

Terrorism or Self-Determination? Britain, the IRA, and the politics of criminalisation

Leslie Wilmart-Angelo

*King: ... But when he pleaded for the poets' right,
Established at the establishment of the world,
I said that I was King, and that all rights
Had their original fountain in some king,
And that it was the men who ruled the world,
And not the men who sang to it, who should sit
Where there was the most honour. My courtiers –
Bishops, Soldiers and Makers of the Law –
Shouted approval; and amid that noise
Seanchan went out, and from that hour to this,
Although there is good food and drink beside him,
Has eaten nothing.*

(W.B. Yeats, "The King's Threshold"; 1904)¹

The parallel between Yeats' King and Seachen, the poet, can be drawn with the events which took place in Northern Ireland in the years preceding and following the Republican hunger strikes. On the one hand the British Government who took a series of measures designed to undermine the Republican Movement that was challenging it. On the other hand the Republican Movement who believed that the fight for legitimacy, and a United Ireland justified its campaign of violence to undermine the British government.

As the poets' claims for legitimacy must be recognised, so too must the king's position be understood. Protagonists in conflict often have the tendency to claim their own sense of victimhood in order to justify their actions. Clearly this was the case in

¹ David Beresford, Ten Men Dead: The Story of the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike, (HarperCollins Publishers), 1987, p.16

Northern Ireland where the British government felt it was a victim of the IRA terrorist campaign, and, likewise, the IRA felt it was a victim of the British oppressor. As a result, this thesis will explore how both protagonists to the conflict used their respective sense of victimhood in order to criminalise each other. In order to do so, this thesis will examine the British and the Republican positions, embracing both the ‘terrorist’ and the ‘self-determination’ points of view. Since analysing the ever-changing political landscape of Northern Ireland may prove too much of a task for the scope of this work, the author wishes to examine the period from 1971 to 1981 as an illustration of how both parties attempted to criminalise each other. At this stage, it may be worth noting that while the author mainly refers to the Provisional IRA, (PIRA), the terms IRA and Republican Movement will be used interchangeably.

The first part of this thesis will briefly focus on setting the framework for this work. The following chapter will then examine the terrorist argument adopted by Britain to criminalise the Republican movement. This part will aim to demonstrate how by means of ‘penal and/or judicial’ warfare, rather than ‘political’ warfare, the British government attempted to internalise the ‘Northern Ireland problem’ as a ‘United Kingdom problem’. This internalisation process was undoubtedly made easier by the IRA’s focus on military strategy rather than political. Indeed, it provided the British government with the necessary grounds to classify the Republican movement as mere criminals. In order to achieve the stated aim, the first section of this chapter will briefly describe the threat the IRA posed in an attempt to clarify the British position. The second section will then attempt to analyse the internment policy as a first of many measures to

counteract the IRA. The third section will then go on to explain the mechanisms by which the Diplock Courts worked and their significance. The fourth section will explore the implementation of the criminalisation policy and its implication in the deadlock position the British government faced at the time of the hunger strikes. Finally, the last section will attempt to give an insight on how and why the British government handled the Blanket protest and the hunger strikes the way it did.

The third chapter of this thesis will take the self-determination debate in order to explain the IRA's position. This chapter will attempt to explain how, as events changed, the IRA was able to move from a position on violence to a position encompassing political strategies. Prior to the hunger strikes, it is clear that the IRA's bargaining position was one of violence and therefore relatively weak in the face of the British government criminalisation policy. However, as events progressed and the hunger strikes took place, the bargaining position of the IRA also shifted dramatically to include a political dimension.

The final chapter of this thesis will aim to draw the fine line between the terrorist and the self-determination approaches. This section will explore how both protagonists' definition of 'their' conflict clouded the political solutions available to them. It must be noted, however, that the aim is not to determine who 'won' or 'lost', or who is 'right' or 'wrong' but rather offer a critical insight as to why a political solution was not found at the earlier stages of the conflict.

Finally, the conclusion will only aim at bringing together the ‘mini-conclusions’ explored in previous chapters, and hence offer an account of lessons learned.

Setting the framework

In order to achieve the stated aims, this thesis will take the following positions:

1. The terrorism debate and the self-determination debate are two sides of the same coin, creating parallel yet divergent views deadlocking the protagonists' positions, and consequently blurring the middle-ground political solution.

2. Neither protagonists solely used political warfare as a means to undermine the other's position. The mixture of penal/judiciary and political strategies adopted by the British government to counter-act the IRA did not give it much room to seek a political middle-ground at an earlier stage of the conflict. Similarly, the IRA's use of violence and political strategies to counter-act the British government did not give it much space to seek that same middle-ground.

In the context of this work, terrorism will be defined as:

“illegal violence or threatened violence directed against human or non-human objects, provided that it:

1. was undertaken or ordered with a view to altering or maintaining at least one putative norm in at least one particular territorial unit or population,
2. had secretive, furtive, and/or clandestine features that were expected by the participants to conceal their personal identity and/or their future location,
3. was not undertaken or ordered to further the permanent defense of some area,
4. was not conventional warfare and because of their concealed personal identity, concealment of their future location, their threats, and/or spatial mobility, the participants perceived themselves as less vulnerable to conventional military action;
5. was perceived by the participants as contributing to the normative goal previously described by inculcating fear of violence in persons (perhaps an

indefinite category of them) other than the immediate target of the actual or threatened violence and/or publicizing some cause”²

Clearly this definition is somewhat vague and open to interpretation, however for the purpose of this work it is not necessary to debate this definition. What is important is that it offers a comprehensive account of what terrorism encompasses, and the debate over what constitutes a terrorist movement only depends on the stance one takes.

On the other hand, self-determination, a widely recognised concept by both academics and politicians, is defined as the right “to choose [one’s] political, economic, social and cultural systems, without interference by another state”³.

Understanding these debates and positions is important since this thesis will work on the assumptions that:

1. viewing terrorism as a criminal problem and not a political problem significantly diminishes the chances to find an adequate political solution to the problem.
2. using violence for political ends creates the tendency to get trapped in a cycle of violence moving away from a peaceful political solution.
3. in cases such as Northern Ireland, where the protagonists to the conflict take such opposing views, it can be argued that only a political compromise can shift a potentially warlike situation into a more peaceful and workable one.

² Gibbs (1989) in Aviva Katz, [The 1981 Irish Hunger Strike: Struggle for Legitimacy or Pathology of Terrorism?](#), (MA studies at the Department of Political Science, University of Haifa), http://www.ict.org.il/articles/1981_ira_hungerstrike.htm , October 23, 2000, p.3

CHAPTER I

From Internment to Hunger Strikes: the British Position and the Terrorist Debate

1. The Threat of IRA Terrorism

The increase in violence that followed the Civil Rights Movement in 1969 dramatically changed Northern Ireland's political landscape. Indeed, by 1972, it became increasingly clear that the Unionist government in power was no longer adequate to uphold violence in the province. As a result, Stormont was suspended and Direct Rule introduced on March 24th, 1972. The threat of Republican violence that had so far been concentrated in Northern Ireland had reached mainland England following the implementation of Direct Rule. Moreover, the death of approximately 3,000 on the Troubles since 1969⁴ reinforced Britain's view that the IRA posed a "significant threat to the stability of the United Kingdom. Its violence sometimes apparently mindless and gratuitous, is clearly aimed at producing a 'war weariness' among the electorate and government in Great Britain, enhancing support for a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland"⁵. Furthermore, it argued, "militarily, PIRA is well armed and equipped to carry on it's 'war of national liberation'. It is an experienced terrorist organisation"⁶.

³ Charles Beitz, Political Theory and International Relations, (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press), 1979, p.92, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/beitz.htm>

⁴ David Bonner, United Kingdom: The United Kingdom Response to Terrorism, in Paul Wilkinson, Terrorism: British Perspectives: The International Library of Terrorism 1, (Dartmouth Publishing Company Ltd), 1993, p.58

⁵ *Ibid*, p59

⁶ *Ibid*, p59

This view was further reinforced by the failure of the 1972 talks between members of the Republican movement and the British government. William Whitelaw had secretly flown to England six prominent Republicans, including Gerry Adams, in order to negotiate a ceasefire. These negotiations were facilitated on the part of the British government by the granting of a Special Category Status following the 1972 hunger strike by Billy McKee, the reduction in the number of prisoners, and the decrease of army presence in Nationalist areas⁷, the so-called 'no go areas'. However, despite these allowances the IRA rejected the truce and continued to confirm their "commitment to the 'armed struggle'"⁸. When it became clear that the talks had failed, the subsequent bombing campaign "led to an army offensive and the ending of nationalist 'no go' areas"⁹.

The failures of these negotiations could be explained in two ways. Firstly, the IRA was, at this stage, a politically weak entity and had entered the negotiations with a 'military' mind. Secondly, the British government was still 'new' to the 'Northern Ireland problem' and quite clearly had not entirely grasped the extent of the IRA's commitment to a United Ireland and to its campaign of violence. Furthermore, the government, it seems, had approached the negotiations with a mind-set that it was dealing with politically weak terrorists and the hidden agenda that it:

needed a truce to create the requisite atmosphere for the release of internees. This was designed to allow the inauguration of a shift in security policy towards criminalization and away from those aspects of previous policy, like internment

⁷ Michael Cunningham, British Government Policy in Northern Ireland, (Manchester University Press), 2001, p.20

⁸ Ibid, p.12

⁹ Ibid, p20

and reliance on the British Army, which were seen as allowing the Provisionals to represent their activities as part of a legitimate national liberation struggle.¹⁰

Nonetheless, the failure of the negotiations did not deter the government from its stated aims. Instead, undisturbed by the IRA's apparent lack of political insight, the government continued to gradually implement the seeds of the criminalisation policy that came into effect in 1975.

2. Internment and the start of criminalisation

Internment was introduced on August 9th, 1971, by the Unionist government in power prior to Direct Rule. The policy aimed at interning “without trial ... those suspected of involvement in illegal violence”¹¹. This was by no means a new strategy aimed at controlling the violence perpetrated by Catholic ‘terrorists’. In fact, internment without trial had been introduced by the Irish Republic in the years 1939 and 1957 to counter IRA terrorism¹². Furthermore, “it had also been previously introduced in Northern Ireland in 1922 and 1957, once again to counter the threat posed by militant republicanism”¹³. Yet, by 1971 Northern Ireland was politically very different than the early 20s or, even, the late 50s: the Civil Rights movement started in the United States had brought worldwide attention to the question of civil rights. Similarly, the Civil Rights

¹⁰ Henry Patterson, The Politics of Illusion: Republicanism and Socialism in Modern Ireland, (Hutchinson Radius, London, Sidney, Auckland, Johannesburg), 1989, p.162-163

¹¹ Martha Crenshaw, The persistence of IRA Terrorism, in Yonah Alexander and Alan O’Day (ed.), Terrorism in Ireland, (Croom Helm London and Canberra, St Martin’s Press NY), 1984, p.248

¹² Aviva Katz, 23 October 2000, p.5

¹³ Ibid, p.5

movement in Northern Ireland, in 1969, had reframed the ‘internal United Kingdom problem’ in terms of civil rights issues. As a result, it could be argued that the Civil Rights movement had become the unconscious beginning of the ‘internationalisation’ of the province. Nevertheless, despite the Civil Rights movement, internment policy had been introduced with little, or no, regards for the changing political landscape Northern Ireland was undertaking. Consequently, the policy proved to be ineffective in dealing with IRA terrorism for several reasons.

Firstly, the policy was implemented with the same mind-set that the problem lied with Catholic terrorism and had little regard for the moderate Catholic population. In fact, it completely alienated the Nationalist population: “the introduction of internment ... justified the SDLP’s abstentionism once again; its counter productive effect on the Catholic population of the urban areas could not possibly allow a nationalist party to cooperate with the government that had introduced it.”¹⁴. Undeniably, internment had resulted in putting the constitutional Nationalists in a precarious position since they did not support the IRA violence but could not support a policy that was clearly aimed against Catholics. On the other hand, the British government needed the SDLP’s support in the area and with it came the realisation that a new strategy had to be implemented in order to include Nationalists in the ‘fight against terrorism’. More importantly, perhaps, was the fact that internment went against democratic standards of civil rights as it was clearly targeted against Catholics, and thus proved to be an unviable policy in the long run.

Secondly, the British government failed to predict how internment would increase, rather than diminish, support for the IRA. Following the split between the Official and Provisional IRA, the movement has been practically moribund since 1969, but “re-emerged in the sectarian violence accompanying the political upheaval set in train by the Civil Rights Movement, principally as defender of Catholics against sectarian attacks”¹⁵. By being so openly against Catholics, internment policy had not only alienated Nationalists but, arguably, had also pushed some into the ‘arms’ of the IRA. As the government could not defend what Catholics had fought for with the Civil Rights movement, then only the IRA was left to do so. One could argue that instead of suppressing the IRA, internment had the opposite effect of strengthening it. Moreover, the civil disobedience campaigns, sponsored by the SDLP, and the Bloody Sunday events, where 13 Catholics were killed by the armed forces, clearly reinforced the inadequacy of the British government to protect Catholics with the result of increasing support for the IRA. Finally, as Sabine Wichert argues,

The introduction of internment was an act of desperation which could soon be seen to have been a mistake; police and army intelligence was not good enough to make it effective, and it increased support for the PIRA as many of the old IRA were interned who had previously not had much sympathy for either the methods or the declared aims of the new version of the movement.¹⁶

Thirdly, internment “damaged Britain’s international reputation and make relations with the Republic more difficult, and”, most importantly perhaps, “it emphasised the political nature of the conflict whereas normal legal procedures would

¹⁴ Sabine Wichert, Northern Ireland since 1945, (2nd Edition, Addison Wesley Longman Ltd), 1999, p.150

¹⁵ David Bonner, 1993, p.59

¹⁶ Sabine Wichert, 1999, p.124

allow the government to present the violence as criminal in origin”¹⁷. In addition, the number of prisoners detained was indeed reaching an embarrassing level. Clearly, the policy had been a failure. Consequently, rather than internationalising the conflict as internment was doing, strategies needed to deal with terrorism effectively had to be found in order to internalise the conflict, remove the Nationalist deadlock and remove support for the IRA. As the first of a series of counter-act measures, the British government introduced the Detention of Terrorists (NI) Order which was passed on December 11th, 1972. While in theory detention was identical to internment, in practice, a suspected person could be detained for a period of 28 days, and whose case was referred to a Chief Constable. The Commissioner could then lengthen the detention period if he deemed that the suspect was involved in terrorist activities. As Cunningham argues, “the use of a commissioner, a senior legal figure, was designed to emphasise the quasi-judicial nature of the process and act as a check on executive power”¹⁸. By introducing legal procedures to combat the IRA terrorism, the British government had begun the long process of criminalisation facilitated by the IRA’s campaign of violence in both Northern Ireland and mainland England.

3. The Diplock Courts as a first implementation of criminalisation

The failure of the 1972 negotiations, as well as the failure of the internment policy, opened the way for the British government to implement further strategies in order to neutralise IRA terrorism. According to Tim Pat Coogan, the British “weren’t

¹⁷ Michael Cunningham, 2001, p.21

¹⁸ Michael Cunningham, 2001, p.21

getting the men they wanted in the quantities they needed to cripple the IRA, consequently, the truce approach and the bait of Special Category having failed, something else was tried”¹⁹. This ‘something else’ turned out to be the Diplock Report of December 1972 that led to the creation of the Diplock Courts in 1973. This was the first step towards internalising the conflict and using judicial procedures as a way to tackle terrorism. As Michael Cunningham is quick to point out, the importance of the Diplock Report cannot be underestimated:

First, it marked the advent of a policy in which prosecution through the courts was gradually to replace executive detention in an attempt to bury the distinction between political violence and ‘normal crime’. Secondly, the report laid the basis for legislation which, though amended, was to remain in force for almost 30 years. Thirdly, it revealed the relative ease with which long-established judicial procedures could be jettisoned when expedient.²⁰

One could further argue that the Diplock Report marked a turning point in British policy: first, it had started to deal with Northern Ireland as a problem of terrorism as opposed to a political one, thus internalising the conflict, and, secondly, it viewed the problem of terrorism as a criminal problem and not a political problem which is why it was dealt with by judicial measures rather than political measures. Additionally, the recommendations made by the Diplock Report are of equal importance since it set the trap for internalising the conflict and eased the path to the criminalisation policy.

The first recommendation of significance made by the Diplock Report was that “jury trial was ‘not practicable in the case of terrorist crimes in Northern Ireland’ because

¹⁹Tim Pat Coogan, *On the Blanket: The H-Block Story*, (Ward River Press), 1980, p.52

²⁰ Michael Cunningham, 2001, p.21

of the threat of intimidation of jurors”²¹. Indeed, point 7(a) in the Report’s conclusion states that “the main obstacle to dealing effectively with terrorist crime in the regular courts of justice is intimidation by terrorist organisations of those persons who would be able to give evidence for the prosecution if they dared”²². Furthermore, the Report recommends that “trial of scheduled offences should be by a judge of the High Court, or a County Court Judge, sitting alone with no jury, with the usual rights of appeal”²³. In other words, the Diplock Report recommended a quasi-judicial system parallel to the Detention of Terrorist Order of 1972. This procedure undoubtedly internalised the conflict as a ‘United Kingdom terrorism problem’ consequently criminalizing the IRA and removing the government from any possible international scrutiny.

The second significant recommendation was that convictions could be secured on the basis of a confession by the accused. Point 7(k) of the conclusion states:

A confession made by the accused should be admissible as evidence **in** cases involving the scheduled offences unless it was obtained **by** torture or inhuman or degrading treatment; if admissible it would then be for the court to determine its reliability on the basis of the evidence given from either side as to the circumstances in which the confession had been obtained.²⁴

Furthermore, it added:

A signed written statement made to anyone charged with investigating a scheduled offence should be admissible if the person who made it cannot be produced in court for specific reasons, and the statement contains material which

²¹ S.C. Greer & A. White, foreword by Lord Devlin, Abolishing the Diplock Courts, (The Cobden Trust), 1982, p.2

²² Lord Diplock, Report of the Commission to consider legal procedures to deal with terrorist activities in Northern Ireland, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by Command of Her Majesty, (Published in London by Her Majesty’s Stationary Office), December 1972, p.4, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmsso/Diplock.htm>

²³ Lord Diplock, December 1972, p.5

²⁴ Ibid, p. 5

would have been admissible if the person had been in court to give oral evidence.²⁵

Throughout the years, convictions based on confessions became a highly contested issue. Many accused the RUC of obtaining confessions through beatings. The 1978 Amnesty International Report, for example, concluded that:

Powers of arrest and detention have been extended and are virtually unchallengeable. The investigation is conducted in an atmosphere of seclusion, aggravated by the extended powers of police detention. Access to solicitors is denied as an apparent matter of policy, giving rise to an inference, whether or not justified, that not all statements are made voluntarily.

The reduction of procedural safeguards regarding the admissibility of statements, the extension of the discretion of the single judge and the absence of a jury enhance the danger that statements obtained by maltreatment of suspects will be used as evidence in court²⁶

In the view of the British, however, it was clear that a ‘certain roughness of treatment’ was highly acceptable and taken for granted by the prisoners²⁷. The deliberate vagueness of employing the word ‘voluntary confessions’ made a literal definition quite impossible to achieve and generally opened to interpretation. Moreover, Diplock had recommended that “the applying of psychological pressure should be deemed admissible practice”²⁸. As a result, it was quite impossible for anyone, let alone a Court Judge, to determine whether or not a confession had been voluntary or made under physical abuse. Additionally, the fact that a convicted person would have the reasons of the verdict explained, that he or she had the right to appeal, and the undeterminable nature of confessions, made it all the more difficult to determine the fairness of the system. Yet, the

²⁵ Ibid, p5 point 7(1)

²⁶ Amnesty International, Northern Ireland, Report of An Amnesty International Mission to Northern Ireland (28 November 1977 – 6 December 1977), 1978, p.19, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/intern/docs/amnesty78.htm>

²⁷ Ibid, p.14

point here is not to debate whether a conviction based on a confession is right or wrong. The lesson to be drawn from the Diplock Courts is that while, in theory, the Courts were fashioned in a way that would be contestable, i.e. the right to appeal, in practice however it quite clearly became an incontestable judicial process muting the cries of the IRA since convictions had been obtained by lawful means. Moreover, it had successfully integrated the judicial background needed for the implementation of Criminalisation policy.

4. The Criminalisation Policy and the internalisation of the conflict

Two major changes in security legislation worth noting at this stage is the Emergency Provision Act (EPA) of 1973 and Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act of 1974 (PTA). The EPA became “law in July 1973 and provided the legislative framework for the move from extra-judicial anti-terrorism strategies to one based on criminal convictions”²⁹ as implemented by the Diplock Courts. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, on the other hand, was implemented as an immediate response against the IRA killing of nineteen people in a Birmingham pub on the 22nd of November 1974³⁰.

The Act is important in so far that it contained four provisions of significance:

First, proscription of the IRA was to be extended to the rest of the UK (Northern Ireland was covered by the EPA). Secondly, the Home Secretary was to be empowered to exclude people from Britain to Northern Ireland. Thirdly, police powers of arrest and detention were to be extended. Fourthly, more rigorous checks would be made on those travelling between Ireland and Britain.³¹

²⁸ Michael Cunningham, 2001, p.21

²⁹ Michael Cunningham, 2001, p.23

³⁰ Ibid, p.27

Similarly to the Diplock Courts and the Emergency Provision Act, the Prevention of Terrorism Act provided the British government with the necessary judicial grounds to combat the IRA by defining them as terrorists, thus turning the ‘Northern Ireland Problem’ from a problem of political nature to that of a criminal one.

The judicial frameworks to combat the IRA having been put into place, one further problem remained: that Special Category status granted in 1972. According to Tim Pat Coogan,

Special Category meant that Britain now had an embarrassing number of “political” prisoners to account for before the bar of world public opinion and related to this was the affront to domestic right-wing and Unionist opinion of reading about, and sometimes seeing on television, “terrorists” with in effect Prisoner of War status holding parades and classes, maintaining their own system of discipline in the barb-wire enclosed compounds which had been built at Long Kesh to house the internees. A new look at the problem was required.³²

By the end of 1974 the prison situation above described and the degradation of the political landscape in Northern Ireland had reached an intolerable level. As a result of increasing violence, the British government appointed the Gardiner Commission in January 1975 with the aim to “consider what provisions and powers, consistent to the maximum extent practicable in circumstances with the preservation of civil liberties and human rights, are required to deal with terrorism and subversion in Northern Ireland”³³.

³¹ Ibid, p.27

³² Tim Pat Coogan, 1980, p.55

³³ Gardiner, 1975:1, in Declan Moen, Irish Political Prisoners and Post Hunger-Strike Resistance to Criminalisation, (The British Criminology Conference, Liverpool), July 1999, p.5, <http://larkspirit.com/hungerstrikes/>

The Commission concluded that “the introduction of Special Category Status was a serious mistake ... It should be made absolutely clear that Special Category prisoners can expect no amnesty and will have to serve their sentences ... we recommend that the earliest practicable opportunity should be taken to end the Special Category.”³⁴ In other words, as Michael Cunningham points out, “Special category status was condemned as it facilitated paramilitary organisation and emphasised the political nature of offences.”³⁵

‘The earliest practicable opportunity’ came with the negotiations between the government and the IRA, which resulted in a ceasefire, announced on December 23rd 1974 and scheduled to hold until January 1975. The ceasefire, engineered by Rees, was an outcome of the release of 17 republicans prisoners, the offer of a 3 days New Year’s parole to 50 others, and the approved early release of 100 convicted prisoners³⁶. By January 15th 1975, despite IRA’s threats to end the ceasefire, Rees had further released 25 detainees and on February 24th had announced the further release of 80 prisoners³⁷. However, the ceasefire turned out to be short lived and ended on January 17th 1975. One could argue that the reason behind this failure was the fact that there was no political middle ground on which a dialogue could be established since the government had showed a gesture of goodwill in the view of implementing the criminalisation policy, and the IRA could not be seen to uphold a ceasefire that was contrary to the achievement of a United Ireland by “all means necessary”. In fact, according to Mark Urban, Martin McGuinness “alluded to the negative effects of the ceasefire when he commented, ‘Good

³⁴ Tim Pat Coogan, 1980, p.57

³⁵ Michael Cunningham, 2001, p.24

³⁶ Martin Wallace, British Government in Northern Ireland: From Devolution to Direct Rule, (David and Charles Ltd, Newton Abbot, London), 1982, p.123

operations are the best recruiting sergeant’.”³⁸ Clearly, the positions of both the British government and the IRA left little or no room for a political compromise.

The IRA campaign of violence, that was at the very heart of the criminalisation policy, resumed ten days after the ceasefire when four bombs exploded in London and one in Manchester injuring nineteen people³⁹. Further bombs were planted between April and July, killing one policeman and by the end of 1975 the number of deaths had reached 217 people⁴⁰. The return to violence was to reinforce the British government’s justifications for the criminalisation policy. Indeed, even Gerry Adams “could see that, apart from the lack of military, moral or political justification, the course of events was heading towards disaster. Special Category status was clearly under threat and the atrocities of the period were giving the British sufficient propaganda to justify its removal.”⁴¹ This proved to be true when Rees, on November 4th, announced a scheme to release all convicted prisoners after they had completed half rather than two-thirds of their sentence subject to good behaviour⁴². This move allowed Rees to show in the eye of the world that the government’s gestures of goodwill towards the IRA had been constantly met by a continuation of violence. Consequently, the IRA campaign of violence had smoothen the path for Rees to announce that any person convicted of offences after March 1st 1976 would no longer be able to claim Special Category status.

³⁷ Ibid, p.123

³⁸ Mark Urban, Big Boy’s Rule: The SAS and the Secret Struggle Against the IRA, (Faber & Faber Ltd, London, Boston), 1992, p.25

³⁹ Tim Pat Coogan, The Troubles: Ireland’s Ordeal 1966-1996 and the Search for Peace, (Arrow Books), 1996, p.258

⁴⁰ Martin Wallace, 1982, p.124

⁴¹ Tim Pat Coogan, 1996, p.260

⁴² Ibid, 1982, p.124

The criminalisation policy recommended by the Gardiner Commission had been successfully implemented.

An analysis of the interpretation of what was meant by ‘Special Category’ is important at this stage for it defines the mind-set of both the IRA and British government at the time of the hunger strikes. On the one hand, the IRA felt that the British government had entered the negotiations as a tactical ploy aimed at overturning the position on the Special Category status granted in 1972. This view is reinforced by David Beresford who argues that “detention without trial was an obvious embarrassment to Britain ... and it was eventually phased out in 1975. But simultaneously, it reversed its position on special category status, announcing that such prisoners convicted of offences committed after 1 March 1976 would be treated as ordinary criminals.”⁴³ Evidently, Special Category equated political status, and the political motivations the IRA were claimed as a justification for the crimes committed made them, by definition, political prisoners. However, the British view, on the other hand, was quite different. First, it argued that Special Category was not equal to political status:

In June 1972, after a hunger strike, the government introduced a special category status for convicted terrorists which had set them apart from other convicted prisoners. It was in practice available to those who claimed political motivation for their crime and were acceptable to the appropriate compound leader. Special Category status was not portrayed by the government as political status – it meant merely a more liberal regime [...] for such prisoners – but in practice many regarded it as such.⁴⁴

Secondly, the government argued that political motivations were not sufficient grounds to justify violent actions, and thus the “firm current policy” to treat:

⁴³ David Beresford, 1987, p.24

terrorist criminals like other prisoners convicted of serious criminal offences, notwithstanding that the terrorism claims political motivation for his act, that research on Northern Ireland suggests that many terrorist prisoners would not be criminals but for the political cause, or that those convicted in Northern Ireland have been convicted in a different criminal trial process from the normal.⁴⁵

Moreover, the assassination of the British Ambassador, by the IRA, in Dublin in 1976 undoubtedly reinforced the view that criminalisation was the only solution to counter-act terrorism. Furthermore, the policy removed Britain from international scrutiny as the IRA assassinations generated international outrage and justified the criminalisation policy.

By and by, the British government had entirely shifted from a position of treating the IRA as a political entity of some sorts, as in the 1972 talks, to one of treating them exclusively as criminals with no public opinion support. Britain could “now argue that a responsible government did not negotiate with gangsters or look for political solutions to a crime wave. Instead, such a government ‘got tough’ and took whatever steps might be necessary to defend democracy and protect the public.”⁴⁶ As a result, this position moved the government further away from finding an adequate political solution to the problem, thus creating an impasse in the political process. However, it must be said that Sinn Fein, at the time, was still a politically weak entity, which also created setbacks in finding a political middle ground. Nevertheless, the tough approach Britain was now adopting with criminalisation deadlocked the political process further as Britain got overtaken by the events of the hunger strikes.

⁴⁴ David Bonner, 1993, p.77

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.76

5. From Blanket Protest to Hunger Strikes: The British response

*“Persuade him to eat or drink? ...
While he is lying there, Perishing there, my
good name in the world
Is perishing also. I cannot give way
Because I am King; because if I give way,
My nobles would call me a weakling, and, it
may be,
The very throne be shaken”⁴⁷*

The introduction of the criminalisation policy on March 1st 1976 marked a turning point in the history of Northern Ireland. As a protest against the policy, Kieran Nugent, on September 14th 1976, refused to wear his prison uniform arguing that, for him to wear such uniform, “they would have to nail the clothes on [his] back”⁴⁸. The Blanket Protest had started and was soon to disintegrate into a Dirty, ‘no wash’, Protest. Some critics have argued that these protests were significant as,

support for the Provisional IRA campaign was weakening before the protest began. They argued that one of the main goals of the protest was to maintain support for the Provisional campaign to remove the British army ... from Northern Ireland. The protest was part of this larger campaign. By developing highly emotional support for the Republican prisoners and advocating the category of “political prisoner,” the Republican cause would increase in legitimacy, and the British government would be put under increasing pressure to negotiate a final settlement.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Kevin Kelly, in Aviva Katz, 2000, p.8

⁴⁷ Yeats, The King’s Threshold, 1904; in Aviva Katz, 2000, p.1

⁴⁸ Tim Pat Coogan, 1996, p.265

⁴⁹ Lynne Shivers and David Bowman, foreword by Denis P. Barritt, More than the Troubles: A Common Sense View of the Northern Ireland Conflict, (New Society Publishers), 1984, p.83-84

The Protests, however, attracted little publicity until 1978 when Cardinal O' Fiaich visited the prison and declared that "one would hardly allow an animal to remain in such conditions let alone a human being"⁵⁰. Nevertheless, this was not sufficient pressure to compel the British government to act as it felt that "the condition of the prisoners was self-imposed, and took no responsibility for it"⁵¹. Accordingly, "The government refused to consider the possibility of granting a "political prisoner" status"⁵². The killing of several prison officers, in 1976, did little to alter this position. Neither did this stance soften with the entry into power of the Thatcher government in 1979. The assassination of Lord Mountbatten, his grandson, and a boatman, in 1979, somewhat toughened the already inflexible approach to the question of political prisoners. This act, described by the press as that of "evil men"⁵³, had the adverse effect of producing an international outcry weakening the IRA's position while reinforcing the British one. Furthermore, the British position was somewhat strengthened by the European Commission on Human Rights' declaration, on June 19th 1980, that

the prisoners *were not* entitled under national or international law or under the Convention to the status of political prisoners, and that 'inhuman and degrading' conditions in the H-blocks were self-imposed and could be eliminated almost immediately if the prisoners were motivated to improve them.⁵⁴

However, it must be noted that while the protests did little in shifting the British position, they nevertheless "had successfully switched attention from the reason the men

⁵⁰ Tim Pat Coogan, 1996, p.265

⁵¹ Lynne Shivers and David Bowman, 1984, p.84

⁵² Ibid, p.84

⁵³ Daily Mail, 1979, in Liz Curtis, The Propaganda War, The British media and the 'battle for hearts and minds', (Pluto Press, London and Sidney), 1984, p.114

⁵⁴ Martin Wallace, 1982, p.158

were in jail to questions about the sort of government that could allow them to exist in such conditions”⁵⁵.

On October 27th 1980, the prison issue escalated further with the start of a hunger strike by seven Republican prisoners in the Maze prison. According to Mark Urban, the prisoners “had hoped that they could win a concession which would allow Sinn Fein to claim that political status had been restored, while at the same time they knew the strike would have enormous value in dramatizing the republican cause”⁵⁶. Moreover, the prisoners were hoping that the hunger strikes would coerce the government into granting the five demands: the right to wear their own clothes; the right to refrain from prison work; the right to associate freely with one another; the right to organise recreational facilities and to have one letter, visit and parcel per week; the right to have lost remission fully restored⁵⁷. Margaret Thatcher, on the other hand, felt that the five demands were simply an IRA strategy aimed at taking power away from prison authorities. She argued that “The purpose of the privileges they claimed was not to improve prisoners’ conditions but to take power away from the prison authorities”⁵⁸. Furthermore, she added, “The protesters were trying to secure a prison regime in which the prisoners – and not the prison officers – determined what went on”⁵⁹. Interestingly, when asked about this issue of prison control, Raymond McCartney, a hunger striker himself, replied that “this was possibly true”⁶⁰. However, he added, conditions in the prison and political status were at

⁵⁵ Mark Urban, 1992, p.131

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.131

⁵⁷ Martin Wallace, 1982, p.159

⁵⁸ Margaret Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, (HarperCollins Publishers), 1993, p.389

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.392

⁶⁰ Raymond McCartney, Wednesday 17th October 2001, 2:30pm

the very core of the five demands, and that “concessions” on those demands without political status was also acceptable⁶¹. Still, to the British government the five demands equated prison control, and more importantly, political status. This clearly was unacceptable, as the government would then be seen to be making concessions to terrorists:

Above all, I would hold fast to the principle that we would not make concessions of any kind while the hunger strike was continuing. The IRA were pursuing with calculated ruthlessness a psychological war alongside their campaign of violence: they had to be resisted on both levels⁶².

Despite these hard-line positions on both the IRA and the British government, negotiations were going on between the two factions. As the prospect of the death of a hunger striker was drawing nearer, and the fact that the strikes were attracting worldwide attention, the pressure on both parties to solve the deadlock also mounted. On December 18th 1980, “following suggestions from a Northern Ireland Office civil servant who visited the Maze that a compromise might be possible – for example on the clothing issue”⁶³, the strike was called off. According to Raymond McCartney, the prisoners felt they had a good document in which to base the end of the hunger strikes but, quite clearly, the “British government didn’t negotiate in good faith” as the concessions were not implemented. Consequently, Bobby Sands, who was commanding officer at the time, felt betrayed by the British and immediately undertook plans for a second hunger strike⁶⁴.

Conversely, these concessions were denied by the government as never been made or thought of, and subsequently the government argued that the IRA was making

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Margaret Thatcher, 1993, p.390

⁶³ Mark Urban, 1992, p.131

such claims in the view of discrediting it and prepare the grounds for a second hunger strike. Indeed, Thatcher argued, the “IRA claimed later that they had done this [ended the strikes] because we had made concessions, but this was wholly false. By making the claim they sought to excuse their defeat, to discredit us, and to prepare the grounds for further protests when the non-existent concessions failed to materialize”⁶⁵. The 1980 hunger strikes had ended, to some extent, with a propaganda victory on the British side: it had successfully diverted the strikes without giving in to terrorist pressures. Furthermore, the government had successfully played the victimisation game by claiming that the IRA’s hunger strikes were a form of political coercion to which they were not prepared to give into, hence reinforcing itself as the victim of IRA terrorism and justifying the criminalisation approach further.

It is with this frame of mind that the government approached the second hunger strikes. Following the ‘victory’ of the first hunger strikes, it can be argued that the government was somewhat confident that the second strike was to be defeated with the same approach. When Bobby Sands started his hunger strike on March 1st 1981, the British government was quite determined not to give in to the pressures of terrorists:

the government will not surrender control of what goes on in the prisons to a particular group of prisoners. It will not concede the demand for political status, or recognize that murder and violence are less culpable because they are claimed to be committed for political motives⁶⁶

It could be argued that conceding to the five demands would only mean that Britain had accepted the IRA’s fight for self-determination thus legitimising their cause.

⁶⁴ Raymond McCartney, Wednesday 17th October 2001

⁶⁵ Margaret Thatcher, 1993, p.390-391

Furthermore, in Thatcher's view one could never give into terrorists' demands, "similar to the belief that if you give into dictators' demands they will only be satisfied until the next demand"⁶⁷. Quite clearly this was a situation the government could not afford to be in, as recognising terrorism would simply shake the foundations on which criminalisation had been built, and would equally displace the problem from one of IRA terrorism to one of Unionist discontentment and terrorism. By viewing terrorism as a criminal problem, and confronting it with judicial measures, the government had deadlocked itself into a position it could not reverse. The seeds of criminalisation had been firmly planted and now were being challenged by the hunger strikers. It is not clear whether or not the government realised that this position would lead to the death of ten men, and that only a political resolution could now solve the situation. Nevertheless, the start of the hunger strikes did not present itself with sufficient political grounds on which a solution could be based. On the one hand, as described above, the government felt it could not give into terrorist pressures and grant the legitimisation the IRA was so clearly seeking. On the other hand, the IRA, while recognising that a political dimension had to be included in their cause, continued its campaign of violence and thus did not yet have the sufficient political wisdom needed to negotiate with the government. In fact, Sinn Fein had been boycotting Westminster as a stand against the oppressor and had little power in the political game that was unfolding.

However, this situation was reversed with the election to Westminster of Bobby Sands, the hunger strikes leader, on April 9th 1980. The subsequent election of two more

⁶⁶ Humphrey Atkins, in David Beresford, 1987, p.67

hunger strikers, Paddy Agnew and Kieran Doherty, and, following Sands death, the election of Owen Carron, Sands' election agent, dramatically changed the political landscape of Northern Ireland for,

It undermined the entire shaky edifice of British policy in Northern Ireland, which had been so painfully constructed on the hypothesis that blame for the 'Troubles' could be placed on a small gang of thugs and hoodlums who enjoyed no community support.⁶⁸

Furthermore, "it was a propaganda calamity for the government, though Mrs Thatcher sought to nullify the result by insisting: 'It is not political. It is a crime'"⁶⁹. To her, the people of Northern Ireland had voted for the killers of Lord Mountbatten, the killers of the innocent victims Britain was trying so hard to defend. She did however recognise the fact that "The IRA were on the advance politically"⁷⁰ with the election of Sands. The election result had now shifted the problem from a criminal one to a political one. No longer could Britain afford to ignore the political dimension involved in the hunger strikes. Nevertheless, Margaret Thatcher was manifestly not prepared to negotiate for a political status and certainly not while the pressure of the hunger strikes was continuing, as she was visibly still feeling that this would result in legitimising violent means for political ends. Moreover, the continued IRA violence that was accompanying the strikes, especially as the hunger strikers began to die, could not be dismissed despite the election results. Finally, as the Economist pointed out in 1981,

If the British government wants to end the hunger strike it will probably have to deal with the provisionals direct. That can only isolate the moderate SDLP further

⁶⁷ The Margaret Thatcher Site, The Thatcher Revolution: IRA Hunger Strikes, [thatcheronline.co.uk, http://www.thatcherweb.com/revolution/hungerstrikes/index.html](http://www.thatcherweb.com/revolution/hungerstrikes/index.html), 2001

⁶⁸ David Beresford, 1987, p.114

⁶⁹ Paul Routledge, John Hume: A Biography, (HarperCollins Publishers), 1997, p.175

⁷⁰ Margaret Thatcher, 1993, p.391

and strengthen the image of the IRA. The British government, well aware of this is determined to win the endurance test, will public opinion let it do so.⁷¹

Following the death of ten hunger strikers, the strike got called off on October 3rd 1981 after families intervened to save their sons' lives. The question as to why the government let events unfold as they did may be explained in different respects. Firstly, there was certainly a question of image, and of internal politics as far as Margaret Thatcher was concerned. To Thatcher, it seems, 'image was everything'. The Iron Lady she was as she showed she was quite prepared to let ten men die instead of giving in to political status or the five demands. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that this conflict was not two-dimensional as it also involved Unionists and moderate Catholics. As argued above, negotiating with the IRA and legitimising its cause could only alienate Nationalists further for, even if they identified with the IRA struggle, they certainly did not support their violent means to attain their goals. There was also the question of the Unionist population of Northern Ireland that also had an important role to play, determining to some extent Thatcher's approach to the hunger strikers. A profound Unionist herself, Margaret Thatcher could not be seen to 'let down' a population that quite clearly supported her stance against terrorist pressures. It could be argued that she was therefore deadlocked into a position where the only way to take action was to undergo the similar test of endurance the IRA was undertaking with the hunger strikes and not give in.

Secondly, it may be important to note that "terrorism has little effect on the domestic political structure of Great Britain ... and is not an election issue"⁷². This fact is

⁷¹ The Economist, Hunger Strike Endurance Tests, 16-22 May 1981, in Gareth Williams Doherty, Fighting on All Fronts: The Republican Prison Struggle 1976-1981, (MA Irish History and Politics, Department of

of significance as it may explain why the British government did not give into the mounting pressure of the hunger strikes and why it could 'afford' the loss of ten men without any major impact on British public opinion. In fact, it seems British public opinion supported Thatcher's decision as shown in an article published in *The Guardian* the day after Bobby Sands' death:

Sands was largely responsible for the negotiations which terminated the first hunger strike. However, this was not clearly constructed as a victory for the Provisionals.

It was Sands' own dissatisfaction with the outcome of these talks which led him to start a fast himself. In this he, as a participant, would be in the best position to judge if the British Government was unequivocally acceding to his demands. The outcome of that protest became clear yesterday.⁷³

Thirdly, there was little the government could do while the strikes were going on. As Martha Crenshaw argues, "Governments confront a difficult choice between tolerating a certain level of terrorism or instituting rules and security procedures that jeopardize the political order that is being defended against terrorism"⁷⁴. In the eye of the government these deaths were clearly self-imposed and there was no excuse to the amount of violence they brought about. The government could hence not be seen as taking the responsibility for these deaths, which could only imply legitimising the IRA. Finally, it is not certain whether the strikes, and the IRA violence, would have ended had the concessions been granted. A difficult choice it was to decide to overturn the criminalisation policy without any knowledge of the impacts concessions could have on security. There were no guarantees that the IRA terrorism would cease if the demands

Humanities, Magee College, University of Ulster), 2001, p.32

⁷² Martha Crenshaw, 1984, p. 263

⁷³ John Cunningham, *How the IRA manufactured a new martyr*, *Guardian Century*, <http://www.guardiancentury.co.uk>, May 6, 1981

⁷⁴ Martha Crenshaw, 1984, p.253

had been granted during the strikes. Neither were there guarantees that Protestants paramilitaries would not escalate violence had Britain given into the IRA. Quite clearly, Britain had been trapped by the democratic standards it believed in. As a result, it had cost ten men's lives to finally produce the much-needed shift from a criminal approach to a more politically orientated approach, required to effectively counter-act terrorism and violence.

6. Afterthoughts and Conclusion

Throughout the years, it appears, Britain firmly believed that a United Ireland could only be achieved through democratic standards, in this case the wish of the majority. While the government conceded that majority rule “meant permanent power for the Protestants, and there was no getting away from the fact that, with some justice, the long years of Unionist rule were associated with discrimination against Catholics”⁷⁵, it could nevertheless not withdraw as a result of the IRA campaign. Undeniably, as Margaret Thatcher argued, “Those who sought a United Ireland must learn that what could not be won by persuasion would not be won by violence”⁷⁶. In other words, prior to the ‘politicisation’ of Sinn Fein, the situation was deadlocked from the start. On the one hand, there was the question of discrimination against Catholics and that of a United Ireland, which was recognised as questions of self-determination and human rights standards. On the other hand, there was the problem of the IRA’s violence campaign and no political entity per se that the government could negotiate with. Throughout the years

⁷⁵ Margaret Thatcher, 1993, p.386

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.392

of internment through to the second hunger strikes, the British government was left to deal with the question of a United Ireland through a terrorist campaign that had little to do with democratic values. The lack of political power on the IRA side left little room to negotiate a peaceful solution through political means. Furthermore, it made it impossible for the British government to tackle the question of IRA violence by any other means than a criminal approach, thus the judicial counter-measures undertaken by internment, the Diplock Courts, the Gardiner Commission and the Criminalisation policy. In some ways, it can be argued that the tough-line measures undertaken by the government during the second hunger strikes, was a result of these fears, of previous government policies and lines of thoughts, and of a continuous IRA campaign of violence.

The situation, however, changed with the election of Bobby Sands and consequently the introduction of a political entity in Sinn Fein. By then, the government could not longer ignore the wishes of a population that had democratically elected a hunger striker and had demonstrated Sinn Fein to be a democratic political party per se that was now to be negotiated with. The criminal approach was no longer a viable approach to tackle terrorism and focus had to be placed on a political solution. While the IRA's campaign of violence continued after the hunger strikes, with the Harrods bomb in 1983 and the 1984 Brighton bomb, the solution now laid with political discussions between Sinn Fein and the government. The time was now ripe for the government to move from a criminalisation approach to a political approach as a means to counter terrorist. As a result of this process, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed in 1985. This Agreement included the ever-so important dimension of the achievement of a United

Ireland through democratic means. Finally, a political truce had been found between the King and the Poets.

CHAPTER II

The IRA position and the Self-Determination Debate

1. The IRA response to internment

Just go off somewhere and hit somebody, warrior!” he yelled at Conall. “Do blind damage! It’s all any of you are good for!” Raising the ash stick in his hand, he turned south facing the fort. “I curse you, Emain Macha, for fostering a belligerent tribe. You throw away peace with both hands; so be it. I make this prophecy: The day will come when you will search with both hands throughout all Ulster and not be able to find it!
(Cathbad’s voice)⁷⁷

The IRA version on the ‘Northern Ireland problem’ has always been one of self-determination against the British oppressors who had partitioned Northern Ireland in 1922. For the IRA, it seems, the fight for self-determination could only be won through ‘all means necessary’ required for a United Ireland and a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. However, following the Civil Rights movement in 1969, the IRA “formally adhered to a programme emphasizing social revolution and Marxist doctrine rather than violence”⁷⁸. The Civil Rights movement, and the Protestant-Catholic clashes that followed, were to spilt the IRA into two factions: the Officials who believed in waiting for the appropriate conditions, and the Provisionals who were intent on taking advantage of the Civil Rights movement defining their role as ‘defenders’ of the Catholic population⁷⁹. According to Martha Crenshaw, “Defending the Catholic minority was an

⁷⁷ Morgan Llywelyn, Red Branch, in John P. Dunnigan, Deep Rooted Conflict and the IRA Cease-fire, (University Press of America), 1995, introductory page.

⁷⁸ Martha Crenshaw, 1984, p.254

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.254

intermediate goal, justified in the short run by the necessity of maintaining the IRA's credibility, and in the long run as a step toward abolition of the Stormont regime, expelling the British, and unifying Ireland"⁸⁰.

The abolition of Stormont in 1972 granted part of the Provisionals' wish. However, the introduction of internment in 1971, and the establishment of Direct Rule in 1972, posed serious obstacles to be overcome. As a protest against internment the IRA engaged in a campaign of violence "making the statement that internment could not restore order. They were doing this by providing visible proof that disorder had grown and spread. They were showing that the government had created chaos"⁸¹. Furthermore, the IRA was finding support in the Nationalist population who did not necessarily support the IRA's campaign of violence, but who were nevertheless determined to end a policy that was so clearly aimed at Catholics. The phasing out of the policy gave the IRA a propaganda victory as they established themselves as the 'only' capable defenders of the Catholic population, especially after Bloody Sunday. To a certain extent it could be argued that this propaganda victory reinforced the IRA's view that 'violence works'.

With the introduction of the criminalisation policy came the realisation that a political component had to be introduced in the cause. The continuous campaign of violence had resulted in phasing out internment but it had also allowed the British government to define the IRA as simple criminals as opposed to the political prisoners they felt they were.

⁸⁰ Martha Crenshaw, 1984, p.254

2. The Blanket Protest and the start of the IRA politicisation

They will not criminalise us, rob us of our true identity, steal, our individualism, depoliticise us, churn us out as systemised, institutionalised, decent law-abiding robots. Never will they label our liberation struggle as criminal.⁸²

“With the introduction of the criminalisation strategy, Britain had done away with internment without trial in Northern Ireland, but had restructured the legal system – abolishing juries and diluting the rules of evidence – to make it easier to obtain convictions”⁸³. The arguments put forward by the IRA - such as for example the fact that Special Courts and Power should amount to political status - could no longer hold as the Diplock Courts and criminalisation were continuously being justified in the face of IRA violence. Consequently, the IRA leadership came to the realisation that the ‘long war’ against the oppressors had to include a political component. Raymond McCartney reinforces this view by arguing that criminalisation had the effect of bringing politics into primacy as opposed to the military tactics that had been previously used⁸⁴.

The political inclusion came, although somewhat unconsciously at first, with the Provisionals’ tactic of putting the “issue of ‘Prisoners of War’ at the centre of attempts to build a popular ‘anti-imperialist’ alliance”⁸⁵. According to Gareth William Doherty, the IRA felt that the “termination of special category status was a political decision to

⁸¹ Malachi O’ Doherty, The Trouble with Guns: Republican strategy and the Provisional IRA, (The Blackstaff Press Ltd, Belfast), 1998, p.81

⁸² Bobby Sands, Diary of Bobby Sands, <http://www.larkspirit.com/hungerstrikes/diary.html>, March 6th 1981

⁸³ David Beresford, 1987, p.31

⁸⁴ Raymond McCartney, Wednesday 17th October 2001

⁸⁵ Henry Patterson, 1989, p.173

criminalize them for propaganda purposes. They rejected the idea that the reasons were either the recovery of disciplinary control or their rehabilitation”⁸⁶. In other words, as argued previously, the IRA had successfully shifted the problem from the reasons they were imprisoned to a political one about their status. Furthermore, the Blanket and Dirty Protests had the same effect of shifting international attention to political issues rather than the ‘criminal’ ones they were being imprisoned for. While Raymond McCartney would argue that these were ‘instinctive’ Protests with no grand plan involved⁸⁷, one could argue that it was aimed at attracting sufficient international attention to the prison issue. However, the Protests failed to attract the necessary attention needed to pressurise the government into restoring the political status: “The problem for the IRA and the republican movement in general was that while support for the men in the H-Blocks was gradually increasing, the violence on the outside put a damp squid on this support”⁸⁸. Nevertheless, the protests had opened the path for the inclusion of a political tactic alongside the military one. As Eamon McDermott argued,

What became important to us was the prison struggle, looking at it from a broader area point of view it was a distraction, it forced the republican movement to divert its energy into a road it didn’t want to go down ... It forced them to concentrate time and energy into something that they did not see as being the main thrust of the struggle. However the prison protest did alert them to the fact that there was still a base support that could be mobilized.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Gareth Williams Doherty, 2001, p.16

⁸⁷ Raymond McCartney, Wednesday 17th October 2001

⁸⁸ Gareth Williams Doherty, 2001, p.10-11

⁸⁹ Derry Journal Office 23rd October 2000, in Gareth William Doherty, 2001, p.12

3. The Politics of Hunger Strikes as a response to criminalisation

Discourse can only be transcended by action; inside a prison action can only take a symbolic form, all the more potent for being irrational and in every respect exorbitant. There is no gesture more compelling than the hunger strike, and ideally the hunger strike to death.⁹⁰

The political component needed in the IRA's strategy was introduced with the first hunger strike in 1980. While this hunger strike did not achieve its stated aim of the restoration of political status, it certainly led the way for a political reform within the IRA. It also achieved an international recognition of the prison issue and created the necessary momentum needed for the second hunger strike, started on March 1st 1981.

Hunger striking is a powerful political tool, the perfect example of David Apter's inversionary discourse, the powerless versus the powerful. By means of a hunger strike, the prisoners hoped that their death would be "politically productive for the republican cause to which they were committed"⁹¹. Furthermore, hunger-striking, "when taken to the death, has a sublime quality about it; in conjunction with terrorism it offers a consummation of murder and self-sacrifice which in a sense can legitimise the violence which precedes and follows it"⁹². Raymond McCartney argues that, while self-sacrifice had a possible play in the hunger strikes, it was more a tactic the prisoners felt they could

⁹⁰ Donoghue, 1981, in Paul Arthur, "Reading" Violence: Ireland, in David Apter (ed.), The Legitimization of Violence, (UN Research Institute for Social Development, New York University Press), 1997, p.278

⁹¹ Gerry Adams, Free Ireland: Towards A Lasting Peace, (Brandon Book Publishers, Ltd), 1986, p.79

⁹² David Beresford, 198, p.38

carry out⁹³. Nevertheless, the image of ‘self-sacrifice’ through hunger striking was certain to bring public opinion support in favour of the prisoners. Indeed, “nothing was more guaranteed to boost popular support for the Provisional IRA and the political prospects of Sinn Fein than a long, drawn-out hunger strike engaging deep sympathy of the Catholic community”⁹⁴. In other words, hunger striking was a fight by other means, one that could promote public opinion support, while at the same time justifying and legitimising the violence going on outside the prisons. It could further be argued that the aim of the hunger strikes was to produce sufficient support in order to intimidate Britain into reacting. It was a means to expose the British prison system to international scrutiny in the hope to internationalise the crisis and attract support outside Northern Ireland.

Additionally, hunger striking represents the two sides of the IRA’s coin: endurance and infliction. Sacrifice, such as hunger striking, as long been imprinted in IRA’s strategy since it provides a new world of meaning whereby memory and past heroes are used as tools for political violence, or in Apter’s words, political discourse. It is a means by which political violence becomes the only outcome as it provides new moral standards in order to justify the cause. In other words, it justifies the IRA’s use of violence against the oppressor, Britain. Furthermore, it provides a world of symbolism rationalizing violence, thus attaining public support. In J.J. Lee’s words, “the attitude is based on a reading of history which emphasises victimhood and resistance: ‘there is no place in Irish political culture for greatness outside the “heroic” model’. Greatness is

⁹³ Raymond McCartney, Wednesday 17th October 2001

⁹⁴ Paul Routledge, 1997, p.168

defined in terms of defiance to the external enemy”⁹⁵. By hunger striking, and laying down their lives for Mother Eire, the IRA prisoners had demonstrated that their ‘victimhood’ could be used as a form of political resistance against Britain. The level of public and international support gathered during the hunger strikes could not have been so extensively achieved had it not been for the hunger striker’s heroism. In addition, memory was used to justify the violence that went on alongside the strikes, as the world focused on the hunger strikers themselves, and was blinded by the surrounding violence Britain was still claiming could not be forgotten. The hunger strikes had the effect of legitimising the IRA cause, and provided the necessary means whereby violence and endurance could now achieve democratic outcomes.

The legitimisation of the IRA struggle came with the election to Westminster of Bobby Sands on April 9th 1981. The election of two other prisoners, Paddy Agnew and Kieran Doherty, and that of Owen Carron after Sands’ death, further confirmed that the hunger strikes had achieved the inclusion of the political dimension much needed to the cause. However, the ongoing violence accompanying the hunger strike was in opposition with the democratic outcome that came with the election results. Public opinion it seems, while in opposition to the use of violence, supported the hunger strikers and provided the necessary grounds to shift the conflict into a political one. Nonetheless, the election results had moved the IRA into a sphere it was still ill prepared for, as military tactics had been so far employed. Furthermore, the hunger strikes had gained a momentum of their own meaning that there was little room for manoeuvre in terms of political compromise.

⁹⁵ J.J. Lee, 1989, in Paul Arthur, Special Relationships: Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Problem, (The Blackstaff Press, Belfast), 2000, p.62

Calling off the strikes could not be acceptable as it would mean a defeat against Britain, despite the election results, and would further mean ‘giving up’ on the cause the hunger strikers were laying down their lives for. Moreover, while the strikes were going on, there was little that could be done in terms of diminishing violence and finding a political solution to end this crisis.

Bobby Sands died on May 5th 1981; Francis Hughes on May 12th; Pasty O’Hara and Raymond McCreesh on May 21st; Joe McDonnell on July 8th; Martin Hurson on July 13th; Kevin Lynch on August 1st; Kieran Doherty on August 2nd; Tom McElwee on August 8th; and Mickey Devine on August 20th⁹⁶. On the 3rd of October 1981 the strike was called off. The five demands became slowly implemented. It had taken ten men’s death to accomplish the necessary shift for the construction of a political compromise. Yet, the hunger strike had achieved its ultimate purpose: it had allied sufficient public opinion support to legitimise the IRA cause, thus ‘de-criminalising’ the prisoners in the eye of the world. As Gerry argued, “in 1976 the British government tried to criminalise the republican prisoners. In 1981, the republican prisoners criminalised the British government”⁹⁷.

4. Afterthoughts and conclusion

The perceived right to use violence for self-determination had been long-standing in world history. It is through war and violence that most nowadays democracies have

⁹⁶ Gerry Adams, 1995, p.83, p.85

⁹⁷ Ibid, p.87

achieved their plight for the same right. International actors, as well as academics, have long acknowledged the fight for self-determination as a 'political war' serving democratic outcomes. In the case of Northern Ireland, self-determination was sought after through violent means. The complexity of Northern Ireland lies in the fact that self-determination equated to violence in the internal structures of a democratic country, England. When violence erupts in a democratically recognised country, the cause of the enemy quickly becomes de-legitimised by the label 'terrorism'. As long as violence continues to be the main tactic for self-determination there is little room for a political compromise or solution. The use of violence creates a circle whereby violence escalates into further violence, and ultimately other means of warfare are no longer available or used. This was clearly the case with the IRA who, for many years, felt that only violence could intimidate Britain into withdrawal. The political component of the fight for a United Ireland had somewhat been forgotten until revived by the hunger strikes. With it came the realisation that violence does little for the achievement of self-determination, and that a fight through political means was the way forward. Propelled by the election results, the IRA's fight had turned from one of violence into one that included a political element.

The transition from violence to politics was to be a slow process in IRA thinking. The continuing violence throughout the 1980s, with, for example, the Brighton bomb in 1984 and the Enniskillen bomb of 1987, showed that military tactics were still a strong part of the IRA's strategy. However, the support gained by Sinn Fein throughout the period of the hunger strikes was slowly being lost by 1983. No longer could a political

party democratically elected could support violence as a legitimising factor for the attainment of a United Ireland. The time had come when Sinn Fein had to restructure itself, move away from violence, and acknowledge the fact the a United Ireland could be achieved through democratic means. The signature of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was the IRA's first step towards that achievement. The Agreement undeniably undermined Sinn Fein's capacity to act as an efficient political party as it was still supporting the strategy of the 'Armalite and the Ballot Box'. Indeed, Sinn Fein's had claimed that "there is a distinction between a party's advocating the right to use violence in certain situations, and a party's direct or even indirect use of violence. Sinn Fein claims the former right and rejects the allegations of its involvement in the latter"⁹⁸. Sinn Fein, it seems, had failed to entirely shift to using political means as a sole tactic for self-determination. The Agreement had nevertheless marked Sinn Fein's first attempts at political dialogue with the oppressor as opposed to the use of violence as the sole mean of communication. The struggle for self-determination was slowly being shifted to one of political dialogue between the Poets and the King.

⁹⁸ Andy Pollack (ed.), "A Citizen's Enquiry: The Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland", (The Lilliput Press for Initiative '92), 1993:50

CHAPTER III

UNITED KINGDOM AND THE IRA: BRIDGING THE GAP

I was Ireland, the guardian of her Faith, the one solitary man who would keep the Republican symbol alive, keep the last lamp glowing before the last icon, even if everybody else denied or forgot the gospel that had inspired us all from 1916 onwards.⁹⁹

The IRA's commitment to the cause seems to have always been one that relied on past heroes and symbols. According to Boyce, "the I.R.A.'s primary allegiance was not to the real, living population of Ireland, but to the Irish nation of the dead past or the prophetic future"¹⁰⁰. The use of symbols and past heroes is significant in explaining the IRA's logic of violence to attain self-determination. Symbols provide a new world of meaning where rational thinking has little or no space. Apter reinforces this view by stating that "when such truths become the basis for redemption and transformational projective solutions, a logic is provided"¹⁰¹. In other words, defining the logic behind the IRA's motto whereby violence is constantly legitimised and justified for the attainment of a United Ireland against the aggressor. Moreover,

Guerrillas who want to bring social and political change do not wait for conditions to become "ripe" for revolutionary action, because they could be waiting forever. Instead, they take the field and gradually build up popular support through their successes.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Former republican in, D.G. Boyce, Water for the Fish: Terrorism and Public Opinion, in Yonah Alexander and Alan O'Day (ed.), Terrorism in Ireland, (Croom Helm, London and Canberra, St Martin's Press NY), 1984, p.149

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.160

¹⁰¹ David Apter, Political Violence in Analytical Perspective, in David Apter (ed.), The Legitimization of Violence, (UN Research Institute for Social Development, New York University Press), 1997, p.12

¹⁰² MacStiofain, in Martha Crenshaw, 1984, p.254

Throughout the years the IRA has been particularly good at the propaganda war against Britain. It has somehow been a revolutionary movement that most of the Catholic population could identify with, even if they did not agree to the means. The IRA campaign it appears has always been one based on this mixture of symbol, violence and public support. By means of this tactic its plan had always been to undermine the British rule. However, the IRA has had little regard for the Protestant population which it sees as a part of the English oppressor. The IRA firmly believed that once England would withdraw, unification would happen regardless of the Protestant population. Clearly, in its confrontation with the British government, the IRA had little acknowledgement of the role Northern Ireland's Protestants were playing in Britain's internal politics. While Protestant paramilitary was often disregarded¹⁰³ by the IRA, this was not the case in Britain, or even in the Republic. To Britain, even if it meant a Protestant majority, the wishes of the population had to be respected and a United Ireland could only be achieved through democratic means. Moreover, the use of force to obtain a United Ireland would certainly diminish Republican violence but would increase Protestant violence, something unacceptable to both Britain and the Republic.

The realisation that a United Ireland could be obtained by other means than violence came with the introduction of a political component in Sinn Fein. While it took many years for Sinn Fein to become a mature political party, the road to a United Ireland seems closer now. The decommissioning of weapons in 2001 demonstrated that Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA had accepted the idea of a United Ireland through politics. More importantly, while it did not agree to the concept of British rule, there was

¹⁰³ Martha Crenshaw, 1984, p.255

nevertheless an acknowledgement that a United Ireland could only be attained by the wish of the majority.

However, from the implementation of internment to that of the criminalisation policy, there was little room for a political compromise between Britain and the IRA. The British policies, clearly aimed at Catholics, especially Republican Catholics, had to be opposed by 'all means necessary'. Sinn Fein was not in a position to make political compromises and the ongoing violence could not shift the British position of criminalisation. The secret negotiations that took place between the IRA and Britain, especially those during the hunger strikes, could only fail for several reasons. Firstly, because in the eye of the IRA violence was the only means to combat England. Even the times of the hunger strikes were violent and continuously justified the British position of criminalisation.

Secondly, there was little compromise that could be achieved between the protagonists as they were now defining the conflict as a black and white affair, a 'you verses me'. Never was this more so at the time of the hunger strikes when the ultimate test between the protagonists became one of endurance and violence. Violence because both the IRA and the British government were prepared to let men die for the cause they believed in. On the IRA side, the death of innocent victims in the name of the cause. On the British side, violence came at the time of the hunger strikes when the government was quite willing to let ten men die for what it believed in, that is criminalisation. The test of endurance was especially significant in creating a deadlock in finding a political

compromise. Both protagonists, it seems, were unprepared to shift their respectful position and were ready to see the 'battle of wills' through to the end. In this case, both violence and endurance left little room for a political middle ground to be explored.

Thirdly, while self-determination was generally acknowledged, even by Britain, as a democratic concept, violence on the other hand was not accepted as part of that concept. There is nothing truly 'democratic' about violence even if its use produces democratic outcomes. Paradoxically, self-determination is accepted as a political concept but violence for the purpose of self-determination is treated as a criminal problem. While it is true that not all violence is political, it is nevertheless the case that violence for political outcomes is a political problem not a criminal one. As Aviva Katz would argue, "political violence is criminal in that it violates legal status, but the motivations of the participants and the explicitly political goals of their actions usually distinguish politically motivated crime from other forms of criminality"¹⁰⁴. Yet, until Britain finally accepted to treat the 'threat of terrorism' as a political problem, no solution could possibly be found.

It is not easy to pinpoint the exact moment when the conflict between the British government and the IRA moved from one of confrontation to one of political discussion. Change is a relatively slow process and in the case of Northern Ireland it is continuously going on. However, one could argue that the 1981 hunger strikes marked the first move towards reconciliation between the two factions. On the one hand, with the strikes, and more particularly the election of Bobby Sands, came the move from a purely military and

intimidatory tactic to one of political inclusion. On the other hand, the granting of the five demands at the end of the hunger strikes marked the first steps of the British government's recognition that the criminal approach had to be shifted to one of political dialogue. The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement certainly marked the first realisation that the solution laid with a political compromise. The subsequent signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement demonstrated that the gap between violence and politics could finally be bridged.

¹⁰⁴ Aviva Katz, 2000, p.20

CONCLUSION

The concept of terrorism has long been used by governments when they felt under threat by a particular group or movement. Labelling one as a terrorist has the tendency to simply a conflict in terms of 'black and white issues', while at the same time unquestionably justifying governments' approaches to counter-act the problem. In the case of Northern Ireland, the continuing campaign of violence by the IRA justified the criminal approach by the British government. Despite the failure of internment policy, the government could safely argue that the judicial procedures implemented by the Diplock Courts and, later on, the Criminalisation policy was the only means by which the IRA could be discredited and destroyed. According to Burton this process is a normal one for "when the legitimacy of a state is challenged it engages in a variety of defensive techniques which they termed 'official discourse'. These are primarily efforts on the part of the political establishment to 'save face'"¹⁰⁵.

With the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes it became increasingly clear that a criminalisation approach was ineffective in the face of the IRA's determination. Nevertheless, it was impossible for the government to abandon the criminalisation policy without any impacts on security. Had the criminalisation policy been withdrawn, it could be argued that there would no longer be a safety net left to restore order and security in Northern Ireland. Endurance became the test of criminalisation. Despite the election results in favour of the IRA, there was still nothing the government could do, or willing to do, to solve the deadlock. The concessions made following the strikes clearly

demonstrated that with it came a, maybe unconscious, recognition that the problem had to be moved to the political sphere.

On the IRA side, however, the story was a different one. To them the fight for self-determination alone could justify the violence employed. However, the use of violence as a means to an end can only bring about further violence and confrontation. Undoubtedly, the IRA had fuelled the criminalisation policy. Unsurprisingly it responded to it with further acts of violence and intimidation leaving little or no room for a political strategy to be included in their military one. The hunger strikes, however, presented the IRA conflict in a new light. Alongside the continuous violence there was an inclusion of political strategy. The IRA victory came with the election of Bobby Sands and the increasing internal and international support for the hunger strikers. Slowly but surely the IRA was moving away from violence as the only means to self-determination. As public support declined following the years of the hunger strike, and in the face of continued violence, it became clearer that Sinn Fein could not longer employ violence alongside politics. As Paul Arthur once argued

Time will tell whether or not electoralism is an extension to the development of the ideology of violence in Ireland. In some respects it arose simply as an adjunct to the hunger strike campaign when the republican leadership realized it might win the battle but not the war because it had not ensured popular support.¹⁰⁶

Nowadays, it is clear that a United Ireland can only be achieved through electoralism. The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement and the 1998 Good Friday Agreement

¹⁰⁵ Burton 1979, 1977, in Aviva Katz, 2000, p.21

¹⁰⁶ Paul Arthur, 1997, p.282

have demonstrated that, when ideologies cannot be forsaken and surrender is unthinkable, only a political compromise can bring about peace.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Source

Raymond McCartney, Interview held on Wednesday 17th October 2001, 2:30pm

Reading

Gerry Adams, Free Ireland: Towards A Lasting Peace, (Brandon Book Publishers Ltd), 1995

David Apter, A View from the Bogside, in **Herman Giliomee and Jannie Gagiano (ed.)**, The Elusive search for Peace, (Oxford University Press – Cape Town in Association with IDASA), 1990

David Apter, Political Violence in Analytical Perspective, in **David Apter (ed.)**, The Legitimization of Violence, (UN Research Institute for Social Development, New York University Press), 1997

Paul Arthur, Government and Politics of Northern Ireland, (Political Realities, Edited on Behalf of the Politics Association by Derek Heater, Second Edition, Longman Group UK Limited), 1984

Paul Arthur, “Reading” Violence, in **David Apter (ed.)**, The Legitimization of Violence, (UN Research Institute for Social Development, New York University Press), 1997

Paul Arthur, Special Relationships: Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Problem,
(The Blackstaff Press, Belfast), 2000

David Beresford, Ten Men Dead: The Story of the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike,
(HarperCollins Publishers), 1987

Paul Bew and Henry Patterson, The British State & The Ulster Crisis, From Wilson to
Thatcher, (The Thetford Press Ltd), 1985

David Bonner, United Kingdom: The United Kingdom Response to Terrorism, in **Paul
Wilkinson**, Terrorism: British Perspectives; The International Library of
Terrorism 1, (Dartmouth Publishing Company Ltd), 1993

D.G. Boyce, Water for the Fish: Terrorism and Public Opinion, in **Yonah Alexander
and Alan O'Day (ed.)**, Terrorism in Ireland, (Croom Helm, London and
Canberra, St Martin's Press NY), 1984

Peter Catterall and Sean McDougall, Introduction: Northern Ireland in British Politics,
in **Peter Catterall and Sean McDougall (ed.)**, The Northern Ireland
Question in British Politics, (Macmillan, London), 1996

Liam Clarke, Broadening The Battlefield: The H-Blocks and the Rise of Sinn Fein, (Gill
and Macmillan Ltd), 1987

Tim Pat Coogan, The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966-1996 and the Search for Peace,
(Arrow Books), 1996

Tim Pat Coogan, On the Blanket: The H-Block Story, (Ward River Press, Dublin), 1980

Michael Cunningham, British Government Policy in Northern Ireland, 1969-2000,
(Manchester University Press), 2001

Martha Crenshaw, The Persistence of IRA Terrorism, in **Yonah Alexander and Alan O'Day (ed.)**, Terrorism in Ireland, (Croom Helm London and Canberra, St Martin's Press NY), 1984

Liz Curtis, Ireland: The propaganda war, The British media and the 'battle for hearts and minds', (Pluto Press, London and Sidney), 1984

Gareth William Doherty, Fighting On All Fronts: The Republican Prison Struggle 1976-1981, (MA Irish History and Politics, Department of Humanities, Magee College, University of Ulster), 2001

John P. Dunnigan, Deep Rooted Conflict and the IRA Cease-fire, (University Press of America), 1995

T.G. Fraser, Ireland in Conflict, 1922-1998, (Routledge London and New-York), 2000

Tony Geraghty, The Irish War, The Military History of a Domestic Conflict, (HarperCollins Publishers), 1998

Tommy Gorman, The Closure of Long Kesh, in The Other View, (Cross-Border Business and Cultural Links, Sponsored by EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, Co-operation Ireland), Autumn 2000

S.C. Greer & A. White, Foreword by Lord Devlin, Abolishing the Diplock Courts, (The Cobden Trust), 1986

Leslie Macfarlane, The Right to Self-Determination in Ireland and the Justification of IRA violence, in **Paul Wilkinson (ed.)**, Terrorism: British Perspectives;

The International Library of Terrorism 1, (Dartmouth Publishers Company Ltd), 1993

Elizabeth R. Murphy, 'A Community in Crisis', Dungiven: and the 1981 Republican Hunger Strikes, (MA Dissertation Peace and Conflict Studies, Magee College, University of Ulster), 1999

Malachi O'Doherty, The Trouble with Guns: Republican Strategy and the Provisional IRA, (The Blackstaff Press Ltd, Belfast), 1998

Brendan O'Duffy, The Price of Containment: Deaths and Debate on Northern Ireland in the House of Commons, 1968-1994, in **Peter Catterall and Sean McDougall (ed.)**, The Northern Ireland Question in British Politics, 1996

Padraig O'Malley, Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair, (The Blackstaff Press, Belfast), 1990

Henry Patterson, The Politics of Illusion: Republicanism and Socialism in Modern Ireland, (Hutchinson Radius, London, Sidney, Auckland, Johannesburg), 1989

Andy Pollack, A Citizen's Enquiry: The Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland, Andy Pollack (ed.), Torkel Opsahl, Padraig O'Malley, Marianne Elliot, Ruth Lister, Eammon Gallagher, Lucy Faulkner, Eric Gallagher, (The Lilliput Press for Initiative '92), 1993

Paul Routledge, John Hume: A Biography, (HarperCollins Publishers), 1997

Mark Ryan, War and Peace in Ireland: Britain and the IRA in the New World, (Pluto Press, London, Colorado), 1994

Lynne Shivers and David Bowman, Foreword by Denis P. Barritt, More than the Troubles: A Common Sense View of the Northern Ireland Conflict, (New Society Publishers), 1984

Margaret Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, (HarperCollins Publishers), 1993

Kevin Toolis, Rebel Hearts: Journey within the IRA's soul, (Picador), 1995,2000

Mark Urban, Big Boy's Rule: the SAS and the Secret Struggle Against the IRA, (Faber & Faber Ltd, London, Boston), 1992

Martin Wallace, British Government in Northern Ireland: From Devolution to Direct Rule, (David and Charles Ltd, Newton Abbot, London), 1982

John Whyte, Foreword by Garret FitzGerald, Interpreting Northern Ireland, (Clarendon Press, Oxford), 1990

Sabine Wichert, Northern Ireland since 1945, (2nd Edition, Addison Wesley Longman Ltd), 1991, 1999

Internet Resources

An Camcheachra, The Starry Plough, Why it is Murder, 1981,

http://irsm.org/general/history/starryplough/why_it_is_murder.htm

Amnesty International, Northern Ireland, Report of an Amnesty International Mission to Northern Ireland (28 November 1977 – 6 December 1977), 1978

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/intern./docs/amnesty78.htm>

Charles Beitz, Political Theory and International Relations, (Princeton, New-Jersey, Princeton University Press), 1979

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/beitz.htm>

Lord Diplock, Report of the Commission to consider legal procedures to deal with terrorist activities in Northern Ireland, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by Command of Her Majesty December 1972, (Published in London by Her Majesty's Stationary Office), 1972

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmso/diplock.htm>

John Cunningham, How the IRA manufactured a new martyr, in Guardian Century, Wednesday May 6, 1981

<http://www.guardiancentury.co.uk>

Aviva Katz, The 1981 Irish Hunger Strike: Struggle for Legitimacy or Pathology of Terrorism, (MA studies at Department of Political Science, University of Haifa, Israel), October 23, 2000

http://www.ict.org.il/articles/1981_ira_hungerstrike.htm

Declan Moen, Irish Political Prisoners and Post Hunger-Strike Resistance to Criminalisation, (The British Criminology Conference, Liverpool), July 1999

<http://larkspirit.com/hungerstrikes/>

Sean P. O'Connell, The Psychology of a Hunger Striker: Factors Influencing the Death of Bobby Sands, MP, 2001

<http://larkspirit.com/hungerstrikes/oconnpaper.html>

Sinn Fein, Freedom, A Sinn Fein Education Publication, May 1991

<http://sinnfein.ie/documents/freedom.html>

Bobby Sands, The Diary of Bobby Sands, March 1981

<http://larkspirit.com/hungerstrikes/diary.html>

The 1981 Hunger Strikes, America Reacts, British Officials and Politicians, (Archives of the Irish America New York University, Division Libraries), 2001

http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/aia/exhibits/0501_hunger.htm

The Irish Hunger Strikes of 1980-1981, Precedents for Hunger Striking, 2001

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~klmroe/strike.htm>

The Starry Plough, The IRSP Announcement of the Start of the 1981 Hunger Strike, March 1981

<http://irsm.org/irscna/hungerstrike/prestrk.htm>

The Margaret Thatcher Website, The Thatcher Revolution: IRA Hunger Strikes, 2001

<http://www.thatcherweb.com/revolution/hungerstrikes/index.html>