STUDIES OF CARTOONS CONCERNING NORTHERN IRELAND

ALISON KENNEDY
VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS
1991

Illustration 1, Martyn Turner

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I would particularly like to thank the following

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I would particularly like to thank the National Library, without whose *help,* I would have fininshed this thesis three weeks earlier !

'It is not the cartoonists' business to wave flags and cheer as the procession passes; his allotted role is that of the little boy who points out that the emperor is stark naked' - *Osbert Lancaster*.

This thesis is an exploration of cartoons concerning Northern Ireland. I have taken two case studies for examination and development, the *Anglo Irish Agreement in 1985*, and the *1981 Hunger Strike*.. In this thesis I have also referred to the relationships between cartoonists and their newspapers, censorship, clichés and the general purpose of cartoons. Wherever suitable I have included cartoons from abroad. In exploring these cartoons, reasons are suggested for the existence of some and the lack of others.

I shall try to ignore the slimy side of politics. Politicians are restless creatures. They, like some cartoonists, spend their lives looking for safe subjects for which to crusade, and desperately avoid the trouble making ones. I'm dealing mainly with the cartoonists who are quite happy to be up to their necks in trouble.

When I began this thesis I had no idea what it would entail and how much work would be involved. This subject was chosen because it was one of which I was largely ignorant and there appeared to be very little information available concerning it. So, I innocently thought that I could help to fill a gap in information. I know now that I would need at least 10 years of research to fill such a gap. The subject of Northern Ireland political cartoons is vast !

I chose the case study of the Anglo Irish Agreement because it is one which the loyalists feel extremely passionate about. It is also a topic of which many cartoonists have seen the amusing side. The Hunger Strike is the Republican passionate case. In marked contrast, the media didn't find this case study funny.

The cartoons presented here are merely samples of the ones published at the time. Almost every paper has its cartoons; many are purely for fun but numerous are political hits and jibes. I have researched as

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many newspapers, newsletters and magazines as possible from Ireland, England, Northern Ireland and abroad.

Cartoonists and Newspapers together:

I think the manner in which cartoons and editorial policies are interlinked is self evident. If a cartoonists is content working for a particular paper and the paper is happy with his work then they must have a basic agreement on attitudes and beliefs, and as such should enjoy a good working relationship. For example, Cummings, who draws for the **Express** is known for his anti-Irish cartoons. The **Daily** and **Sunday Express** themselves are not known for a sympathetic attitude to Northern Ireland and are regarded as 'non-offensive to the conservative politics' (a match made in heaven it would seem). On the other side we have Cormac and **An Phoblacht**, both voicing an extremely anti-British view. 2

The general public, like cartoonists, usually choose a paper which reflects their political and social attitudes. Many give very little thought as to why they do choose one paper in preference to another. Generally, people will stay within the bounds of their political, social, intellectual, monetary and wants comfort level. Very seldom will the public (or a cartoonist) continue to buy (or work for) a newspaper with which they are at constant loggerheads. One could, perhaps, make a case for condensing the political and editorial policies of a newspaper through its political cartoons.

The South of Ireland is an exception to this hypothesis. 'In the Irish Republic it would not be possible to estimate, on the basis of its political stance, in which magazine or newspaper any single cartoon had appeared'. This probably because most southern Ireland newspapers are extradionarily impartial; they maintain a general outlook on the 3

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Northern Ireland conflict rather than getting caught in specifics.

It has been suggested that political cartoons are used as 'a humor-coated capsule by means of which the sober judgements of editorial minds may be surreptitiously gotten down the throats of an apathetic public'. This would imply that the editors dictate their views to the cartoonists, and then to the readers. Editorial meetings can be used by the cartoonist to become aware of the changes in editorial opinion. Does the editor enjoy the privilege of dictating his views or does he bow to outside pressures? Printing time available, corresponding articles, public's reaction etc. are all worries for the overworked editors. The cartoonists worries are equally as troublesome if somewhat different in character. 4

Constraints:

As I have already mentioned, the relationships between editors and cartoonists vary enormously. However, constraints which cartoonists experience are usually as a result of events, rather than editors. Having said that, the editor does have the final word on printing material. Generally, events of the day govern the cartoonists' themes long before the editor even thinks about censorship. Turner and Friers are cartoonists who draw on a regular basis for the **Irish Times**. Both have a particular interest in Northern Ireland. They both lack 'an evangelical commitment and single-minded focus for their attacks' and without this their interest in Northern Ireland dwindled. However, Turner insists that the main reason stopping him from doing cartoons centered around Northern Ireland is that such topics are no longer newsworthy. 5

Thus, even if I care deeply and profoundly about a particular subject, I can't get these feelings out of the way and on to paper unless there is a current hook to hang it on. One doesn't loose interest in subjects, the subjects merely become less interesting to the media. 6

Turner points out that as violence, bombing and death become more normal, the media's interest vanishes.

Most cartoonist affirm that the events of the day are the most agreeable from which to create cartoons. A sudden gust of inspiration concerning a problem in Northern Ireland must be stored away carefully until such time as the subject becomes newsworthy again. And in most cases in Northern Ireland the same subjects reoccur over an over again.

Many restrictions face the political cartoonist aside from the need for a current hook on which to hang the cartoon. They can, however, dodge many restrictions by claiming their work to be a form of journalism or an art form, depending upon which suits them at any particular time. Political cartoonists are extremely powerful. Unlike traditional journalists they don't have to back up their cartoons with solid evidence and can usually escape criticism from their "victims". Many public figures are wary of openly passing judgment on a cartoonist's work for fear of being accused of having no sense of humour. The fear of falling victim to their art is also very real but seldom mentioned. In some circles the epitome of success is to appear in such a cartoon. It's a sign of having "arrived".

'The cartoonist does not produce his drawings in a void. Indeed the context in which he works, provides him with both themes and constraints'. Martyn Turner who draws for the **Irish Times** claims that 8

he is more or less free to draw what he wishes along the political line. 'They're more tight on sexual matters, but never on politics....'. 9

Many cartoonists are terrified of their work being labeled "prejudice". Usually they avoid contact with politicians. On one occasion Martyn Turner met Garret Fitzgerald when he was the Irish Prime Minister and wished that he would loose the next election because 'you're [Fitzgerald] such a nice person I'm going to have trouble thinking of nasty things to draw about you'. However, Turner has since done himself proud thinking up "nasty things"! A good political cartoonist is the worst enemy any politician can acquire. 10

Purpose of Political Cartoons:

Political cartoons are frequently viewed as the entire political mess in a nut shell. The cartoonist's job has often been described as one of simplifying and illuminating the folly which politicians create. In one sense politicians are much more amusing than cartoonists. The cartoonist is reacting to a given situation, while the politician has the imagination to invent the situation in the first place!.

> Political cartoonists violate every rule of political journalism - they misquote, trifle with the truth, make science fiction out of politics and sometimes should be held for personal libel. But when the smoke clears, the political cartoonist has been getting closer to the truth than the guys who write political opinions'. 11

Why do most of us smile when we read this quote? Perhaps we recognise the truth of what is said. We like to see the political cartoonist as a cheeky schoolboy up to mischief - and escaping punishment.

Gag cartoons hang on a punch line and rely on stereotype devices. Strip cartoons, which were originally intended for the young and illiterate, use visual narrative and make believe to create entertainment

through fantasy and the absurd. Political cartoonists pick aspects of these types of cartoons according to their needs. Many trade on past traditions and cliches. In general, the political cartoonist seeks an understanding smile, rather than a belly laugh.

Problems faced by cartoonists:

The fine lines between *constraints, censorship* and *problems facing cartoonists* is very difficult to define. I'm including under the heading *problems* more personal aspects to cartooning censorship than government clampdowns. I am particularly referring to the forms of self-censorship many cartoonists implement on themselves. Cartoonists in Northern Ireland find that a deep knowledge of the situation tends to dull rather than illuminate issues. They find it almost impossible to be objective while understanding both sides of the argument. In attempting to do so many cartoonists got caught in a see-saw effect by frequently changing perspectives.

Problems faced by cartoonists in the south of Ireland frequently result in a reluctance to get involved. If they condemn the IRA in their work they are seen as supporting Britain and vice versa. John Darby claims that 'this dilemma was resolved by largely ignoring Northern Ireland and its complications'.

British cartoonists confront similar difficulties. They frequently find whispers of *traitor, collaborator* and *sympathizer* following any cartoon which could be viewed as not anti-Irish. Northern Ireland is such a complex issue that finding a balance is practically impossible (in real terms if a balance could be found, we wouldn't have the problem!).

Foreign cartoonists seem to have the easiest job of the lot. They take a general view of the Irish situation and avoid getting bogged down in

specifics, usually because they don't know them. Many cartoons from abroad are totally different in flavour to those from home. Soviet magazines consistently feature cartoons on Northern Ireland. They love to highlight *British Imperialism*. A peak in Soviet cartoons with relations to Northern Ireland happened around the civil rights and internment era of 1969-1971.

'By 1982 Northern Ireland had become a convenient shorthand metaphor for casual violence, religious bigotry or imperialist oppression to most overseas cartoonists'. This quote is perhaps oversimplifying the situation but foreign cartoons often tend to oversimplify.

Before proceeding on to a brief history of the Anglo Irish Agreement it is appropriate to comment about the cartoonists drawing skills. Most don't have any. Very few cartoonists have had any formal artistic training. In many cases the drawing skills are embarrassingly poor. Most political figures can be identified by symbols such as handbags, badges, sashes, hats, offices, etc.

Anglo Irish Agreement, brief history:

Garret Fitzgerald (who was the Irish Prime Minister or Taoiseach) and Margaret Thatcher (the then British Prime Minister) signed a document called the Anglo Irish Agreement on November 15th 1985. This controversial agreement, gave the Republic of Ireland a consultative role in the running of Northern Ireland for the first time.

The loyalists were quick to retort with their now famous "Ulster says no !" slogan. This slogan can regularly be seen on badges, posters, walls and banners. The objection the loyalists have with the agreement is that it is seen as the first step toward a *united Ireland and British withdrawal*. The republicans were not exactly thrilled with the agree-

Illustration 2, Martyn Turner

ment either, since they want a united Ireland immediately. Out of this situation the only possible winners were political cartoonists. However, they remained remarkably quiet for the first few months after the agreement was signed.

A Martyn Turner cartoon of 1986 *(illustration 2)* shows a comical side the both the Anglo Irish Agreement and the divorce referendum. This particular cartoon was taken in good spirit on all sides, as the situation is presented as a farce. The two characters look as though they have spent the entire day drinking in a pub. The fact that arch enemies are depicted as drinking buddies is comical.

The comradeship between the opposing sides is one which is sought after by the vast majority of the people. The way in which Turner has depicted the characters as being so friendly is to be admired. The cartoon is a comment on divorce in Ireland but Turner couldn't resist including Northern Ireland.

It has been hoped that having divorce in Southern Ireland might bring North and South closer. The Northerners and Protestants in Ulster would be unwilling to relinquish divorce which is allowed in Northern Ireland. Turner is drumming home the point that it is petty, conservative social opinions which keep the countries apart, by showing how petty conservative opinions can unite us. The main function of this cartoon is to amuse, but as with most of Turner's work there is also an underlying more serious theme. In this case a more obscure method of creating peace.

The typical "Ulster says no" in addition to the bowler hat and sash is how the orange man is characteristically dressed. The ulsterman's hat is covering his eyes - possibly to show how blind he is - while the Southerner looks equally stupid, wearing a hat which is far too small

Illustration 3, Martyn Turner

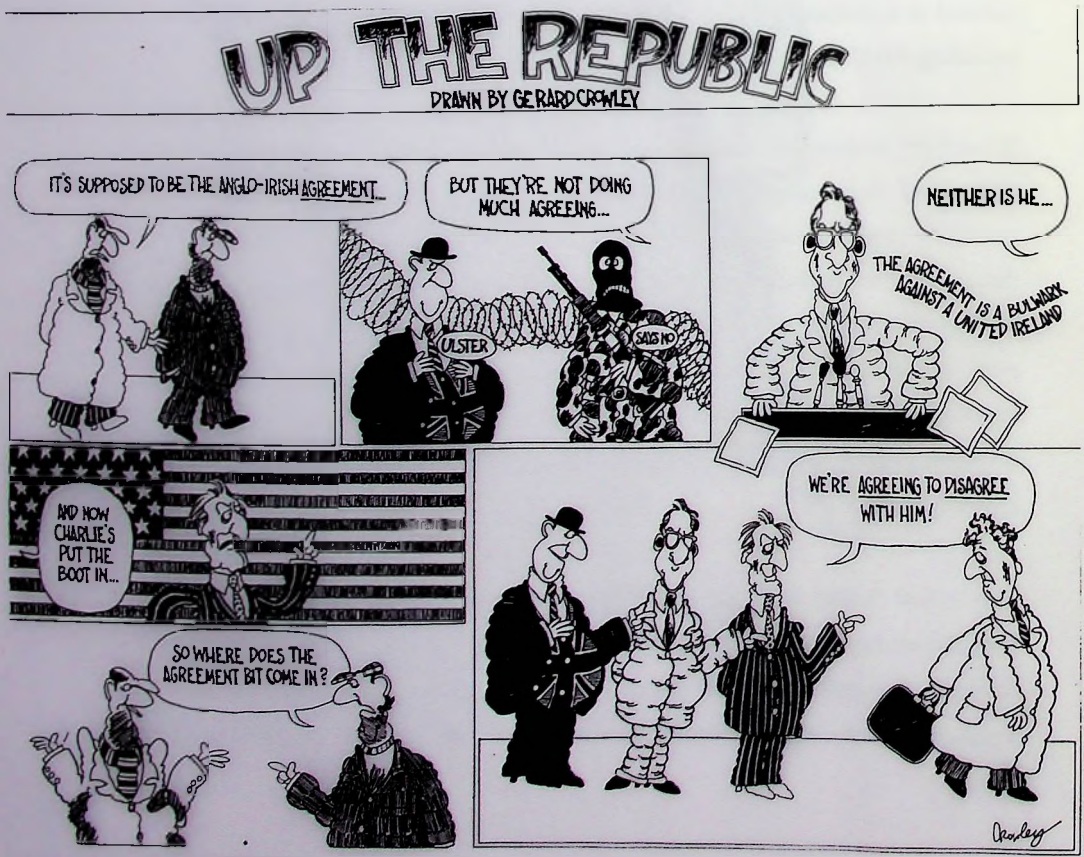

Illustration 4, Gerard Crowley

for him. The proceeding series of events could be interpreted as similar to soccer supporters exchanging hats. The cartoon emphasises how comically the situation could be viewed, unlike the sad reality.

Another one of Turner's cartoons *(illustration 3)* pictures how the two leaders (Thatcher and Fitzgerald) can look at the same thing and read it differently ... a point emphasised by the eye chart. The cartoon indicates why both leaders embraced the Anglo Irish Agreement. Turner's portrayal of this subject needs no explanatory punch line; the images themselves are explanation enough for us to see how their reasons varied.

Margaret Thatcher has her obligatory handbag and Fitzgerald is depicted in a characteristically doddering way (as Turner loves to portray him in this manner). The feeling behind the cartoon is lightly teasing and good natured. His idea is simple and communicates well. Turner avoids commenting on the rights and wrongs of the situation and just reports it as he sees it. The editorial of his paper **The Irish Times** very much reflects this approach.

The whole notion of the Anglo Irish Agreement being an agreement is in itself quite comical. This is an aspect of the affair which many cartoonists have adopted for investigation. Gerard Crowley doesn't normally draw cartoons related to specific events in Northern Ireland. However, in Up the Republic *(illustration 4)* he has chosen to illuminate the disagreement side of the agreement. After the Anglo Irish Agreement was signed it was followed by arguments, protests and riots. However, Crowley cynically suggests that a certain amount of agreement had taken place. We have the absurdity of King, Molineaux and Haughey all agreeing to disagree with poor Fitzgerald, the politician who tried to develop the agreement in the first place. One very important aspect of this cartoon is its timing in publication. The Anglo

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Illustration 5, Martyn Turner

Irish Agreement was signed in November 1985 and this cartoon didn't appear until March 1986. While researching this thesis I was struck by the severe absence of cartoons published around the time of the agreement. Cartoonists, who are normally quite quick to scramble on the band wagon, remained quiet and waited to see what would happen. This Crowley cartoon gives us the view from *the man on the street.* Unfortunately his use of cliches weakens his interpretation of the situation. His typical terrorist and loyalist are worn our stereotypes. I don't think that such blatant stereotyping was necessary as the cartoon appeared in the **Phoenix** magazine which normally attracts visually literate readers.

In *illustration 5* Turner has taken a similar approach to Crowley, the basic theme being the irony of opposing sides coming together, even if only to oppose the agreement. It's enough to make any self respecting politician (if there are any !) give up in despair. Turner has depicted Haughey as sneaky and Paisley as overgrown, a fashion he favours in these figures. The characters are leaning on the cliched fence - a metaphor for the border. Yet again we see the renowned "Ulster says no !" badges, which are very much exaggerated in size. Both parties are relaxed in their talks, possibly because they don't have to produce a solution; just criticise the existing one, which is always a much easier position to be in.

Turner has featured his characteristic bird in this cartoon. This creature often voices another position in counterpoint to the main cartoon, almost like a P.S. section in a letter. While politicians North and South of the border, in opposition to the agreement are united in their disagreement, gaining strength from their unity; the ironic point raised by the bird is that the Anglo Irish Agreement also wants to achieve strength through unity.

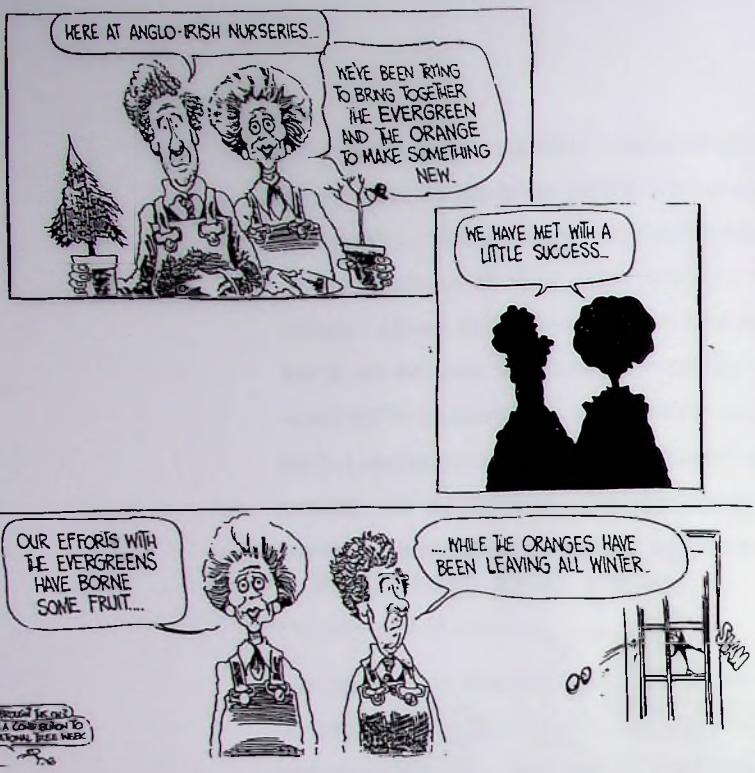

Illustration 6, Martyn Turner

Illustration 7

"It must be one of those trick candles that don't blow out."

Illustration 8, Ollie

It is not often that Margaret Thatcher is viewed as incompetent. However in this Turner drawing *(illustration 6)*, we see Thatcher and Fitzgerald dressed as Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum, gardeners at the Anglo Irish Nurseries. If we were in any doubt as to what were growing, the predictable bowler hat suggests the orangemen. The humour of the cartoon is based on the pun on orange and orangemen. The depiction of the two leaders as gardeners is amusing.

Turner is yet again protesting at the puerile behaviour of many politicians: in this case the orange men who resigned their positions in protest at the agreement. Turner's speech bubbles reveal his thoughts on the subject. He uses phrases such as '.. trying to bring together' and 'efforts'. He is indicating the attempts made by certain parties and the reactions from others.

The Anglo Irish Agreement was one big headache for the English and Irish governments. This cartoon, *illustration 7* (which isn't signed) appeared in the **Phoenix** magazine in November 1986 and shows how the headache continues one year on. The Fitzgerald government is still in power and still saying yes while Ulster is still saying no. The joke centres around Haughey's indecision, which is a role reversal as it is normally Fitzgerald who is pictured thus. The size of the figures would appear to indicate their dedication to their beliefs. The cartoon doesn't particularly take sides but it definitely doesn't take Charlie Haughey's side, showing him as a political opportunist who changes his view depending on the situation.

The cartoon by Ollie *(illustration 8)*, which appeared in the **Phoenix** in November 1986, also follows the theme of the monotonous but potentially explosive Anglo Irish Agreement. A party with a bomb as a candle is depicted. It is amusing to see both leaders wearing party hats. Ollie's drawing emphasises the tiresomeness of the situation through

the image of a trick candle which doesn't blow out. Ollie doesn't actually show which one of his characters (if either) is voicing the punchline, as this is irrelevant to the essence of the joke. I shall refrain from commenting on Ollie's drawing ability, which is not particularly distinguished.

Martyn Turner also couldn't miss the opportunity of the first birthday of the Anglo Irish Agreement to insert his joke. Here in *illustration 9,* he uses an image of Paisley as a big bully throwing things at a defenceless terrified baby in the other pram, to convey the idea of his [Paisely] attempts to destroy the Anglo Irish Agreement. In the background pram we have Gerry Adams from Sinn Fein, hiding the IRA figure who is also hurling missiles at the Anglo Irish Agreement pram. All of our sympathy goes to the birthday pram. The hurling of objects is childish and basically bullying. The drawing arouses a feeling of indignation - imagine two such big bullies picking on a defenceless infant - *AND ON HIS BIRTHDAY!* This is probably the reaction Turner hoped for. He spent many years in Northern Ireland and witnessed much suffering. He objects to watching every possible solution being shot down. The irony of the loyalists and republicans ganging up against the same target is, again, prominent.

Turner's bird also features in this cartoon. He points out that the baby is extremely quiet. Some see the policy of Thatcher and Fitzgerald not defending the Anglo Irish Agreement as their policy for allowing spoilt children to have their tantrums. As we all know it's quite difficult to have an argument if the other side doesn't argue !

A cartoon by Hayden *(illustration 10)* appeared in the **Phoenix** in February 1986, is another example of a late comer onto the political bandwagon. Hayden was not a regular contributor to the **Phoenix** and in this particular cartoon he has mixed the Anglo Irish Agreement with

Illustration 9, Martyn Turner

Illustration 10, Hayden

Illustration 11, Martyn Turner

Aids. A doctor has diagnosed the illness of the patients as being Aids. The implication of the cartoon is that opposition to the Anglo Irish Agreement is, like Aids, a fatal condition.

Ian Paisley in naturally wearing a paisley patterned pyjamas. The inclusion of the title of the ward as "Ward H" is a humorous reference to the H-Block prison. The quality of line, composition, characterisation and even basic anatomy is very amateurish.

A more unsentimental attitude to Northern Ireland appears in *illustration 11,* a cartoon by Martyn Turner. Yet again, Turner has succeeded in clearing out all of the other issues and reducing the situation to its most basic level, which is that things won't change much. Turner was highlighting the fact that after all of the fuss, objections and resignations, the "New Ireland" will be more-or-less the same as the old. He is again indicating the futility of such arguments.

His figures are those of the working class enjoying a pint before going home. He has detailed a jumper (which is most likely sleeveless), unstarched collars and out-of-fashion suits and shirts.

One of his figures dares to voice that the "New Ireland" might be something other than wonderful - in a sense he's just like the little boy who's half afraid to point out that the king has no clothes on. His friend, who bears a striking resemblance to Charles Haughey, is perplexed at the suggestion that the "New Ireland" might be like the old.

Eriett Kastner said that political cartoonists are 'men of angry laughter'. What was he saying? Did he mean that cartoonists were angry men releasing their feelings through the humour of cartoons, and that under

each political cartoon there's a serious issue? If so we are left with the question - why are they angry? Many cartoonists feel that because of their extra freedom, they also have extra pressures to highlight subjects which are taboo for regular journalists. One such subject being Northern Ireland.

Censorship and *treason* are considered nasty types of words. They are seldom declared aloud, but the whisperings of such words can be heard all over everything to do with Northern Ireland.

The plight of the British cartoonist is a difficult one. If Britain is at war in Northern Ireland then criticism of the army would appear to be treason. Liz Curtis questions this issue.

> While the authorities have not promoted the triumphalism of a full-blown war - as in the south Atlantic campaign - they have also not shown the openness to investigation which might be expected if they were genuinely engaged in a peace keeping operation. Instead, Britain's activities in the North have been handled like guilty secrets. 16

She suggests that the national and international press have been discouraged from publishing articles on Northern Ireland, and that if everything was above board this would not be the case.

> Undoubtedly the provisional IRA were the universally agreed enemy, but few cartoonists in Britain found anything in the province with which to sympathise; there was a discernible ripple effect of general antipathy towards the Ulster people, and indeed the Irish. 17

The British media generally tried to ignore what was going on in Ulster and used the Irish sea as a physical and psychological barrier. However, when violence began to spread onto mainland Britain their attention was reignited.

Political cartoonists, although they possibly possess more liberties than

regular journalists, are also subjected to unwritten codes of subject matter. Very few British cartoonists came out in protest against the British Government's stance in Northern Ireland. Most were content to ignore "big news" issues and stuck to routine political maneuvers for subject matter. Despite official reports criticizing the British Government, the media and cartoonists were slow to investigate. Subjects which elected a greater uniformity of opinion were happy hunting grounds for the frustrated cartoonists.
In a cartoon by Colin Wheeler *(illustration 12)*, the confusion felt by British soldiers is evident. This cartoon appeared in a loyalist newspaper. The question of being at war or not frequently appears in in-house army newspapers. Surely the point that they are being shot at must imply that they are at war, even if this is not officially recognised.

Cormac, who draws for **an Phoblacht** also covers the issue of war and identifying the enemy. Here *(illustration 13)* he uses a prosaic Brigadier to denote the futility of the army even looking for the IRA members. This cartoon contains many "hits". One being that if the army could dispose indiscriminately of their "enemy" they would. Another jibe is that the army is utterly stupid; but perhaps the most significant association being made in the cartoon is that the English are not only sectarian but racist as well.

The Hunger Strike:

The world press flocked to Northern Ireland in 1981 to report on the Hunger Strike in H-Block (H-Block is a prison in Belfast). The republican prisoners there compiled a series of five demands, and it was for these demands that the Hunger Strikers starved themselves. The republicans were claiming the right to be called political prisoners and to enjoy whatever benefits this would involve.

Illustration 12. Colin Wheeler

Illustration 13, Cormac

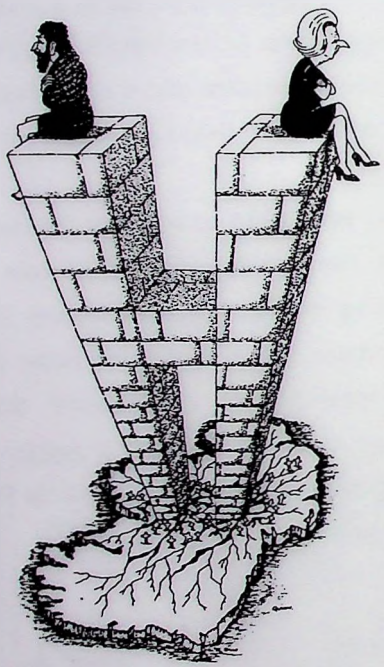

Illustration 14, Quinn

This time the protests did not complement British strategy but challenged its foundations, for the prisoners were asserting the legitimacy of the republican struggle and refusing to accept the British definition of it as criminal.

The demands of the republican hunger strikers were:

1. The right to wear their own clothes.
2. The right to refrain from compulsory prison work.
3. Free association with other prisoners.
4. The right to one letter and parcel per week.
5. Restoration of remission of sentence lost through the blanket protest.

Cartoonists have politely ignored another very controversial subject in Northern Ireland; in this case the hunger strike in 1981. As the topic is not in the least bit funny, the cartoonists who did attempt to cover this issue did not try for laughs.

This cartoon by Quinn *(illustration 14)* which appeared in the **Sunday Tribune** depicts the obtuse state of the stalemate which evolved over the H-block controversy; both parties refusing to yield an inch cost 10 men their lives. The stubbornness of each side is depicted in their crossed arms and turned backs. The legs of the "H" shape, indicating the H-Block prison, are planted firmly in the South of Ireland with masses of cracks and graves appearing as a result. The H-block campaign-violence did flood over into Southern Ireland. This sketch would appear to imply that the Republic of Ireland is the unlucky front line for their disagreements. Quinn has given his cartoon stark depth - possibly as an indication of the depth of the issue. His H-Block is very securely made and looks like it has no intention of falling. Ireland looks as though it will crumble instead. Margaret Thatcher is easily

identifiable by her characteristic nose and hair. The H-block protester is equally identifiable by his blanket. The whole H-block issue is shown as something which can destroy Ireland.

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'The Provisional IRA wanted Bobby Sands to die or have a victory, the British wanted Sands to die or surrender, and the unionists wanted him to die'.

Bobby Sands was a figure used by all sides. His death, in retrospect, served only to gain a little more support for the IRA cause. His death gave journalists, politicians and, yes, political cartoonists, an opportunity, or as Turner puts it "a hook", on which to hang all of their pettiness and frustrations. Everyone blamed everyone else for his death.

Volumes of books have been written about this topic and the conclusions depend upon the bias of the author. I don't propose to cover it in its complexities in one chapter of a thesis. My opinion is that neither side was right. Both sides claimed a victory, but any victories which were achieved were hollow ones.

The 1981 Hunger Strike attracted much in the line of sympathy and support for the IRA worldwide. However, with the possible exception of Keith Richardson (chief European correspondent) in the **Sunday Times** most English papers totally condemned the strike and the IRA. 20
In marked contrast to the rest of Europe 'The British media almost unanimously supported the government's stance'.

One of the more humourous cartoons to have surfaced during the Hunger Strike was this one by Rowel Friers *(illustration 15).* The absurdity of Bobby Sands attending the House of Commons in a blanket speaks for itself. Needless to say, he is depicted as disrupting even that. Expressions ranging from sheer curiosity to disbelief, amuse-

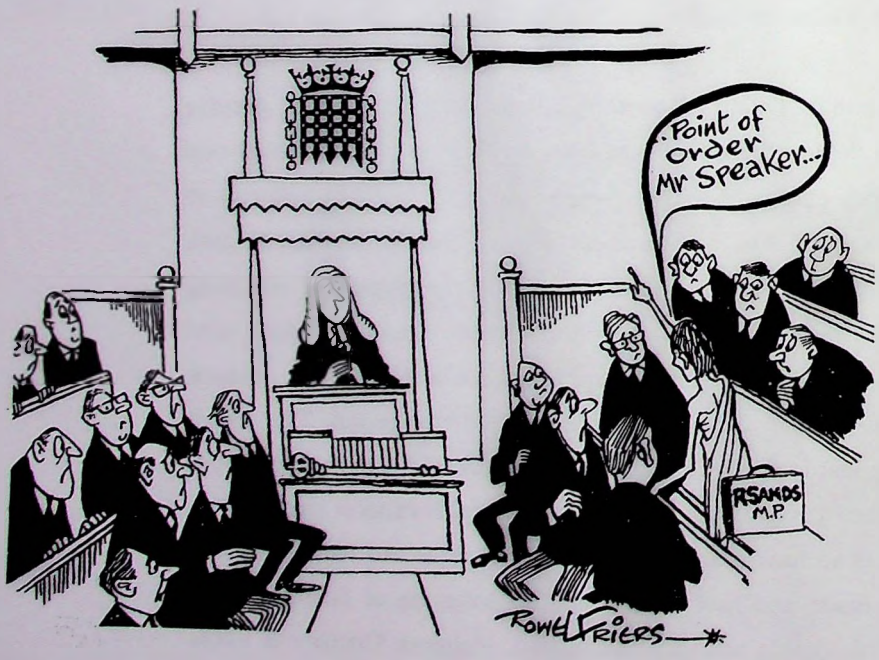

Illustration 15. Rowel Friers

'I WAS AFRAID HE'D NEVER DIE...'

Illustration 16. Auth

ment and disapproval can be seen on the faces of the members of parliament (all of whom are men). The Speaker of the House looks very unsure of himself, which is echoed by his hand posture. Bobby Sands (or as his brief case says R. Sands) is depicted with skeleton-like thinness.

In this cartoon Friers has not depicted individually identifiable politicians', we're not supposed to try to identify the characters but instead see them as a whole body.

It is generally held that the death of the hunger strikers resulted in a propaganda war which was largely won by the IRA. However, there are always two sides to every story. At the beginning of the Hunger Strike support rallied around the strikers. Then, when Bobby Sands won his seat in Parliament, the international press really dug their claws in. It was claimed in the British Army's in-house magazine Visor, that there were more than 400 pressmen in the province. 'On frequent occasions pressmen covering incidents have outnumbered those taking part'. However, when Bobby Sands died and the others looked likely to follow, some of the world press saw the situation as the IRA trading lives for publicity, and these are samples of the resulting cartoons. They're not funny, but then neither was the situation.

Auth, in this cartoon in the **Philadelphia Inquirer** *(illustration 16),* comments that the death of Bobby Sands was nothing more than a lever for the IRA. Auth has featured the IRA as a gang of hooligans who were desperately seeking an excuse to shoot the place apart. A petrol bomb, handguns and a machine gun are clearly depicted. The general impression from the sketch is that the IRA are delighted by Bobby Sands death. The callous manner in which they are carrying his coffin shows the lack of respect for their martyr, either before or after his death.

The humorous part of the cartoon is the fact that if the rowdy group weren't wearing badges identifying them as the IRA we would naturally assume they were loyalists. The men featured are drawn as "typical Paddys" wearing jackets and trousers which don't match, accompanied by jumpers instead of shirts and ties and the incessant cloth cap. The figures are blocky and stocky, a general manner adopted for drawing less intelligent people.

Personally I don't believe that a prisoner's right to call himself *political* instead of *criminal* is worth dying for, but I do think that it's too easy and distasteful to mock a man when he's dead. I object to this cartoon. Very few cartoonists tackled the issue of the Hunger Strike until the "victims" were dead. This cartoon I view as an assault against common respect for the dead.

The **Arizona Republic** newspaper published this cartoon by Benson *(illustration 17)* after the death of Bobby Sands. His point, a very valid one, is very anti-IRA. Benson asks us to spare a few moments thought for the victims of the people Bobby Sands was representing on his hunger strike. The flood of flowers and wreaths around the grave aren't much use to Bobby Sands, but they're even more useless and twice as insulting to the child, whose headstone is almost in the shadow of the more majestic stone. This cartoon asks us to look again and decide who really deserves our sympathy.

In this cartoon by Austen *(illustration 18)*, we see an over the counter interview with a possible IRA recruit. We are spoon fed the concept that IRA recruits are far from being mastermind candidates. Austen possibly wanted to highlight the level of ignorance surrounding the hunger strike. The humor in this cartoon lies in the absurdity of someone wanting to join the IRA, to go to prison, join the hunger strikers, and loose some weight. It shows a terrorist who is in typical

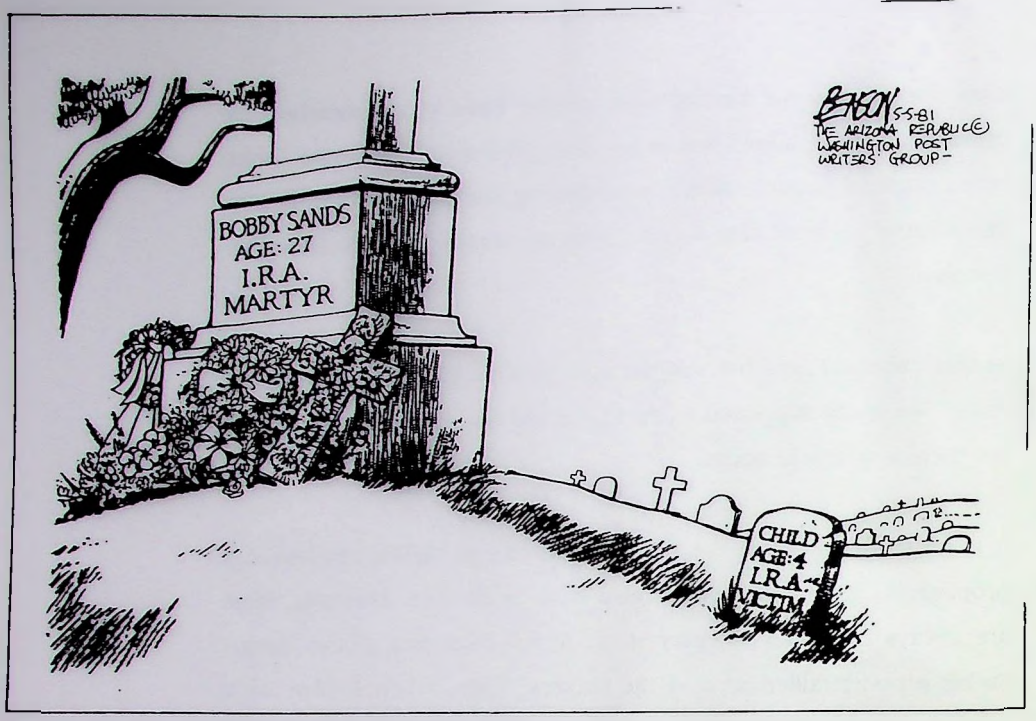

Illustration 17. Benson

"Wanting to lose a bit of weight isn't a good enough reason for joining the IRA"

Illustration 18 Austen

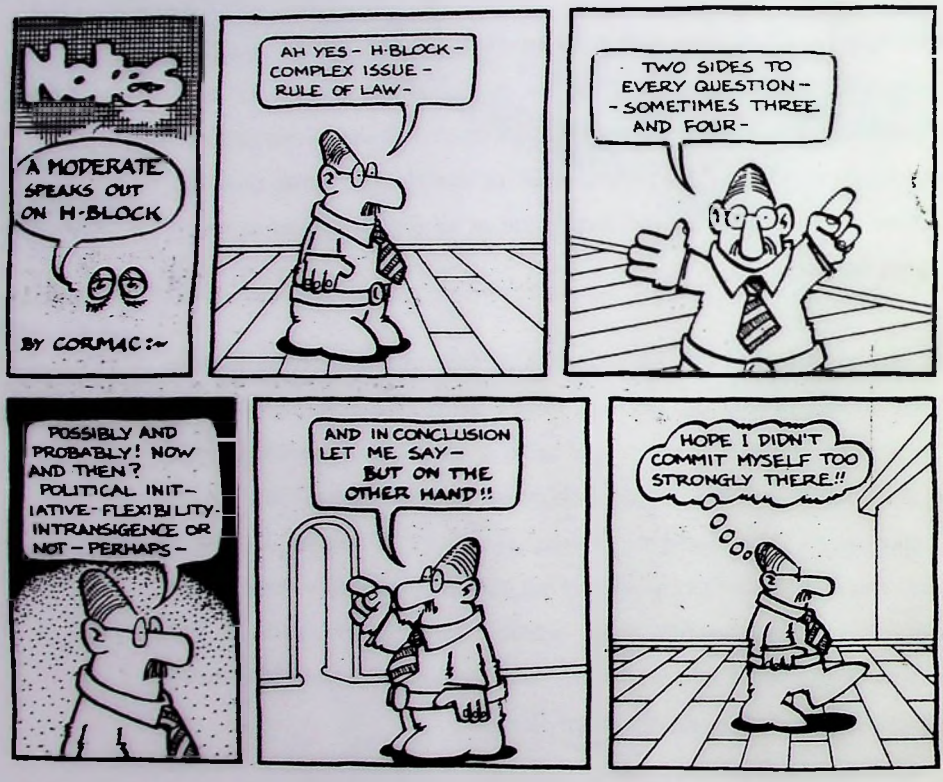

Illustration 19. Cormac

cliche garb and a stupid looking worker (probably a manual worker judging by his hands and arms). The terrorist doesn't seem too surprised at the possible recruit's reason for wanting to join the IRA. Instead he seems like a teacher correcting a dim student and waiting for the next answer. The cartoon is a comment on the lack of basic commitment and understanding of ideas by IRA sympathisers.

Before continuing with samples of work published in **An Phoblacht**, it is important to understand the audiences of such papers, The audience for **An Phoblacht** tend to be very anti-British. I was struck, while reading it, by the level of hatred expressed in each edition. Cormac's cartoons are treated as morale boosters since he's preaching to the "converted".

Danny Morrison, editor of **An Phoblacht**, says of Cormac ....

> In his cartoons he belittles the enemy and boosts the morale of the oppressed, and his acerbic, supportive comments, particularly on the IRA operations, have outraged **The Guardian** and the editor of the **Irish Press.** The rest of us, however, have been entertained. 22

His dubious use of the word "entertain" can be seen in the following cartoons.

The in-house cartoonist from **An Phoblacht** is Cormac. In these cartoons his pet subject seems to be encouraging people to choose a side. In an issue as complex as Northern Ireland most people much prefer to avoid getting involved. This is the area Cormac is highlighting. This cartoon *(illustration 19)* which appeared in March 1981 (30 days after Bobby Sands began his hunger strike) could be viewed from either side. The theme is one of objection to people and politicians who don't commit themselves.

Illustration 20, Cormac

Illustration 21, Cummings

Illustration 22, Cormac

In the following week's edition *(illustration 20)* Cormac continues this theme with his "Fence". Cormac was referring to the high feelings on both sides due to the Hunger Strike. Instead of appealing to people to choose a side he was drumming home the need for them to decide. The image of the fence is frequently used, but Cormac maintains that the "Fence" no longer exists, thus the people must choose. Cormac is emphasising that the issue of the Hunger Strike is one which people can't take the easy way out of by remaining impartial, or on the fence. His reference to burning the fence on the barricade acts both as a morale booster to those engaged in such activities, and to hit home to those not doing anything that perhaps they should become more active.

The concept of sitting of the fence is one which has appeared in numerous cartoons. In this Canadian cartoonists cartoon *(illustration 21)*, we can see how he views Margaret Thatcher's stance. She looks extremely uncomfortable there, but doesn't look as though she'll fall off.

These drawings *(illustrations 19 & 20)* appeared at a time when we might have expected Cormac to cover the topic of the Hunger Strike. Bobby Sands was on Hunger Strike since the first of March, yet the first cartoon in which the strike was mentioned was in the middle of July. Why was this? Cormac's silence all through the Hunger Strike, election and death of Bobby Sands is unusual, He seems to stick to the more general topic of condemning all the British, rather than promoting the specific republican cause which dominated the news. This cartoon *(illustration 22)*, which appeared in July 1981, was a direct hit at Margaret Thatcher. The narrator tells us that he is writing a book on the achievement of Margaret Thatcher, and in case we missed the singular version of achievement, he tells us that it will be a slim volume. Some of the humour in the cartoon is in the suggestion that

...22

Thatcher deliberately provoked the riots in an "attempt to distract the world's attention" from the H-Block hunger strike. In actual fact the riots attracted even more world press coverage of the Hunger Strike.

The first Cormac cartoon in which Bobby Sands is mentioned is in August *(illustration 23)*. As with other Cormac cartoons the narrator changes. This cartoon is one of Cormac's more complex ones. The humour is in the mixing of metaphors from *Pig*, to *Lapdog* to *Pork*. This series of name calling may be an indication of how Cormac sees Gerry Fitt's progression - ending with the question "what tears would Irish people shed if that Tory Lapdog suddenly became Pork? " i.e if he died.

This cartoon is the first in which Bobby Sands suffering is mentioned. Judging by the lack of cartoons by Cormac on the hunger strike it would appear that he too found the subject too sensitive and decided to avoid it.

The in-house army magazines and newspapers are also guilty of a lack of cartoons centered on H-Block and the hunger strike. This cartoon from **Visor** *(illustration 24)* was the closest the pro-British army cartoonists came to commenting on the subject. Fortunately I was able to find a republican cartoon covering the same topic. The **Visor** cartoon is dealing with the wounded republican protesters returning from the South of Ireland after the riots in Dublin in July 1981. The police in the Republic of Ireland were accused of heavy handed tactics in their dealings with the influx of Northern demonstrators. As is common in most of the cartoons published by **Visor**, the army are polite to the point of being a bit stupid. The soldiers don't appear to be too perturbed at seeing these "troublemakers" return. In fact, we have the impression that life was a bit quiet without them. The smirk on the Army's face could be because they're happy to see the people

Illustration 23, Cormac

Are you glad to be back then lads?

Illustration 24, McCalin

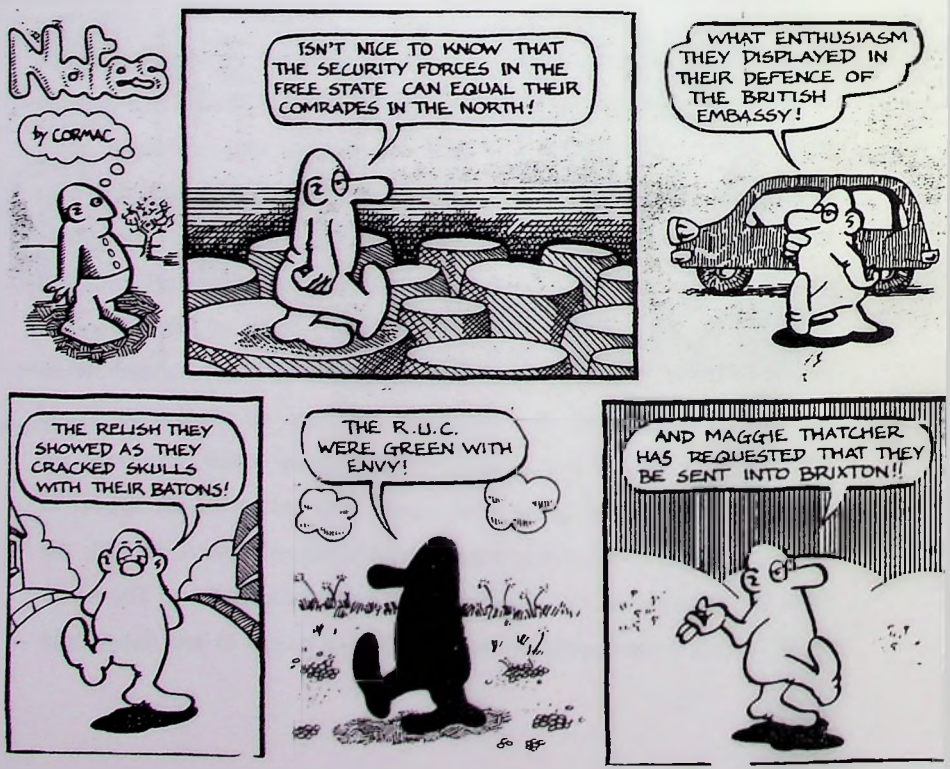

Illustration 25, Cormac

back, or more likely, they find their injuries amusing. The cartoon is very illustrative and full of details.
In contrast, the Cormac drawing *(illustration 25)* is quite plain. Again, the reference is made to the British abusing the Irish and the black community in Britain. In this cartoon reference is made to Brixton, while in an earlier cartoon reference was made to Notting Hill *(illustration 13)*. The theme is the same as with the **Visor** cartoon. All parties in the North seem to be surprised that the Irish police dealt with the situation so effectively. Cormac openly associated the Irish security forces with the British ones. A point which sounds of Turners illustration where he suggests that the old Ireland and the new Ireland will have few differences *(illustration 11)*.

I view the work so far as being an introduction to the very complicated and involved area of political cartooning in Northern Ireland. I have shown samples of how certain incidents are interpreted and executed by different sides. As Cormac said in *illustration 19*, 'two sides to every question - sometimes three and four -'.

I have included cartoons which are funny, middle of the road, and offensive. I have examined attitudes from both sides of the border and abroad.

My attitude to Northern Ireland and the media coverage of it will never be the same again. I honestly didn't realise that so much in the line of cover ups, hatred and point blank refusal to meet anybody half way existed. I would thoroughly recommend anyone to pay attention to the political cartoons in their newspapers or study up on the subject. I would also suggest that people should question the objectivity of their paper and cartoonist.

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1. Osbert Lancaster, Drawn and Quartered.
2. John Darby, Dressed to kill.
3. John Darby, Dressed to kill, page 115.
4. J.N. Darling, Man bites man. page 19
5. John Darby, Dressed to kill, page 77
6. Martyn Turner, Introduction of Dressed to kill
8. John Darby, Dressed to kill, page 114
9. Martyn Turner, In Dublin, March 22nd 1979.
10. Martyn Turner, A fistful of Dailers, introduction
11. Jeff Mac Nelly, Newsweek 1980
12. John Darby, Dressed to kill, page 79
13. John Darby, Dressed to kill, page 113
14. King was the Northern Ireland Secretary and Haughey was the leader of the opposition in the south of Ireland
15. Eriett Kastner, The Freedom of the Political Cartoonist, page 77
16. Liz Curtis, Ireland the Propaganda war, page 202
17. John Darby, Dressed to Kill, page 65
18. Liz Curtis, Ireland the Propaganda war, page 275
19. John Hume, Referred to in An Phoblacht, May 9th, 1981
20. Liz Curtis, Ireland the Propaganda war, page 203
21. Visor, edition 369, 8th May, 1981
22. Danny Morrison, Thin Black Lines

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