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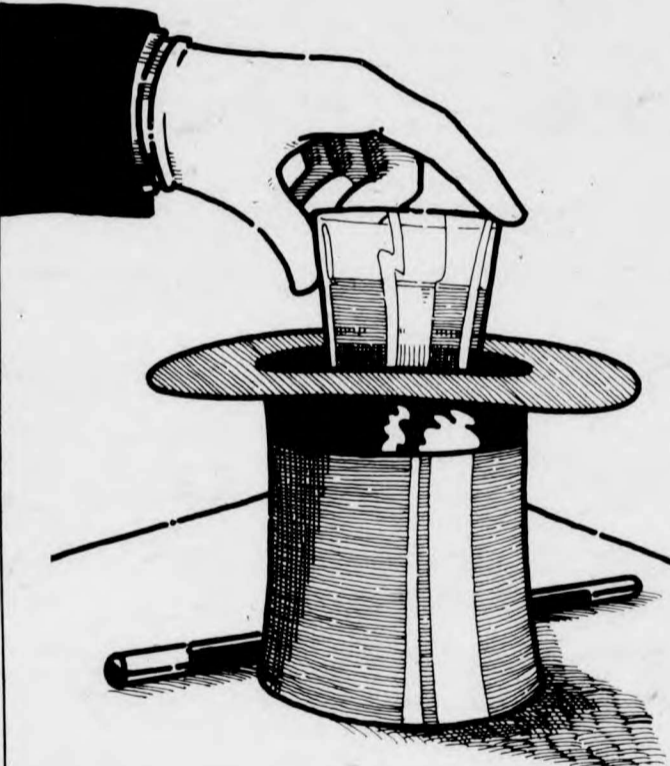
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Devlin says S. Ireland suspends civil liberties

By JEFF KESSLER
NEWYORK (CUP)—Bernadette Devlin McAliskey was first in the international press as the youngest Member of Parliament, in 1969.

Recently she spoke before about 800 people in the Columbia University gymnasium. Devlin re-examined the historical reasons for the conflict in Northern Ireland and pressed her campaign for helping victims of the state of emergency in south Ireland. However her ultimate message carried a new twist: "If you Americans really want to help us, build the struggle in your own country." The struggle, for Devlin, is the struggle toward socialism.

There are two views the rest of the world holds toward the strife in Ireland, Devlin said. One is that there is some kind of "racial aberration drawing the Irish into constant conflict", that there is a medieval religious war going on in Ireland. The second view is that Ireland is being torn apart by a small group of "pathological political killers."

"These views are gratis of the public's willingness to believe whatever it reads in the newspapers or sees on television", she said.

Citing from her plain-spoken autobiography, *The Price of My Soul*, Devlin gave a brief summary of the evolution of Northern Ireland to clarify "just what the real issue is to be presented."

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to Devlin, in 1609 the British Empire transplanted thousands of Scottish Presbyterians to the nine counties of Northern Ireland that composed the ancient kingdom of Ulster. These Protestant colonists were meant to keep the rebellious Irish under control, and they did, insofar as they formed an upper class and became the landed gentry, while the Irish Catholics formed the peasant class. "The traditional hatred between the colonists and the colonized, the have and the have-nots, was further complicated by religious hatred. Politics and religion have never separated themselves in Northern Ireland."

In 1801, with the Act of Union, Ireland's linen and wool economy was sacrificed for the British cotton industry. Devlin commented that "this caused a resurgence of nationalist activity, generally nonsectarian, which culminated in Easter Rising of 1916."

"The citizens of Ulster took very little part in this doomed revolution", partly, Devlin pointed out, because of poor organization. Whatever the reason, the northern counties were already regarded with hostility by the south — they were called "Orange", condemned for being the offspring of Protestants who had supported the Dutch William of Orange against James II, the Catholic King of England, in the late 17th century.

The Easter Rising may have failed, but that action and the fact that in 1918 Ireland peacefully voted to be removed from the British Empire, forced the British to realize they could hold on no longer. In 1921 Ireland was divided, forming the Free State to the south. Six predominantly Protestant counties went to the formation of Northern Ireland: they were six of the nine counties of Ulster.

Devlin came to be involved in the pacifist movement in 1969 while still a student at Belfast. These peaceful protest marches quickly deteriorated into street fighting. In a country where unemployment is so high, where housing is such a problem, and where a large segment of the population, the Catholics, are treated as second-class citizens, religious tension is



still high.

In Derry, in 1969, it appeared that the Protestants were going to slaughter the Catholics. The police were unable to contain the streetfighting, and the predominantly Protestant B-Men, a special civilian militia, were called out. Finally British troops were brought in to keep the peace. The Catholics cheered their arrival, heedless of the fact that British troops were once again on Irish soil.

Devlin said that when she brought this up in a speech, reminding the Catholic crowd that the British had come not to protect the Catholics, but to preserve the State of Northern Ireland, she was booted off the rostrum by her fellow Republicans. That she can say "I told you so" is no comfort to this small but powerful woman.

That is the background of the present conflict in Northern Ireland. "I would love to say it is a class struggle," Devlin sighed. "But it's not. It is a day-to-day struggle against oppression, against second-class citizenship."

In an interview, Devlin commented on the women's peace movement presently taking place in Northern Ireland: "They have no politics. The oppressed cannot be the first to lay down their weapons. They would be walked all over. These women's demands for peace are demands by the oppressed to the oppressed."

Devlin was gravely concerned about a new twist in the turn of events in supposedly free south Ireland where the constitution has been suspended and the basic rights of citizenship have been denied — all in the name of law and order. A state of emergency has been declared "...as south Ireland batters down the hatches to prevent the onslaught of terrorist activity from the North."

"Press censorship has been taken so far that newspapers have been told they are responsible for the views expressed in letters to the editor," said Devlin.

Alleged criminals, she added, if they are said to be political activists, can be tried without jury in special political courts. All one needs for this is the word of one policeman.

Devlin came to America to protest one such case. Marie and Noel Murray, a young couple in their mid-twenties, were arrested for bank-robbery and the alleged shooting of an off-duty policeman in the course of the crime. They were arrested as political activists, though they belong to no party or movement, and were interrogated for seven days without the benefit of counsel. After seven days of interrogation the police emerged with a signed

confession. The Murrays were tried without jury, and most of their trial was conducted with the Murrays themselves in abstenia. The automatic sentence for the murder of a policeman is death. The Murrays have very little time to live before they are hanged, and Devlin's trip to the US had been to collect signatures protesting the hanging.

The Murrays, Devlin said urgently, "are the easiest people to hang. They have no political affiliation." No one has been hanged in Ireland for 30 years. The Murrays will be the first, Devlin said, and they will be the first of many. The Murrays are just the beginning, Devlin continually stressed. "Anyone who is said to be a political activist by any one policeman can be tried without jury and be hanged."

Devlin told Canadian University Press: "We have cut ourselves in two tightening our belts. There is no way this system can give us all we want. They can't afford to treat us equally — there's no room in the system. And despite what the British would have you believe, capitalism and socialism cannot exist in harmony."

There are two priorities in the Irish struggle for freedom, she said. The first is to remove the British troops from Irish soil, and the second to create a socialist reform in Ireland. "As it is," she added, "South Ireland is quickly evolving into a satellite state of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is to be torn by dissension that people are not only jobless but homeless. We have to take back what has been taken from us: the means of production and distribution."

Discussing the need for socialism in America, Devlin said that the last time Americans admitted to a working class was during the Depression. Since then there is no one who will admit to being working class — anyone who has a job is considered middle class. "Everyone is so busy protecting what he has that no one knows what has been taken away."

"Your Mr. Rockefeller... well, far be it from me to suggest the man's a thief," Devlin chuckled. "And as for the Queen of England, she's not so much a thief as a receiver of stolen goods."

But the job of a socialist "revolutionary" is to work in the working class, "...to educate within the working class. We have so many dangerous reactionary ideas we have to educate ourselves out of", Devlin pleaded during her speech.

"Don't put on Che Guevara hats and raise your clenched fists and wave your rifles. Join the working classes."