of war and great hopes of peace internationally. These hopes were to be dashed in Spain, as a prelude to them being dashed on a far greater scale in the Second World War, a war in which the South remained neutral despite cajolements and pressures of many kinds.(5) It is here in the 1930's that I take up the story of Irish peace groups.

The 'Thirties And World War Two

In the North there was a Belfast-based Peace League which started around 1934 but foundered a couple of years later over the Spanish Civil War; some took the absolute pacifist stand, while others felt it was justified to fight to defend the Spanish Republic against the fascist Franco forces. Some members of the Peace League became involved in the Peace Pledge Union, which was founded in the North in 1937 (founder members included Denis Barritt, Brian McConnell and Jack Weir).

The Peace Pledge Union (PPU) had started in Britain in 1934, though it was only named as such in 1936. The Northern

section was soon quite active from its 1937 start. Letters were written to the papers outlining the pacifist position and defending the PPU. From 1938 *'Peace News'* (then the organ of the PPU) was sold at the GPO in the centre of Belfast. Early in 1939 (March 25-27) a conference on *'Planning for Peace – a conference on the theory and practice of pacifism'* was held.

Then the war clouds which had been on the horizon soon covered almost the whole of Europe. While many in the North who had been involved in the PPU felt that the times were so desperate and the cause so justified that violence was necessary to defeat Nazi Germany, there were some who remained pacifists throughout the war. The public selling of *'Peace News'* in Belfast had to cease after Dunkirk, however. Previously some sellers had been physically attacked a couple of times, and questioned by the police (once for *'seditious literature'* and again for *'breach of the peace'* when a crowd gathered in Royal Avenue blocking traffic though nothing serious happened). The internment of any pacifists was avoided, though it came close to it on one occasion when leaflets left by one woman near an army barracks fell into army hands. Inevitably there was curtailment of activities by the PPU as the war went on, though from 1939 through to the end of the war the PPU had a meeting room in Wellington Place.

Early in the war the PPU, in addition to Belfast united meetings, had local meeting groups in Ulsterville, Central, Knock, Oldpark, Lisburn, Londonderry and Bangor. Meetings and conferences early in the war included ones on *'The pacifist and the community'*, *'What is non-violent technique'*, *'The churches and pacifism'*, and, in March 1941, *'Pacifism in a world at war'* with Prof. J. E. Davey and Prof. T. Finnegan speaking. While many non-pacifists were also looking towards when the war would be over, the Northern PPU was concerned to see what it could do in the future: but by the time the war was over, pacifism had little enough support and the Peace Pledge Union was a dirty name to many in the North.(6)

The Irish Pacifist Movement based in Dublin, or rather what was to become the IPM, began life as the Irish Anti-War Crusade (Crosaid Frioith-Chogaidheach na hÉireann) in 1936.(7) As Stanley Haliday records, there were four Quakers in the original committee of eight, though the membership did include members of the different Protestant denominations, some Catholics, and a few atheists. It affiliated in 1937 to the War Resisters International as the Irish WRI section, the only Irish group to affiliate (though today *'Dawn'* is an associated publication of the WRI).

In several ways it was quite similar to the Peace Pledge Union in Britain; like the PPU and IPM had an anti-war pledge which had to be signed to join (including an absolute pacifist stand, though in 1962 an alternative pledge was introduced). Some people who became involved in the IPM never signed the pledge; Andree Sheehy-Skeffington recalls that neither herself nor Owen Sheehy-Skeffington signed, partly because of the dilemma over what action to take in relation to the Spanish Civil War.

It tried to work to promote the ideal of peace in opposition to war, by holding meetings, talks, poster displays, leafletting and the organising of petitions. But there was a wider concern for society in the South; Betty Taylor recalls being vowed to secrecy when a meeting was held to discuss family planning – something that was possible for a liberal and mainly Protestant group to do, but anathema to the narrow Catholicism of the South of Ireland in the 1930's.

Stanley Haliday recalls the first big effort for the IPM was in 1937 opposing a military alliance between Ireland and England, an idea which was being floated about at the time. In 1938 the group (which while having most members in Dublin did have members in every county) worked to try to get jobs and general help for Jewish refugees who had started arriving in Ireland.

Stanley Haliday records about the following year:

“About four months before the war started in 1939 we decided to have a Peace March through Dublin, followed by a meeting in the Rathmines town hall. From O'Connell Street to Rathmines we marched with placards fore and aft, selling *'Peace News'* as we went. Over 800 crowded into the Hall to hear Stuart Morris and Eric Gill denounce the war they felt sure was coming and begging Ireland to remain neutral so that there would be one oasis of peace in the world. Those hostile members of the audience had every question answered fully by these two expert speakers and Helen Chenevix chaired the meeting to a splendid conclusion. This was the first march in Ireland and the largest peace meeting I ever attended.”

A campaign was launched to oppose conscription in the South, including distributing a circular (*'Conscription, a Psychological Blunder'*) all over the country. In fact conscription was introduced neither North nor South, and once again

nationalist and republican feeling against it was the deciding factor (as in the First World War).

As the war continued, very strict censorship was imposed in the South, and the IPM was unable to publicly advertise meetings, letter writing to members being the only way of keeping in touch. In these circumstances there was little the IPM could do.

Voices In The Wilderness: After the War

As most of those in the North who retained their pacifist conviction through the war were Christians, it was decided in 1949 to make a clean start by forming a Fellowship of Reconciliation group.

Internationally the F.o.R. had its origins in the first World War. It began in the North as a Protestant grouping, though in 1957 the visit of Hildegard Mayr (a Catholic working for the International F.o.R.) opened up some doors to the Catholic church. Previously approaches had been made to some Catholic clergy without any response, but Hildegard Mayr met both with a group of Catholics and with Cardinal D'Alton of Armagh.

By the early 1950's the F.o.R. was organising up to a couple of meetings a month. Obviously the concerns reflected the times, though they avoided the cold war excesses which characterised much of Irish society; a meeting which caused some controversy in 1952 had the Rev Clifford Mcguire speaking on 'Three weeks in the Soviet Union' and Lucy Burt on 'Modern China's Challenge to a Christian'.

Where pacifists North and South did take up an issue early on which was to be of wider significance later was with regard to the H-bomb. The F.o.R. and the I.P.M. were both in at the very beginning of protests about the H-bomb; the F.o.R., for example, organised a meeting in Belfast in August 1954 with Hugh Delargy M.P., Dr K Jones, Peadar O'Donnell and William Boyd all speaking.

From the start of the PPU in the North and the IPM in the South there had been good links between pacifists North and South. To some extent there was overlapping membership, both in terms of a few belonging to both groups, or of PPU members in the South or IPM members in the North. This overlapping continued in the 1950's with the F.o.R. being active in the North and the IPM in the South, and is still present with the various groups today. Some of the battles being fought North and South were the same, but there was an important initiative in December 1957 when the first of a number of annual North-South conferences was held in Drogheda sponsored jointly by the F.o.R. and the IPM.

'Reconciliation – at home and abroad' was the topic of the first conference, with speakers J. J. Campbell, Roy Johnston and Hildegard Mayr (during her first visit). The second year a more thorny issue was tackled under the title of 'Reconciliation in Ireland', with Myles Shevlin talking on 'The British must go', and Alderman William Boyd on 'Partition – plus progressive reform'. Subsequent conferences included tackling the issue of capital punishment (1962, with Owen Sheehy Skeffington as the main speaker), 'The rights and responsibilities of minorities' (1965), and 'Problems of Church and State in Ireland' (1960, with Very Rev. R. J. Davey, the Goss-Mayrs, and Ciaran Mac An Fhaili speaking).

In the South the IPM worked for refugee children after the war, helping out with children from Germany, Austria and France who were brought over by the Irish Red Cross. More general activities which were restricted during the war began again, and 'Pax', the IPM journal, was restarted (and continued production into the 1960's).

Regular meetings were organised by the IPM; these included a memorial meeting for Mahatma Gandhi two days after his death in 1948 which filled the lecture room in the Friends Meeting House in Eustace Street, Dublin (which the IPM usually used for meetings), a protest meeting against the H-bomb (which filled the Molesworth Hall), various ones on nonviolent action and pacifism (including Denis Barritt in 1959 on 'Pacifist – prophet or politician'), and on more general topics.

The 'Sixties Corrymeela

With the start of Corrymeela in 1965 we see the emergence of a new kind of 'peace group', though Corrymeela would not describe itself first of all as a 'peace group' but as a Christian reconciliation centre and action group. Previously the 'peace groups' in Ireland were pacifist in orientation; Corrymeela would include some pacifists but its main orientation is towards reconciliation. It began before the Troubles at the end of the 'sixties, but the peace groups of the 'seventies were

by and large to be reconciliation-oriented groups.

Corrymeela began from a group associated with the Presbyterian Chaplaincy in Queen's University Belfast and with the chaplain, Ray Davey. It is by now a fairly well known story.⁽⁹⁾ The group had visited some Christian centres of reconciliation around Europe (Taizé, Agape, Riese, Iona) and thought of the possibility of setting up something similar in the North. Then the former Holiday Fellowship centre at Ballycastle, named Corrymeela, came on the market and was snatched up by the group with borrowed money. Henceforth the group had a centre and a name, though much work was necessary to get the centre operational. Subsequently they rented a house in Belfast from Queens, to use as a Belfast meeting place and offices.

Reconciliation between Protestant and Catholic was initially seen as only one aspect of Corrymeela's work, and this remains true today, though naturally the Troubles brought the Catholic-Protestant aspect to the fore. Corrymeela is a mixture of meeting place and action group. The Ballycastle centre provides an opportunity to bring people together, including workcamps, youth groups, old people and families. There is work on follow-up through Corrymeela workers and groups elsewhere, and a developed meeting and conference programme (ranging from independence for Ulster to mixed marriages).

While originally Protestant and still to some extent disproportionately so, Catholic involvement is much greater on the younger end of the age scale. Corrymeela has developed in a number of ways since the beginning. The size of the Ballycastle centre has been enlarged with several new buildings, including permanent workcamp and youth villages. Recently there has been a searching analysis among the Community members of what direction Corrymeela should take in future.

Pax Christi

Pax Christi has surely the longest gestation period of any peace group in Ireland (from 1958 to 1967). Internationally Pax Christi began as a movement of French and German Catholics in 1945, then becoming an officially-recognised movement of the church. Any national Pax Christi group has to have a bishop as president before it can organise collectively – otherwise there can only be individual members attached to other national sections (though the Catalan Pax Christi has broken from this more recently). Pax Christi seeks to work for peace and is based on Catholic social teaching, particularly Pope John's "Pacem in Terris".

Dorothy D'Alton, the main moving force behind the formation of Pax Christi in Ireland, began working towards an Irish section in 1958 after a visit to France, and she set up a small committee in Dublin. But it was to be June 1967 before Pax Christi achieved the assent of the Irish hierarchy and the appointment of Dr Birch of Kilkenny as president, after a long and arduous campaign to get recognition.

Since then Pax Christi has grown slowly, though there were great hopes in 1972 when the international Pax Christi 'Route' was held in Ireland (the possibility of which was mentioned as far back as 1963). The 'Route' is a conference on the move, people walking from different starting points to converge on one centre – in this case Kilkenny – and discussing 'en route'. The Route was very successful but there were too few on the Pax Christi committee to follow up the contacts around the country.

Pax Christi also got publicity through the then chaplain and ex-army officer, Fr Mícheál MacGréil, and his proposals for a replacement of the Soldier's Song as national anthem, and a peace ballad competition in relation to the same. Dr Dermot O'Mahony (Auxiliary bishop of Dublin) is now president and Fr Donal O'Mahony (who was involved as a mediator in the Herrema kidnapping case) is chaplain. While Pax Christi does have membership scattered around the country, it is only active through its committee based in Dublin. Presently it is involved in a large information service project for flat-dwellers in Dublin.

Irish Pacifist Movement

One question which brought varying responses from pacifists in the South at the start of the 1960's was the question of the Irish army serving with the United Nations as a 'peace keeping force' in the Congo.⁽¹⁰⁾ Although not connected with this, the IPM adopted in 1962 an alternative pledge ('I am conscientiously opposed to War and will strive for the fulfilment of the Aims and Objectives of the Irish Pacifist Movement') and a new constitution; Brian Boydell was elected President, Helen Chenevix, Ciaran Mac an Fhaili and Eoin O'Mahony vice-presidents, Betty Taylor as secretary,

Marguerite Lovell as treasurer, and 9 other members of the committee.

While the IPM had been very active on 'the Bomb', it ceased to be much of an issue after the early 'sixties. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament groups which had begun North and South towards the end of the 'fifties had faded out by the middle of the 'sixties, and much effort had gone into CND, both by the IPM, the FoR, and individual members of both.(11) But the issue of Vietnam, which was to be so important in the radical movements of the late 1960's, was only taken up by the IPM in 1966.

In 1967 the FoR organised its appeal 'Plea for peace in Vietnam', and the IPM organised its own appeal through its participation (with the Irish Voice on Vietnam, a broad front) in the 'Irish Joint Committee on Vietnam'. This 'Irish Appeal for Peace in Vietnam' was presented to the government in 1968 with 38,500 signatures.(12)

But there was considerable dispute within the IPM over Vietnam, particularly whether the IPM should cooperate with other, non-pacifist groups in opposing the war. IPM anti-Vietnam war activities were organised by a sub-committee, with Moira Woods as secretary (the original impetus on Vietnam had come from William Ledwich). As well as the petition, American tourists were handed leaflets welcoming them to Ireland and urging them to oppose the war when they returned home.

Why did the IPM fade away? Partly it failed to take up younger members, and it never succeeded in getting a sizeable number of Catholic members. There was also dissension in the 'sixties about which direction the movement should take, whether the pacifist pledge should be retained and the question of changing the name to the 'Irish Peace Movement'; some felt it should drop the pledge, take up social and political concerns more, while others felt the pledge should be retained and that too much attention was given to particular campaigns, such as the one on Vietnam.

The last entry in the IPM minutes book is for the AGM of 25/2/69; "Harry Nelson put forward his motion to discontinue the IPM, due to lack of support from members. This was seconded by Stanley Haliday." There was a discussion which noted embarrassment when speakers faced almost empty rooms; 17 members had turned up for the AGM. "Finally decided to give the IPM one more chance, as these are dark days full of growing violence and disillusionment, we should not add to the gloom but rather keep faith and struggle on, with our fellow countrymen, who are also working and fighting to uphold the victory of truth, justice and human rights, through the power of love and non-violence."

That was the end of the IPM as such, though there was direct continuity in that some members adopted a new constitution and set up the Irish Movement for Peace and Justice, which continued as the Irish WRI section (IMPJ should not be confused with the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace which was set up by the Catholic hierarchy). This had several sub-committees, including one which did valuable work in bringing attention to the disgraceful conditions in the children's courts. Moira Woods became secretary (taking over from Brenda Yasin who had been secretary of the IPM for much of the 'sixties). The IMPJ declaration was much more radical than previous IPM statements, as the following paragraph demonstrates:

"Every member of the Irish Movement for Peace should realise that capitalism rests on inequality, which, together with the resulting lack of freedom for many, provides the breeding ground for violence and war. But the oppression of the under-privileged of the white races is many times multiplied in the countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia. The inhuman suffering of countless millions of coloured people are the direct result of capitalist economies. No serious work for peace is possible with a critical, non-violent opposition to capitalism."

But the IMPJ did not and, indeed, as a more radical group, could not, take up all the members of the IPM, many of whom were scattered or 'sleeping' members. Others, among the older members, felt they had done their share and should leave it to younger people. In 1970 there was a further split in opinion over the EEC, though a letter was sent to the Minister for External Affairs opposing Ireland joining the EEC on the grounds of the danger to neutrality. And in 1971, with internment in the North and the resultant violence and pogroms, the IMPJ organised some food, clothing and medicine to be sent up – getting a strong negative reaction from some inactive members in the North.

Apart from occasional statements and actions in the early 'seventies, that was the end of the IMPJ, effectively dead by 1973. It did not succeed in establishing itself properly, and gradually ideological divisions on various matters caused weakening and extinction.

Fellowship of Reconciliation

In 1960 it was individual members of the FoR who got going War on Want in the North. And in 1962 Denis Barritt and Charles Carter wrote a book which looked at the situation in the North, drawing attention to some aspects of sectarianism and discrimination, a book several years ahead of its time.(13) In 1962 the FoR itself had 46 members and 5 sympathisers: in 1969 this was 64 members and 8 sympathisers. Activities included some within the churches on the H bomb, and a conference on 'Winds of Spiritual Change in Northern Ireland.' From 1969 for a couple of years the FoR organised a workcamp playscheme in Derry, and more recently have organised one in Lurgan for several years. During 1971-73 there was a British FoR project in cooperation with the Northern FoR looking at the possibility of a trained, disciplined corps for nonviolent action in the North – a nonviolent third force. Robin Percival worked on this project full time for 9 months and Dave Mumford for another couple of months. But Robin Percival looks back on it as a purely academic exercise, since there was only a demand (and an ambivalent demand at that due to fears of a loyalist backlash) for British army withdrawal in Catholic areas; it was only credible to talk of alternatives if it seemed likely the army would be withdrawn.

Later, in helping dialogue on reaction to the British army among and between the British and Northern FoR's, a survey was taken of Northern FoR attitudes to the British army in the North. Conducted by Robin Percival, this revealed very little criticism, except among Catholic members of the FoR.(14) From 1973-75 the FoR had a full-time organiser in Colm Cavanagh who did some very good work including organising conferences, but with a spread out and small membership it was difficult to do more.

Today the FoR continues in a fairly modest way, the organiser for the North since recently is Anne Grant. In addition to occasional meetings and conferences (the last was on community) they have, for example, sponsored an inter-schools competition on the theme 'World without War'.

In 1972 there was an action taken by 17 British pacifists in Belfast, distributing a leaflet "To British soldiers from British citizens", stating the pacifist approach, advocating immediate confinement of British troops to barracks and a date for their withdrawal to be set, plus the end of internment. Some were questioned but all were free to return to England. This was the starting action of what became the British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland Campaign (BWNIC).(15)

Earlier an attempt was made to reactivate the Peace Pledge Union, during the mid-'sixties, as a secular pacifist group. Most involved at this stage was Roger Green who, in 1967, rowed around a British warship anchored at Bangor (Co. Down) displaying a CND flag – and got pelted with potatoes for his efforts. The PPU had a meeting room in Donegall Place which was not used very much and subsequently wrecked by Paisleyites. Again in the period 1974-75 an attempt was made to reactivate the PPU (this time by Norman Lockhart) without any results.

The Troubles

Since the start of the 'Troubles' from 1968/69 onwards, peace groups of one kind or another have mushroomed all over the country, some disappearing almost as fast as they came. Particularly paramilitary campaigns or atrocities in the North have led to protests, marches, and groups being formed. There has not been the same impetus in reaction to military activities. A few groups have emerged since the troubles which are not directly due to them, but almost all have been affected in some way.(16)

The Peace People are of course the latest and greatest manifestation of public reaction against the horrors of paramilitary activity in the North. The Peace People may have got up to 20,000 people on early rallies; but events organised by Witness for Peace, Peacepoint, or joint rallies promoted by different groups had up to 10,000 in them in previous years. But the numbers game is a dangerous one; (17) 100,000 men march on the 12th July, not counting all the 'participant observers' along the routes.

One other factor worth noting here is the transmogrification (magical trans-formation!) from one group to another. As some groups have risen and fallen like waves, individuals or sub-groups have moved on to new labels. The Peace People, particularly, took up many previously involved elsewhere (though many of these continued their former activities as well).

On the local level in the North there are many people, some not attached to any group or organisation of any kind, who have risked their lives in trying to cool tensions or come to the aid of threatened people during disturbances such as

followed the introduction of internment in 1971. This whole area is beyond the scope of this article which is concerned with public, organised groups. There were, for example, many street committees set up in 1969 which acted as unarmed peace-keeping cum vigilante groups when there was rioting or trouble. This article also cannot touch the unpublished activities of many within particular groups; apart from being beyond the scope of this article it would require a considerable time span to elapse before some stories can be safely told. One example, however, is of Will Warren, an English Quaker who worked in Derry as a mediator and reconciliator, who actually caused firing to stop on one occasion by walking down the street between firing points.

This article does not deal with the churches, but it is worth mentioning them briefly here. While they have come in for criticism, and often justifiably, they have been active, particularly on a local level. Though again there are stories here that cannot be told. The Feakle talks in 1974 between Protestant churchmen and the Provisional IRA are well known;(18) this was an attempt at a cease-fire, and to persuade the Provos to use political rather than military means. The churches ran a well-organised peace campaign around about the same time (end of 1974 to early 1975), partly aimed at influencing political leaders. One other example worth mentioning is the mobilisation of churches in East Belfast into a 'Good Neighbours' campaign when loyalist paramilitaries gave Catholics a warning to be out of East Belfast within three months; this ultimatum was quietly dropped.

Women Together

Women Together was formed in 1970 from and inspiration of Mrs Ruth Agnew, a retired cleaner, that women should use their influence for peace. Together with Monica Patterson,(19) an English Catholic, they set up the first group in East Belfast. A first public meeting in September 1970 had 400 women from all areas of Belfast at it. At this time activities included, as mentioned in a Women Together handout on its history;

"...separating rival gangs in riots by using themselves as human shields (in Andersonstown and Ardoyne), stopping children and youths setting fire to property (Broadway), dispersing a gang of youths with knives who were attacking a boy from the 'other side' (Newtownards Road), defending neighbours who were having windows broken, and going out night after night talking to tartan gangs (East Belfast), giving sympathy and practical help when it was needed and showing concern generally."

With the gun on the streets in a much bigger way, many of these activities were no longer possibilities. But Women Together activities continue on a number of fronts, and there are at present nine groups, and a paid secretary. Their office was bombed and burnt out in 1976, losing all their records, but they now operate from Bryson House.

Not to be confused with Women Together is a short-lived group, People Together, which received some publicity when Harry Murray and Bob Pagles (two original Ulster Workers Council spokesmen and closely connected with the 1974 Loyalist strike) joined it embryo, the 'Peace and Reconciliation Committee'. Although People Together held a couple of conferences and a few groups were formed, the constitution did not come out until after People Together had effectively ceased to exist in 1975.

Witness For Peace

Witness for Peace (20) is in origin one of the more charismatic groups, born of direct tragedy, and associated mainly with the name of the Rev. Joe Parker who lost a young son in the 'Bloody Friday' bombings in Belfast in July 1972. Its basis was an individual Christian declaration to work and witness for peace (which some 8,000 signed); its name, Witness for Peace, aptly summarises its aim – a witnessing group rather than an action group. Ceremonies of planting crosses and remembrance for those who died were organised, badges distributed, and a 'scoreboard' of the number killed set up in the centre of Belfast – which has been described by Sidney Callaghan as gimmicky but a useful stab to conscience.

Joe Parker was undoubtedly the main force in Witness for Peace, though he found it difficult to take criticism. There also arose a dispute between Joe Parker and the Mission to Seamen (for whom he worked and who had given him over a year's sabbatical to work for Witness for Peace), and the Church of Ireland. He was very critical of the role of the churches and their unwillingness to help.

In the end, 1975, Joe Parker and his family decided to leave for Canada. (21) Some aspects of Witness for Peace continue – its annual remembrance service, its award to groups or individuals working for peace, and the scoreboard of the dead at Belfast City Hall.

Peacepoint

Peacepoint, which sees itself as a service group for other peace groups, was set up through a concern of the Methodist Council of Social Welfare in 1972 and was launched in June 1973. Its original aim was to highlight the constructive things in the North, initially appointing a public relations firm to handle publicity; this turned out to be too commercialised an approach. Subsequently they did have a full time organiser in the South for a short while (Tom Savage), and now have a full-time community worker in the North (Sean Cooney) and an organiser (Sheelagh Flanagan). They have developed their service functions which have become their main focus, for example providing leadership training for people from peace groups.

As with all peace groups, Peacepoint has its own political orientation, though it would call itself 'non-political'. When Love, Peace and Justice, a radical pacifist group based mainly in Dublin, applied to Peacepoint in Dublin for help in 1974, they were refused, seemingly because LPJ was involved in housing action (among other things) and therefore too 'political'. The point is that the decision not to accept LPJ was itself a political decision; any peace group is faced with decisions which are in a wide sense political.

Service Civil International

Service Civil International does not fit neatly into the category of 'peace groups', being a mainly voluntary work organisation, though internationally its origin is very much tied in with conscientious objection. In the North there were a couple of workcamps in the 'fifties (e.g. the first one was in Glencraig in 1955 – the British section was then called International Voluntary Service for Peace, the 'for Peace' being subsequently dropped). There was an active local group in Belfast from 1964 on; then, in late 1971, in response to the Northern situation, the Belfast local group plus VSI in the South and IVS from the north-west of England got together to set up a Northern Ireland Co-ordinating Committee to extend IVS work throughout the North.

Much effort at this stage, as with other groups, went into children's holidays. Sean Armstrong became a field officer working mainly on holidays; he was shot dead in June 1973 (though it is not clear whether he was shot because of sectarian reasons – in opposition to bringing Protestant and Catholic children together – or for personal reasons). But the work continued, for example with the setting up of Glebe House as a children's centre in conjunction with Belfast Rotary. Since then there has been the development of teenage workcamp schemes, and, via that, the promotion of local groups. IVS sees itself as concerned with both reconciliation and personal development. While IVS itself has ceased to be involved in children's holidays, which in any case came in for increasing criticism,(22) certainly the more exotic ones outside the North, there are a number of different groups still working with children's holidays.

In the South, Voluntary Service International began work in 1963 as a purely Irish voluntary agency, and only affiliated fully to SCI in 1975, having gradually developed international contacts. VSI has two groups in Dublin and one each in Cork and Galway, and they are developing their thinking with regard to peace and politics. Recently VSI published a booklet (23) on the need for home insulation, both to cut fuel bills for the old and poor, and to reduce overall fuel imports; this was a direct extension of their work in decorating pensioners' homes.

Glencree

Glencree is in many ways similar to Corrymeela, as a broadly Christian and liberal meeting place, though with an action programme as well. Begun in 1974 it was in direct response to the situation in the North. The initial impetus came from Working for Peace, a Dublin-based peace group which opened up the Glencree project to others and it became a group in itself. Working for Peace still exists and organises meetings but most of its members are also involved in Glencree.

Like Corrymeela, Glencree is named after the place name of its centre, in Glencree's case a former British army barracks and reformatory (24) in Co Wicklow, leased to the Glencree Community by the Board of Works (and, more recently, a 30 acre farm immediately beside which they have bought). While its initial impetus was the situation in the North, and a desire to be of help through providing holidays for people from the troubles and contact and conference facilities to the North, Glencree's response to the situation in the Republic has been mainly in relation to their programme on pluralism and working for pluralism in Southern society. Glencree has a broad 'Christian ethic' in its articles of association but is perhaps less visibly identified as a Christian centre than Corrymeela.

Both Corrymeela and Glencree have non-resident 'communities' of people who are formally and strongly committed to

their respective group, about 100 in each case; both from time to time have tensions inherent in their structure between the Community members and volunteers and workers living in their respective centre. Glencree also has a corporate membership structure; it is worth mentioning that as of early January 1976 the corporate members of Glencree were – Working for Peace, Friends of Corrymeela, Pax Christi, Peacpoint, Pere Pire Movement for Peace, Clontarf Good Neighbours Committee, Love, Peace and Justice (LPJ), the Ballyfermot Peace Corps (a youth group with a peace ideology), and the Dublin Monthly Meeting Peace Committee of the Religious Society of Friends.

Glencree has been working to restore most of the buildings in their centre; one section was completely modernised by outside builders to provide accommodation for 30 in comfort plus a meeting hall and kitchen/dining area. Work-camps and voluntary workers have been working on the other buildings and surrounding grounds, and there is dormitory accommodation in the old building. Glencree runs workcamps, and conferences and peace education courses for school leavers, and holidays. They have also been interested in the possibility of setting up a university-level peace studies course, of which there is none in Ireland, (possibly in Trinity College Dublin), but money is the critical factor.

The Peace People

The Peace People are nationally and internationally the best known peace group, due to the massive amount of media coverage they received from their beginning in August 1976. But while the event which gave rise to the Peace People is well known – the death of the Maguire children – it is not so well known that the car crash which killed the three children was immediately caused by the British army when they shot at the car they were pursuing, causing it to go out of control. There are differences of opinion over whether the army had been fired on by the two men in the car, and whether the Armalite rifle subsequently found in the crashed car was not assembled; but these questions are irrelevant so long as the paramilitary role in the slaughter is not the only one mentioned, ignoring the army role.

It took a lot of courage for Betty Williams to knock on her first door, an enormous amount of courage, but from there on support snowballed. Ciaran McKeown, subsequently to become the Peace People's chief tactician and publicist,(25) was involved from the time of the funeral on. And rally followed rally. Naturally forming an organisation out of this spontaneous outburst was difficult, and many mistakes were made along the way; perhaps the prime one being in not holding a real debate within the movement about future directions before the leadership had made public statements on the matter.

There was also a certain amount of ill-feeling between the Peace People and other groups, some justifiable and some perhaps due to jealousy. But certainly there was an early arrogance about some Peace People and their activities, ignoring the work which had been done by previous groups, particularly at a community level. It took a period for the Peace People to learn from their mistakes, but much of the ill-feeling remains, intensified by the money which the Peace People received.

But while there are differences between reality and rhetoric so far as the Peace People are concerned, they are not in this any different than the other peace groups ('Dawn' included). And they have at least raised a number of valuable ideas, for example on 'community politics' at a time of party-political and more general vacuum, or on monitoring army arrests.

The Peace People see themselves as a mass protest against violence. Many of those who became involved were already involved in other peace or community groups, some being reactivated; there was a significant number of people, however, who were brought into action through the Peace People. Currently the movement has some 60 or 70 groups. While the prisoners of the popular definition of 'politics' as party-political, they are attempting to educate themselves and others for effective action free of party or interest group stances.

In the South from the basis of the rallies held in support of the Peace People in the North, a Southern Peace Movement was formed; This has about 15 'centres' around the South (outside Dublin) which, while still supporting the Peace People have been trying to respond to the situation at home. One project they are currently engaged in is trying to set up a 'friendly towns' competition.

There is some co-operation between peace groups both North and South; for example, the North has a regular 'Peace Forum' discussion meeting. Since 1974 in the South most groups have been involved in a 'Peace Week' during March. Topics for the week have included 'Respect', 'Housing', and 'Human Rights and Responsibilities'. Though now an established part of the calendar, Peace Week gets a limited response. Co-operation is possible on particular projects that

more comprehensive plans are difficult to agree upon.(26)

Commentary

After such a mass of narrative, I would like to make some fairly general and brief comments about peace groups in Ireland.

Firstly, there is much in the past that we can learn from and which can inspire us; some ideas which we think of as new have been around for a considerable time.

But, secondly, the overall effect of peace groups has been peripheral. Of course it is possible to argue that the Peace People caused a down-swing in violence, or that a down-swing in violence caused the Peace People; a group like the Peace People has made some difference but has in no way substantially altered the overall situation. Other groups too may have affected hundreds or even thousands of individuals, but they have not altered the overall situation in society either.

Thirdly, there is a danger of reconciling what should not be reconciled. I do not believe, for example, that a 'peace group' should be seeking reconciliation in any way cover over conflicts or paper up cracks. I do not believe, for example, that peace groups should be concerned with 'reconciling' between workers and management when perhaps the very categories of 'workers' and 'management' as currently in operation need to be abolished. On a more sectarian level, it has been said that Catholic groups in the North tend to talk about 'justice' and Protestant groups of 'reconciliation'. True reconciliation may require radical changes from us all.

Outside of the (important) area of opposition to sectarianism in the North, the peace groups have not shown that they are prepared to risk for peace. Within the North some groups and individuals have literally put their lives on the line in the cause of anti-sectarianism, and their courage in so doing is amazing and an inspiration to others. But, outside of this, North or South, there has been no evidence of being willing to risk and take chances for peace; indeed, often the definition of 'peace' has been so narrow that it did not require risking for.

Certainly the sectarian problem in the North might appear to be the overwhelming one, but it does not exist in isolation, and all the other problems which exist in other countries are present in the North, some on a larger scale than other western European countries (partly exacerbated by the Troubles).

To illustrate what I mean by risking for peace, I should like to take the example of the (currently inactive) Love, Peace and Justice group. Their action in Dublin in 1975 in defence of one worker's job may seem unnecessary and extreme to some,(27) but extreme measures may be called for. Their action in sitting in at the Port and Docks Board office was nonviolent. They were prepared to say – 'this I challenge with myself' – and go to prison over it – as Justin Morahan did resultantly for 6 months.

The peace groups as a whole will not be taken seriously, either by the establishment or by the left, until they are prepared to risk for peace. This does not involve putting their live at risk but certainly their lifestyle. Where necessary, groups may need to take nonviolent direct action, either inside the law (if possible) or outside it, in furthering the cause of peace; it may be in opposition to direct physical violence, or institutional violence as regards housing, unemployment, malemployment or other matters. Until they do, until we do, and show that we really mean business – if in fact we do – we cannot hope to reach out to the whole of society or offer a new vision for the future.

Footnotes/ References

Definition of 'nonviolence' and 'non-violence'; I use 'nonviolence' generally in the sense of a positive, active nonviolent strategy, and 'non-violence' with a hyphen more negatively as that which may be tactically non-violent but which is not committed to nonviolence in the long term.

For recent Quaker action and inaction in relation to a particular question (Quakerism, Vietnam and American policies) see 'Nixon in Ireland' in *Irish Young Friends Quarterly*, No 4, 1970

Principles of Peace Exemplified, Thomas Hancock MD, London 1825

Memoir of James Haughton, Samuel Haughton, Dublin 1877, pages 75 and 124

'Irish Neutrality and the USA 1939-47', T. Ryle Dwyer, Gill & MacMillan 1977 See also forthcoming 'Dawn' issue on Irish neutrality

For the Northern story from the 'thirties on I am especially indebted to Denis Barritt. See also his article in 'Newspeak' (British FoR), Sept. 1971

See Stanley Haliday's article 'The Irish Pacifist Movement in *the Irish Young Friends Quarterly*, Winter 1968. See also 'Pax', the magazine of the IPM. The whereabouts of the early IPM minutes is unknown; only those for 1959-69 are safe. Haliday reference as (7), page 10

'Corrymeela – the Search for Peace', Alf McCreary, Christian Journals Ltd, Belfast, 1975.

'Pax', Autumn 1960

See *'The Banner'*, the journal of Irish CND, at least a couple of which came out, the first dated June 1963

'IPM', the short newsheet of the IPM, April 1968

William Ledwich and Moira Woods wrote a booklet entitled *'Ireland and Vietnam'* (Thoreau Press), reviewed by Erwin Strunz in 'IPM' June 1968

D. Barritt & C. Carter, *'The Northern Ireland Problem – A Study in Group Relations'*, OUP, 1962 & 1972

See Robin Percival's 'The Other Way' in *'Fortnight'* 20/2/76

'Peace News' 7/1/72. *'Peace News'* in the early 1970's contained some excellent coverage of the Northern situation from a nonviolent viewpoint and is recommended. Many of their articles were written by Bob Overy who lived and worked in Belfast for a period from 1970 onwards.

One exception is the Irish International Peace Movement which was formed in Dublin in 1977, associated with Sean McBride, Roy Johnston and others; this is concerned with international questions such as that of Irish neutrality.

'Dawn' No 24 'Analysis'

'Violence in Ireland – A Report to the Churches', p. 39; written by a joint Catholic-Protestant working party, CJL Belfast 1976. For the situation of the churches more generally see *Audenshaw Papers* no 45 'The Captivity of the Irish Churches' by John Morrow.

For Monica Patterson's look back at Women Together, see her 'What went wrong with Women Together?', *'Belfast Telegraph'*, 5/4/75

See also her pamphlet *'Gandhi speaks to Ulster'*, 1973

See 'Witness for Peace' by Norman Lockhart in *'Dawn'* No 1

See also 'Rev. Joe Parker – His failure or our?' by Desmond Wilson, in *'The Newman Review'*, Spring 1975

See article by Jerry Tyrrell in *'Dawn'* No. 21 and reply in No. 22

'The Great Heat Escape – a report on home insulation in Ireland' by Nick Warren, VSI, 1977.

For a short history of Glenree valley, the army barracks and the reformatory, see *'From Revolution to Reconciliation – the Story of Glenree'*, by Howell Evans, 1977, published by Glenree.

See *'The Price of Peace'* pamphlet by Ciaran McKeown, issued shortly after the Peace People started. More generally, *'Peace by Peace'* magazine.

'Divided we Stand' article by Dermot Hurley on Southern peace groups meeting, *'Dawn'* No. 22

For LPJ account of the situation and background see their magazine *'LPJ'* S/12/75

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