IRISH LANGUAGE ACTIVISM IN WEST BELFAST:
A RESISTANCE TO BRITISH CULTURAL HEGEMONY

by

PATRICIA MARY CATHERINE KACHUK

B.A., York University, 1981
M.A., University of British Columbia, 1987

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

We accept this thesis as conforming

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
March 1993

© Patricia Mary Catherine Kachuk, 1993
Abstract

This contribution to the understanding of the dynamics of domination and resistance will focus on the nature and development of Irish language activism in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and the subsequent response of the British State when faced with this challenge to its cultural hegemony. The research is theoretically framed using Raymond Williams' model of cultural hegemony and James Scott's model of disguise and surveillance, and is based on fifteen months of in-depth fieldwork in Northern Ireland, which I undertook from February 13, 1990 to May 10, 1991.

It has been argued that not all Irish language activism is revolutionary, but instead, to use Williams' terminology, has both alternative and oppositional ideologies as major components. While both alternative and oppositional Irish language activists have recovered the Irish language as "an effective element of the present," and are using it to challenge the legitimacy of British cultural hegemony in Northern Ireland, the difference lies in their ultimate goals. Alternative Irish language activists are seeking a permanent space for the Irish language in Northern Ireland, regardless of the political outcome of the present conflict.
On the other hand, oppositional Irish language activists, have made the Irish language an integral part of their struggle for self-determination.

Alternative Irish language activists have focused their efforts on demanding that the public status of the Irish language be raised, and on building an Irish-medium education system that would be the foundation of a permanent Irish language infrastructure in Northern Ireland. Central to oppositional Irish language activism is the struggle for the cultural and linguistic rights of republican prisoners. However, the State justifies the shunning of these demands by citing the security risk they may engender. Oppositional Irish language activists, in particular Sinn Féin (the political wing of the Republican Movement), have adopted a strategy of "encouraging" and "supporting" alternative Irish language groups, thus creating the a priori appearance of a common goal. Since Sinn Féin does not assume a direct leadership role within the Irish language movement, any refusal of the cultural demands of alternative Irish language activists by the State, can be labelled as discriminatory toward the legitimate cultural rights of an ethnic minority. Hence, efforts by the State to dismiss the challenge by alternative Irish language activists by branding it as revolutionary, have been ineffectual.
British cultural hegemony in Northern Ireland, it is argued, is both powerful and vulnerable. The reaction of the British State to the challenge of Irish language activists has varied, at times with its interpretation of the challenge, and at other times seemingly at will. Prior to 1980, attempts were made to exclude the Irish language and culture from Northern Ireland, branding it as "foreign" and "subversive." Since 1989, the approach of the British State has been a re-interpretation of the Irish language and culture into the Northern Ireland context, recognizing it as one of the "two traditions" of the State. This move to neutralize Irish language resistance, while welcomed by many alternative Irish language activists, has seriously ruptured the unity of the majority in Northern Ireland. As a result, the British government finds itself at an impasse. Because of strong oppositional and alternative Irish language resistance, the State is prevented from "excluding" Irish language and culture in Northern Ireland, but similarly, differences within influential and dominant groups will not allow the conciliation of Irish language resistance by a "process of incorporation." The stage is thus set for an examination of the background, growth, and durability of the Irish language movement, juxtaposed with the hegemonic determination of a State bent on cultural subjugation, in the boisterous environment of Northern Ireland.
Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .................................................. ii

LIST OF FIGURES ......................................... xii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .......................................... xiii

CHAPTER 1 .................................................. 1

I. Research Aim and Questions .......................... 1

II. The Theoretical Framework .......................... 4

   A. Gramsci's Concept of "Ideological Hegemony" and the Thorny Question of "Consent" .......... 4

      1. James Scott's Model of Hegemony and Resistance .......... 5

      2. Lears and Roseberry: Hegemony as a "Common Discursive Framework" ................. 9

   B. Raymond Williams' Model of Cultural Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony .................. 11

   C. Understanding Resistance in West Belfast's Irish Language Activist Community: A Definitional Model .................................................. 16

      1. British Linguistic Hegemony and Irish Language Resistance: A Definition of Terms .......... 16

      2. Language: A Symbolic Expression of Resistance ........ 19

         a) Language as Ethnic Identity ...................... 23

         b) Language as Power ............................... 33

         (1) Language and Ethnonationalism: A Tool for Ethnic Mobilization .................. 33

         (2) Language and the State: To Win the Hearts and Minds of the People .............. 42

III. The Plan .............................................. 45
CHAPTER 2  Fieldwork in a Politically Turbulent Environment .......................... 49

I. A Terminological Muddle: The Search for Political Neutrality ........................ 52
   A. The Actors ....................................... 52
   B. The Territory ..................................... 59

II. Fieldwork in a Dangerous Environment: Challenge and Survival ....................... 62
   A. The Research Setting ................................ 62
   B. Negotiating Roles in the Field ........................ 67
   C. Ethical Considerations .............................. 74
   D. The Problem of Objectivity .......................... 78

III. Methodology: Data Collection and Research Techniques ............................... 82
   A. Participant/Observation ............................. 82
   B. Interviewing ....................................... 85
   C. Other Research Methods ............................. 91

CHAPTER 3  The Roots of Alternative and Oppositional Irish Language Activism ...... 93

I. The Pre-Eighteenth Century Battle for Linguistic Hegemony in Ireland ............. 96
   A. The Articulation of the Traditional Gaelic and English Feudal Modes of Production .......... 96
      1. Inheritance and Property Rights:
         A Clash of Legal Systems ........................ 96
      2. The Heart of Gaelic Culture Attacked:
         The Destruction of the Irish Monasteries and Bardic Schools .................. 101
      3. The Irish Language Becomes a Class Issue:
         The Dominant English-speaking Culture Takes Root .......................... 107
II. The Restoration of the Irish Language: The Protestant Ascendancy and the Gaelic Culture of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

A. The Protestant Ascendancy and the Restoration of the Irish Language

B. Murmurs of Alternative Irish Language Activism: Ulster's Protestants and Irish Language Revivalism, Pre-1850

C. Nascent Oppositional Irish Language Activism: The United Irishmen Rising 1798

III. Alternative and Oppositional Irish Language Activism: A Period of Political Upheaval in Belfast

A. Belfast: The Turbulent Nineteenth Century

B. Another Victory for Linguistic Hegemony: The National School Act of 1831

C. Alternative and Oppositional Irish Language Activism Come of Age: Conradh na Gaeilge (Gaelic League) and Sinn Féin

1. Pre-Partition Alternative Irish Language Activism: The Gaelic League

2. The Irish Language Becomes Part of the Republican Ethos: The Birth of Sinn Féin

IV. Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 4 Pre-1980 Irish Language Activism in Northern Ireland: The Calm before the Storm

I. Ireland Divided: The Irish Language is Attacked by the New Northern Ireland Parliament

II. The Cumann Chluain Ard: The Bastion of the Irish Language
## III. The Shaws Road Irish Community: Irish Language Activists Create Their Own Gaeltacht in English-Speaking West Belfast

### IV. Chapter Summary

### CHAPTER 5 Irish Language Activism: The Context of Resistance

#### I. Prelude to the 1981 Hunger Strike: Terror Warfare as Lived Reality

#### A. Pre-1969: A Period of Sporadic Official and Sanctioned Unofficial Attacks on the Nationalist Population

#### B. The "Troubles": The Militarization of Northern Ireland

#### C. The Carrot and the Stick: A Mid-1970s Shift in British State Policy in Northern Ireland

#### II. Irish at the Door: The Blanket Protest and Hunger Strikes

#### A. Irish Language in the Prisons

1. **Irish Language in the "Cages"**

2. **Irish Language in the H-Blocks**

#### B. Impact of the Hunger Strike on the Nationalist Community in Belfast

#### III. Chapter Summary

### CHAPTER 6 The Aftermath: Sinn Féin Rises to Political and Cultural Prominence in Nationalist Belfast

#### I. Irish Culture Behind Bars: The Prison Struggle for Irish Language Rights

#### II. Sinn Féin and the Nationalist Community
### A. The Development of Community Action Groups in Belfast

Page: 230

### B. Sinn Féin assumes an "Encouraging" and "Supportive" Role in the Nationalist Community

Page: 235

### III. Sinn Féin and the Irish Language Movement

Page: 237

#### A. The Irish Language as Part of the Republican Ethos

Page: 237

#### B. Sinn Féin and the Irish Language Activist Community: A Self-Analysis

Page: 240

#### C. Suspicions that Sinn Féin "Hijacked" the Irish Language after the Hunger Strike: The Alternative Irish Language Activist CommunityResponds

Page: 248

#### D. The Role of Sinn Féin in the Irish Language Movement

Page: 254

### IV. Chapter Summary

Page: 258

---

**CHAPTER 7  Post-1980 Alternative Irish Language Activism: Confronting British Linguistic Hegemony**

Page: 260

#### I. Direct Action: The Welsh Model of Alternative Language Activism

Page: 263

#### II. The Radical Years: Alternative Irish Language Activism in the Early 1980s

Page: 271

##### A. Irish Language Activists Defy the Ban on Irish Language Street Signs

Page: 271

##### B. Media Campaigns for Irish Language Broadcasting in Northern Ireland

Page: 274

#### III. Belfast Irish Language Activists Unite in Constructing a Permanent Irish Language Infrastructure

Page: 283

##### A. Lá: The Celtic World's First Daily Newspaper

Page: 283
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. A &quot;Carrot&quot; for Moderate Irish Language Activists: Government Money for Irish Language Education</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee: Irish-Medium Education becomes a Priority</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. West Belfast becomes &quot;The Irish Language Capital of Ireland&quot;</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. &quot;Hands Off Our Language&quot;: A Victory for Irish Language Activists</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Cultural Diversity: Fitting the Irish Language into the Northern Ireland Context</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Bridging the Gap: ULTACH</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tolerance and Understanding in the Schools: A New Curriculum</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Irish Language in the Northern Ireland Context: A Hegemonic Nightmare</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The British State as &quot;Honest Broker&quot;: Bringing &quot;Tolerance and Friendliness&quot; to the &quot;Two Communities&quot; in Northern Ireland</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Protestant Reaction: The Irish Language and Northern Ireland Culture</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) We are British: There is No Room for the Irish Language in Northern Ireland</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) We Are Irish: It's Our Language</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Ulster Irish is Part of Our Ulster Heritage: Ian Adamson's Re-interpretation of the History of Ulster</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Chapter Summary</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 8 Flexing Hegemonic Muscles: The Blacklisting of Glór na nGael | 333 |
| I. Glór na nGael: "A Cheeky Subordinate"                              | 335 |
| II. Glór na nGael's Symbolic Declaration of War, Challenge and Counter-Challenge | 339 |
### A. The Public Transcript of the State: Silence, Secrecy and Unsubstantiated Allegations

339

### B. Glór na nGael's Campaign to Clear Its Name

341

### C. Glór na nGael Takes the Government to Court

350

### III. Reaction in the Irish Language Activist Community: The Mask of the Oppressed Thickens

355

### IV. Chapter Summary

361

---

### CHAPTER 9  General Conclusions

363

#### I. Alternative versus Oppositional Activism within the Irish Language Movement in West Belfast: Differences and Links

363

#### II. British Cultural Hegemony: The Struggle for Legitimacy

365

### NOTES

370

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

382
List of Figures

FIGURE 1  Ireland: Irish Speaking Population Distribution 1851 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 132

FIGURE 2  Ireland: Irish Speaking Population Distribution 1891 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 133
Acknowledgement

While it would be impractical, as well as strategically ill-advised, for me to acknowledge by name all the people who made this work possible, I would like to express my gratitude to the following groups and individuals. Those at Glór na nGael, the Shaws Road Irish Community, ULTACH, the Committee for the Administration of Justice, the Linen Hall Library, Sinn Féin, and the Roddy McCorley Society, whose assistance was invaluable.

I wish to thank my committee for their critical reading of my work, and the many suggestions offered that led to its successful completion. Special thanks to my advisor, Dr. Elvi Whittaker, for filling my methodological tool kit; to Dr. David Schweitzer, for his theoretical guidance; to Dr. Michael Blake for his guidance on practicalities such as funding; and to all three collectively, for their unwavering support, regardless of the obstacles.

I would also like to thank my examining committee: Dr. Joan Vincent, Dr. Martin Silverman, and Dr. Diane Mauzy for their interest in and constructive comments on my work.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, who provided funding for my fieldwork in Belfast; the Tina and Morris Wagner Foundation Fellowship; and the I.W. Killam Predoctoral Fellowship whose collective funding hastened the completion of this dissertation.
IRISH LANGUAGE ACTIVISM IN WEST BELFAST:
A RESISTANCE TO BRITISH CULTURAL HEGEMONY

Chapter One

I. Research Aim and Questions

It is hard to recall an age when the Irish language was not an issue. The right to speak it; the right to use it as a medium of education for children; the right to have the Irish form of a name on State documentation. It would seem that the language has always . . . been linked in the public perception to a measure of disrespect for establishment politics (Macauley 1990:11).¹

This Belfast journalist could well have added that the imposition of the English language on the people of Ireland has always been met with resistance. The general concern of this dissertation will be an investigation of Irish language activism in the Northern Ireland capital city of Belfast, and the British state's response to this symbolic challenge to its linguistic hegemony. The analysis will focus on the nature of this resistance over time, examining how Belfast cultural groups, Sinn Féin, and the British government, perceive and construct Irish language activism. The principal questions suggested by this research will be:
Is Irish language activism in West Belfast solely connected to the armed struggle? Does cultural Irish language activism differ from politically motivated Irish language activism, if so, how? What are the demands of various groups of Irish language activists? What is the nature of British linguistic hegemony? How is this linguistic hegemony maintained when challenged by Irish language activist groups?

In Northern Ireland, ethnonationalist conflict has escalated to the stage of armed struggle. As a corollary to this development, attempts made by members of the ethnic minority to continue their own non-violent resistance to discrimination and oppression are, if acknowledged at all, stigmatized by those in power as part of the overall revolutionary struggle. Once labelled as revolutionary, legitimate demands for human and civil rights made by ethnic minority members are often dismissed. Thus, the distinction between armed revolutionary resistance and symbolic resistance based on the struggle for justice by those caught up in the everyday reality of terror warfare, is crucial.

Concentrating on the nature and forms of Irish language activism and how they are perceived and responded to by those in power, and drawing on the work of Raymond Williams (1977, 1980) and James Scott (1990), this ethnographic study will suggest ways in which the multiple meanings of
resistance in areas where liberation struggles are being fought, can be delineated and analyzed. Although I include comparative material on the civil disobedience campaign of Welsh language activists, the objective of this dissertation is not to be comparative but to understand the dynamic relationship between a particular form of resistance and domination as it is played out in the lives of everyday people. The analysis presented here however, could well be used as a theoretical framework for the study of other ethnonationalist conflicts involving linguistic differences as key elements of their struggle. Areas of significant present-day linguistic unrest, for example, could include Spain (Basque, Catalans), France (Bretons) or indeed Canada (Québecois).

This study, based on fifteen months of in-depth research conducted in the hostile atmosphere of West Belfast, is also intended to elucidate some of the physical and emotional concerns that may beset the anthropologist undertaking fieldwork in a potentially dangerous environment. Hence, the overall aim of this thesis is to offer a theoretical and methodological contribution to the anthropological literature on cultures in conflict and on culture and power.
II. The Theoretical Framework

A. Gramsci's Concept of "Ideological Hegemony" and the Thorny Question of "Consent"

Central to Gramsci's (1971) analysis of why the working class in advanced capitalist societies appears to be accepting the established order rather than, as Marx had predicted, plotting its overthrow and replacement with socialism is the concept of "ideological" hegemony. What Gramsci means by his "notoriously vague" concept of, "hegemonic rule [which] is rule through 'consent,'" is widely disputed, and generally misunderstood (Femia 1981:8, 35; also see Lears 1985; Roseberry 1992; Roseberry and O'Brien 1991; Scott 1977, 1985, 1990). The reason for this interpretive confusion in Gramsci's writing, Femia (1981:9) explains, is largely due to the fact that his Prison Notebooks were:

... an unfinished work, replete with elliptical passages, disorders, apparent contradictions, cryptic utterances, sly asides, esoteric allusions, aborted observations, unassimilated "rough" facts, and seemingly endless digressions--a monumental labyrinth of often opaque undeveloped ideas ... [which] rarely reach[ed] final draft forms ... [but, instead were merely] notes and jottings intended for the author alone, not for publication.
This ambiguity of how subordinate groups "consent" to their domination, as reflected in the different interpretations of Gramsci's work by Scott (1990), Lears (1985), Roseberry (1992), and Roseberry and O'Brien (1991) will be the focal point of the following section.

1. James Scott's Model of Hegemony and Resistance

One reading of Gramsci, discussed by Scott (1977, 1985, 1990) implies that "consent" of the masses to their subordination is accomplished through the manipulation and control by the ruling classes of the means of "symbolic" production. Thus, the ruling classes' "domination of the 'ideological' sectors of society--culture, religion, education, and media--[enabling] them to disseminate those values that reinforce their position" (Scott 1977:272). The subordinate classes, who presumably have no input into this hegemonic process, are saturated by the ideology of the dominant, and thus rendered incapable of "thinking and acting on the basis of their objective interests" (Scott, 1977:271-272). Given this interpretation of "ideological" hegemony, the result is the "passive compliance to social domination" of these subordinate groups.
Hegemony constructed in this manner, Scott (1977:272; 1990:72) points out, amounts to nothing more than an explanation of the "institutionalization of false consciousness," whereby masses are convinced that the "social order in which they live is natural and inevitable," thus evoking at the very least, acceptance through "resignation." Scott (1985:330-331; 1990:74, 77-78) goes on to criticize this version of Gramsci's notion of ideological hegemony, claiming that there is no evidence that acceptance of a dominant value system by the subordinate classes will diminish social conflict. In order to convince subordinate groups that a "particular social order is in their best interest," it is necessary for the ruling classes to make promises, which once made, must be kept. Failure to do so would lead to the questioning of their legitimacy, thus paving the way for future conflicts.

Scott (1990:79-81) concludes his criticism, arguing that there is no historical or contemporary evidence to support the assumption that the consciousness of the subordinate groups can be so completely imbued with the ideology of the dominant that they become incapable of either imagining a social order in which the "existing distribution of status and rewards" are reversed or which is the negation of the existing "onerous" social order.
He concludes that, "the obstacles to resistance, which are many, are simply not attributable to the inability of subordinate groups to imagine a counter factual social order" (Scott 1990:81).

There are however, Scott argues, reasons why subordinate classes appear to consent to their own exploitation. Scott (1990:xii) explains, "If the powerless are not willing to engage in actual rebellion then it is in their self-interest to reinforce hegemonic appearances." Therefore power relations in the public domain may give the appearance that indeed the subordinate group "consents" to their oppression, however Scott warns, this "public transcript" of the weak is deceptive.

Scott (1990:10) elaborates on his "model of resistance," saying that an understanding of the public performances of the dominant and the subordinate, requires an examination of each group's "hidden transcript," which is derived from "those gestures and words that inflect, contradict, and confirm what appears in the public transcript." The hidden transcript of the subordinate group, Scott explains, is created "out of its ordeal," and "represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant . . . usually in a place 'offstage' beyond direct observation by power holders" (Scott 1990:xii, 4, 9). Scott adds that, "the more menacing the power, the thicker
the mask [of the oppressed]" (Scott 1990:2). It is only in cases in which this "subservience evaporates and is replaced by open defiance," that we encounter what Scott describes as "one of those rare and dangerous moments in power relations" (Scott 1990:6). By this Scott means that:

. . . the first open statement of a hidden transcript, a declaration that breaches the etiquette of power relations, that breaks an apparently calm surface of silence and consent, carries the force of a symbolic declaration of war. . . . [Therefore, when] angry or cheeky subordinates . . . spoil the performance . . . by breaching the frontier between hidden and public transcripts, the dominant have several strategies they can follow. . . . They may elect to ignore a symbolic challenge; they may make a public example of someone; . . . [they may deny the] rebels the status in public discourse they seek; [or] the authorities [may] choose to assimilate [the act of rebellion] to a category that minimizes its political challenge to the state (Scott 1990:8, 18, 205-206).

Rather than ideological hegemony, suggested by Scott as referring to the imposition of an immobilizing value system of the dominant on the subordinate, Scott (1990:4) proposes that the "cultural patterns of domination and subordination" can be much better understood if an examination is focused on "the dialectic of disguise and surveillance," that, he claims, "pervades relations between the weak and the strong."
2. Lears and Roseberry: Hegemony as a "Common Discursive Framework"

Lears (1985), Roseberry (1989, 1992), and Roseberry and O'Brien (1991) argue that Gramsci's concept of "ideological" hegemony implies neither "forced compliance" nor "unconscious adherence" of the subordinate to the will of the dominant, as one might conclude would be the case if Scott's interpretation of Gramsci were accepted. Rather, they claim since "the essence of the concept [of hegemony] is not manipulation but legitimation . . . the line between dominant and subordinate cultures is a permeable membrane, not an impenetrable barrier" (Lears 1985:574).

These authors base their interpretation of the concept of "ideological hegemony" on a close reading of Gramsci's (1971:52-120) chapter entitled "Notes on Italian History." Here, Gramsci maps out the relationship between and within the hegemonic and subaltern (or subordinate) groups in a certain period of Italian history to analyze why the "Piedmont bourgeoisie" failed to form a nation state. Focusing on the inability of the ruling classes to form a unified bloc, Gramsci exposes the "fragility" of hegemony. These dominant groups, Gramsci found, were unable to rule through either force or consent. Revealed in Gramsci's detailed analysis of the reasons behind this abortive attempt at nation-building, is the heterogeneous nature of
both the ruler and the ruled, with their very real, "important internal differences--differences in interests, lived experiences, projects, struggles, and so on" (Roseberry and O'Brien 1991:13). From this analysis, Lears and Roseberry both conclude that Gramsci does not mean that dominant-subordinate interaction is un-problematic, the latter passively accepting the ideological rule of the former, but rather is one "characterized by contention, struggle, and argument . . . " (Roseberry 1992:15).

Therefore in this interpretation of Gramsci, "What hegemony constructs . . . is not a shared ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination" (Roseberry 1992:16).

As Lears and Roseberry's interpretation of hegemony--which will be expanded upon and clarified in the next section in a discussion of William's model of cultural hegemony--corresponds closely with my own reading of Gramsci, it will be the one used in the remainder of this dissertation. While differing with Scott's interpretation of Gramsci, I will illustrate in Chapter Eight that his conclusion on the nature of the dialectic of "disguise and surveillance" that "pervades relations between the weak and the strong" has validity, and his method for demonstrating this dialectic has heuristic value in the ordering of
ethnographic material. In this chapter, I will use the analysis Scott suggests in examining the hidden and public transcripts of the British state, and the Irish Language activist community in West Belfast: (a) to derive the "hegemonic purposes" behind the linking of an independent Irish language group to a paramilitary organization, and (b) to attempt to understand the subsequent response of the Irish language activist community to this apparent attempt to brand the Irish language as subversive.

B. Raymond Williams' Model of Cultural Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony

Elaborating on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Raymond Williams (1977, 1980) has developed a theoretical model in which he analyzes how, as interpreted by Nordstrom and Martin (1992:6), "power shapes cultural processes." Williams asserts that "in any society, in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective" (Williams 1980:38). Arguing against the economic determinism of traditional Marxism, which dismisses cultural, political, social and ideological activity (or superstructure), as mere reflection, imitation, or reproduction of the forces of production (or base), Williams instead depicts cultural hegemony as being:
... the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural ... but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent ... that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure (Williams 1980:37). [Hegemony, then] is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values--constitutive and constituting--which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of ... experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives (Williams 1977:110).

This social process, while being "tied to relations of dominance and subordination," is at the same time, "meaningful" because it represents "a selection from and interpretation of a people's history ... [which] touches aspects of the lived reality, or experience of the dominant and dominated alike" (Roseberry 1989:26-27). Cultural hegemony then, is both powerful and vulnerable in that not only does it allow the "effective self-identification" of the dominated with what is always passed off as "the tradition," "the significant past" (Williams 1980:39), but it leaves room for resistance or counter-hegemony to develop. Williams explains:
From a whole possible area of past and present, in a particular culture, [only] certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings and practices . . . [are, at best] reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture. [This] . . . continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture, [is achieved through a process of incorporation involving such forces of incorporation as] . . . the processes of education; the processes of much wider social training within institutions like the family; the practical definitions and organization of work; [and] the selective tradition at an intellectual and theoretical level (Williams 1977:115; 1980:39).

[But at the same time those] . . . other meanings and practices [that the "effective dominant culture" has] . . . neglected or excluded [or dismissed] as "out of date" or "nostalgic," [or attacked as] "unprecedented" or "alien" . . . [are] effectively recoverable, and many of the alternative or opposing practical continuities are still available (Williams 1977:115-116) [thus making its cultural hegemony vulnerable to both "alternative and oppositional" forms of resistance].

The sources of this resistance then, are found in what Williams calls "residual" and "emergent" cultures. Williams elaborates saying:

Residual [culture, as opposed to] the "archaic" . . . [has by definition] been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present (Williams 1977:122). [On the other hand, "emergent" cultures are the] new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences, [that] are continually being created (Williams 1980:41).
When these residual and emergent cultures are unsuccessfully incorporated or devalued by the "effective dominant culture," its hegemony may be challenged. Clarke et al. (1976), Hebdige (1979), Schweitzer (1988, 1991), Scott (1985), and others, argue that this challenge takes the form of "counter-hegemonic" resistance, in which the powerless group seeks to secure a permanent place for those "meanings and practices" that the "effective dominant culture" has rejected, demeaned and/or ignored. While "symbolic counter-hegemonic forms of expressive resistance, rejection, and revolt . . . involve overt acts of public defiance and direct confrontation with the authorities," Schweitzer (1988:93; 1991:39) argues that, "they remain almost exclusively within the realm of ideology and culture." Schweitzer (1991:39) adds that these practices "seldom represent a substantial political challenge to the fundamental relations of domination in society or to the concrete material conditions which lie at the root of their alienation and subordination."

The reaction of the "effective dominant culture" to these counter hegemonic challenges differs depending on the form and perceived intent. Applying Williams' theory of cultural hegemony, counterhegemonic resistance can be further distinguished as being either alternative or oppositional in nature. Williams (1980:42) describes the
alternative resistor using the analogy of "someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it." He goes on to depict the oppositional resistor as, "someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change the society in its light." Williams (1980:42) adds that, "this is usually the difference between individual and small-group solutions to social crisis and those solutions which properly belong to political and ultimately revolutionary practice."
C. Understanding Resistance in West Belfast's Irish Language Activist Community: A Definitional Model

1. British Linguistic Hegemony and Irish Language Resistance: A Definition of Terms

Theory, Giddens (1984:ix) writes, not only aims to "illuminate, interpret and explain substantive features of human conduct" while "establishing and validating generalizations" but, more importantly for this study, it sensitizes those "conceptual schemes that order and inform processes of inquiry into social life." With this in mind, a theoretical framework will now be proposed, based primarily on Williams' model of "cultural hegemony." This framework will be used in the ensuing analysis in an attempt to decipher the contradictory constructions of language activism made by the British State, versus those of the citizens of West Belfast involved in promoting and reviving the Irish language.

The "effective dominant culture" in Northern Ireland is essentially English-speaking and British. The British state, in keeping with the Gramscian definition of state, is that apparatus which, through force plus consent, implements an "effective dominant culture" in Northern Ireland. The term British government, its local arm being the Northern Ireland Office, refers to the actual people and offices that
carry out the task of the State. The subordinate culture (in this study, culture as it is embodied in the Irish language) is not just oppressed but it possesses neither autonomy nor its own hegemonic position within Northern Ireland. The Irish language, in this study, will be taken to be part of a "residual" not archaic culture, in that despite its two-thousand year heritage, its place in the Irish language activist community in West Belfast is not as a fossil revived from the past but as "an effective element of the present" (Williams 1977:122).

Resistance in the Irish language activist community, it will be argued, is--using Williams concepts--both oppositional and alternative. The resistance of political Irish language activists--which include Sinn Féin, republican prisoners, and others who adhere to the philosophy from the 1916 Rebellion as embodied in the statement by one of its leaders, Pádraig Pearse, "Ireland, not free only but Gaelic as well; not Gaelic only but free as well!"--is oppositional in that it directly challenges British cultural hegemony. On the other hand, the resistance of cultural Irish language activists (in the sense that Williams defines it), is mainly alternative. As one Irish language activist I interviewed stated:

There are many people within the movement for the restoration and the revival of the Irish language who would not necessarily have any political goals
other than the revival of the Irish language. And people who would be happy, for example, to revive the Irish language within a British Commonwealth context or within an independent Northern Ireland context or whatever.

The reaction of the British state to this resistance to British linguistic hegemony has been varied. In the case of oppositional resistance, the State has continued in its cultural suppression of the language and its refusal of the demands of political activists, except in those instances in which the international legal apparatus has forced them to make concessions. The State's response to alternative resistance during the 1980s, reflects what Lears (1985:574) refers to when he describes the permeability of the membrane that separates dominant and subordinate cultures. The State's position on recognizing the Irish language as a part of at least one of the "two traditions" in Northern Ireland, and its decision to fund the Irish language, appears to be a significant change from its historical position of open hostility and "planned neglect" in the pre-1980 period. However, I will argue that rather than actually recognizing the Irish language as reflecting Irish culture, the British state is attempting to re-interpret the Irish language in the Northern Ireland context, thereby incorporating it in forms, "which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture" (Williams 1980:39).
At times, the British state's response to the demands of cultural Irish language activists can resemble its response to oppositional resistance. When cultural activists have in the State's perception, stepped over the boundary, and in so doing, made what Scott describes as "a symbolic declaration of war," as was the case of Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee, an independent Irish language group, the State reaction has been punitive.

2. Language: A Symbolic Expression of Resistance

Throughout this study, the Irish language will be used to represent the dimension of ethnicity that activists, who see themselves as culturally Irish and in some cases also politically Irish, have chosen to accentuate as a symbolic expression of differentness from the "effective dominant culture." An in-depth analysis of language use, as undertaken for example by Milroy (1981), whose work on regional accents of English in Belfast relates speech variation to a social and cultural context, would have value in studies of a narrower focus. Such an analysis would be well suited to, for instance, a study focusing on the extent "jailtacht" Irish has been incorporated into the Irish language in Belfast. Such an analysis, however, is beyond the scope and nature of this study.
Similarly, the theoretical body of literature on language policy and language planning, which concentrates on "first, 'second' and 'other' languages for some citizens in a community which is organically bi- or multilingual . . . [rather than on] 'foreign' languages" (Pritchard 1990:26), is not pertinent to the present study. In Northern Ireland the Irish language has always been, and still is, considered a "foreign" language in a unilingual state. For this reason the Northern Ireland Office and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland have not developed an Irish language policy. Some attempts were made in the 1980s to channel funds into "safe" Irish language projects, and since 1990, to re-interpret the language into the Northern Ireland context. However at the time the research for this study was carried out, 1990-1991, a definite Irish language policy had not been formulated, thus in the school system the status of the Irish language continued to be one of a foreign language. The goal of alternative Irish language activists has been in the past and continues to be, to urge the government to establish an Irish language policy, hence this study of language activism deals with the attempt to create a policy concerning the Irish language in Northern Ireland. The 1991 Census of Northern Ireland, included for the first time a question on the Irish language, and
revealed that 9.4 percent of the population (142,003 people) in Northern Ireland had some knowledge of the language and 79,012 claimed complete fluency (An Phoblacht/Republican News 1992c:12). In light of this revelation, the area of language policy and planning may offer theoretical direction for future studies.

In his socioeconomic profile of an Irish learner, based on a study of 234 people who were enrolled in adult Irish classes in the 1980s, ó hAdhmaill (1985:30) discovered that unemployment did not seem to be a major motivating factor among people deciding to learn Irish, and that those who did choose to learn the language were spread evenly across socio-economic classes. ó hAdhmaill (1985:30) also points out that there were a "high number of professionals learning Irish at a Sinn Féin class [suggesting that] the idea that Sinn Féin holds attraction mainly for the less well educated lower socio-economic groups either didn't affect these people or just doesn't hold true." While suggestive of future areas of research, the body of literature from sociolinguistics on the political economy of language (see Gal 1987; Woolard 1985) which relates "patterns of choice among linguistic variants . . . [to] class relations within the state" (Gal 1987:637), would appear, based on ó hAdhmaill's conclusions, to have no direct application to this study of language activism in Belfast.
Gal's (1987) work on the analysis of code switching patterns would, however, be useful in a future analysis of the circumstances in which the Irish language is used in Belfast and what such usage reveals about the speakers' "consciousness." For example, I was told by an Irish speaker of an incident that took place in West Belfast in the 1980s. The Irish speaker was standing on the sidewalk in Ballymurphy, a strongly nationalist area of West Belfast, having a conversation with another man who did not speak Irish. As a patrol of British soldiers approached, the non-Irish speaker said to his friend, "quick say something to me in Irish." Knowing that the man didn't understand Irish, the Irish speaker said a few simple Irish sentences to his friend and the non-Irish speaker responded in gibberish. After the patrol had passed the non-Irish speaker said to his Irish speaking friend, in English: "That will show them that they are foreigners here." This is but one example of how the study of code-switching could offer an understanding of another dimension of Irish language activism, which while beyond the scope of this work, could be an important focus of future research.

It is the dynamic relationship between domination and resistance at the grass roots level that this ethnographic study of British cultural hegemony and Irish language activism will seek to illuminate. With that objective in mind, the following section will focus on a theoretical
analysis of linguistic/ethnic identity, the use of language in ethnic mobilization, and the responses of the State when the "linguistic hegemony" of the "effective dominant culture" is threatened.

a) Language as Ethnic Identity

In the Irish language activist community of West Belfast, language and ethnic identity are synonymous. Khleif (1979:327), concurring with the findings of my own research, sums up the prevailing attitude toward the Irish language in his definition of the relationship between language and ethnicity:

A language, in a very real sense, is the pedigree of a people. . . . Language is both the social history of a people and its Anschauung; it structures both the social perception of a people's past and the interpretation of its future. Language creates consciousness; as Naipaul . . . has said, a native language ties a people more closely to its landscape and breeds definable loyalties to it. On the other hand, an adopted language, as Sartre maintains . . . is for the native writer a kind of prison, for it is the creation of a different civilization. In short, a native language is a language of regeneration.

[Khleif concludes by stressing that] an attack on one's language is but an attack on one's personal integrity and on one's group integrity, for the person is essentially a reflection of his group affiliations.
The question then, becomes who does and does not belong to this linguistic/ethnic group. This question has sparked lively debate in the anthropological literature. The following is a brief outline of the main arguments of this debate, and should serve to elucidate ideas relevant to the understanding of how Irish language activists construct their identity as a distinct ethnic group.

The terms "ethnicity" and "ethnic" made their début into the language of anthropology roughly twenty-five years ago. Their birth is generally linked to the appearance of a collection of articles in a book edited and introduced by Barth (1969) titled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Cohen 1978; Nagata 1973), even though prior to this time some attempts had been made to discover objective criteria that would delimit what Naroll (1964) called a "cultunit" and Moerman (1965) "Lue-ness." Since Barth's work there has been a steadily accelerating acceptance of these terms, so that today, "almost any cultural-social unit, indeed any term describing particular structures of continuing social relations or sets of regularized events now can be referred to as an 'ethnic' this or that" (Cohen 1978:379).

The first attempts to distinguish the criteria which could be used to differentiate one group from another concentrated on finding objective cultural markers. For example Naroll (1964:284) proposed six criteria which could
be used for defining whole societies, or used in comparative studies of different societies: territorial contiguity; political organization; language; ecological adjustment; local community structure; and the distribution of the particular traits being studied. Cohen (1978:382) criticizes Naroll's definition of a "cultunit," saying, "but no set of criteria fits all cases. Instead they vary with societal complexity, regional and continental contexts, the ethnographer and probably with time as well." Moerman (1965) hints that objective delimiters alone would not adequately describe the Lue, a tribe located in modern Thailand. But while Moerman points toward a definition of ethnic identity that would include both objective and subjective criteria, it was Barth 1969 who first postulated the definition.

Barth (1969) summarizes the anthropological definition of ethnicity in four elements:

(a) A biologically self-perpetuating population.
(b) A sharing of cultural values and forms.
(c) A field of communication and interaction.
(d) A grouping that identifies itself and is identified by other categories of the same type (Cohen 1978:385).

This definition has gained wide acceptance in anthropology. For example, Segal (1979:10) describes the three essential components of ethnicity as:
(a) Cultural and biological factors clustered over time and passed down from one generation to another.
(b) Interaction of a "purported ethnic group" with another in the same society.
(c) "A common subjective identification" based on the cultural and biological factors mentioned above as well as a "distinctive pattern of loyalties and solidarity" which are "passed on through differential socialization" thus making any attempt at arriving at a completely universal definition of ethnic identity impossible.

Sugar (1980:421-422) also discusses the objective and cultural attributes, which when combined with subjective feelings and behaviour patterns—often manifested by the use of numerous symbols—result in a sense of ethnic identity by a group of people. Linz (1985:205) on the other hand, argues that initially the definition of ethnicity is based on objective and cultural attributes but when the group is mobilized this definition of "belonging" becomes much more subjective. He advanced the hypothesis that while primordial elements—those relations based on a common descent, race, language, etc.—may be initially emphasized as the source of ethnic group membership, this emphasis will later shift as ethnicity and nationalism become linked. This shift in emphasis is toward a definition based on territoriality—members who "live and work" in an area, who are willing to identify with that community, or both. Thus, common descent is de-emphasized as a necessary condition for membership in a nation group.
Other anthropologists have departed significantly from the definitional model of ethnic identity posited by Barth, doing away with the biological attributes of ethnic identification all together. Heiberg (1979) for example, maintains that the definition of what a "true" Basque is, does not require that a person be Basque by descent. She supports her argument by pointing out that "one of the Basques' most revered martyrs, Juan Paredes Manot was an immigrant who spoke no Euskera; 'Long live free Euskadi!' he cried as he was executed by Franco's police" (Heiberg 1979:195). From this, Heiberg (1979:195) concludes that "a person is 'Basque' when he is seen as adhering to the symbols of Basqueness."

Whittaker (1986), presents the interactionist and existentialist view of ethnic identity in which ethnicity is seen as a "social construction" (1986:148) and where the "variability and legitimacy" of the identity of interacting groups are "essentially negotiated in each encounter."

Whittaker (1986:165) continues:

... ethnicity is not a physical fact but rather is the product of a consciousness shaped to see it. It exists as a tradition of cultural ideas mapped onto a population. These ideas assert certain kinds of agreed upon social facts which serve as a warrant for other things. Their use becomes routinized, repetitive and invariant.
Whittaker (1986:191-192) concludes by suggesting that ethnicity should be appraised as "an organizing code, as a sense-making device, as a *lingua franca* . . . as a way of viewing the world . . . [and hence] analyzed as a metaphor."

In much of the anthropological research undertaken in Northern Ireland, ethnicity has been defined primarily in terms of religion--Catholic or Protestant (see Burton 1978; Donnan and McFarlane 1986a, 1986b; Harris 1972; Jackson 1972; Larsen 1982a, 1982b; Leyton 1974a, 1974b, 1975; Sluka 1989). Some authors, (notably Burton and Sluka) however, see British imperialism rather than religion, as being largely responsible for the "troubles" in Northern Ireland. McCann (1985:6-13) has argued convincingly that the "two tribes" (Jackson 1972) or "two communities" (Leyton 1974a, 1974b, 1975) implied by this religious dichotomizing of Northern Ireland society are a "misrepresentation and are counter-productive." She argues that these two notions: (a) fail to take into account the internal heterogeneity within each of these so called "communities/tribes"; (b) imply parity, obscuring the "permanent majority/permanent minority" situation in Northern Ireland; (c) suggest "irrationality" (especially the "two tribes" notion); (d) fail to "take adequate account of the [historic and contemporary role of] the State" in the Northern Ireland situation; and (e) are "ahistorical."
In this dissertation, I will argue that the religious definition of ethnic identity does not reflect the way the Irish language activist community in Belfast defines ethnic identity. I will propose that the Irish language activist discourse reveals three different definitions of ethnicity and that the membership of each of these three ethnic groups consists of both Catholics and Protestants. First, there are those who see themselves as both culturally and politically Irish; secondly, there are those who see themselves as culturally Irish but politically British; and then there are those who see themselves as both culturally and politically British.

As will be discussed below, aspects of the different anthropological constructions of "ethnicity," even ones that appear to be mutually exclusive (e.g., those of Barth and Whittaker), are at varying times and circumstances part of the discourse of Irish language activists in defining the attributes of who is and who is not a member of each of these three ethnic groups.

Given that Irish language activism depends on a mechanism which will ensure the stable and continued persistence of a linguistic identity, this section will conclude with a discussion of ethnic boundaries. In Barth's social interaction model of ethnic identity, ethnic groups are defined in terms of inclusion and exclusion.
Thus the construction of ethnic boundaries becomes a crucial part of defining who "we" are. A brief summary of Barth's (1969) concept of ethnic group boundaries would include the following basic premises:

(a) "Ethnic boundaries define the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses" (Barth 1969:15).

(b) Because ethnicity is defined by boundaries, both the cultural and biological content and form of the group can alter but as long as the boundary mechanism is maintained, the distinctiveness of the group is retained.

(c) "Boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them. . . . In other words, ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the courses of the individual life histories" (Barth 1969:9-10).

(d) Boundaries are created and maintained because of the self-perceived notion of group members that "belongedness" has an adaptive advantage. Perceived ecological, economic, demographic and political advantage, according to Barth, do affect choice of group membership.
It is this final point that has engendered the most criticism of Barth's model of ethnic boundaries and ethnic groups; criticism especially from those theorists who favour a more psychological approach to ethnicity.

If as Barth suggests, boundaries are consciously created because of their adaptive advantage to the group, then why, several authors ask (Alverson 1979:15-16; DeVos 1975:8; Smith 1981:46-47) does a group that does not have any visible barriers to prevent its assimilation into the majority culture—a move that in most cases is assumed to be both politically and economically advantageous—choose to maintain a separate identity. Alverson (1979), Devereux (1975), and DeVos (1975) conclude that boundaries are a means of preserving self-identity and that membership in a group is not the result of perceived benefits that the individual believes will flow his way due to the resources that the group provides. Instead, these authors argue that "membership in itself is [deemed to be] the reason for belonging [and that this membership is less fluid than Barth posits because] an individual can deny or abandon [his or her] . . . ethnic identity only at a great psychic cost, for it lies at the core of self-identity" (Alverson 1979:16).

Ethnic boundaries in Ireland, as Barth has suggested and as will be illustrated in Chapter Three below, have sometimes been defined in terms of their adaptive advantage.
This first occurred at the time the Anglo-Norman settlers in Ireland adopted the Gaelic language and culture, "becoming more Irish than the Irish," and later, in the wake of Henry VIII's conversion to Protestantism, joined with the native Irish to form a single Catholic group (see Kachuk 1987). Adaptive advantage, I will argue, also played a role in the decision of the Catholic middle and upper classes to abandon the Irish language and culture--and in some cases their religion as well--in favour of the imposed English culture and language. However, why some of the Catholic ascendancy (i.e., Anglo-Normans) opted to become part of the peasantry rather than become anglicized, why Protestant settlers chose to become culturally and in some cases politically identified as part of a Gaelic-speaking culture, and why both groups joined the native Gaels in resistance against English linguistic hegemony, probably is better explained by the above psychological arguments of Alverson, Devereux, and DeVos which are at variance with those of Barth. The oppression and discrimination that the decision to retain the Irish language and culture brought about could hardly be termed an adaptive advantage (see Chapter Three, below).
b) Language as Power

As Sagarin and Moneymaker (1979:35) argue, "Language is power . . . and is utilized by both sides in the fight over the redistribution of power." This section will examine how both ethnonationalist movements, and the State, utilize language to achieve their political goals.

(1) Language and Ethnonationalism: A Tool for Ethnic Mobilization

Language can become a potent weapon when it is used to mobilize and unify an ethnic minority. In the arsenal of a movement seeking separation from a linguistically different group, language can be used to win over such an ethnic minority and develop it into a strong ally of the struggle. To illustrate the intrinsic power of language in a nationalist struggle, Fishman (1977:19) writes that:

Mobilized ethnicity often makes language into a dynamic corpus mysticum. It is not only the conveyor of other ethnic symbols. It is not even merely an ethnic symbol in and of itself. It is "flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood" and, therefore, all the more powerful as a conveyor, as a symbol, and as a summum bonum, well worth living and dying for.
Even if, as Sagarin and Moneymaker (1979:33) point out, a language is "diminish[ed] in its daily utilization [until it is] . . . little more than a cultural fossil [it can still] continue to be a symbolic rallying point for the ethnic group." The popularity of language as a mechanism for winning the support of an ethnic minority toward the goals and objectives of a nationalist movement, is rooted in its malleability as a symbol, in that: (a) it offers the movement a mark of legitimacy and authenticity (Fishman 1977, 1980, 1989); (b) it embodies the indignities inflicted upon a group's ethnolinguistic identity by a colonial/oppressive power (Fishman 1989); and (c) it can be re-cast as a symbol of the group's socio-economic and political oppression (Hechter 1975; Khleif 1979, 1985; Sagarin and Moneymaker 1979). Each of these symbolic linkages is relevant to the understanding of the relationship between the Irish language and the Irish Republican Movement, and each will be discussed separately.

*State* and *nation* are acknowledged as having different meanings in the literature on politics but in actual usage the two terms tend to be regarded as interchangeable (Connor 1972:333). Richmond (1987:4) writes:

The essence of a state is that it is a system of government exercising supreme authority, having a monopoly over the legitimate use of military and other coercive agencies within a clearly defined territory, and whose sovereignty is recognized by other states.
Richmond adds that a state may consist of one or more nations.

A nation on the other hand, is "a social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions and customs, and a sense of homogeneity" (Connor 1972:333). While "territory" is a necessary component of a nation, its boundaries may or may not be coterminous with those of the state (Connor 1972; Richmond 1987).

A central issue thus becomes: When does an ethnic group form a nation-group whose feelings of nationalism can be manipulated and intensified to correspond to the beliefs and goals of a nationalist movement? In a series of articles on this issue, Connor (1972, 1973, 1978), suggests two conditions which must be met before an ethnic group becomes a nation. First, the members of the ethnic group must become self-aware of the group's uniqueness, "while an ethnic group may, therefore, be other-defined, the nation must be self-defined" (Connor 1978:338). Secondly, the group's members must be aware that the customs, beliefs and attitudes they share are different from those shared by other groups. In other words, the group's members must be conscious that they form a "collective we," while members of other groups belong to a "collective them."
It is imperative then, that both a nationalist group's members, and their nationalist aspirations be identified as being legitimate parts of the "collective we" that they are attempting to mobilize. One of the ways a nationalist group can achieve this "collective we" legitimation is through emphasizing the common linguistic heritage that they share with the rest of an ethnic minority. Nationalists can seek this authenticity directly, not just by promoting identification with a language but by furthering the "identification of authenticity with a particular language which is experientially unique" (Fishman 1989:274). Nationalists may also pursue authenticity indirectly. The glorification of an ethnic group's oral and written imagery of the vernacular can be used to awaken and arouse feelings of difference and a sense of unity within the group.

In the case of direct authentication, language and nationality are promoted as being inseparable. To illustrate this point, Fishman (1989:279) quotes from Spenser's *A View of Ireland*, indicating the "naturalness of the link" between language and nationality:

... by a single phrase: "So that the speech being Irish, the heart must needs be Irish" ... [and] a Welsh writer of the same period, "Our tongue cannot be learned by a stranger; its fire burns only in a native breast" (Fishman 1989:279).
Thus, through the promotion of "our language" which is
different from "their" language, the group is made conscious
of itself as a unique linguistic entity.

In the case of indirect authentication, the ethnic
group's awareness "that the customs, beliefs and attitudes
they share are different from those shared by other groups,"
is brought forcefully into consciousness by the new
intensified emphasis that nationalism gives to the
vernacular. Therefore:

... through nationalism masses of people attain
and maintain a new and a constantly renewed sense
of identity and purpose. Their new (or old-new)
songs, poems, slogans and proverbs, the moving
phrases of their leaders and teachers, their
national epics and their national literatures, are
all part and parcel of a sense of (re)birth,
awakening, and mastery . . . (Fishman 1989:287).

Finally, language is also used as the vehicle through
which an ethnonationalist movement is able to reach into the
"glorious past" to authenticate the present. Fishman
(1989:276) explains, "vernaculars [are viewed] as direct
bonds with historical glory (and, therefore, with either the
reality or the potentiality for current glory)." For
example, it is little wonder why Pádraig Pearse's cry from
the battlefield of 1916, "Ireland, not free only but Gaelic
as well; not Gaelic only but free as well!", has been
revived as a slogan of the Republican Movement of today, and with it the conviction that this time victory will bring a united thirty-two county Republic of Ireland. As one political Irish language activist in Belfast explained to me:

Since the Irish language revival began, we can trace [its beginnings] back to the time when the first people came under attack from the colonial power. There have always been those people within the Irish language movement--revivalist movement--who have been separatists and who believe that reviving the Irish language itself would be no use unless you have an independent country and a government of your own to rule that country. And I think that over the last 20 years, since 1969, that accent has been among those people who believe along with Pearse that they want Ireland to not only be Gaelic but free as well, not only free but Gaelic as well and I think that has come to the fore.

An ethnic minority that has been stimulated into heightened awareness of its own uniqueness and of its own "specific way of ordering belief and experience [and] of giving meaning" (Pi-Sunyer 1985:274), in the process becomes conscious that "the collective dominant them" has degraded and suppressed "our" culture, "our" beliefs, and "our" language, in their quest to impose "their" culture, "their" beliefs, and "their" language on "our group." It is these "feelings of linguistic inferiority or cultural suppression" (Khleif 1985:187), that can be effectively utilized by a
nationalist movement to make their cause the cause of the people. Quoting from the literature of Ireland, Fishman shows how linguistic dignity and freedom of the ethnic minority, and the nationalist aspirations of de-colonization and self-determination come to be one and the same:

To impose another language on . . . a people is to send their history adrift . . . to tear their identity from all places. . . . To lose your native tongue, and learn that of an alien, is the worst badge of conquest--it is the chain on the soul. To have lost entirely the national language is death; the fetter has worn through. . . . Nothing can make us believe that it is natural . . . for the Irish to speak the speech of the alien, the invader, the Sassenach tyrant, and to abandon the language of our kings and Heroes. . . . No!, oh no! the "brighter day shall surely come" and the green flag shall wave on our towers and the sweet old language be heard once more in college, mart and senate (Thomas Davis 1845, quoted in Fishman 1989:280).

Sagarin and Moneymaker (1979:35) claim that language can also be, "useful, if not indispensible [for] rallying people in power struggles [even though the] . . . aims, goals and motives of this struggle may be unrelated to language itself." Khleif (1979:350, 348; 1985:178) explains, saying that:

. . . an emphasis on language is usually an emphasis on something else--on dignity, identity, and economic power. . . . When a language has been suppressed, banned, or humiliated, then an emphasis on its resurgence becomes a powerful symbol of regeneration. . . . We, therefore,
define ethnicity as political mobilization, a reaction to a perceived sociocultural threat. The supreme symbol of unity often becomes a traditionally suppressed native language, which cuts across internal divisions, vested interests, and feelings of inferiority.

The denial of language rights via linguistic discrimination then, can not be separated from the socio-economic and political discrimination experienced by the ethnic minority as a whole. Thus, the power of language as a symbol of ethnic mobilization is enhanced when it can be linked to the socio-economic and political issues which are at the core of a nationalist struggle (Khleif 1979:349; Sagarin and Moneymaker 1979:35). Hechter's (1975) internal colonialism model proposes one way that language could be linked to socio-economic and political issues and become instrumental in generating an "ethno-regional" movement.

Hechter (1975:10) argues that the results of the "uneven spread of modernization" over the state at the beginning of the industrialization period produced "advanced" and "less advanced" groups. By institutionalizing this new stratification system, the super-ordinate group hoped to maintain the advantage gained by having an uneven distribution of resources and power within the state. The allocation of all social roles was regulated by the super-ordinate group. Subordinate groups, denied access to
positions of power, became dependent on the "advanced" group. As a result of this new system of stratification, termed the "cultural division of labour" by Hechter, groups with "distinctive ethnic identification" emerged.

While theoretically, peripheral groups should assimilate into the core, Hechter (1975:43) points out that:

When objective cultural differences [in particular language and accent; distinctive religious practices; and lifestyle] are superimposed upon economic inequalities, forming a cultural division of labor, and when adequate communication [through language societies, cultural festivals and similar institutions,] exists as a facilitating factor, the chances for successful political integration of the peripheral collectivity into the national society are minimized.

Hechter argues that the uneven development of economic resources between culturally dissimilar groups stimulates reactive collective action by the disadvantaged (peripheral) group. This reactive collective action, Hechter continues, often takes the form of an ethno-regional movement which seeks to change the allocation of societal resources.

The Irish language is closely connected with the ethos of the Republican Movement, both today and in the past, and as such is used as a "symbolic weapon" of resistance by the movement in its struggle for self-determination. After the hunger strike in 1981, Sinn Féin became actively involved in the Irish language movement, which it saw as an effective
vehicle for raising Irish ethnic awareness. Through this involvement, Sinn Féin was able to mobilize support for and legitimization of itself and its goals in the nationalist community. Chapter Six, will examine the relationship between Sinn Féin and the Irish language movement, and especially the often made accusation, "Sinn Féin has hijacked the Irish language."

(2) Language and the State: To Win the Hearts and Minds of the People

Societies can be divided into ethnic and non-ethnic groups, the latter being defined as "the dominant or ethnically 'neutral' area which represents the ultimate goal of all members of society or at the very least [represents] the standards by which they are measured" (Nagata 1973:331). In those cases where "ethnics" refuse to be assimilated, thus challenging the cultural hegemony of the "non-ethnics", the latter must react.

From the above discussion of Williams' model of cultural hegemony, the "effective dominant culture," when confronted with "meanings and practices" that conflict with its own—in the case of Northern Ireland, a completely different language (and all the ethnically distinct identity
that it embodies) as discussed above--will seek to maintain its cultural hegemony through two courses of State action. The State can: (a) "incorporate," these challenging subordinate "meanings and practices" through "re-interpretation," or "dilution," or by the embodiment of these conflicting factors in "forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture"; or (b) it can neglect or exclude them in such a way as to render them undesirable even to those segments of the population that identify with these "other meanings and practices" (Williams 1977:115-116).

Tajfel, in his theory of intergroup relations (described in Giles, Bourthis and Taylor 1977:342-343), offers a number of strategies the dominant cultural group may employ to devalue and marginalize a minority group's language. Tajfel describes one method as the "use of verbal affronts" or "ethnophaulisms" which are employed to "demean members of the subordinate groups." For example, in Northern Ireland the Irish Catholics are commonly referred to as "Paddies" or "Taigs." Humour is often used by the dominant group "to ridicule members of the subordinate group who are attempting to assert their identity." The "Irish bulls" (Irish jokes) have been used historically, and are still used to ridicule the Irish language and culture (see Curtis 1968; Curtis 1984; and Chapter 3, below).
Another tactic employed by the dominant group is the use of "rational statements" when "refusing ethnolinguistic minorities their right to develop their own cultural distinctiveness" (Giles, Bourthis and Taylor 1977:342-343). The often used "rational" argument by the British state for not supporting the Irish language is that "the language is dead" and has no place in a modern Britain or a unified Europe.

Tajfel also argues, based on evidence from the United States, that even when the state appears to be granting linguistic rights to ethnic minorities "by means of bilingual programmes," that these programmes are "actually designed to promote assimilation rather than cultural pluralism." Tajfel concludes that the dominant group, as a last resort, can assert its "linguistic values onto minority groups through government legislation" (Giles, Bourthis and Taylor 1977:342-343).

All of the above strategies--those of incorporation plus those outlined by Tajfel to undermine and exclude a subordinate language and culture--have been used in both historical and contemporary Northern Ireland to counteract the threat posed by the Irish language to British linguistic hegemony, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters.
III. The Plan

In any construction of knowledge, the conditions of the construction must be analyzed. The ideological and emotional agenda of the construction must be examined. This will be done reflexively in Chapter Two. Special attention will be given to the methodological and ethical problems of doing fieldwork in a dangerous environment. Through my fieldwork experience, the context in which contemporary Irish language resistance in Belfast is constructed will be elucidated. Using the "beyond the community" approach, Chapter Three will analyze the history of the oppressive conditions which brought into being the contemporary counter-hegemonic Irish language activist community in West Belfast.

In the pre-1980 Northern Ireland State, hostility to the Irish language and what Andrews (1991) describes as a "planned policy of neglect" continued to dominate the government's public transcript. Within the Northern Irish language activist community prior to 1980, open resistance to government policy was at a low ebb. But despite the lack of serious public challenge to the government's hegemony over the Irish language community, there were some significant actions by these activists prior to 1980.
Those who organized Irish classes in the 1930s, 40s and 50s—the group that in 1969 set up an Irish language housing scheme on Shaws Road in West Belfast, and who in 1971 set up Northern Ireland's first Irish-medium primary school—and the activists who in 1936 opened the Cluain Ard (an Irish language club), are today acknowledged as having provided the basis for the Irish language revival that exploded in the 1980s. Chapter Four will examine what Scott (1990) would describe as the "apparently calm surface of silence and consent" that dominated relations between the government and the Irish language community prior to 1980.

The Irish language has long been the symbolic "badge of resistance" of republican prisoners. In 1980, the blanket and dirty protests against the British government's attempt to criminalize the republican struggle were entering their fifth year. The hunger strike of 1981 marked the next stage of these protests, which before it ended left Ireland with ten more martyrs. The image of naked men—wrapped only in a blanket, in filthy cells, some wasting away—teaching themselves to become fluent Irish speakers, had a tremendous impact on the nationalist community outside. There was a huge growth in interest in the Irish language, not just because of what was occurring in the jails but also on local streets. As Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Republican Movement gained prominence in the political arena, the
perceived connection between it and the Irish language movement became stronger—especially in State propaganda. The next two chapters will explore the relationship between Irish republicanism and Irish language activism. Chapter Five will focus on the context of Irish language activism, beginning with the formation of the Northern Ireland State and concluding with the 1981 hunger strike and its impact on the nationalist community. Chapter Six will be devoted to an investigation into the connection between Sinn Féin and the Irish language revival, following the period of prison protests.

In contrast to the pre-1980 Irish language activism, during the post-hunger strike period alternative Irish language activists began to demand rights for Irish language speakers. The Sinn Féin style of Irish language activism was not the only model of activism that alternative Irish language activists had available to them to structure their campaigns. The Welsh model of "direct action" was becoming increasingly well known in Belfast. After a discussion of this model, Chapter Seven will contain a detailed examination of several individual campaigns by alternative Irish language activist groups and the State's response. The Chapter will conclude with an analysis of the State's recent attempts to incorporate the Irish language into the Northern Ireland context, through re-interpretation and dilution, and the difficulties it faced.
After the hunger strike, the State adopted a dual strategy of directly targeting republicans on the one hand and appealing to the less militant segments of the Nationalist population on the other. The mushrooming Irish language revival that followed in the wake of the hunger strikes prompted the government to make another policy decision: the allocation of funds toward Irish language initiatives. However, because it had had nothing to do with the Irish language for most of the life of the Northern Ireland State, the government had no contacts at the grass roots level. This, in addition to the high profile that Sinn Féin had in the Irish language movement, posed a real problem when it came to actually funding the language. Therefore, when it started to assume responsibility for the Irish language, the government acknowledged that not all the language activists were revolutionaries but it needed to weed out the most radical elements and those that it felt might be close to Sinn Féin. Glór na nGael West Belfast Committee, an independent Irish language group, was one such group the government felt it must weed out. Chapter Eight will investigate the strategies used by the government when the demands of alternative Irish language activism take the form of a "symbolic declaration of war." The blacklisting of Glór na nGael, and the impact that this action had on the Irish language activist community will be analyzed.
Chapter Two

Fieldwork in a Politically Turbulent Environment

A "subculture," as defined by Clarke et al. (1976), is said to consist of a subordinate "sub-set" which, through resistance, is keeping its hegemonic "parent" culture at bay. The authors maintain therefore, that a subculture, "though differing in important ways--in its 'focal concerns,' its peculiar shapes and activities--from the culture from which it derives, will also share some things in common with that 'parent' culture" (Clarke et al. 1976:13, emphasis added). While recognizing that through years of making and remaking of both the "effective dominant culture," and the subordinate Irish culture in Northern Ireland, the two may have some "meaning and practices" in common, the "parent" culture of the subordinate Irish culture is not British. Therefore, Irish language activists do not represent a sub-culture of the system of cultural hegemony they are resisting. On the other hand, according to Cohen (1985), a community is not a physically bounded unit, but instead one constructed by those who claim membership in it.
Cohen presents the view that:

whether or not its structural boundaries remain intact, the reality of community lies in its members' perception of the vitality of its culture. People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity (Cohen 1985:118).

Irish language activists use language as a symbolic mechanism to distinguish themselves from the linguistically and culturally different "effective dominant culture" in Northern Ireland, and as such can be said to constitute a community.

With the discussion of ethnicity and ethnic boundaries in Chapter One in mind, and in concurrence with Cohen's (1985) definition of a "community," the analysis presented here will be based on a community study. I will provide a detailed account of the "community" of Irish language activists in West Belfast and their resistance to British cultural hegemony in Northern Ireland. This community is made up of two main groups of Irish language activists, with similar linguistic interests but differing aims. Alternative Irish language activists are attempting to secure a permanent space for the Irish language and culture in Northern Ireland, regardless of the political future of the area, while oppositional Irish language activists, have made the Irish language an integral part of their revolutionary ideology and strategy.
In this chapter the methods used to study the nature of cultural hegemony and resistance in Northern Ireland will be discussed. There are no politically neutral terms to use for either territorial designations, or groups of people in Northern Ireland--including the term "Northern Ireland" itself. The first section of the chapter will introduce the main actors in the cultural struggle, and elucidate my somewhat querulous solution to the dilemma of politically neutral terms. My interaction with the participants in the sometimes hostile, sometimes beguiling, and always enigmatic environment of war-torn Belfast will be taken up in the next section.

During an interview I was told, "people in West Belfast are in pain, they're drinking too much, you sort of get very depressed, you're asked for direct answers to questions when there are no direct answers. There's no black and white anything." With this in mind, the concluding section of this chapter will detail the methodology used to investigate Irish language resistance to British cultural hegemony.
I. A Terminological Muddle: The Search for Political Neutrality

A. The Actors

Both the dominant and the subordinate groups in Northern Ireland are neither politically nor religiously homogeneous. The Northern Ireland population of approximately 1.5 million (sixty percent Protestant and forty percent Catholic) is broadly labeled as either unionist/loyalist or nationalist/republican.

Unionists identify themselves culturally and politically as British. They are mostly monarchists and wish Northern Ireland to remain as part of the United Kingdom. Religiously, unionists are predominantly, but not exclusively, Protestant. From my research, a finding statistically confirmed by Sluka (1989), approximately five to ten percent of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland do see themselves as British, and support union with Britain. Politically, unionists range from those who support total union with Britain—a situation in which Westminster would continue to rule Northern Ireland directly (as it has done since 1972)—to those who want devolution—a return to the pre-1972 period when the local Stormont parliament had complete decision making power in Northern Ireland affairs. These two opposing political views are represented by the two major unionist political parties:
the Official Unionist Party, and the Democratic Unionist Party.

The *Official Unionist Party* (OUP), is the largest political party, and the one that provided government in the North from the formation of the Northern Ireland State in 1922, until direct rule in 1972. While many OUP members support continued total union with Britain, others are seeking what the leader of the OUP terms "administrative devolution" (Molyneaux 1990). Under administrative devolution some decision making powers, especially those concerned with law-making, would remain the under the bailiwick of Westminster. Other areas, such as housing, health, and education, would be handled by one or more regional councils (Ulster Unionist Party, n.d.).

The *Democratic Unionist Party* (DUP), was founded in 1971 by Rev. Ian Paisley, the founder of the Free Presbyterian Church, and by the then MP and former OUP member, Desmond Boal. The party takes a strong stance on preventing anything Irish from tainting the British identity in Northern Ireland. To quote from its 1985 election manifesto:

> The DUP being totally committed to the Union with Great Britain and implacably opposed to an All Ireland Republic, utterly rejects any involvement by Dublin in the affairs of Northern Ireland (Democratic Unionist Party 1985:2).
Unlike the OUP, the DUP wants the re-establishment of the full decision-making powers of the Stormont Parliament.

Having democratic Stormont rule as a top priority, the DUP refuses to countenance support for anything which would delay or impede the return of powers to the Stormont Assembly (DUP 1985:3).

Loyalists represent an extreme unionist view, and believe that there should be no Irish influence, cultural or political, in Northern Ireland. A portion of the Loyalist population is actively involved in one of two major Loyalist paramilitary groups—-the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), and the Ulster Defense Association (UDA). These groups maintain that they are not sectarian and their targets are republicans, enemies of the British state. Loyalist paramilitary groups see their duty as performing tasks shirked by British security forces (see Ulster Volunteer Force 1974). The claim by the loyalist paramilitaries that they target only republicans, and the generally accepted notion that their activity is "reactive" to IRA violence rather than "proactive," has been challenged in a recently released special report. It was disclosed that during the current "troubles," only twenty of the more than eight hundred victims of loyalist paramilitaries were republicans (Thornton 1992:1).

Nationalists and republicans identify themselves as culturally and politically Irish, and envision an eventual
reunification of Ireland as a necessary element in the solution to the present conflict. While the perception of "the problem" in Northern Ireland varies somewhat between the two groups, the basic difference between them is over the means by which unification should be achieved. Despite a predominantly Catholic membership of both groups, a number of Protestants I interviewed during my fieldwork, identified themselves as either nationalists or republicans and maintained that Ireland should indeed be reunited. A sociological study conducted in 1968 claimed that approximately twenty percent of Protestants in Northern Ireland described themselves as Irish (Fitzgerald 1988:198).

Moderate nationalists politically support the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). The SDLP was formed in 1970 with a socialist platform that sought to end political and economic discrimination of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland. It strongly opposes the use of violence as a means of bringing about a united Ireland. Instead, the SDLP believes that through dialogue, compromise, and agreement among the four groups concerned (the unionists, the nationalists, and the British and Irish governments), a solution to the present conflict can be worked out (6 hAdhmaill 1990a:700). The SDLP were:

prepared to accept an interim internal Northern Ireland settlement, prior to Irish reunification [or to] accept a compromise settlement which would involve both the British and Irish States.
However, it was clear that the overwhelming view within the SDLP was that there must eventually be some sort of special constitutional linkage between North and South. In its view, this could be achieved only through dialogue and persuasion (ó hAadhmaill 1990a:700-701).

The Republican Movement consists of a political base--Sinn Féin--with a military component--the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Unlike the SDLP, Sinn Féin maintains that peace is only possible following a complete British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. After this withdrawal, Sinn Féin proposes an "all Ireland solution" in which unionists, loyalists, nationalists, republicans, Catholics and Protestants, both north and south of the border, would decide Ireland's future together. The Republican Movement and its supporters, therefore, see Britain as the main obstacle to a political solution in Northern Ireland, and view "the problem" as British imperialism which can only be removed through armed struggle (ó hAadhmaill 1990a:700). The IRA, in carrying out this armed struggle, claims as its prime targets those who symbolically represent the British state via its military, legal, and administrative apparatus in Northern Ireland. In keeping with republican ideology, the IRA is not governed by sectarian motives, thus if targets of the IRA fit its definition of "legitimate," religious beliefs will not mitigate the consequences (see Bell 1990). While the IRA is primarily involved in an armed
struggle against the formal institutions of the British state, the aims of the Republican movement go beyond the removal of the political and economic influence of the British state in Ireland. The Republican vision of a "free" Ireland includes the replacement of the present British "effective dominant culture" with a distinctively Irish one, whose makeup is determined by all the people of Ireland.

The British state, contrary to republican views, claims "the problem" in Northern Ireland to be a religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants, and portrays its role as a mediator, trying to bring the "two communities" peacefully together (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1988).

Twenty-three years of war in Northern Ireland has resulted in an enormous drain on the British economy. Recent actions by the State hint that Britain is looking for a way to withdraw from Northern Ireland without loss of face. The negotiation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, and the periodic revival of the "talks" process in which members of the two Unionist parties, the SDLP, and the British and Irish governments attempt to reach some sort of agreement on Northern Ireland's political future, attest to the State's desire to withdraw with honour.

Were the British to simply and immediately withdraw from Northern Ireland, as suggested by the Republican Movement, this action could be interpreted by the British
public as an IRA victory, and by the international community as giving in to terrorism. Loyalists have already interpreted these recent measures by the British government to reach a political solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland as a betrayal of the Protestant majority. As a result, Unionists have waged a vigorous "Ulster Says No" campaign against the Anglo-Irish agreement. These feelings of betrayal have also resulted in a deadlock in the "talks" process on the issue of involvement of the Irish government in Northern Ireland's future. Thus, a negotiated settlement that excludes Sinn Féin, and which could be interpreted as a British victory does not seem likely.

When republicans use the term *Brits*, they are describing those who are involved directly in implementing or in maintaining "British colonial rule" in Northern Ireland: the Security Forces, those supplying goods and services to the Security Forces, politicians, judges, and so on. The term *British* is usually used in reference to the British government or more abstractly to the British state, rather than to the British people, whom republicans regard as uninformed in what their government is doing in Northern Ireland.

The *Northern Ireland Office* is under the direct control of Westminster and the office holders in it are appointed by the ruling party in the British House of Commons.
The security forces consist of, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR)—which until July 1991, was called the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR)—and the British Army. To most unionists, the RUC are the equivalent of a community police force. To the majority of nationalists and all republicans, the RUC is a sectarian paramilitary police force. The RIR is a locally raised, mainly part-time force within the British army structure. It is perceived as decidedly sectarian, by nationalists and republicans alike.

B. The Territory

All terms used to describe the geographical division of Ireland are imbued with political implications. Northern Ireland is the legal name for that portion of the ancient Irish province of Ulster politically claimed by Britain in 1922 when Ireland was divided. This term is most commonly used in unionist or British discourse and occasionally also in nationalist and republican discourse.

Unionist and loyalist discourse has its own set of pertinent terminology. The term Ulster is used in place of Northern Ireland, and to emphasize the "constitutional relationship between Northern Ireland and Britain" (legally
England, Scotland and Wales), the term *United Kingdom* is often used (Rowthorn and Wayne 1988:14). The term *mainland*, is used to reinforce the notion that Britain is the "mainland" to Northern Ireland. *Province* is used in the same sense--to emphasize that Northern Ireland is a province of Britain. The Southern portion of Ireland is referred to as the *Republic of Ireland* its legal name, or *Eire* its Irish equivalent. *Eire*, according to Rowthorne and Wayne (1988:13), "is a name rarely heard in the Republic; more commonly it is used by people in Northern Ireland who are strongly opposed to a united Ireland as it makes the Republic sound foreign."

In the discourse of the nationalist population, Northern Ireland becomes the *Six Counties*, backed by the argument that the ancient province of Ulster had nine counties and only six of them are "occupied" by Britain. Nationalists refer to the rest of Ireland, not included in the Six Counties, as the *Twenty-Six Counties*. Northern republicans usually derogatorily refer to the rest of Ireland as the *Free State*, and its inhabitants as *Free Staters*. These terms refer to a period just after the partition of Ireland, when the South or "Free State" was given the status of a self-governing dominion under the British Crown. Republicans, in using these terms, are reminding the people south of the border that until all of
Ireland is free, the entire island remains under British control. Often nationalists will just refer to the geographical division of Ireland, that is, they will talk about, the *North of Ireland* or the *South.*

In this analysis, the term *Northern Ireland* will be used as its meaning is most widely understood. What is legally called the Republic of Ireland will be referred to here as the *South,* as the term is more geographically correct and less politically problematic. *Britain* is used in its legal sense, that is the union of England, Scotland and Wales. *British,* throughout this work is usually used as a modifier, for example, the British state. The phrases *British linguistic hegemony* and *British cultural hegemony* are used interchangeably to describe the linguistic and cultural legacy of the "effective dominant culture" that prevails in Northern Ireland.
II. Fieldwork in a Dangerous Environment: Challenge and Survival

A. The Research Setting

Below the approach to Belfast's Aldergrove airport are whitened stones in a farmer's field spelling out the word "Peace." This was my first glimpse of the city that was to be my home for the next fifteen months. During my stay in Belfast, I would remember this solitary missive as idealistic, and far removed from the reality in which I found myself. As I was subsequently informed by a friend, "You always live in a state of unease; never sure if you will be alive at the end of the day or what will happen next." In response to my inquiry as to whether one ever gets accustomed to this unease, another friend replied, "You never really get used to it. You get angry, you get scared, but never used to it."

Visitors to Belfast can spend their entire stay seeing only the occasional military vehicle, and if they go to the city centre having their passage delayed by the ubiquitous gates that only open to allow "authorized" traffic to pass. In the area I studied, the evidence of State reaction to republican resistance was everywhere. Permanent barricades of concrete and corrugated iron--the so called "peace walls"--partially contained the communities studied. Large boulders decorated the fronts of taverns, and other likely
targets of car bombs. During "marching season," when the Orangemen celebrate King William III's victory over the Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne (see Larson 1982a, 1982b), twenty foot high screens attached to army trucks, temporarily sealed off nationalist areas in the path of marchers. Then there were the personal barricades in the homes of a number of people I interviewed and visited: the bullet proof glass in the living room and kitchen windows; the front door reinforced with iron and secured with three or more locks of various types; the club by the door to use in case the locks didn't work; the wrought iron gate installed at the bottom of the stairs and padlocked at night to prevent access to the bedrooms from the ground floor. Usually, I was told that when a person's name is on a Loyalist paramilitary "hit list," the security forces inform the "target," and then the next move is to go to the DHSS (Department of Housing and Social Services) who provide partial funding for the installation of security gates and doors.

Belfast is a society under surveillance. Cameras are everywhere: on building walls; on observation towers; looking down from army barracks; perched on top of apartment buildings. Your movements are recorded, walking or driving on the streets of nationalist Belfast. Helicopters hover day and night, equipped with infrared cameras, maintaining a watch from the sky.
IRA warning posters tell the citizens of West Belfast to:

Stay Clear Isolate the Enemy

The primary consideration of Oglaigh na hÉireann active service units while exploring the viability of any operation is the safety of the civilian population in the area. As a result many actions are cancelled or delayed, greatly endangering the security and lives of our Volunteers, because of the proximity of civilians to crown forces personnel, installations and vehicles.

We therefore appeal for your co-operation and understanding and ask you to stay clear of all crown forces personnel (Republican Movement 1990).

As I walked to a lecture on Irish mythology a couple of days after the posters went up, I found myself surrounded by dozens of army troops and several RUC members who saturated both sidewalks and formed a line down the centre of the road. My thoughts were verbalized by a woman who looked at me and said with indignation, "How do they expect us to isolate them? They're everywhere."

"You are never allowed to remove yourself from the ever present reality of a war zone," I wrote in my journal in August of 1990. That morning as I walked to my Irish class at the Glór na nGael office on Falls Road, I had allowed my mind to wander--composing articles and books that could be written. My journal entry read:
While I was completely caught up in my thoughts, I still had an awareness of my surroundings so as to keep from walking into people and other more stationary obstacles. As I approached Glór na nGael I looked down for some reason—maybe I heard a grunt or some sense of danger abruptly brought me back to reality, I don't know—I do know my eyes focused on a crouching British soldier, his rifle but a foot from my forehead. I gasped and jumped, my heart pounding. By the time I reached Glór na nGael, a minute away, I was angry at showing him my fear, at reacting, and at allowing him to be aware of these feelings. I imagined a grin forming on his face.

At times like this your helplessness becomes a vivid reality. My taxi driver classmate said, after the first time it is less frightening. But this wasn't the first time. It belies the myth that you get used to it—"it" (the situation), is never far from your consciousness. The taxi classmate said, "They make you feel this small," demonstrating with his fingers less than an inch apart. He's right.

Thursday and Friday usually brought bomb alerts. Obstructions made walking difficult, and bus travel impossible. I was confronted with the reality that not all alerts were hoaxes when a bomb was thrown across the path of the taxi I was riding in, exploding near its intended target, an army vehicle. I was told that there are "spotters" in all areas memorizing the faces of strangers. This aroused my suspicions of every strange car driving through the neighbourhood, or every parked car with a person just sitting, supposedly reading. Often attacks were made by people on motorcycles, hence the surge of adrenalin whenever I saw one approaching. Seeing people being bodily
searched on the streets was always accompanied with the thought--what would happen if I was stopped and the tape of the interview I had just completed was discovered. I was almost to find out when, after attending the annual march in memory of the government's internment policy, an RUC member jumped from his vehicle and began running toward me (the only person on the street at the time). Realizing my safety lay among the local people, I quickly went into a nearby crowded fast-food restaurant, at which point my pursuer apparently changed his mind. I was not comforted when a man said to his friend, "He was going to lift that girl," and then to me, "He nearly arrested you."

There was also the constant concern that the security forces would search where I was staying, and confiscate my research material. After a three week stay with a friend in West Belfast, I decided that while I would have been physically safer there, the threat of house searches in the area was more common. In West Belfast, the friendliness of the locals could not mitigate the oppressive atmosphere of constant surveillance, and I decided to relocate. As my new landlord in North Belfast put it, "You have to be born there [West Belfast] to live there," although getting used to oppression (even if possible), is bound to leave psychological scars. The district in North Belfast where I eventually settled was known as "murder mile." It gained
this appellation after being the location of one quarter of all killings in Northern Ireland during the last twenty or more years of conflict. Despite its reputation, there was considerably less military presence in the area and fewer house searches. One reason for this may have been the RUC's initiative in North Belfast to improve its image to Catholics, and in so doing encourage them to report any IRA activity in the area (see Irish News 1991:1). It was not until fourteen days before I was to fly home to Vancouver, that five RUC members did try, at 7:30 a.m., to enter my residence. Getting no response from constant hammering on the door, they were finally dissuaded from their task by the attention they attracted from neighbours. Thus, sympathetic neighbours, and I suspect a lack of proper authority, defused what could have been an anthropological disaster, not to mention a personal one.

B. Negotiating Roles in the Field

Olesen and Whittaker (1967) view the researcher's role in participant observation, "as a mutual venture in which reciprocal interpersonal exchanges between the research investigator and the actor result in more or less mutually meaningful, well understood, viable social roles" (Olesen and Whittaker 1967:274). The authors maintain that the
reliability and validity of the data gathered can be greatly
influenced by the outcome of this process of role
genegotiation.

My interest in Northern Ireland dates back to 1986
when I was searching for a topic for my MA thesis. My
knowledge of Ireland was minimal at this time, however,
stimulated by the interest in Ireland of my committee chair,
I selected as my topic Celtic mythology with an emphasis on
Irish folklore. I did not have a wide background in
folklore or myth, but was interested in the methods by which
the media, along with other more politically motivated
groups, employed these topics in an attempt to manipulate
the opinions of the population at large. Therefore, to
garner information on Celtic mythology, my husband and I
embarked on a search of university and national libraries in
England, Scotland, and Wales. Ireland was not included in
my itinerary at this time.

When I was not searching through shelves of dusty tomes
in pursuit of exciting primary source material, I was
enjoying local tourist attractions. High on my list of
priorities was a visit to the Central Criminal Court, or Old
Bailey. Having always had an avid interest in
jurisprudence, mainly spurred by reading books on crime
(both fiction and non-fiction), the prospect of observing
the English legal system in action held a singular
fascination for me. As I stood in the long queue outside the court, my excitement rose as I heard that this day's "major attraction" was the trial of the IRA's "Brighton bomber," Patrick McGee. McGee was also on trial for planning, along with four other conspirators (two men and two women), a series of hotel bombings, scheduled to begin during the summer of 1986. While I passed through the metal detector; was subjected to two separate body searches; had my passport examined; my name and address recorded; stated that "no" I did not personally know any of the accused; and then took a seat in the front row of the visitors' gallery, I wondered what these "terrorists" would look like. My composite portrait of a criminal came from a combination of the strong negative images imparted whenever a person is labelled a terrorist, along with many hours in my youth absorbed in reading Agatha Christie novels, and tales of mass killers. When the accused were brought into the courtroom, however, my image was shattered. They adhered more closely to my image of ordinary law abiding citizens. A flood of questions about the societal conditions that would motivate these people to engage in such extreme acts of violence poured into my mind. On my return to university in the Fall of that year, I changed my research topic from Celtic mythology to Irish nationalism, which I went on to pursue ethno-historically in my Master's Thesis.
In 1987, a meeting of Commonwealth leaders was held in Vancouver. To bring attention to issues not covered by the Commonwealth Conference, a second meeting, the Alternative Commonwealth Conference, was to run concurrently with it. It was the latter meeting which I attended, and where I met a member of Sinn Féin who would prove pivotal to my research.

After learning of my M.A. thesis and indicating I wished to pursue this topic at a Ph.D. level, he invited me to Belfast, promising that he would introduce me to nationalists so I could learn about Irish nationalism first-hand. In June of 1988, I partook of his offer, and during my seventeen-day stay spoke with many people in Belfast, Derry, and Crossmaglen. I met both supporters and non-supporters of Sinn Féin, and got an overpowering introduction to what it is like to be a nationalist and live in Northern Ireland. During this trip, I discussed with Sinn Féin representatives, the feasibility of doing future research in Belfast. I received the assurance that, as far as they were concerned, such research would be acceptable.

When I arrived in Belfast on February 13, 1990, I initially stayed with the family of a friend from Vancouver. Shortly after my arrival in Belfast I re-contacted the people at Sinn Féin and gave them a copy of my dissertation proposal, explaining that I wanted to be educated about what
it is like to be a nationalist or a republican living in Belfast. A Sinn Féin representative told me that I would have to educate myself by talking to the people. However, it was added that if I had a specific request or needed an interview arranged relating to a specific topic—for example with prisoners or their families—Sinn Féin would be able to help me. I took Sinn Féin at its word and if I needed specific information—for example the location of a safe place to get my film developed—or wanted to interview their members on research related topics I did not hesitate to ask. I attended and taped lectures and speeches at events and marches arranged by Sinn Féin with no difficulty. Sinn Féin did not inquire as to what my conclusions were or how I planned to present them. In a way I was surprised by this lack of inquisitiveness by Sinn Féin. I felt that if I ran a revolutionary movement, I would certainly want to know what was to be disclosed about me and my supporters. However, such was not the case.

The IRA itself did not concern me during my stay in Northern Ireland, an attitude that I now consider may have been somewhat naive. I was however, always conscious of the possibility that I might be in the proximity of an exploding bomb, or caught in the cross-fire of a tactical operation.

While Sinn Féin did not complicate my research, I soon discovered the necessity of knowing the politics of the person I was speaking with, before identifying myself as a
researcher. While returning home to North Belfast from a céilí (dance) at a social club in West Belfast on St. Patrick's Day 1990 my taxi driver, who worked for a firm in West Belfast, asked me if I was visiting Belfast. Under what turned out to be a mistaken assumption that since he was from a nationalist area and worked for a nationalist taxi company, he was probably a nationalist, and as such would be interested in my work, I said "No, I am doing academic research here on what it is like to be a nationalist and to live in Belfast." He replied that he was a nationalist but was only concerned with raising his kids. Then he turned to me and said could I prove I wasn't a CIA spy over to gather information for the British. I replied that he could check with Sinn Féin because they knew me. He belligerently denied any interest in Sinn Féin, and asked again if I could prove I was not a spy. By this time, having stopped in front of my residence, we were having a quite heated discussion. He did not seem in any hurry to leave so I responded to him that I could see his point and that in reality I could tell him I was not a spy, but I did not have any way to prove I was not a spy. He then said to me, "What's stopping me from going over to a loyalist hit squad after I leave here, and saying to them that there is this Canadian anthropologist staying over on [my address] and that she's a supporter of the IRA." I agreed that there was nothing stopping him from doing this.
I had not been prepared for the possibility that people may assume I was a spy—an accusation that was difficult for me to refute. I did not believe that the taxi driver would carry out his threat, however from then on my response to any taxi driver who asked if I was over on holidays was "yes," and that I was visiting friends and would be returning home to America in a month or so.

The only other threat I received was from a friend, who told me with great sincerity that if I proved to be anything different from what I presented myself to be, that she would put a bullet in my brain. These incidents were great incentives to pursue my research objectives, and not delve into areas that may have satisfied my curiosity, but could have put into question my motives for being there.

In loyalist areas, where I did a lot of photographing of murals and slogans, I was more cautious. The people however were friendly, and since I was not judgmental of their stories—either verbally or non-verbally—were quite talkative. In these areas I retained the aura of a foreign visitor. I was always conscious of the danger loyalist paramilitaries presented but was not unduly concerned.

The majority of people in Belfast, Catholic and Protestant, accepted me as an academic, genuinely interested in their lives, and went out of their way to help me in my research. I do believe my being a woman aided my acceptance, because although many women are actually
involved in the conflict, men are the primary targets of the IRA, loyalist paramilitaries, and the security forces. I also represented the outside world, and the people of Northern Ireland, especially the nationalists and republicans, want the world to know the truth of what is happening. Other possible reasons for my acceptance may have been: because I was alone; my willingness to learn the Irish language; my participation in some of the things that were of symbolic and real importance to the nationalist people, such as the annual marches and commemorations, or the "Save the Belfast Hills" walk. I was very visible as I roamed the streets most days. I listened to people and did not pass judgment on them, and in discussion with people shared my life experiences with them. One woman even expressed concern that I may have sacrificed my marriage to come over to Northern Ireland to study. I assured her I had not done so.

C. Ethical Considerations

The "Principles of Professional Responsibility" adopted by the American Anthropological Association (1973) proclaim that "an anthropologist's paramount responsibility is to those he studies . . . when there is a conflict of interest [i.e., between the anthropologist's responsibility to those
studied and those of the public, the discipline, one's sponsors, or one's own or host government], these individuals must come first."

Many of the difficulties of adhering strictly to the AAA stated responsibility of the anthropologist in cases of conflict of interest, are brought to light in a book by Punch (1986), which outlines such key ethical issues as consent, deception, privacy, identification, confidentiality, sponsorship, freedom to publish, etc. Punch (1986:29, 30, 34-35) discusses many of the political and moral dilemmas that arose in my field work, the most pertinent are enumerated here in the form of questions:

(1) Are there areas that should not be researched?  
(2) Does the end (knowledge) justify the scientific means?  
(3) Does the researcher enjoy any immunity from the law when refusing to disclose information?  
(4) What is public and what is private?  
(5) When can research be said to be "harming" people?

After deciding on Northern Ireland as the location of my fieldwork, I next chose to centre my interest on the experiential reality of the daily warfare for the ordinary citizen, not the armed struggle per se. I neither sought nor was I told any details of IRA war operations, as this was not part of my research.
The understanding of the dimensions of domination and resistance at the local level is, in my opinion, a necessary step toward the eventual resolution of ethnonationalist conflict, not just in Northern Ireland but in similar venues throughout the world. As my aim is to contribute to this understanding of domination and resistance, it was crucial that my analysis be based on extended fieldwork, seeking to investigate this relationship as it was acted out in everyday life. Therefore, the potential knowledge gained from such research superseded the inherent dangers for both the researcher and the researched.

Northern Ireland affords no immunity to its citizens (or its visiting academics), from arrest and imprisonment of up to ten years if the material in their possession is deemed "likely to be useful to terrorists" (Clause 30 and 31 of the Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Bill 1991). Equally relevant is that there are no "safe" places in Northern Ireland to secure research data gathered, and short of burning it—a measure I was prepared to take—such material is always in danger of being confiscated. The people I interviewed knew the risk of providing a permanent record of their accounts, probably better than I did, but they were willing to take that risk. For my part, I took every precaution possible, under the circumstances, to avoid attracting the attention of security forces. I also took the precaution of coding my fieldnotes and journal entries.
to exclude all names and more blatant identifying features. Keys to the codes used were mailed to my husband in Vancouver. Audio tapes in the field posed the greatest risk as names, places and dates often were used by my respondents in relating the history of an event. In the process of transcription, this identifying material has been coded and the original tapes erased. However, the fieldwork experience offered little time for the processing of tapes, thus the transcription and erasure of tapes, had to be postponed until my arrival home.

The attempts to present data in a manner that would protect the identity of the interviewee has posed many difficulties during the actual writing of this dissertation. Some of the information given to me was background information, and for "my eyes only," while other information could be quoted. However, it was often not clearly designated which information was which. This was especially true when I got to know my respondent before the interview and it was assumed I would understand what was and wasn't for disclosure. My decision about disclosure was further complicated by the knowledge that a mistake in judgment on my part could be fatal to the people I interviewed.

My research was primarily focused on the symbolic expression of Irishness as a form of resistance. Those who produce these symbols of resistance, such as poster and mural artists, or public advocates of the Irish language,
have been designated as targets for loyalist paramilitaries. Therefore, my presentation of data received, and especially information from ex-prisoners, had to be scrutinized with great diligence lest a clue to the identity of the author be given. There is no definite way of knowing that what appears to me (an outsider) to be an innocent statement may in fact jeopardize an interviewee's physical safety. To limit the risk of accidental identification of the sources of personal communication, I have followed Feldman's (1991:12) example and broken apart interviews, distributing them non-sequentially throughout this work, between sections of analysis. In addition, I have only identified the speaker as an alternative Irish language activist, a spokesperson for Sinn Féin, or an ex-prisoner. When the term Irish language activist is used alone, it is referring to alternative Irish language activists.

D. The Problem of Objectivity

The positivist contends that there are "discrete," "recognizable," "objective," and "true" facts that the researcher can discover by using a set of "widely known and accepted," standardized interviewing methods, and then interpreting them by using "neutral" scientific theories (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:4-5; Whittaker 1986:xvi).
In contrast to this view, Schutz (1964:5) argues that "there are no such things as facts, pure and simple. All facts are from the outset . . . interpreted facts." Not only are all facts interpreted, Descombes (1985) argues that "accepted facts" are a question of power—that is, general acceptance depends on the power of the interpreter. He writes, "If there is any controversy about a fact, the question arises: who is to settle the matter and how? It is obvious that this last question is a question of right" (Descomes 1985:58). In Northern Ireland "all facts" are "interpreted," and power plays a significant role in determining which facts become generally accepted and which are suppressed. In this dissertation, the "facts" presented are the interpretations of the social world of the actors involved. My theoretical bias, albeit scientific, will of necessity determine how these facts are structured.

Neither is this analysis free of my own biases regarding victimization. Positivists have argued that "knowledge is gained ready-made, unspoiled by biases" (Whittaker 1986:xvi), and prejudices of the researcher can be readily eliminated, "by an act of self-assertion" (Weinsheimer 1985), hence the "guiding presuppositions" that govern "analysis and methodological questioning" are never queried (Palmer 1969:233). Put another way, the notion of scientific objectivity argues that since "scientific ideas are . . . morally and socially neutral things, . . ."
objects, or commodities rather than states of mind" (Whittaker 1981:447), they do not have an "observer effect" on the research.

Positivists, also argue that like their "scientific ideas" and "guiding presuppositions," they themselves have no "observer effect" on the research environment. Lopate (1979:322) writes that positivists, "like other 'scientists'. . . have bought the ideology of objectivity and neutrality and [tried] to give the impression that they were homunculi floating through the communities they studied, unobservable to those they observed." I was not unobserved by those I studied and with whom I shared my personal experiences. As one such person told me, "whether or not you go back and write about us it doesn't matter. By coming here and being my friend, my life is now different, and your life is now different. After you leave I will be doing something and suddenly remember, Pat and I talked about this and she said such and such." The people I studied and who showed me such uninhibited kindness did change me, and even if they had not been so accepting, I could not morally have overlooked the oppressive circumstances under which they lived. As Roger Keesing notes:

It is being realized that not taking a political position, not making a moral commitment, is not neutral: it is making a commitment--to the support and continuation of the system of which one is a
part and within which one is working anthropologically. If one does not "notice" oppression or injustices or exploitation because one is only a scientist and science does not concern itself with political issues, then one is being myopic and self-deluding about objectivity. Ultimately amorality is immorality (quoted in Huizer 1979:6).

Dumont (1992:133) echoes these sentiments when writing of his research in the Philippines:

Because violence remains hopelessly entangled with the issue of legitimacy, it is fair and necessary to state, once more, that I have no pretension to objectivity. There are villains in my biased story, and I shall let them wear the black hats.

Therefore, while I make no claim to complete impartiality (scientific or otherwise) in my analysis, this is not to imply that I have ignored the contradictions, inconsistencies, and nuances encountered in the field—-they are dealt with in a thorough manner. As well, I have attempted to give my "villains" a chance to defend their malevolence toward the Irish language, by quoting their rationalizations offered in the print and electronic media. The ultimate choice lies with the reader in determining whether these rationalizations have been correctly interpreted.
III. Methodology: Data Collection and Research Techniques

A. Participant/Observation

The majority of my time during the fifteen months of fieldwork in Belfast, was spent attending demonstrations, marches, local talks, exhibitions, and events. I read locally produced material, and walked the streets of Belfast, observing, and at every opportunity, speaking to local people about their experiences in the besieged city.

During my fieldwork there were several major commemorations, including the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising; the tenth anniversary of the hunger strike; the twentieth anniversary of the Falls curfew and the three hundredth anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. Many events and marches in observance of these occasions were included in my itinerary. Local events attended were as diverse as: (a) a lecture series on "Liberation Theology: An Irish Perspective," and the "Law and Society Series," on discrimination; (b) conferences such as, "1690 Educate Not Celebrate"; "Painting A Different Picture" (Radical Arts Conference); "State Power: Can It Be Controlled?" (a conference sponsored by Committee on The Administration of Justice); "Ireland: The Way Forward" (a three day international conference put on by Springhill Community
Centre in West Belfast); (c) local solidarity events such as "Nicaragua Solidarity Night" (sponsored by the Belfast Nicaragua Solidarity Group); and a show of support for the visiting delegation from the American Indian Movement; (d) other events including céilís (dances), and folk nights, etc. I attended fourteen marches in all, including the International Women's Day march, halted twice by security forces preventing the women of West Belfast from joining their Protestant, and academic "sisters" at Belfast City Hall. Security forces effectively disrupted the women's attempt at a meaningful demonstration by forcing the Falls Road marchers back in the direction of West Belfast.

More specific to my Irish language research, I took two six-week intensive Irish language courses from Glór na nGael, and at the end of the first course passed the examination to receive a silver Fáinne, the badge of an Irish learner. I attended and taped a series of lectures sponsored by Glór na nGael on the history of the Irish language, Irish place names, and Irish myths and legends. I was present at an all day Irish language conference at which Irish language issues such as Irish language television, schools, and prisoners', Welsh and Irish language rights were discussed. I joined a woman's group called Fáinne na mban (Women of the Fáinne), and joined in monthly get-togethers. Typical of such occasions would be a reading of members' poetry, the singing of traditional Irish songs
in both Gaelic and English, and a buffet meal. At another group sponsored event, Mary Condron, author of *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland*, was the invited speaker. Through role-playing we examined the portrayal of women in Irish mythology.

I also had the opportunity to participate in various regional excursions. One such coach trip, arranged by members of Glór na nGael, included visits to: The Valley of the Boyne; Monasterboice (home of the oldest Celtic crosses in Ireland); Newgrange (site of one of the oldest passage graves in the world); Drogheda, to see Saint Oliver Plunkett's head; and then to Ross Cairn in County Meath (an Irish-speaking area), for a home-cooked meal followed by a visit to a Gaelic pub, to be entertained by Irish music, set and céilí dancing, and Gaelic songs.

These are but a few of the events I attended, participated in, and made careful records of, always accompanied by my ubiquitous camera, tape recorder, and note pad.
B. Interviewing

Douglas (1985) has said that interviewing is a creative process, a mutual search for self-understanding by the ethnographer with her subjects. He writes that the concept of "creative interviewing" is based on the assumptions that:

1. the discovery of human beings . . . is overwhelmingly dependent on the use of vastly complex commonsensical methods of interacting and understanding [and]
2. . . . that for most purposes, and certainly ideally, it is most fruitful for us human explorers to begin by immersing ourselves in natural situations and observing ourselves and others a great deal before presuming that we know enough to ask significant questions about the experience (Douglas 1985:12).

Thus, it could be said that creative interviewing is a combination of common sense and experience. Guided by the technique suggested here by Douglas, the first three months of my fieldwork were spent familiarizing myself with the social environment of Belfast. This I felt necessary in order to gain a basic knowledge of the position of groups, organizations, and individuals within the society, and of utility as a precursor to the conducting of interviews.

As previously stated, my research goals included the investigation of symbolic expressions of Irishness as resistance to British domination. After my first two months in Belfast, I realized that the predominant symbol of Irish
expression was the Irish language itself. I saw embodied in the language, the dynamics of the cultural struggle of domination and resistance taking place around me in Northern Ireland.

During the fifteen months spent in the field, I tape recorded 101.5 hours of interviews with seventy-six people, and had brief, untaped, topic-related interviews with approximately seventy other people. Those interviewed both on and off tape included: mural and poster creators, poets, language activists, Sinn Féin activists, former prisoners, republicans, nationalists, and Protestants with nationalist views. In addition, I taped eighty-two hours from conferences, lectures, discussions, speeches at marches, and speeches at other events.

Of the taped interviews, thirty-one pertained directly to the Irish language. Twenty-one of these were with alternative Irish language activists, and the remainder were with Sinn Féin representatives, ex-prisoners, and other oppositional Irish language activists who were neither members of Sinn Féin nor ex-prisoners. Fluency in Irish was not required to be a language activist. One alternative Irish language activist I interviewed did not speak the language, but all her children were in the Irish-medium school system, and three others were adult Irish language learners. All oppositional Irish language activists interviewed were fluent Irish speakers. Regardless of
fluency, all thirty-one Irish language activists interviewed spent a substantial part of their time promoting the Irish language and working toward gaining recognition of the Irish language in Northern Ireland.

It should be noted that Irish language speakers and activists make up a growing part, but still a minority, of both the republican and nationalist population in Belfast. It is estimated, from the 1991 census, that there were 30,000 people (10 percent), of Belfast's 300,000 population who knew some Irish—which is up from 7,900 (2.3 percent), in the 1911 census. The attitude of the majority of English speaking nationalist and republican population appeared to be sympathetic toward the endeavors of Irish language activists, as evidenced by the monetary contributions made to support Irish language schools during street collections, and the donations made by people in high unemployment areas for the erection of Irish language street signs.

However, this sympathy for the Irish language movement was not universal among Belfast republicans and nationalists. I spoke with one former prisoner, for example, who had been interned during the prison protest period and the hunger strikes, and who had refused to learn Irish. To him, the struggle was one of political and economic freedom from Britain, and there was no need to learn any language other than English. A nationalist explained that he did not need to learn Irish to know that
he was an Irishman. These attitudes, much to the dismay of both alternative and oppositional Irish language activists, are far from isolated.

Of the twenty-one alternative language activists I interviewed, one was in his twenties, nine were in their thirties, seven were in their forties, one was in her fifties, one was sixty-four, and two were in their seventies. There were ten men and eleven women interviewed, nineteen Catholics and two Protestants. Alternative Irish language activists claimed that politics was not a part of their work, and hence not relevant. Some may have voted for Sinn Féin—and this includes at least one Protestant—but would not necessarily support the armed struggle. While this is essentially a contradiction, the people I spoke with did not see this stance as contentious. The majority of alternative Irish language activists, if opting to vote at all, would have voted for the SDLP.

Of the alternative Irish language activists interviewed, six were teachers who had taught in the Catholic school system, while three of these had taught also in the Irish medium school system. One of these teachers had a Ph.D. Another activist—a Protestant—had a Ph.D. in Celtic studies, while yet another—a Catholic—had a Ph.D. and was a lecturer at a Belfast university. One activist was a journalist, another a secretary, and another a technician.
Four people I interviewed were parents actively involved in the Irish medium primary schools, and the Irish medium play groups. The alternative Irish language activists I interviewed could not be labelled as coming from any one socio-economic class, a finding generally applied to those in the Irish language movement by ó hAdhmaill (1985) in his study of 234 Belfast Irish language learners in the 1980s.

Five of the people I interviewed worked full time for Glór na nGael; two for Lá, a daily Irish language newspaper; and two for ULTACH Trust (see Chapters 7 and 8). These people were interviewed both before and after Glór na nGael was blacklisted by the British government. The majority of those interviewed—eighteen of the twenty-one—had, at some time in their lives, close ties to an Irish language club, the Cluain Ard (see Chapter 4). Several of the above had been active in Conradh na Gaeilge and Comhaltus Uladh (the Gaelic League in Northern Ireland, see Chapter 4). Four of those interviewed were part of the original group which established the Shaws Road Irish language community in 1969, and set up the first Irish medium primary school in Northern Ireland in 1971 (see Chapter 4).

Of the ten oppositional Irish language activists interviewed—seven men and three women—all but three were also Sinn Féin activists. Most were in their late twenties or early thirties, however two were in their sixties and one in her seventies. All came from Catholic backgrounds.
Of the three who were not Sinn Féin activists, one was a former prisoner who was currently taking university courses in Celtic studies and was a teacher of adult Irish language classes, another was a retired teacher, another described himself as a self-taught historian. All except two of the Sinn Féin activists were ex-prisoners and unemployed. One of the two non-prisoners had the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, and was active in politics in addition to Irish language activism, and the other was a former teacher. All oppositional Irish language activists supported Sinn Féin and the armed struggle.

Questions asked of all Irish language activists were grouped into three main categories: (1) their reasons for becoming involved in the Irish language revival; (2) why they chose language as their avenue of expression; and (3) the consequences of this decision both for themselves and their families. When the respondent was involved with a specific Irish language group, I also inquired as to the group's history, its goals, and the obstacles it encountered while trying to achieve its goals. More general questions about the Irish language revival itself, its raison d'être, its extent, and its future were also asked.
C. Other Research Methods

The investigation of Irish language activism in Belfast also involved many hours of archival and library research. The origins of primary source material scrutinized and in most cases photocopied, included: the Linen Hall Library; the collections of the Committee for the Administration of Justice, Queen's University; the museum of the Roddy McCorley Society; and the books and papers collected by republicans and nationalists. In addition, I made tape recordings of 228 hours of programmes from various radio and television sources on topics pertinent to my research. Loyalist and republican bookstores, and other used and new bookstores were frequented, and many locally produced books and pamphlets purchased. Research related articles from local daily newspapers: The Irish News, The Belfast Telegraph, and The Belfast Newsletter, both from during the period of my fieldwork, and prior to it, were cut out or photocopied. Other sources of data included: The Irish Times; The Irish Independent; The Sunday World; The Sunday Press; The Daily Mail; The Evening Standard; The Guardian; Republican News; An Phoblacht; An Phoblacht/Republican News; Andersonstown News; Fortnight (a nationalist magazine); Women's News (a locally produced Irish Feminist Magazine); Troops Out; Labour in Ireland; The Captive Voice (a magazine produced by republican prisoners);
The Irish Democrat; Unity; The Irish Reporter; and loyalist papers such as, The Shankill People; and the loyalist paramilitary periodicals, Ulster, Combat, and The Red Hand.

In summary, my approach to fieldwork has been to immerse myself in Belfast society, and having done so, to gather as much written and verbal data as possible on all issues that the local citizens felt were important to them in their lives--from the spectacular to the mundane. The material gathered in the field presented many contradictions. Once home, away from the "baptism of fire" that permeated every minute of my waking hours, and often my dreams at night, I began to search for a theoretical framework that would make sense of the data. I chose to examine the history of the struggle to elucidate how the cultural battle being acted out in contemporary Northern Ireland developed. The analysis presented here is the result of an attempt to understand the "field reality" I encountered while in Belfast.
Chapter Three

The Roots of Alternative and Oppositional Irish Language Activism

As discussed in Chapter One, language as identity is more than just a way of speaking. It encompasses a social history and those values and ways of doing things that are "meaningful" to an ethnic group. I postulate that the battle for linguistic hegemony in Ireland began with the colonial encounter. Thus, in this chapter I will use the "beyond the community" approach to map out the "historical and exploitative dimensions of those processes" (Rebel 1989a:122), which subordinated the Gaelic culture to one beneath its English invaders.

Any "analysis of cultural hegemony," Rebel insists:

... has to begin with a precise analysis of social formation; and this ... has to begin at those historical moments when people enter processes of primary accumulation, when the definitions, negotiations, and structurally determined applications of terms of ownership, property rights, and appropriation change. This is where modes of production are born and die, where they begin and terminate their articulations, where cultural hegemonies struggle for dominance and where they collapse and reform (Rebel 1989b:351).
With this in mind, I will commence my analysis by examining the articulation of the traditional Gaelic mode of production with, and its eventual destruction by, the English feudal mode of production, beginning at the time of the first Anglo-Norman invasion in the twelfth century and ending with the Flight of the Earls in 1607.

Until the Tudors came to the throne in the early sixteenth century the Gaelic culture had not been seriously threatened. The preoccupation during this period had been with the subordination of the traditional Gaelic mode of production to the feudal mode of production. However, this changed with the rule of Henry VII and later Henry VIII, as an attack of everything Gaelic began in earnest. Although by the early seventeenth century, the last vestiges of the Gaelic mode of production had all but disappeared, "capitalism [had] not yet successfully incorporated nor effectively eliminated all precapitalist [i.e., Gaelic] ideological [or cultural] practices" (Muratorio 1980:40). However, what had begun to occur after the "Flight of the Earls" and what had to a large extent been completed by the early part of the eighteenth century, was a class shift whereby the Catholic middle and upper classes were abandoning many aspects of Gaelic culture, especially language, and leaving them to the rural peasantry and working class poor.
In the second section of this chapter, I will examine the Protestant ascendancy's role in restoring the Irish language during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, with special emphasis on their activities in Belfast. While the Catholic middle and upper classes, as well as the Catholic clergy, were actively assimilating into the dominant English-speaking culture, the Protestant ascendancy were deeply involved in collecting manuscripts in the old Gaelic language and setting up Gaelic speaking literary and cultural organizations. Why this group of middle-class Protestants chose to devote its time and money to restoring a language and culture that was being stigmatized as inferior and associated with the "uncivilized" rural peasantry will be analyzed.

The political atmosphere of the nineteenth century led to the politicization of the Irish language and the waning of Protestant ascendancy support for its restoration. The concluding section of this chapter, will examine this politicization process and both the alternative and oppositional Irish language activisms that emerged.
I. The Pre-Eighteenth Century Battle for Linguistic Hegemony in Ireland

A. The Articulation of the Traditional Gaelic and English Feudal Modes of Production

1. Inheritance and Property Rights: A Clash of Legal Systems

By the fifth century A.D., an indigenous, highly developed and complex legal system called Brehon Law had been drawn up to "uniformly delineate and enforce the Gaelic method of organizing society throughout Ireland" (Kelley 1982:1). The Brehon Laws were a complete set of authoritative decisions upon nearly every civil, military, and criminal question that may have arisen in the lives of the early Gaelic people (Hayden and Moonan 1927:62).

Medieval Gaelic society comprised about 150 Gaelic clan territories or petty states called tuatha. The organization and structure of the tuatha was of an aristocratic nature and the states were often violently defended by armies led by the clan kings. The various ranks in Gaelic society were regulated by Brehon Laws which enumerated their rights and privileges and governed relationships between and among their numbers. Clan membership was extremely important to all members of Gaelic society, as it ensured the individual of both political and
property rights. This was especially true for illegitimate children, who under the custom of "naming" could be "affiliated" with a clan solely on the sworn declaration of a mother just before death (Nicholls 1972:11, 77). The usual practice Nicholls claims, was for the mother to name a clan chief as the father of her child. As Brehon Law did not distinguish between the legitimate and illegitimate child, either had the right to inherit clan chiefdomship, or at least a share of the clan's property.

Inheritance in Irish society was governed by the customs of Gavelkind and Tanistry. "'Gavelkind' was the Gaelic practice whereby the lands of a family group were re-distributed on the death of one of its landholding members [amongst members of his immediate fine or extended fraternal family, rather than going to his children] and 'Tanistry' was the practice whereby during the lifetime of a king or chief, his successor was chosen from among his kindred within a certain degree of consanguinity" (Beckett 1981:34-35n). "The Gaelic chief was chosen by his peers of the derbfine, the ruling family, from 'the eldest and worthiest' of the [male] candidates; his successor, the tanist (hence tanistry) was elected during the chief's lifetime" (Cronin 1981:5).

In the traditional Gaelic mode of production, communally held land had been the economic basis of society. Wealth was calculated in terms of the number of cattle owned
by the clan. While the Gaels did grow some wheat and oats, most of the land was utilized for grazing. In this traditional system of land tenure, rather than owning the land, "the chief had but a demesne of his own, called 'mensal lands', and further to maintain him in his office he had rights of tributes, food-rents and military service over his whole 'country'" (Curtis 1937:179).

The Gaelic Brehon Laws, rules of inheritance and property rights governed by these laws, as well as the society's communal agricultural practices conflicted sharply with the forms of landholding under the feudal system of the Anglo-Normans, which strictly followed the Canon law of primogeniture. Thus by the thirteenth century, when the Anglo-Normans had gained effective control over much of the better land areas, these regions were converted into manors, Canon law introduced, and the English (i.e., Norman) concept of feudal obligation to political structure was brought to bear on the Irish countryside (Pringle 1985:78). The Anglo-Normans introduced a three-field system of crop rotation which converted most of the best land in Ireland into cereal production for the British market (Pringle 1985:77). Anglo-Norman agriculture also emphasized mixed farming, especially the growing of fruits and vegetables. As a consequence, much of the grazing land in Ireland was converted into agricultural land. This action greatly reduced the economic base of the Gaelic chiefs, and
threatened their continued economic viability. It was only a combination of geography and strong resistance from the Gaelic clans that prevented the Anglo-Normans from effectively destroying the native Irish economy.

The Gaelic resurgence of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had pushed back effective English control to within the borders of the Pale, a small area which extended a mere thirty miles inland from the ports of Dublin and Drogheda. Outside the Pale, the Irish enjoyed a period of relative freedom with only occasional clashes with the English. This relative peace was broken in 1485, when the first Tudor King, Henry VII, began a process of consolidation of power, designed to build a strong, centralized monarchy at home and to complete the goal of the Anglo-Norman invasion by finally bringing Ireland under total English domination.

The Anglo-Norman settlers in the Pale bore the brunt of Henry VII's action to tighten English control over Ireland. Shortly after ascending to the English throne, he annulled the Act of 1468 which had asserted that in order for English statutes to be valid in Ireland, they first had to be ratified by the Irish Parliament in Dublin. Further, he forbade the Irish Parliament from meeting unless the English King had been informed beforehand of what legislation the assembly intended to sanction. Thus the political power formerly enjoyed by the Anglo-Normans (or
Old English) in the Pale was severely curtailed.

Gaelic culture was next on Henry's hegemonic agenda when in 1494 the Poyning Laws were enacted, authorizing the King's forces to impose the provisions of the Statutes of Kilkenny on both native and settler living in the Pale. The Statutes of Kilkenny, originally passed in 1367, required everyone living in areas under English control to speak English at all times. The Statutes also prohibited settlers from: following Brehon Laws; adopting Gaelic names (Kelley 1982:2); singing Irish songs and airs; playing the harp; and wearing the Irish kilt. Intermarriage between the native Irish and the English settlers was made a capital crime (Colleary 1985:5). While Henry VII was able to secure the loyalty of the Old English in the Pale, his forces made little headway in subduing the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman population outside this English stronghold. Even as late as 1532, some twenty-three years after Henry VIII became King of England, most of Ireland remained under the control of the Gaelic kings and a few Anglo-Norman lords who had adopted the Gaelic culture and whose loyalty to England was questionable.

When Henry VIII came to the throne, his primary focus was the assertion of English domination over the entire Gaelic population. He began by instituting a policy of "Surrender and Regrant" by which the Gaelic chiefs could turn over their land to the English Crown and then receive
it back to be held in vassalage. While the Gaelic kings still retained their land, they were forced to abide by English law, and "aristocratic home rule" was brought to an end (Bottigheimer 1982). Henry's next target was the Gaelic culture itself and in this attack he was much more determined and effective than his predecessor had been.

2. The Heart of Gaelic Culture Attacked: The Destruction of the Irish Monasteries and Bardic Schools

By A.D. 590, bardic schools had become prominent throughout the Irish countryside. In each province a large bardic school, similar to a modern university was built. A smaller bardic school serviced the educational needs of each parish. "The Bardic Schools were purely secular institutions. The medium of instruction was the native tongue; and the Irish language and literature, Irish history, and the Brehon Law were intensively and scientifically studied. For centuries they produced a long succession of poets, historians and brehons" (Dowling 1968:7-8).

While the Bardic schools catered to the educational needs of those specializing in the arts and law, the monastic schools provided children with a practical education that prepared them for their future roles in Gaelic society. Religion and education had been closely
linked in Ireland even before the sixth century, when Irish eminence in both fields had earned the land the title, "the island of saints and scholars" (Darby 1976:113). Many scholars from the continent had sought refuge in the Gaelic monasteries to avoid the invasions of the Barbarians. They brought with them their expertise and books, making Irish monastic schools of the fourth and fifth centuries attractive places of learning for many foreign students, especially ones from England (Scherman 1981:240-249). For the native Irish, who believed from pagan times that, "a man could rise, through his thrift, his profession, or talent given him by the gods, above the station of his father" (Scherman 1981:247), the education provided by the bardic and monastic schools was the key to upward social mobility within Gaelic society.

But the Gaelic monasteries were more than just schools. These religious organizations which were erected on the lands of the powerful clan families, penetrated most of the social, economic and political institutions which organized Gaelic life. Scherman (1981:206) writes, "The lay connections of monasteries extended to all conditions of life: they were trading centers, schools, penitentiaries, [and] repositories of food in times of famine." Thus their activities, went far beyond the realm of those of a purely religious and academic institution.
Each monastery was a "self-sufficient entity" with its own "absolute ruler." It was the activities of the Irish monastic clergy which evoked the wrath of the Roman Church. Ideally the abbot who ruled the monastery, was chosen from within the family of the patron saint, however when this was not possible, the abbot was appointed from the descendants of the Gaelic king on whose land the monastery was built. After the Anglo-Norman invasion, Canon Law had been declared the official policy of the Irish Church, yet Brehon Law continued to influence the education policies and religious practices of the monasteries in those areas of Ireland that were not under effective British control (Scherman 1981). Under Brehon Law, marriage was a secular issue and divorce was permitted. Thus, the Irish clergy neither practiced nor was obliged to practice celibacy, and thus fathered many legitimate as well as illegitimate children. Along with the rest of the population, the Irish clergy observed tanistry—a procedure in direct violation of Canon Law. As a result, the religious profession in Ireland adopted a "strongly hereditary character."

As the monastery was an integral part of the clan, the clergy actively participated in secular wars and battles waged against their rival clans. This activity of the Irish clergy was also strongly denounced by the Roman Church. Thus these Monastic Churches, the custodians of Gaelic education, developed a "distinctive nationalistic character"
which deviated in many significant aspects from the nature of the Church of Rome.

This "nationalistic character," being reproduced in each new generation of Gaelic children, was seen as a major obstacle to English cultural hegemony in Ireland. In an action aimed at undermining the power of the monasteries, these differences in attitudes and practices between the Irish monastics and the Roman Church, were used as propaganda to justify English domination in Ireland and stigmatize the Gaelic culture as inferior and uncivilized. Liz Curtis writes:

The English colonists justified their actions by arguing that the Irish were culturally inferior to themselves, and that the English would civilize them. They condemned Irish religious practices, criticizing them more for failing to practise Catholicism properly than for their rejection of Protestantism. Spenser [poet and author of *A View of Ireland* (1596), *The Faerie Queene*, and who had spent 18 years in Ireland amassing considerable property in County Cork] wrote that the Irish "all be papists by their profession, but in the same so blindly and brutishly uninformed (for the most part) that not one amongst a hundred knoweth any ground of Religion, or any Article of his faith" (Curtis 1984:17).

A more direct attack on the bardic and monastic systems was implemented when Henry VIII came to the throne. In 1534, Henry VIII broke with Rome and established a separate Church of England. This independence from Roman Catholicism by the English monarch was soon forced on
Ireland--an almost entirely Catholic island. The Church of Ireland was established with the English monarch at its head, no longer acknowledging the superiority of the Pope. To the old English living in the Pale, the newly established Church did not appear to pose a serious threat to either the doctrine or the liturgy of their faith. Thus when Henry VIII drafted three bills and presented them to the Irish Parliament in 1537, all passed with little dissention. The first was an act denying papal authority in Ireland; the second prescribed for office holders, an oath acknowledging royal supremacy; and the third proposed the dissolution of thirteen of Ireland's monasteries (Bottigheimer 1982:79-80).

The dissolution of the monasteries--the pride of Gaelic religious life and centres of learning and creativity--struck at the very heart of Gaelic culture. Monastic houses totalled more than four hundred in 1534, in which between four and five thousand monastics resided (Bottigheimer 1982:80). The suppression of the monasteries which began in earnest in 1539 saw, "the monks expelled and their possessions taken away . . . [and] buildings which had been the pride of the pious founders [came] into the hands of the despoiler, and were pulled down or suffered to fall into decay" (Dowling 1968:15). As these institutions were central to the reproduction of Gaelic society, it is hardly surprising that the resistance to this policy was strongest in the very traditional regions of Ireland.
Bottigheimer (1982:81) writes that, "By Henry VIII's death in 1547 nearly one-half of the monasteries had been dissolved, leaving only those in the strongly Gaelic regions of northwestern Ulster, northern Connacht and southwestern Munster mainly untouched."

Along with the destruction of the monasteries, Henry VIII instituted a policy of active assimilation directly aimed at the destruction of the Gaelic language and religion, establishing in 1537 a system of Parish Schools which were to:

introduce a knowledge of the English language among the native Irish. This Act enjoined on oath every clergyman to "keepe, or cause to be kept, within the place, territory, or paroch, where he shall have . . . benefice or promotion, a schole for to learne English." The clergyman was directed to "bid the beades in the Englishe tongue, and preach the work of God in English" (Dowling 1968:26). The Irish language and culture, as expressed in the bards, poets, and others, were again forbidden or even penalized. Ireland was to be made if possible a second England through the complaisant bishops and nobility, and no provision was made for the recognition of Irish and Gaelic tradition (Curtis 1937:170).

Thus, the battle for linguistic hegemony had intensified on two fronts: first, through the practice of demeaning Gaelic culture and using humour to ridicule those who were respected members of the Gaelic society such as the monastics, the bards, and the Gaelic chiefs as well as the Gaelic population as a whole (see Curtis 1984); and
secondly, through legislation excluding the use of Gaelic religion or language in the activities of institutions, such as State run schools and Anglican churches.

3. The Irish Language becomes a Class Issue: The Dominant English-speaking Culture Takes Root

Claiming that Henry VII and Henry VIII had no desire to extirpate Gaelic culture or aristocracy, but only to assimilate both to the English monarchy, however Bottigheimer (1982:101-102) writes that under Elizabeth I:

English policy was openly hostile towards the Irish and especially Gaelic society. Assimilation was replaced as an objective by "reformation", a remodelling which went far beyond religion to include law, language, custom and even social habits.

Elizabeth began her rule by withdrawing all of the concessions made to Catholics during the brief reign of the Catholic Queen Mary. Laws were passed requiring the use of The Book of Common Prayer and fines were imposed on those who did not attend an English or Anglican Church:

By the act of Uniformity the new Book of Common Prayer [1560] was imposed upon all ordained clergy, and attendance at the State Church was made compulsory on pain of a fine of one shilling each Sunday (the "Recusancy" fine). English was the language of the prayer book, and yet this
language was only understood by a minority of the people. It was provided that Latin might be used instead, but no provision was made for the Irish language, which all the Gaelic race spoke and most of the Old English understood (Curtis 1937:182-183).

During the reign of Elizabeth I, the destruction of the traditional Gaelic mode of production and the consolidation of political power was completed. The policy of Plantation was continued, started on a small scale by Queen Mary. This entailed the dividing of the Irish countryside into shires or counties, each administered by a loyal sheriff. The lands of the Irish lords who rebelled against the Crown's authority were confiscated and these estates were then leased to English settlers of the Protestant faith and therefore considered loyal to the Crown.

When the shire system was imposed upon the province of Ulster—by this time the only area in which Irish power and Gaelic culture remained intact—a rebellion broke out. The persistence of Gaelic culture in Ulster was, according to Busteed (1972:4), partly because a strong Gaelic military and social organization had successfully resisted the foreign invaders, and partly because "such a vigorous people could make full use of woodlands, lakes and mountain areas," which presented difficult obstacles to late medieval armies. Therefore when rebellion broke out in 1594, the English were faced with the strongest resistance they had yet encountered in their struggle to subjugate Ireland.
The Ulster Gaelic chieftain, Hugh O'Neill "appealed for solidarity between the Gaels, whose traditional way of life was being threatened by the consolidation of Tudor power and the imposition of English law. He also appealed for solidarity between Catholics against the Protestant English" (Pringle 1985:93). However, Hugh O'Neill's plea for group solidarity of all the Irish population, based on their Gaelic cultural origin and common religion, failed. In the wake of the total military defeat of the Ulster chieftains, most of the Gaelic nobility forfeited all Irish rights to land and property and fled overseas to the Continent. Deprived of their natural military and political leaders, the Irish population was left disorganized and powerless to resist foreign English domination.

After the defeat of the last of the Gaelic chiefs in 1603 and the abolishment of the Brehon Laws of tanistry and gavelkind in 1608 and 1609 (Beckett 1981:34-35), Canon Law became the official practice of both the Old English and Gaelic Irish Churches. As oppression against those of the Catholic faith in Ireland and the Gaelic language intensified throughout the seventeenth century, its effect was felt mostly among the middle and upper Irish Catholic classes.
The Irish language and culture continued to be devalued and lampooned by English historians and entertainers. For example, Liz Curtis (1984:31) quotes from a 1693 history of Ireland by Nathaniel Crouch:

the English endeavoured to civilise the people, and to introduce the English laws, language, habit and customs among them, thereby to reduce them to civility, yet such was their rough, rebellious disposition, and their implacable malice to the English, that nothing could attemper, or reduce them to any tolerable patience; so that in all times, as well as when they were admitted into the condition of subjects, as while they were esteemed and treated as enemies, they took all advantages, most perfidiously to rise up and imbrue their hands in the blood of their English neighbours, and Ireland hath long continued a true Alcedama, or field of blood, and a dismal sepulchre for the English nation . . .

Curtis continues (1984:34), quoting from the preface of a 1749 joke book titled *Teagueland Jests and Bog Witticisms*:

The bulls and witticisms that too frequently drop from Irish mouths have made them the discourse and entertainment of all sorts of companies. Nothing more recommends Teague and his countrymen than their natural stupidity.

This stigmatizing of Irish culture and language, when coupled with the Penal Laws of 1691, had the dual purpose:

. . . firstly, of converting as many of the Irish Catholics as possible, particularly those of the upper and landowning class, to the Protestant religion, and secondly, of excluding those who
remained Catholics from the rights: to carry arms; from all the professions except the medical; from political power at local and national level; from the possession of landed property except on a short-term lease-hold basis; and from all education, either at home or abroad, except such as was avowedly proselytising in aim (Malcomson 1975:1).

This resulted in the abandonment of the Irish language and many aspects of the traditional Gaelic culture by those who perceived the economic advantage of assimilation into the dominant and by this time effective English culture. Beckett (1981:37) elaborates:

The Anglicization of the upper classes of Gaelic society, so far as language and dress were concerned, had already made some progress by the end of the sixteenth century... Among the upper classes, also, the use of the English language made great progress; and though they no doubt remained more at home in Irish, it is probable that by the end of James's reign most of them spoke English...

Deprived of the traditional Gaelic aristocracy which had given the language and the culture authenticity and prestige, both "descended into the ranks of the peasantry, who themselves, as a result of frequent confiscations, were soon a blend of the noblest names of the old order and the blood of the common people" (Curtis 1937:271). Thus the battle for linguistic hegemony had been in England's favour, but its rule would not be without resistance and direct challenge, as will be illustrated below.
Edmund Spenser, writing at the end of Elizabeth's reign, said in defence of the "extermination" policy enacted by the Tudors against the Irish language:

> It hath ever been the use of the conquerors to despise the language of the conquered, and to force him by all means to learn his (quoted in Ó Fiaich 1969:104).

By the eighteenth century, the Catholic middle and upper classes had largely abandoned the Irish language in favour of English, for economic reasons. The Catholic Church too, in reaction to the religious hegemonic threat from the new Protestant order, who had by this time realized the proselytizing benefits of translating the Bible into Irish, was "... encourag[ing] their flock to speak English rather than Irish, and burn Gaelic manuscripts" (MacPóilín 1990b:31). The Protestant ascendancy however, was becoming interested in this "despised" language and this interest was not solely in its value as a tool for proselytizing. A discussion of the Protestant ascendancy's efforts to restore this stigmatized language will begin this section.
In following part of this section, I will argue that the restoration of the Irish language primarily by Ulster Presbyterians was differently motivated from that in the rest of Ireland and by the late eighteenth century, this Irish language activism had begun to assume two distinctly recognizable linguistic strands of identity. One strand included those Protestants who saw themselves as culturally Irish but politically English (or British), and the other strand consisted of those who identified themselves as both culturally and politically Irish.

A. The Protestant Ascendancy and the Restoration of the Irish Language

The seventeenth century had been a period of intense colonialism throughout the non-European world. "Missionization" directed at tribal "savages" had become an integral part of this colonial effort. From the eighteenth century onward the intellectual community in Britain and elsewhere had become preoccupied with "saving" traditional cultures--on paper--before they were lost forever (see Stocking 1971). This was also the age of Romanticism and antiquarianism. Thus it was in this intellectual and political environment that some members of the Protestant educated middle classes and even some of the "country gentry" began to show an interest in the Irish language (ó Fiaich 1969:107).
Many of these early attempts at the restoration of the Irish language concerned themselves primarily with:

the investigation and publication of the source material of Irish manuscripts . . . the older literature or . . . the contents of the Irish historical documents and annals--and the vindication of Irish learning . . . [and] were usually propagandist, scholarly and defensive in character. . . . [The efforts of these Protestants] were of importance in so much as they played no small part in the slow growth of a national awareness of the significance of the language and of its value to the Irish people, but in general they showed little interest in the spoken language or in its survival as a vernacular (ó hAilín 1969:91).

ó hAilín (1969:91) offers one reason for this disinterest in reviving the contemporary Irish language, saying that before the famine, the vernacular of Ireland was in no danger as Irish was widely spoken despite continuing efforts by the English authorities to eradicate it and replace it with English.

The anti-Irish propaganda of the period, that had stigmatized the Irish culture and language as "uncivilized" and inferior, provides another clue to why these early restoration groups confined their efforts to collecting and publishing historical Irish manuscripts and documents. As ó hAilín (1969:92) writes:

None of . . . the founders of such societies as The Gaelic Society of Dublin (1806), the Iberno-Celtic Society (1818), and the
Irish Archaeological Society (1840) . . . had any interest in contemporary literature, and the average ascendancy view of the spoken language is well summed up in a pamphlet of 1822 which declares "the common Irish are naturally shrewd, but very ignorant and deficient in mental culture; from the barbarous tongue in which they converse which operates as an effectual bar to any literary attainment." Another contemporary view was that speaking Irish spoiled the English accent and created a prejudice against one in polite society.

Thus to many of the Protestants involved in some of these earlier groups, the interest in the Irish language was for the most part, purely academic. It was in Ulster, and particularly within the large Presbyterian population of Belfast--which like the Catholics, was suffering the impact of the Penal Laws--where this interest in the Irish language and culture became more than an academic hobby. Among that portion of the Presbyterians who went on to organize the United Irishmen, this nascent interest became incorporated into a nationalist struggle for independence.

B. Murmurs of Alternative Irish Language Activism:
Ulster's Protestants and Irish Language Revivalism,
Pre-1850

Belfast, nestled in the heart of the last Gaelic stronghold able to resist English encroachment until the year 1607, began as an English garrison of the twelfth century. Even before it received its town charter in 1613,
Belfast had become a significant and prosperous seaport. From its beginning Belfast was very much a Protestant, essentially Presbyterian town and remained so into the eighteenth century. While the Penal Laws denied Presbyterians political power as well as the right to vote or to buy land, they were free to practice their religion, as they were their professions or trades (Budge and O'Leary 1973:4). Thus Belfast Presbyterians were able to benefit from the town's growing profits from commerce and the cotton industry.

In 1793, England was involved in a war with Revolutionary France, highlighting—as in the twelfth century—Ireland's strategic importance in securing England's western flank. This vulnerability, as well as England's need for recruits to replenish her armies, provided a strong incentive to remove the restrictions the Penal Laws had imposed on the Catholic and Presbyterian population. The prevailing belief was that "Ireland would be less vulnerable to invasion if its people were tranquillized by concessions, and more amenable to a recruiting-drive if the Catholic rank-and-file were recruited by Catholic officers" (Northern Ireland Public Records Office 1976:29). However, these measures were insufficient to quell the growing dissatisfaction in Ireland and in the wake of the rebellion by the United Irishmen in 1798, the Dublin government was abolished and Ireland was
integrated with the United Kingdom. The Act of Union in 1801, lifted restrictions on industry and trade between Britain and Ireland, and Ulster—especially Belfast—prospered. "Steam power revolutionized the linen industry, an engineering industry developed and eventually shipbuilding as well" (Farrell 1980:14).

From surrounding rural areas, Catholics came to Belfast to sell cattle or to obtain work as cotton weavers, and when the cotton industry collapsed, as labourers in the linen factories. Those who stayed, settled in the areas of the city around Divis Mountain and Black Mountain, areas now collectively known as West Belfast. The Catholic population remained at or near eight percent of the total population until the beginning of the nineteenth century, but jumped in 1808 to sixteen percent (Budge and O'Leary 1973:32). The influx of Catholics during the period 1750 to 1810 had been welcome by Belfast's Protestant population. Protestants, as a gesture of goodwill, paid for the building of Belfast's first Catholic Church, St. Mary's, in Chapel Lane which opened in 1784 (Boyd 1987:4-5). This was one of the few periods of religious tolerance and co-operation in Belfast's history (Boyd 1987:2-3; Budge and O'Leary 1973).

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, Belfast—known locally as the "Athens of the North"—was similarly endowed with talented people in the areas of politics, science, industry and culture (MacPóilín 1990a:28). In the midst of
this fury of intellectual and industrial activity arose an interest in Irish music and language. This interest was largely fostered by Belfast Presbyterians who—if O'Snodaigh's (1973:2-7) suggestion that many of the Scottish settlers in Ulster were Gaelic speakers is correct--may have been motivated by their own Gaelic tradition which had its ancestral roots in Ireland.

Throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth centuries, a growing number of Belfast groups were set up to stimulate interest in the Irish language. "The radical Belfast of the seventeen nineties" saw the setting up of many diverse groups. One of these groups was the "Belfast Reading Society (from which came the Linenhall Library) [that had resolved] on 2 March 1793, [to make funds available to encourage] the obtaining and purchase of books and manuscripts in the Irish language" (O'Snodaigh 1973:12). The aim of the Reading Society was to make this material publicly available to all, since prior to this time most works in the Irish language were collected by individuals. The Belfast Harp Society, founded in 1791, had goals that transcended a routine preservation of "the Ancient Music and Poetry of Ireland" into the reviving and perpetuation of the otherwise forgotten arts (O'Snodaigh 1973:12). These and the groups that followed were also active in promoting the learning and use of the Irish language through the sponsoring of instructional classes.
O'Snodaigh (1973) argues in *Hidden Ulster* that, "the Irish language stratum is a deep and significant one in the hidden heritage of the Ulster Protestant," and goes on to describe some other pre-1850 Irish language and music groups of Belfast in which Ulster Protestants played a prominent role:

(a) The Literary Society, 1801, "one of the many precursors of the Gaelic League."

(b) The Irish Harp Society founded in 1808: i) to enable blind boys and girls with the means of making a living by playing the harp; and ii) to stimulate interest in "the study of the Irish language, history and antiquities."

(c) The Belfast Academical Institution (1810) (later to become Queen's University, Belfast), taught Irish as an academic subject.

In 1830, Cuideacht Gaedhilge Uladh (or the Ulster Gaelic Society) was established. This society took a major step beyond the antiquarian nature of its predecessors in the South, taking an active interest in the contemporary Irish language (ó hAilín 1969:93). O'Snodaigh (1973:19) describes this group:

The Society and its members, mostly middle class Belfast Presbyterians, were not only . . . extremely active in collecting, copying, and editing old Irish manuscripts and in commissioning
scribes around the country to record [the] . . . many recent compositions [that] . . . had only been in oral circulation beforehand . . . [but were] teaching and organising teaching [of Irish], [and] lobbying, [and] corresponding with similarly disposed people [on behalf of the language]. . . . [This group also published an Irish] translation of Maria Edgeworth's Forgive and Forget and Rosanna in 1833.

Although, like their southern counterparts, these pre-1850 groups were non-political in nature, they had transcended the southern attitude toward the Irish language by advocating its use in everyday speech. Importance was also placed on the oral tradition of Irish speakers. Rather than just regarding the language as an artifact to be preserved for its museum value, the objective of many southern Irish language restoration groups, some of the members of these Belfast groups and their students, especially in the 1790s, seem to have had more than a cultural interest in the language. It is on these people that the remainder of the discussion in this section will focus.

C. Nascent Oppositional Irish Language Activism: The United Irishmen Rising 1798

That some of Belfast's Irish language enthusiasts recognized the language as part of their own Gaelic tradition and as such having the potential to culturally
unite settler and native to their mutual benefit, is hinted at in this 1791 notice encouraging enrolment in Irish classes:

Irish Language

An attempt to revive the grammatical and critical knowledge of the Irish language in this town is generously made by Mr. Lynch: he teaches publicly in the Academy and privately in several families . . . It is particularly interesting to all who wish for the improvement and Union of this neglected and divided kingdom. By our understanding and speaking it we could more easily and effectually communicate our sentiments and instructions to our Countrymen; and thus mutually improve and conciliate each other's affections. The merchant and artist would reap great benefit from the knowledge of it. They would then be qualified for carrying on Trade and Manufactures in every part of their native country (quoted in O'Snodaigh 1973:10).

It was this same Mr. Lynch, O'Snodaigh (1973:11) and ó Fiaich (1969:108) claim, who probably wrote with Thomas Russell one of his students (or perhaps alone), the preface to the first Irish language magazine ever published, Bolg an tSolair, in October 1795. This magazine was a supplement to the publication Northern Star, the United Irishmen paper in Belfast, which Russell produced. ó Fiaich (1969:108) describes Bolg an tSolair as:

Selling to thirteen pence a copy, it had a hundred and twenty small pages containing an introduction to Irish grammar, simple dialogues in Irish with English translation, and a selection of Fiannaíocht poems, also with translation. The
contents were obviously meant to aid the reader in picking up some knowledge of the spoken language (Ó Fiaich 1969:108).

The contents of this preface was also political in that it, in James Scott's (1990) terms, symbolically declared war, breaching the hidden transcript by publicly declaring the abuses the English had inflicted on the Irish language and appealing for Irishmen to rectify these wrongs. The purpose of the preface was:

To recommend the Irish language to the notice of Irishmen . . . any arguments laid down on that head, to persuade the natives that their own language is of some importance to them, would appear quite superfluous in the eyes of foreigners; but seeing that the Gaelic has been not only banished from the court, the college and the bar, but that many tongues and pens have been employed to cry it down and to persuade the ignorant that it was a harsh and barbarous jargon, and that their ancestors, from whom they derived it, were an ignorant, uncultivated people--it becomes then necessary to say something in reply . . . The Irish enjoyed their own laws and language, till the reigns of Elizabeth and James, when the English laws were universally established and English schools were erected with the strict injunction that the vernacular tongue should be no longer spoken in the seminaries . . . It is chiefly with a view to prevent in some measure the total neglect, and to diffuse the beauties of this ancient and once-admired language that the following compilation is offered to the public, hoping to afford a pleasing retrospect to every Irishman, who respects the traditions, or considers the language and compositions of our early ancestors, as a matter of curiosity or importance (quoted in O'Snodaigh 1973:11-12).
There is evidence that the author of this preface, whether Lynch or Russell (or indeed both), identifies himself as culturally Irish. This cultural identification may be symbolic, as suggested by Whittaker (1986) or Heiberg (1979) (see chapter one above), as illustrated by the phrase, "to every Irishman, who respects the traditions"; or in fact imply a direct biological link as proposed by Barth (1969) and others, and as intimated by, "or considers the language and compositions of our early ancestors." The use of the Irish language as a vehicle to make a political statement can also be argued, given that the aims of the United Irishmen were to gain self-determination for Ireland. This political slant could be found in the implied condemnation of the English "foreigners" who tried though physical coercion and derision to destroy "this ancient and once-admired" language. That the Irish language was a part of the United Irishmen's ideology is further evidenced by a statement cited by ó Fiaich (1969:108) when writing of another Belfast United Irishman, Lord Edward Fitzgerald. ó Fiaich reports on an account given by a biographer of Lord Fitzgerald of, "a meeting at his home [by the United Irishmen leaders] where it was decided 'that the English language should be abolished, setting themselves forthwith to the study of the Irish tongue'." This oppositional Irish language activism is not unlike that found in the Republican Movement today. While they would probably settle for
bilingualism, republican members are actively trying to Gaelicize their rank and file.

The actual role of the Irish language in mobilizing popular support for the United Irishmen Rebellion can only be speculated on. That the most prominent Presbyterians who had leadership roles in this Rebellion—Ulstermen: Thomas Russell, Henry Joy McCracken, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Dr. William Dennan, and even the Rebellion's leader, Wolfe Tone—took time to attend Irish classes and to vocalize the oppression of the language is however, an indication that these men of '98 were part of a segment of the Protestant population in Ireland generally and Ulster in particular, who saw themselves as both culturally and politically Irish.

III. Alternative and Oppositional Irish Language Activism: A Period of Political Upheaval in Belfast

The fragile "respectability" the Irish language had gained—largely through the efforts of various Belfast societies devoted to its restoration and revival—in the early decades of the nineteenth century, was shattered by the dramatic, often violent political events that marred relations between Protestants and Catholics from the 1830s on. This section will begin with an examination of the political factors underlying these events and their ultimate effect on the attitudes of middle class Protestants toward the Irish language.
Following this will be a discussion of the National School system of 1831 and the near fatal blow it dealt to an already faltering Irish language. To conclude this section, the alternative and oppositional Irish language activism that arose as a reaction to this latest attempt by the English to secure linguistic hegemony will be analyzed.

A. Belfast: The Turbulent Nineteenth Century

By the 1830s, the tolerance and goodwill between Belfast Catholics and Protestants that had prevailed only two decades earlier, was rapidly dissolving. The Catholic population had doubled from sixteen percent in 1808 to thirty-four percent in 1834, and this rapid increase had begun to make Protestants uneasy. The influx of Catholics from the poverty-stricken rural areas, hoping to reap some benefits from Belfast's continued prosperity, had added to the city's overcrowding, poor sanitation, and endemic disease. These social problems coupled with cheap Catholic labour had intensified competition for jobs and housing. The economic boom at the turn of the nineteenth century had begun to wane and low wages and periodic depressions intensified the already competitive atmosphere—an atmosphere in which established Protestants regarded Catholics as an economic threat (Farrell 1980:16).
This period also saw a gain in popular support for the Orange Order, an exclusively Protestant organization formed in 1795. This support was bolstered by lobbying efforts against Catholic emancipation (a freedom which should have been part of the reform package of 1793 with the repeal of the Penal Laws, but was not enacted until 1829) and other government legislation perceived as undermining the political power of the Protestants in Ireland. An additional factor contributing to the rapidly deteriorating relations between Belfast Protestants and Catholics was the emergence of a new breed of extremist clerics or "street preachers." Economic insecurity, the activities of the Orange Order and street preachers such as Rev. Henry Cooke, Rev. Thomas Drew and Rev. Hugh (Roaring) Hanna played a central role in the serious disturbances or riots in Belfast. Starting in 1813 and recurring throughout the century, the riots peaked in the years: 1832, 1835, 1843, 1857, 1864, 1872, 1880, 1884, 1886, and 1898 (Boyd 1987; Budge and O'Leary 1973; Farrell 1980). An examination of the circumstances leading to one of these riots, the one in 1857, will serve to illustrate how the above factors combined to produce deadly results.

The change in Belfast's population makeup combined with Catholic emancipation had, The Presbyterian Church of Ireland (1975:14) claims, "re-awakened in the Protestants of Ireland fears of resurgent popery and of an undermining of
the Protestant position within Britain and Ireland." This perceived Catholic threat to Protestant economic, political and religious hegemony in Belfast was worked up to a fever pitch in July of 1857, when Rev. Thomas Drew spoke to a large, predominantly Orangeman, crowd. The events directly preceding the 1857 riot are described by Boyd (1987:12) who writes that on Sunday, July 12, 1857:

When Drew, dressed in the plain vestments of an Episcopalian priest, mounted the pulpit . . . in Christ Church the congregation fell silent. The people had come from many parts of Belfast and were estimated at more than 2,000. The first, carefully chosen words of his sermon were intended to flatter them:

Matthew five (he intoned), verses thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen . . . Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. . . .

But this flattery soon digressed to a fanatical attack on the Catholic Church, an inflammatory theme common in the street sermons of Drew's contemporaries, Cooke and "Roaring" Hanna. Drew continued:

The Sermon on the Mount is an everlasting rebuke to all intolerance. . . . old time lords of high degree, with their own hands, strained on the rack the limbs of the delicate Protestant women, prelates dabbled in the gore of their helpless victims . . . cells of the Pope's prisons with the calcined bones of men and cemented with human gore and human hair (quoted in Boyd 1987:12).
After this rousing speech by Drew, the Orangemen left quietly but a few days later they attacked a Catholic district, beginning ten continuous days of fighting, that continued intermittently until September 6, 1857 (Budge and O'Leary 1973:79-80). The government inquiry into the causes of the riot blamed the Orange Order and criticized their parades marking the victory of the Protestant William III over the Catholic James II (July 12, 1690), claiming both to be causal factors of the periodic violence in Belfast (Boyd 1987; Budge and O'Leary 1973).

This turbulent period in Protestant-Catholic relations, had a profound effect on the attitude of the city's Protestants toward the Irish language. O'Snodaigh (1973:22) best sums up the effect these events had on the attitude of the Protestant middle class, saying that:

Up to about 1850 it was every bit as normal for a member of that class in society to be a member of the Harp Society or of Cuideacht Graedhilge Uladh as it was to belong to the Literary Society or the Natural History and Philosophic Society. After, say 1860, such being the byproducts of political tension, the Irish language began to become more associated in the public mind with Catholicism (despite the continued existence of communities of Irish-speaking Protestants, e.g., in Rathlin and Donegal, and despite the controversy twenty years earlier in the Glens when it was the Presbyterians who were on the side of Irish, whereas the reaction of the Catholic clergy "destroyed along the Antrim coast the Irish language", in the words of Monsignor O'Laverty). While Irish continued to be spoken in the North it was looked upon with a certain suspicion by people who had no first hand knowledge of it and who seldom met the Irish speakers, many of whom had little or no literacy in it.
In this atmosphere of political upheaval, those Protestants who had promoted the Irish language found it difficult to find the funds to keep their societies and institutions viable. Cuideacht Gaedhilge Uladh (or the Ulster Gaelic Society) established in 1830, ceased effective operation in 1943. The Belfast Academical Institution dropped Irish classes from its academic program, although O'Snodaigh (1973:20-21) writes that one instructor at the Academy did continue teaching Irish until the 1880s.

Queen's University was established in 1849 with a chair in Celtic studies, but as O'Snodaigh (1973:21) relates, because "of the decline in public interest, or hostility, or of both, Irish was not a normal B.A. subject." He continues, saying that the only professor in this department had very few students and that when he died in 1862, his position was not filled even though there had been requests from the public to do so. (It should be noted here that by public O'Snodaigh presumably means the Protestant public as most Catholics who would be interested in learning Irish would have been financially unable to attend the university.) It was not until 1909 that Irish was again taught as a subject at Queen's, and a professorship in Celtic Studies was not re-established until 1945.
B. Another Victory for Linguistic Hegemony:  
The National School Act of 1831

To Gellner (1980, 1981) culture is communication, broadly defined, with language as its most important component. Thus for members to fully participate in modern society, an extensive, formal, centrally-controlled and--Gellner emphasizes--linguistically uniform, state-wide educational system is necessary. Gellner (1980:244) adds that nowadays, "it is the language of the école maternelle and not the mother tongue, that matters."

This policy of using the school system to linguistically "homogenize" the population seems to have been an underlying philosophy of British cultural hegemony in Ireland long before the age of modernization. From the days of Henry VIII with the establishment of the first Parish Schools in 1537, the education system had been used as a tool by the English for religious and linguistic conversion of the Irish masses. The Charity Schools, introduced by Bishop Moule in 1712, were based on the philosophy that, "the whole nation may in time be made both Protestant and English." O'Snodaigh (1973:8) maintains that Charter Schools, established in 1731 "for the instruction of the children of the Irish natives in the English tongue and the fundamental principles of the true religion," proved to be more effective in Ulster than the Charity Schools, in achieving their goals.
The Education Act of 1831 established in Ireland a government-subsidized, nationwide system of non-denominational education in which all instruction was to be in English even though at the time more than twenty percent of the Irish people spoke only Gaelic. Lando (1981:235) writes that in addition to English being the only language of instruction, only English literature and history were taught in these schools, because the English politicians believed this English oriented curriculum would accelerate the Anglicization of Ireland. While these National Schools were described as non-denominational, Lando (1981:235) reports that the Protestant politicians who drafted this legislation did have a religious motivation in mind in that they "hoped that by taking the education of future Irish citizens out of the hands of the priests, they would be able to weaken the hold of the Catholic church over the country."

The effects of this new educational system on the Irish language and Gaelic culture were "fatal" (Collins 1990:66; Coolahan 1981:21; Curtis 1937:362; O'Snodaigh 1973:8). The scope of this devastation of the Irish language (see Figures 1 and 2) and the failure of the National School system to produce a religiously homogeneous population, are summed up by Beckett (1981:186) who writes:
Figure 1  Ireland: Irish Speaking Population Distribution 1851
(Source: Census of Population, Ireland 1851.)
Figure 2: Ireland: Irish Speaking Population Distribution 1891
(Source: Census of Population, Ireland 1891.)
The "national schools" did a great deal towards abolishing illiteracy, but almost nothing towards increasing mutual understanding between Irishmen of different faiths. One effect of the new system was to discourage the use of the Irish language. In 1831 the Irish-speaking population probably numbered between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000; fifty years later it had shrunk into insignificance; and the national schools, though by no means the only cause of the decline, contributed substantially to it.6

C. Alternative and Oppositional Irish Language Activism
Come of Age: Conradh na Gaeilge (Gaelic League) and Sinn Féin

As tensions increased in Belfast in the 1830s and 1840s a mass movement for Irish nationalism was taking form throughout the whole of Ireland under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell, a middle-class Dublin Catholic. Economic, political and religious discrimination had been reasons enough to attract enormous peasant support for this "traditional" and "constitutional" nationalist movement. However, the opposition of the Catholic ascendancy to any moves that would destabilize the status quo and the distrust of O'Connell by Protestants, even those who may have seen themselves as culturally and politically Irish, posed major obstacles to the movement's success (Cronin 1981:66, 67). Cronin (1981:67) writes that O'Connell, realizing that he needed "Protestant allies of national outlook . . . discovered a way of reaching them through a weekly journal, The Nation, which began publication in October of 1842 . . .
[and employed as its chief writer] Thomas Davis, a Protestant barrister and graduate of Trinity College, Dublin."

O'Connell was, according to Curtis (1937:359-360) "no friend to the Gaelic past and though he could and often did address crowds in Irish, he told them that the old language was a barrier to modern progress." Davis on the other hand, whose hobby was Irish history but who had been unable to master the actual language, saw the Irish language and culture as having integral roles in developing a nationalism that would "embrace all Irishmen" (Cronin 1981:67).

Several historians have argued that the writing on the Irish language of Thomas Davis has strongly influenced modern cultural and political Irish language revivalist movements. For example, Cronin (1981:71) claims Davis "supplied the watchwords of the Gaelic League and the slogans of Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin . . . [when he wrote:] 'the loss of one's native tongue [is] . . . the worst badge of conquest--it is the chain on the soul . . . A people without a language of its own is only half a nation . . . A people should guard its language more than its territories.'"

ó hAilín (1969:93) also credits Davis with anticipating the "the views of the founders of the Gaelic League, and even foreshadow[ing] the bilingual programme of Patrick Pearse," when Davis avowed:
Simply requiring the teachers of the National Schools in these Irish-speaking districts to know Irish, and supplying them with Irish translations of the school books would guard the language, where it now exists, and prevent it from being swept away by the English tongue (quoted in ó hAilín 1969:93).

Thus by the mid-nineteenth century the roots of both alternative and oppositional Irish language activism were clearly visible. The final two parts of this section will conclude with a discussion of each of these forms of Irish language activism as it was manifested in the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin. Particular attention will be paid to the underlying philosophies of each of these two groups toward the revival of the Irish language and the challenges each presented to British linguistic hegemony.

1. Pre-Partition Alternative Irish Language Activism: The Gaelic League

Resistance to the "tide of Anglicization" that had beset Ireland after the establishment of the National School system initially came from individuals and the combined efforts of small groups of like-minded people who tried to stimulate interest in the study of Irish among commoners (ó hAilín 1969:94). For example the Archbishop of Tuam, John MacHale "advocated the use of Irish by the Catholic clergy . . . published a number of literary works in the
language . . . [and] was a Patron of The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language" (ó hAilín 1969:94).

This Society, founded in 1876, tended to be more an academic than a popular linguistic movement. Many of its members however, did develop ideas that went beyond the academic approach to language education and restoration. These members later went on to become leaders of the Gaelic League movement (ó hAilín 1969:94). The primary aim of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was to put Irish on the school curriculum, and in this they partially succeeded. Through the efforts of the Society, "Celtic" language and literature became subjects for examination in the intermediate schools in 1878 (ó hAilín 1969:94-95).

The Gaelic Union, a faction that broke away from the above Society placed its emphasis on encouraging both teachers and pupils to learn Irish by organizing Irish language competitions with prizes. Inexpensive Irish language books--a rarity at any price--many containing instructional material useful in the teaching of Irish, were published by this group.

In 1882, the Gaelic Union founded the The Gaelic Journal. This journal devoted itself to reviving interest in Irish literature and language. The Gaelic Journal was a step ahead of its predecessors that had been primarily interested in the restoration rather than revival of the language. One of its founders, Thomas Flannery, "was
careful to point out . . . it was in no antiquarian spirit [that *The Gaelic Journal* was founded, nor would it be conducted in such a spirit" (ó hAilín 1969:95). ó hAilín (1969:96) credits the founding of *The Gaelic Journal* as marking "a turning point" in the Irish language revival movement in two ways: first, "it enabled enthusiasts to develop their ideas in public"; and second, it became a vehicle for the emergence of "a modern Irish prose style" ó hAilín (1969:96).

The tenets of modern Irish language revivalism were laid out in November 1892 via a lecture given by Douglas Hyde, a Dublin poet and scholar. Titled "The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland," the lecture focused on the state of the Irish language in nineteenth-century Ireland. This speech has been credited with being a turning point in the development of modern Irish language resistance to English linguistic domination (Cronin 1981:97-98; Ellis 1972:171; Harkness 1988:127; ó hAilín 1969:97-98).

The son of a Church of Ireland minister, Hyde was politically Unionist. As a child he had learned Irish and had developed a love of Gaelic culture. Cronin (1981:97) writes of his lecture, Hyde "taunted the nationalists for discarding 'with light heart the best claim which we have upon the world's recognition of us as a nationality'--the Irish language--and with it the bricks of nationality." Hyde went on to describe the people of Ireland as being,
"in a half way house: 'ceasing to be Irish without becoming English'" (Harkness 1988:127). Hyde's lecture was concluded with a prescription for remedying the language situation:

Our once great national tongue (must be revived and the spiritual Irish nation saved.) . . . In order to de-Anglicize ourselves we must at once arrest the decay of the language. (The peasantry who used Irish in their daily speech must be made to feel proud of it.) We can, however, insist, and we shall insist if Home Rule be carried, that the Irish language, which so many foreign scholars of the first calibre find so worthy of study, shall be placed on a par with--or even above--Greek, Latin, and modern languages, in all examinations held under the Irish Government. We can also insist, and we shall insist, that in those baronies where the children speak Irish, Irish shall be taught, and that Irish-speaking school-masters, petty session clerks, and even magistrates be appointed in Irish-speaking districts. If all this were done, it should not be very difficult, with the aid of the foremost foreign scholars, to bring about a tone of thought which would make it disgraceful for an educated Irishman . . . to be ignorant of his own language--would make it at least as disgraceful as for an educated Jew to be quite ignorant of Hebrew (quoted in Cronin 1981:97-98).

On July 31, 1893, Conradh na Gaeilge (The Gaelic League) was formed to rescue the Irish language from extinction by implementing the programme outlined in Hyde's speech of the previous November (Ellis 1972:171; ó Fearaíl 1975). The Gaelic League marked a new era in Irish language revival, differing from all previous societies in both its objectives and its organization. Its two-pronged programme, included, "first the revival of Irish as the vernacular of
the whole Irish people and secondly, the creation of a new literature in the Irish tongue" (ó hAilín 1969:96). The enormity of this undertaking became clear when a survey made by the Gaelic League in 1893, found that while ninety-nine percent of the people of Ireland spoke English, eighty-five percent of them could not speak Irish (ó Cuív 1969:128). Undaunted by these figures, the Gaelic League began operations by setting up locally autonomous branches around the country to organize Irish language teaching and other cultural activities. There were 58 branches of the Gaelic League by 1898, 120 branches by 1900, 964 by 1906, and 588 by 1909.

From the beginning, the Gaelic League pressured the government to introduce Irish into the school system. The ensuing struggle is described by ó Fearaíl (1975:30):

In the schools An Conradh [the Gaelic League] continued to play a sort of game with the education authorities and the British Treasury. The game went like this: An Conradh made certain demands for teaching of Irish. The British Government refused them. All shades of public opinion [were] brought to bear by An Conradh and the authorities gave in. However, a short time later the Government introduced some new rule or measure which hit the teaching of Irish. An Conradh mobilized its forces again. There was another submission and a little later another wriggle by the Government and Irish suffered again.
As will be discussed below, the game played out in the first decade of the nineteenth century resembled the one that occurred in the last two decades of the same century between the British government and Irish language groups in West Belfast. These groups were in the process of setting up an Irish-medium school system and were engaged in a fight to get Irish, in Hyde's words (quoted above), "placed on a par with--or even above--Greek, Latin, and modern languages" in the school curriculum.

During its first ten years of operation, the Gaelic League achieved several significant victories. In 1906, the League managed to secure the teaching of Irish during normal school hours in primary schools (Coolahan 1981:36; Ellis 1972:171). Upon examining the methods used for the teaching of modern languages, the League declared them inadequate to achieve the goal of the restoration of Irish into the vernacular. In place of these methods, the League designed a specimen Irish language programme to be used as a guideline in schools, utilizing a direct method--teaching phrases instead of individual words--and emphasizing phonetic drill (ó hAilín 1969:96). The League had also successfully lobbied the government to allow bilingual programmes using qualified Irish language teachers, in the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) areas. Outside the education system, classes were set up to teach the Irish language, as well as its history, folklore, music and dances (Coolahan
1981:36). To rectify the dearth of adequately trained teachers of Irish, the League set up a summer school in which students at the end of each session had to pass both a written exam and give a sample lesson to their classmates, before qualifying for a teaching certificate (ó hAilín 1969:96). In its most difficult battle with the government (1910-1913), the League succeeded in getting Irish recognized as an essential matriculation subject in the new National University (Ellis 1972:171; ó hAilín 1969:99).

One of the reasons for the successes of the Gaelic League can be directly attributed to its non-political nature. As ó hAilín (1960:100) points out, "Hyde and the other founders realised the dangers of introducing either religious or political views to the councils of the League and these were rigidly excluded." The first branch of the Gaelic League in Belfast was set up in 1895, with more than half of its membership being Protestant (MacPóilín 1990b:31; O'Snodaigh 1973:23). But regardless of its mixed religious makeup and its non-political stance, the Belfast branch of the Gaelic League was regarded by most with suspicion. As a local nineteenth-century writer Cathal O'Byrne, states:

*With the advent of the Gaelic League the language came, at least partly, into its own. But the League was never considered quite "respectable" --that awful Belfast word--by the planters. To be a Gaelic Leaguer was to be suspect always (quoted in O'Snodaigh 1973:23).*
Despite all the successes of the Gaelic League, it failed to achieve its primary goal, "preserving and extending the use of the spoken tongue" (ó hAilín 1969:99). The reason for this, ó hAilín (1969:99) writes, is that "no voluntary organisation unsupported by the power of the state could hope to achieve this." As will be clear in the following analysis of alternative Irish language activism in West Belfast, the root cause of the Gaelic League's failure to achieve its overall objective is still the major obstacle to voluntary Irish language groups in West Belfast today.

2. The Irish Language Becomes Part of the Republican Ethos: The Birth of Sinn Féin

Hyde's 1892 lecture not only inspired modern alternative Irish language activism—the form of resistance adopted by the Gaelic League to England's cultural hegemony in Ireland—but it "shaped profoundly twentieth-century Irish nationalist ideology, particularly republicanism, although [Cronin adds] that was never Hyde's intention" (Cronin 1981:98). The infusion of the Irish language and culture into the republican ethos can largely be attributed to Padraig Pearse. While still a member of the League, Pearse developed a new system of teaching Irish, elements of which have been incorporated into the teaching practices of both republican and non-republican Irish language activists in West Belfast.
It was Pearse who introduced to the League both the direct method of teaching Irish and the concept of bilingual education. In his pamphlet *The Murder Machine*, Pearse (1916:4) attacked the English system of education, that had been imposed on Ireland, as deliberately seeking to destroy the Irish culture and language rather than having the objective of a proper school system, to educate.

When one uses the term education system as the name of the system of schools, colleges, universities, . . . which the English have established in Ireland, one uses it as a convenient label, just as one uses the term government as a convenient label for the system of administration by police which obtains in Ireland instead of a government. There is no education system in Ireland. The English have established the simulacrum of an education system, but its object is the precise contrary of the object of an education system. Education should foster; this education is meant to repress. Education should inspire; this education is meant to tame. Education should harden; this education is meant to enervate. The English are too wise a people to attempt to educate the Irish, in any worthy sense. As well expect them to arm us (Pearse 1916:4).

Pearse had been strongly influenced by the bilingual school system in Belgium, and its use of the direct method of teaching (i.e., conversation rather than word drills) which he had studied during a trip to the Continent. Upon his return, he put into practice what he had observed by opening in Dublin, St. Enda's *Sgoil Eanna* School for boys and *Sgoil Ite* for girls, in the year 1908. The philosophy of these schools embodying Pearse's revolutionary view of
an Ireland without England, is a philosophy still very much evident in the current education programme of Sinn Féin. This philosophy is evident in the main points of the schools' syllabus:

(1) An Irish standpoint and atmosphere.
(2) Bilingual teaching as far as possible.
(3) All language teaching on the direct method.
(4) Special attention to science, "modern" subjects generally while not neglecting the classical side.
(5) Association of pupils with shaping of curriculum, cultivation of observation and reasoning, nature study, etc.
(6) Physical culture, Irish games, etc.
(7) Systematic inculcation of patriotism and training in the duties of citizenship.
(8) Above all, formation of character


The Gaelic League had directly challenged England's linguistic hegemony in Ireland. As Hyde put it in his 1892 speech in Dublin, the goal of the Anglicization policy will never be achieved because the Ireland can not be remade into another England. Hyde implored the Irish to "cultivate what they have rejected and build up an Irish nation along Irish lines" (Harkness 1988:128). Yet while Hyde and the League under his leadership called for a cultural revolution that would create an Irish nation with a distinct Irish ethos, these aspirations in no way posed a threat to England's political and economic domination of Ireland. Because of this, England allowed some of the League's cultural demands to be incorporated into the "effective dominant culture"
(i.e., the English culture) that prevailed in Ireland.

The League's non-political policy was changed in 1915, when delegates attending the Ardfheis (annual meeting) of the Gaelic League, "agreed to add to the Constitution a clause stating that An Conradh was devoted to the idea of a 'free Irish nation'" (Ó Fearaíl 1975:44). Shortly after this, Douglas Hyde resigned as President of the League. Ó Fearaíl (1975:44) states that the reason given by Hyde for his resignation was ill health, but many believed the real reasons were based on the political nature of this clause, and that the League now included in elected positions "a very strong left-wing and IRB representation." The introduction of this clause split the League into two factions: those who sought to bring about a Gaelic only Ireland; and those who felt it was not enough simply to build an Irish-speaking nation that would remain in bondage.

Ó Fearaíl (1975:44) writes, "Easter, 1916, came and it was discovered that six of the seven men who signed the Proclamation of a Republic had been members of Conradh na Gaeilge, and four of them had been members of An Coiste Gnó, the governing body of the organisation." No longer was the Gaelic League perceived by the authorities to be solely a cultural organization. It had in the State's eyes, even stepped beyond what Scott (1990) might have termed "symbolically declaring war," a declaration that could have been overlooked by the British government.
Under the circumstances however, the British government's response was predictable, and reflected its current opinion of Irish language organizations that bear too close a resemblance to Sinn Féin or "paramilitary organizations" (see Chapter Eight, below). Ó Fearsaíl (1975:44) continues, "In the Autumn of 1918 Conradh na Gaeilge was declared by the British government to be 'a dangerous organisation which encourages and aids persons to commit crimes,' and was banned." Members of the League were harassed by the police and some were arrested. However, locally it was believed that "the banning of Conradh na Gaeilge by the English authorities had not been intended and that there was no evidence of any military activity by its members. [This belief became an 'accepted truth' when] a year later the ban was lifted" (Ó Fearsaíl 1975:45).

The Gaelic League resumed its non-political, non-religious policy, continued with its activities, and became more popular than ever. Those who ascribed to Pearse's philosophy of "Ireland not only Gaelic but free as well," went on to form Sinn Féin. Thus alternative and oppositional forms of Irish language resistance to British cultural hegemony were now entrenched in Irish society. Writing in the Manchester Guardian in 1923, Douglas Hyde summarized the development of the Gaelic League in pre-partition days:
... when, in 1893, the Gaelic League was founded, we openly preached the doctrine of an "Irish Ireland" as distinguished from an Anglo-Irish Ireland, which we stigmatised as third-rate and vulgar. The Gaelic League grew up and became the spiritual father of Sinn Féin, and Sinn Féin's progeny were the Volunteers who forced the English to make the treaty. The Dail is the child of the Volunteers, and thus it descends directly from the Gaelic League, whose traditions it inherits (quoted in ó Fearaíl 1975:46).

IV. Chapter Summary

Two thousand years ago Tacitus wrote, "The language of the conqueror in the mouth of the conquered is ever the language of the slave" (quoted in ó Fiaich 1969:102). This chapter has outlined the process in which the English conquerors of Ireland imposed their language on the native population, and has traced the development of the two forms of ensuing resistance that attempted if not to remove the conqueror's language altogether, at least to make the Gaelic tongue its equal.

The linguistic consequence of the destruction of the Gaelic mode of production was to deprive the Irish language of its aristocratic prestige. The Catholic upper and middle classes abandoned the language and it was passed down to the Irish masses. Stigmatization of the language by English jokesters, writers, and historians, coupled with the introduction of a hostile, repressive education policy,
sought to eradicate the Irish language altogether. Reaction to the destruction of the Irish language came from the Protestant ascendancy who, caught up in the antiquarian spirit of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, sought to preserve this "ancient" language as a museum piece. Others saw the Irish language as an effective mechanism in bringing about Protestant hegemony in Ireland. In Ulster however, some Protestants involved in the restoration of the Irish language began to look upon it as part of their common heritage. While this group remained politically British, they began to see themselves as culturally Irish. Other Ulster Protestants envisioned themselves as both politically and culturally Irish and many of these Protestants became leaders in the United Irishmen and took part in the Rebellion of 1798. While the turbulent years that followed in Belfast stigmatized the Irish language as being a subversive, Catholic phenomenon, Protestants continued to take an active role in its revival, as evidenced by the Gaelic League whose Belfast branch attracted Protestants as well as Catholics and continues to have a religiously mixed membership (O'Snodaigh 1973:23).

The restoration activities of individuals and groups in the pre-1890 period made no demands on the State with regard to the Irish language, and therefore posed no threat to British cultural hegemony in Ireland. By the time the Gaelic League did start to make demands, a linguistically
English, capitalist mode of production was firmly in place in Ireland. Thus the "membrane" separating the "effective dominant culture" and the subordinate Gaelic culture, could afford to be more "permeable" than it had been in the past. As a result the Gaelic League was able to achieve some hard won successes in the area of education. But while it succeeded in placing Irish on the curriculum, English remained the primary language of the school system. The main objective of the Gaelic League—to restore Irish as the vernacular in Ireland—failed however, because it constituted a direct challenge to British linguistic hegemony.

Irish republicanism that began with Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen was always perceived as a threat to England's domination of Ireland and as such was violently attacked by the State. When the Irish language, which had been a part of republican ideology since the 1790s was, through Pearse, made an integral part of the struggle for the self-determination of Ireland, the State made known its strong objections. The Gaelic League was the first Irish language organization to experience the consequences of this new political role of the Irish language, when it was banned by the State and its members were harassed and jailed.

When Ireland was divided in 1922 then, the new state of Northern Ireland inherited an education system which had incorporated the successes of the Gaelic League:
Irish was taught during the normal school day as an optional subject at all levels in the schools and as an extra subject outside of school hours for fees; the government appointed and paid the salary of an Irish language organizer for the school; and training grants were made available for teachers to attend Belfast's two independent Irish language colleges (Andrews 1991:90). The new State also inherited a minority nationalist population "who had just come through the most intense phase of the Irish language revival, [and] saw themselves as Irish," and a Unionist population who saw themselves as British and considered "nationalists to be disloyal and dangerous on religious, political and cultural grounds" (Andrews 1991:91). In addition, the new State inherited two well established forms of resistance to British cultural hegemony that would continue to make their presence felt in British ruled Northern Ireland.
Chapter Four

Pre-1980 Irish Language Activism in Northern Ireland: The Calm before the Storm

Within the Northern Irish language community prior to 1980, open resistance to British linguistic hegemony was at its nadir. One local Belfast Irish language activist described this pre-1980 dispirited attitude, saying that "up until 1981-82 the Irish language revivalist organizations had made no demands on the State. They shrugged their shoulders and accepted that the State would not support what they were doing."

This chapter will begin by examining the political atmosphere in Northern Ireland after partition, and the attitude of the new Stormont government toward the Irish language, which together appeared to extinguish the Irish language revival spirit that had been developed by the Gaelic League. After two unsuccessful campaigns in the 1920s--one by Catholic teachers and the other by Comhaltas Uladh (Ulster Gaelic League)--against the anti-Irish bias of the new Ministry of Education, the Irish language activist community turned inward. Resistance during the first sixty years of the Northern Ireland State had been alternative in
nature. Without imposing on the State in any way, cultural Irish language activists had opted to continue to maintain and reproduce an Irish language ethos in Belfast by organizing numerous Irish language groups within the nationalist ghettos. This activity culminated in 1969 in the setting up of an Irish speaking community on Shaws Road in West Belfast. The final two sections of this chapter will investigate this pre-1980 Irish language activity in Belfast, concentrating first on the Cumann Chluain Ard, an Irish speaking social club established in 1936, and then on the Shaws Road Irish language community development and the Irish-medium school system it initiated.

I. Ireland Divided: The Irish Language is Attacked by the New Northern Ireland Parliament

On Easter Sunday 1916, with fewer than two thousand men, the rebel forces led by Pádraig Pearse and James Connolly seized the General Post Office on O'Connell Street in Dublin, and from this stronghold proclaimed an independent Irish Republic. While the insurrection did not initially have the support of the general population, the indiscriminate brutal retaliation of the Black and Tans--troops sent over by England to restore order--led the Irish people into electing an overwhelming Sinn Féin majority in the general election of December 14, 1918
(Bennett 1959:66; Comerford 1969; Greaves 1980:14; Ward 1983:142-43). On January 21, 1919 the first Dáil Éireann met in Dublin and declared Ireland's independence. This time the British formulated a political response, rather than the usual show of physical force. Under the Government of Ireland Act (1920), Ireland was divided. The Irish Free State was to be a self-governing dominion within the British Empire and would consist of twenty-six counties, mainly in the south. Six of the nine counties of Ulster in the north-east would become a semi-autonomous province, ruled for the next fifty years by a one-party Protestant/Unionist government. The new Northern Ireland government at Stormont, Rowthorn and Wayne (1988:26-27) write, was:

practically free from any intervention by the government in Britain. . . . Unlike England, Scotland and Wales, for 50 years Northern Ireland's domestic affairs were shaped by its own parliament and government. A few British MPs, chiefly Labour members, did retain an interest in and concern about Northern Ireland. However, their attempts to put it on the British political agenda were universally rebuffed. By agreeing not even to talk about Northern Ireland much less intervene in its affairs, all the major political parties in Britain were able to avoid thinking about the province and gaining any knowledge about it. . . . Britain [had] closed its eyes [to what was happening in Northern Ireland].

The new Northern Ireland state was "profoundly divided" and "Catholics [were] treated as dangerous outsiders" (Rowthorn and Wayne 1988:26). The position of Northern
Irish Catholics in the new State was clarified when Lord Craigavon, the first prime minister of the Northern Ireland Parliament at Stormont, proclaimed:

I have always said I am an Orangeman first and a politician and member of this parliament afterwards . . . all I boast is that we are a Protestant parliament for a Protestant State (quoted in Probert 1978:58).

Despite the continued involvement of Protestants in the revival of the Irish language, to those Unionist members of the new Stormont Parliament who saw themselves as both culturally and politically British, the Irish language was a symbol of Irish Catholic nationalist aspirations, and as such subversive. Therefore in the tense, hostile environment of the 1920s, an attack on the language and its place in the education system was imminent.

The first order of business for the newly formed Northern Ireland Ministry of Education was the drafting of a new Education Act which in its final form negated the majority of the concessions achieved by the Gaelic League in the two decades preceding partition. Even before the new Education Act was finalized, a precursor to what was to be the Stormont government's attitude to the Irish language was revealed in Parliament when "towards the end of 1921 Unionists members queried the payment of a Government salary to an organiser of Irish language instruction saying 'What
do we want with the Irish language here? There is no need for it here" (Andrews 1991:90). Thus what Andrews, a local Belfast Irish language historian, describes as "a policy of planned neglect" toward the Irish language was initiated in Northern Ireland. The aim of this policy was, Andrews (1991:92) argues:

... to create conditions that would encourage nationalists to reject the Irish language and associated aspects of Irishness by self-censorship as a result of intimidation ... through:
(a) negative statements on the subject in Parliament and elsewhere;
(b) negative policy decisions;
(c) negative attitudes to lobbying;
(d) the neglect of educational research in relation to Irish; and
(e) the development of an ethnocentric infrastructure within educational administration.

Resistance to this strong bias against the Irish language displayed by the Ministry of Education came swiftly from the Northern Irish nationalist community (Andrews 1991:91). A Non-Recognition Campaign in 1922, which at its height included some seven hundred Catholic teachers, who, with the "moral and financial support from Dublin" sought to "destabilise the newly transferred educational services" by refusing to participate in Ministry authorized public examinations (Andrews 1991:91). The campaign lasted for eleven months and ended in a victory for Ulster Unionists in that, "Catholic educational interests had been harmed
through association with it and the morale in the nationalist community was damaged . . . " (Andrews 1991:91).

However Andrews (1991:91) concludes that if the campaign had any effect it was to show the Ministry that its policies could provoke strong reaction from sections of the nationalist community.

When the Education Act of 1923 was finally presented, it did not reflect any concern about this possible strong nationalist reaction, instead it:

claimed that the preferential treatment of Irish was unjustified; it recommended that all existing rules regarding the subject should be abolished and that it should be treated in the same manner as Latin or French . . . [effectively making Irish] a "foreign" or alien language. However, unlike other foreign languages it was subject to periodic attacks in Parliament (Andrews 1991:93).

Under the provisions of this Act, the post of organizer for the bilingual programme was eliminated, curriculum support and funding for Belfast's two Irish language teaching colleges was severely reduced and the teaching of Irish at the public elementary school level was limited to ninety minutes a week (Andrews 1991:93).

In 1924, the Education Act was amended to limit further the teaching of Irish at the elementary school level. Andrews (1991:93) describes these changes, saying, "Irish was classified as a Group B optional subject and restricted to Standards V-VII. Group A optional subjects had
precedence over the former making it difficult for schools to choose Irish and satisfy the new regulations." The effect of this change, Andrews (1991:93) reports, was to reduce the number of pupils studying Irish as an optional subject by fifty percent. When the government took the further step of restricting the use of Irish as an extra subject to Standard V or higher, the number of students taking Irish as an extra subject fell by seventy percent (Andrews 1991:93).

In the wake of this sharp decline in the student population studying Irish, the Gaelic League--shattered in the North by partition--was resurrected. The first order of business for Comhaltus Uladh, the new Gaelic League formed in 1926, was to petition the Government to reverse its negative policies toward the Irish language. A discrepancy in the 1924 legislation that made Irish an optional subject gave Comhaltus Uladh its first concession from the government and in 1928, Irish was allowed to be taught as an alternative to History, from Standard III up (Andrews 1991:94). As well, the new Education programme for 1928 abolished the grouping system for optional subjects, making all optional subjects equal. These minor successes were grudgingly acknowledged by the Minister of Education, who commented that, "in Northern Ireland Irish was dead or dying and that French was a more useful language" (Andrews 1991:94).
Like its predecessor, Comhaltus Uladh engaged in a game in which a campaign was mounted to pressure the government to make a concession. Afterward, the government would respond with a more repressive policy against the Irish language (see Chapter Three, page 140). Thus, the gains made in the Education Policy of 1928 were nullified, and the future of Irish in the North made even more precarious when in 1933, the Government voted to discontinue the payment of fees for the teaching of Irish as an extra subject. "Comhaltas Uladh tried to continue the scheme but its finances proved inadequate and before long Irish was not longer available as an extra subject" (Andrews 1991:94).

II. The Cumann Chluain Ard: The Bastion of the Irish Language

While the Stormont government was actively trying to discourage the reproduction of Irish-speakers in the schools, culturally interested Belfast Protestants and Catholics were getting together, as they had done throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to form a variety of small Irish language groups. Irish classes had been set up in the '30s, '40s, and '50s by a number of Irish language groups to compensate for the dearth of Irish language instruction in the education system. One such group was Comhaltus Uladh, which after an unsatisfactory
encounter with the new Ministry of Education in the latter 1920s, refocused its energy into setting up branches throughout the North and providing Irish language instruction to all those interested. Comhaltus Uladh was also active in organizing "dancing and singing classes, lectures in English and Irish on various aspects of Irish history and culture, and a wide range of entertainments including céilís, concerts, debates, and excursions. Some branches established drama groups and others formed hurling, camogie and Gaelic football teams" (Andrews 1991:98). Other groups formed, such as the Ard-Scoil (which in 1929 moved to Divis Street in West Belfast from its previous city centre location of 49 Queen Street), the Gaelic Athletic League, and the Belfast Literary Society. These groups became active in promoting the Irish language, and organizing cultural events including lectures, debates, céilís, and similar activities.

The Cluain Ard, in many ways embodied the principles and makeup of most of the groups. What made it exceptional was the dedication of its members, the efforts of whom made this club the heart of Irish language and culture in Belfast, from its inception in 1936 to the start of the "Troubles" in the late sixties. The following profile of the Cluain Ard was constructed from several interviews with members who, like their parents before them, had joined the Cluain Ard when they were in their early twenties.
Most had been members for more than twenty-five years, some had been active in the Club's management, and all are currently prominent Irish language activists in Belfast.

My initial inquiry concerned the inspiration behind the establishment of the Cluain Ard.

[Respondent 1:] The Cluain Ard was established in 1936, and moved to its present premises in 1944 in Hawthorne Street [West Belfast]. It was established because people thought that the Ard-Scoil was too central and that Irish activists should be active in their own communities and be working locally with people rather than with just all people who joined the Ard-Scoil and were taking the Irish there.

The Cluain Ard and the Ard-Scoil in those days were bilingual--Irish and English. It was probably due to the circumstances. They wanted to get people in to hear Irish first before you put in an Irish only rule.

[Respondent 2:] The Cluain Ard would be in and out of the Gaelic League. It was set up independently and every so often it would join the Gaelic League and then fall out with some of them. It was a very strong minded group.

Some people are drawn toward Irish for simply cultural reasons. Some people are drawn toward Irish for cultural nationalism. Most people tend to be drawn toward the Irish language as an extension of their political nationalism or republicanism. And there are also people drawn toward Irish and nobody has figured out why they are drawn toward Irish. And all those kinds of people would be coming to the Cluain Ard. It would not have a political philosophy. When the Cluain Ard was first set up the Gaelic choir was conducted at a hall on the Shankill Road [a staunchly loyalist area of West Belfast] and there were a number of Protestants who came to the Cluain Ard quite regularly in those days. It changed when "the troubles" started. There was one man who used to be at the Cluain Ard all the time. He lived on the Oldpark Road, [in North Belfast] I think. And he had to cross the
Shankill Road to get home. And one night he was beaten up by Protestants for being an Irish speaker. He finished up by moving to Donegal.

[Respondent 3:] The Cluain Ard was founded in 1936 and its whole development and structure was totally apolitical, non-denominational and a lot of the early members and even today—a lot of the founding members of the Cluain Ard—were actually Protestant. The Cluain Ard in those early years had a choir, the choir master was a Protestant. They had an old shed apparently, behind the Clonard Monastery and they grew from there to another house which they got in Waterford Street. In 1944 they took out a lease on their present premises in Hawthorne Street and they have been there since.

The inspiration then was to expose people to the Irish language and culture. At the time you see the Cluain Ard was basically a bilingual club. . . . some of the founding members . . . did have republican tendencies at the time. There were communists in their midst at the time as well. They were actually blasted from the pulpits by the priests in the Clonard monastery, and that people shouldn't go into the Cluain Ard because they had Communist tendencies. So you had this element as well. At that time then Tuesday night had been set aside as the Irish speaking night. No one was to speak English on a Tuesday night. It was a bilingual effort until the late 40s. Then almost overnight in 1953 a rule was brought in that English was no longer to be spoken on the premises.

[Respondent 4:] The Cluain Ard had a céilí every Sunday night. And it was packed to the doors every Sunday night. It was famous for its céilís but again everything was done through the medium of English. Maybe there was the odd word of Irish here and there. This just didn't go down too well with some of the hard-line members of the club who insisted that the Cluain Ard should adopt a totally Gaelic policy where everything was done in Irish. So almost overnight a policy was brought in that no English was to be spoken at all in the club. One of the leading nationalists at the time . . . he actually stood at the door and informed everyone that from next week, next Sunday night, no English was to be spoken at the céilí, that all
dances would be called in Irish and that the whole business would be done through the medium of Irish from then on. And actually they were putting an end to the whole bilingual aspect of the Cluain Ard. So the next week the numbers fell dramatically. There wasn't a crowd that was pouring into the street as there had been for years previously. It got so bad apparently in the following period that they actually didn't have enough people to make up a set to do dances. That has changed now.

[Respondent 5:] The Cluain Ard started in the '30s apparently by dedicated Belfast Gaels. They set up their own sort of Gaeltacht area. Because at that time it was something you could have been put in prison for--speaking or practicing Irish. [During the 1930s?]
Yes and later too, into the '50s. What they done was at the Cluain Ard, they went in there and made it all Gaelic. In my opinion again, unfortunately they closed the doors to the ordinary man.

Andrews (1991:98) explains why the bilingual policy at the Cluain Ard changed:

In spite of a widespread interest in Irish among nationalists during the 1940s and the vibrant social life surrounding Gaelic League branches, some radical working-class Irish speakers in Belfast began to feel that this fell short of their goal. Influenced by the writings of Seosamh MacGrianna they sought to construct a set of values and an institutional framework that would bring a modern independent Irish-speaking society into existence, using what remained intact and worthwhile of pre-colonial Gaelic Ireland. Emphasis was placed on the preservation and development of the Gaeltacht and on the establishment locally of a variety of Irish-speaking institutions in the belief that they might coalesce, eventually creating the nucleus of this new society.
What made this element different from the Gaelic League generally was its insistence that only Irish should be used at all times in all
activities. To speak English was to undermine this objective. These views, which were pioneered by the organisation, Fál, became a major preoccupation of the members of Cumann Chluain Ard, a Belfast Gaelic League branch, in the early 1950s.

Activities held at the Cluain Ard went beyond those of basic Irish language classes.

[Respondent 6:] There were not just classes, but lively debates, lectures, table tennis, dancing, chess all through the medium of Irish. Everything you could possibly think of through the medium of Irish.

[Respondent 7:] Over its history it has gone in cycles. Over time there are a series of different things that people enjoy doing together particularly young men and women. So in the very early days there was a cycling club. You would have had skating clubs and swimming clubs, an art club. You would have had all kinds of classes going on in the Cluain Ard where the Irish language was promoted, in which you would have spoken in Irish. In the cycling club, we would have conversed in Irish. We would have gone on picnics and so on. It was very rich. How good each was depended on each sort of groups organizing committee.

With the onset of "the troubles" in 1969, the type of clientele at Cluain Ard activities was permanently altered.

[Respondent 7:] They still run céilís; and other activities through the medium of Irish since 1953 but the troubles actually put to bed the development of the Cluain Ard in certain ways. For instance a lot of Protestants were coming to the classes. Now Protestants do still attend but at the moment their numbers are very few. So the
troubles have had a detrimental effect on that policy of the Cluain Ard. For instance, I have heard it said at one particular time almost a third of the members of the Cluain Ard were Protestant. Generally you will find anyway there is great respect for the Irish language. Even the extreme loyalist groups like the UDA, they are now beginning the policy of tracing their Ulster roots. And they have a certain amount of respect for the Irish language. As Dr. Adamson [a Unionist Belfast councillor and author of several books on the Ulster identity, see Chapter Seven, below] said it is part of the ancient language of the Ulster people and for that reason the language should be nourished. Gusty Spence [former leader of the UVF] he's an Irish speaker as well. I have never spoken with him. So it is quite a spectrum that you come across.

The Cluain Ard is still seen by many as the birthplace of the present Irish language revivalist spirit in Belfast.

[Respondent 8:] I would say a major element that have produced the Irish language activists today would be the Cluain Ard. That would be really the source of all today's Irish language activists. And the Ard-Scoil, was another place at the very bottom of the Falls Road. So those two really I think would have been the source. If you go back in everyone's history that's what it would be because your parents would have gone to the Ard-Scoil or the Cluain Ard and they would have danced and fallen in love and it would have gone on from there.

[Respondent 9:] Then you have the development from '53 right up to now—that development that whole period from the fifties on—you have couples coming into the Cluain Ard. They would have met in the Cluain Ard, and then married. And that provided the base for the thinking and the development of the whole revival here in Belfast. So in the early '60s you had these groups coming together and a sort of think tank developed. Here we are in the Cluain Ard speaking Irish all the time and that provided the impetus to develop
further. If we can speak Irish here in the Cluain Ard, it naturally followed that everyone could apply that to their everyday circumstances—we could speak Irish from morning to night. So therefore, they got together—this was through the '60s now—this was a developing thing throughout the '60s. At that time there were only a handful of families in Belfast who had brought their children up speaking Irish prior to the '60s and some of them were academics and so on. So quite apart from that handful of families who were bringing their children up through the medium of Irish, this '60s development actually led to this small Gaeltacht being developed on the Shaws Road. That emanated from the Cluain Ard members, because they were the people who started it all.

The Irish language and cultural organizations that grew up in pre-1980 Northern Ireland resembled their nineteenth-century predecessors in many ways:

(a) the groups were formed in a turbulent political atmosphere where everyone who was involved with anything Irish was suspect by the establishment; (b) the primary motivation was the promotion of the Irish language through classes and cultural events; and (c) the membership was mixed both religiously and politically. As one person told me, "the rule was that guns and politics were left at the door." These organizations, then represented a continuation of past alternative resistance in that they provided an outlet for Irish cultural expression in a way that neither challenged nor imposed upon the state.
III. The Shaws Road Irish Community: Irish Language Activists Create Their Own Gaeltacht in English-Speaking West Belfast

Inspired by the all-Irish environment of the Cluain Ard, six couples, most of whom had met in the Club, had the vision of creating an all Irish community in which to live and raise their children. In 1969, this vision, along with the philosophies of Seosamh MacGrianna, were realized in the building of a Gaeltacht on Shaws Road in Andersonstown, nationalist West Belfast. This development is credited as being the Cluain Ard's "greatest" achievement. As one person put it:

In retrospect the greatest development that the Cluain Ard actually spun was the development of the school. The Cluain Ard members I would say, and I am not exactly sure of my figures but to the majority of the people that went into the housing scheme and built their own houses on the Shaws Road, they were Irish speakers. They came from the Cluain Ard. Some of those couples had met in the Cluain Ard got married then began to raise their families there [on Shaws Road]. Then the school developed. The school was built behind the houses. So therefore that started the ball rolling completely. The Cluain Ard brought Irish speakers together; it made them realize if they wanted to speak Irish from morning to night there was nothing stopping them. They could come together and process some development plan. They built their houses. From that came the school, and the school has mushroomed. There are now four hundred children there. It started off with six children.
The Shaws Road Development actually started in 1968, just before "the troubles", when five families purchased an old farm in Andersonstown and built homes beside each other. Two years later they were joined by two additional families. When I asked one of the founding members if republicanism had been the motivating ideological force behind the setting up of the community, he responded:

No. The range of politics was quite wide, they were all people from a Catholic background and all from I guess a nationalist background but there was not any direct ideological link between that community and republicanism for example, or extreme nationalism or whatever you call it--advanced nationalism.

From its start, this Irish-speaking community depended on its friends from the Cluain Ard for support, rather than the State. One person involved in the discussions of the development explained:

They moved up to the Shaws Road. Then some of the men who were involved in discussions at the Cluain Ard were builders and bricklayers and plumbers and electricians, and in 1967-68 they started building the community. This was before the first civil rights march. The architect was also part of the group who had been involved in the Cluain Ard. He worked in conjunction with the men and the women to design the house that they wanted. I think the first five were built on a piece of land that had been purchased. They realized that the land that was there for the school was part of the original farm. So right from the beginning they planned to build a school for their children to be educated in Irish.
In 1971, this group built Northern Ireland's first Irish-medium primary school, so that their children who had been raised with Irish as their first language could receive their education in their mother tongue. An information pamphlet was produced to commemorate the eighth anniversary of this Irish primary school by some of those originally involved in the project. It was titled *Irish Education for Irish Children*, and details some of the initial problems encountered:

Ten years ago, if you had mentioned the possibility of education through the medium of Irish in Belfast, or in any part of the Six Counties you would have been regarded as a dreamer, an idealist with no idea of the realities of life. Even if the demand ever arose, the government would never permit it! This was proved, by the way, in 1967, when one man wrote to the Education Department to get their reaction to the idea of education through Irish--he was told bluntly that not only would he not receive permission to found such a school, but that anyone connected with any such school would be prosecuted! . . .

It was decided, in 1971, to found Bunscoil Chaeilge Bheal Féirste [an Irish-medium primary school]. The parents had been collecting money from ceilis, etc. for some time; they now had a little money, nine children and no school or teacher. The school was provided, ironically, by the "troubles" in Belfast at the time; chalets had been provided for the hundreds of families burned out of their houses in 1969. As these families were re-housed, the chalets became vacant, and one of these became the Bunscoil. The parents bought it, dismantled it, brought it to Shaw's Road, and rebuilt it there.

Now all that was needed was a teacher; for some time they had been advertising for a native Irish speaker; naturally enough, few were prepared to come to Belfast at that time, but they were
eventually lucky enough to find Caitlín Bean Uí Dhiscín, from Kilcar in Donegal, who had retired some years before. She agreed to come to Belfast from Dublin, where she was then living, to help found the Bunscoil.

The parents are still in debt to Bean Uí Dhiscín for the dedication and hard work that went into the first few months of the Bunscoil--those nine children who were at school in the first days still speak of her often and affectionately. However, in 1971, Belfast, and the Six Counties generally, was not the most peacefully place in the world, and Bean Uí Dhiscín also had trouble with her health; in February 1972, after Bloody Sunday, she was forced to admit that the strain on herself and her family was too much. She resigned, but had played her part. Scoil Ghaeilge Bheal Feirste was founded (reproduced in the Andersonstown News, September 16, 1978:8-9).

At the time the Bunscoil was set up, Andrews (1991:99) indicates that the State's preoccupation with the "troubles" may have been the reason that it didn't carry through with its threat of legal action against those involved in the school, in the probable belief, he adds, that the school would fail. Another person commenting on the State's reaction to this novel attempt to establish a Gaeltacht in the centre of English-speaking West Belfast remarked:

Actually the State did nothing, sat on its hands as it were, when they set up their housing development. The State did nothing which allowed for tax breaks for their school. When they tried to start the school, the Belfast Education and Library Board wrote them and threatened them with court action and jail if they dare set up their own school. They ignored that and set up their own school anyway. The State then said that they wouldn't give it [the school] any recognition because it wasn't good enough [academically]. As the 70s went on, the school did establish itself.
For example, up until last year [1989] no child ever failed the government leaving exam for primary school [this exam is called the eleven plus]. Their record became better than any other school in the North.

It was not until 1977-78 that the school organizers began to petition the government for funding. By this time the enrolment of the school had passed the fifty mark and an Irish-medium nursery school had been set-up to prepare children from English-speaking families for entrance into the Bunscoil. This request for official recognition and funds was a departure from pre-1980 alternative resistance patterns which sought to create their own Irish-speaking environment without any interaction with the State. However, even though the group did finally approach the State in 1977, it was only after 1980 that the actual campaign to demand that the State fund the school began. As one person explained:

So it was only when the school decided to ask the government about funding that that particular group of people began to interact with the State. There were some things earlier on when they first set up the school as an Irish medium school. In 1971, whenever the school opened, there probably was some kind of friction there. A parent can educate their own child but they have to ask for permission. So right from the word go, the letters were going into the government departments for recognition. But there was no attempt to ask the government for money until the late 70s. They first began to ask for funds in 1977-78. It was only in 1980 that they actually started to pressurize the government to get money and to
recognize the schools. The school started off slow and gradually increased. In 1980-81 and '82 it got thick and fast. In 1981-82 they began campaigning, writing many letters to the government, having meetings.

The increasing enrolment of the school and the high educational achievements of its students plus a vigorous campaign in the early eighties finally resulted in recognition of the school in 1984. This recognition meant that the school would receive grant-aid which covered the schools operating costs and eighty-five percent of its capital expenditure (Northern Ireland Office 1991).

The Irish language activists who set up the West Belfast Gaeltacht had been primarily concerned with creating their own Irish-speaking community. They made no attempt to impose their "different way of life" on those around them. At first the Shaws Road development was largely ignored by its English-speaking neighbours. However, in time people in the area began to take notice of this small group who were living their lives in a way that was vastly different from their own. As one Irish language activist involved in this Irish-speaking community explained:

Initially people weren't aware of what we were doing. The only people who were aware of it was the Irish speaking community itself. It is only since the hunger strike that they have really become aware of the Irish language in this community.
You may not know the true significance of the setting up of an Irish language community in an area. It is only when you get to know your neighbours that you think, they are not like me or that they are like me but they are doing something very strange and wonderful or whatever. It is only as the time passes by, that people become aware of things. They were so much involved in their own lives so I can understand why no one knew about this Irish speaking community. There was no resistance from the [surrounding English-speaking] community. For example, they would have helped. If you needed wood, someone would say, "I can get what you need for a cheaper price." There would have been that kind of help. But that kind of help is normal here in Ireland anyway. But I think that once the Irish community does get going, people around do become aware of them. Because after all they would hear them always talking to their children in Irish. If we went to a shopping centre we would talk to our children in Irish. So neighbours couldn't help but notice.

It was through the women that others became aware of us, because the women were bringing up the children. They were taking the children to the shops and speaking Irish to them.

Once the school opened, then there was advertising. All this takes time. I think it was a natural progression.

As the 1970s came to a close the small Irish Gaeltacht on Shaws Road was making its presence felt throughout the nationalist ghettos. As one person put it, "To many in the area the Shaws Road school became the 'heart of whole Irish language movement in Belfast.'"
IV. Chapter Summary

When the Northern Ireland State was formed in 1922, the British "effective dominant culture" that its Unionist controlled Parliament wanted to establish, was not secure. The Irish Free State was embroiled in a civil war over the issue of partition and although the pro-treaty forces eventually won out, the unionist population in the North did not trust the South to stay out of their affairs. Thus the new Northern Ireland State was in no mood to permit any religious, political or cultural accommodation for its minority Catholic population, that the State deemed to be subversive. A new Education Act in 1923, followed in the 1930s by increasingly more repressive cultural amendments, sought to discourage the use of the Irish language, indeed eliminate it altogether, from the education system.

The initial reaction of Irish language activists, to offset the attack being made on the Irish language in the schools, was to themselves provide Irish language instruction. Numerous groups formed in the 1930s and 40s to propagate the Irish language through classes, and a wide variety of Irish cultural activities. Most of these early groups' activities were bilingual. However, in the 1950s some members of this community of activists were influenced by the philosophy of Seosamh MacGrianna who suggested that Irish communities should be created and children should be
raised in an all Irish environment as Irish speakers. The first Irish organization to implement MacGrianna's suggestion was the Cluain Ard, when in 1953 a rule was established that only Irish was to be spoken in the Club. This change in policy was not positively received by all the members of the Cluain Ard, but the all-Irish rule remained in effect. In the 1960s a group of young people who frequented the Cluain Ard and who were just settling down after marriage, decided to fully employ MacGrianna's proposal by creating an Irish-speaking community on Shaws Road in West Belfast. This dream of a Gaeltacht in West Belfast came to fruition in 1971 with the building of Northern Ireland's first Irish-medium primary school.

As the 1970s progressed, the Irish language activist community became bolder and began to make demands on the State to support the Shaws Road Irish-medium primary school. Until the early 1980s, these demands were not backed up by a large scale campaign, did not unduly challenge the cultural hegemony of the State, and were thus ignored. Although little headway was made during this pre-1980 period in getting any recognition from the State for the rights of Irish-speakers, Irish language activists did manage to put in place a solid foundation for the Irish language revival which would explode in the 1980s.
Chapter Five

Irish Language Activism: The Context of Resistance

Throughout the turbulent nineteenth century the Irish language was to become increasingly more politicized. Those involved in promoting the Irish language, Protestants notwithstanding, were considered to be of dubious loyalty. After the 1916 Rebellion, the language became identified with republicanism and as such was perceived by the loyalist population to be a symbol of Catholic nationalism—hence subversive. While Protestants continued to be involved in its revival and promotion, those in positions of power in Northern Ireland who saw the Irish influence as a threat to British cultural hegemony, tried in the early years of the new State to diminish, if not eradicate, the language altogether. To this end, an attempt was made by the semi-independent, unionist Stormont government to institute a British "effective dominant culture" through physical coercion. Emergency measures legislation was enacted to enable the new Stormont government to physically subdue any political expression of Irish nationalism by the Catholic minority.
As was proposed in Chapter Four, the Irish language activists' resistance to this domination by force manifested itself in the development of small Irish speaking clubs and organizations that ran Irish language classes and sponsored Irish cultural events, within the relative safety of their own area of Belfast. Protestants interested in the language would attend these classes and events in the nationalist areas, or involve themselves in similar groups that had been established in the city centre area of Belfast. Just before the start of "the troubles," Irish language activists set up a small Irish-speaking village and Irish-medium primary school on Shaws Road in West Belfast--an action indicative of alternative resistance to British linguistic hegemony. Until the late 1970s, Irish language activists neither asked for, nor expected any support or financial assistance from the State. However, with the approach of the 1980s, this alternative Irish language resistance movement did begin to make quite definite demands on the State.

The dominant-subordinate interaction during the first sixty years of the Northern Ireland State had a profound effect on the forms of Irish language resistance that emerged after the 1981 hunger strike. This chapter will, investigate the context of Irish language resistance, beginning with the sporadic official and unofficial State violence of the 1920s, and ending with the hunger strike of 1981.
I. Prelude to the 1981 Hunger Strike:
   Terror Warfare as Lived Reality

A. Pre-1969: A Period of Sporadic Official and Sanctioned Unofficial Attacks on the Nationalist Population

Wide ranging emergency measures to help the new state of Northern Ireland restore control physically, were among the first pieces of legislation enacted by the Stormont government. The 1922 Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act, which became a permanent part of Northern Ireland's legal code in 1928,\textsuperscript{10} included the following provisions, (Rowthorn and Wayne 1988:35-36):

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(1)] People suspected of crimes could be arrested and interned—that is, kept in prison without trial—for as long as the government wished.
  \item[(2)] The death penalty applied for some firearms and explosives offences.
  \item[(3)] It was an offence to refuse to answer questions put by a policeman.
  \item[(4)] The government could examine bank accounts and seize money deposited in accounts.
  \item[(5)] Newspapers could be prevented from printing certain reports or could be banned altogether.
  \item[(6)] Houses could be searched without warrant.
  \item[(7)] Named individuals could be confined to particular areas of the province.
  \item[(8)] The authorities did not have to hold inquests on any dead bodies found in Northern Ireland.
  \item[(9)] People who committed offences connected with explosives, firearms, causing fires and blackmail, could be punished by flogging.
\end{itemize}

The Act also included the following "catch all" clause, seemingly to cover any and all other actions:
If any person does any act of such a nature as to be calculated to be prejudicial to the preservation of the peace and maintenance of order in Northern Ireland and not specifically provided for in the Regulations, he shall be deemed guilty of an offence against the regulations.

Under this Act, power was given to "the Minister of Home Affairs to make any measures 'he thinks necessary for the maintenance of order' without consulting parliament, or to delegate the Act's powers to whomever he chooses" (Bambery 1986:51). The restrictions on civil liberties contained in this Act were enforced primarily on the Northern Irish Catholic minority by the newly formed Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and the B-Specials, a Protestant legalized para-military force (Bambery 1986; Farrell 1983). These groups jointly monitored the activities of the Northern Irish Catholic population.

During times that British hegemony over the Northern Ireland State was challenged (for example during the IRA campaigns of 1921-22, 1938-39, and 1956-62), the government would introduce internment under the Special Powers Act. Internment was also employed during this period as a means of suppressing potentially embarrassing political opposition. For example, during the week of the Royal visit to Northern Ireland in 1951, the evocation of the Special Powers Act found many republican politicians in prison for the duration of the visit (Hillyard 1983). The first
memories of government oppression among many people I interviewed aged over fifty were of security forces entering their homes to conduct house searches or to intern their older brothers and/or their fathers.

Common too, in this pre-civil rights era, were spontaneous riots and incidents which erupted each year mainly during "marching season" (beginning in the month of March and lasting until the Orangemen celebration of the Battle of the Boyne on July 12). One such incident, which occurred in 1923, was described to me by a Catholic woman whose father had been a Protestant and whose brother had been in the British Army at the time. As her story is not unlike several I was told of this period it will be used here to illustrate the sanctioned unofficial sporadic violence that Belfast Catholics experienced before the "troubles" began:

Our house was the only house on the block that had a back kitchen. My mummy, when she was in the kitchen couldn't hear what was going on in the street. I was about five years old at the time. It suddenly dawned on her that there was something different, and she went to the front door and opened it. Then a head came around the wall of the house across the street and my mummy asked "what's wrong?" The man mouthed the words at her, "are you never out" that's Irish for you asked a stupid question. I had followed out behind her with my sister and she lifted me in her arms and the man dashed across the road and snatched me in his arms and grabbed my sister by the hand and ran with us across the street into the other street. As my mummy shouted "what did you do that for?" we heard the noise come around the corner just about two minutes walk away at the
Protestant end of the street. She realized what it was and got the rest of the kids and dashed across the street. And she was running across the street when the first shot came from the end of the street. She thought she was shot and stopped dead in the street. A man ran out and grabbed her and then both had to make a run for it. As he ran the shots were coming up the street and the RUC and the British Army never moved a muscle to find out who was doing the shooting. They just didn't do a thing.

Now that crowd just came up into our street and saturated the houses with petrol and put matches to them. In our house we had an oven and in the oven they had put our cat Topsy. When mummy found her, Topsy had suffocated in the oven. My daddy died in the house--my daddy died on the 25 of January and we were burned to the ground on Easter Monday.

B. The "Troubles": The Militarization of Northern Ireland

By the mid-1960s, a recognizable change had taken place in the nature of state violence in Northern Ireland. No longer was it just a spontaneous "reaction to perceived or real challenges to [the State's ability to conduct its affairs]" (Lopez 1984:60). It had instead become institutionalized as a systematic and purposeful act, aimed at controlling by force that portion of the population regarded as a threat to the status quo. Lopez (1984:61) writes that the second level in the development of state terrorism can be recognized to have occurred when:
... ruling elites in societies undergoing increasing pressure for social, economic and political reforms appear to find no way (or consciously choose to find no way) of translating these forces into the development of more effective rule. Rather, the government, whether democratic or autocratic, capitalist or socialist, civilian or military, begins to respond to the changing national environment with a curtailment of civil and human rights, with increased militant policies of coercive controls of collective and individual behavior.

By the late 1960s, the second stage of state terrorism, as described by Lopez, had been reached in Northern Ireland. This was clearly illustrated when, during the civil rights period, the demands for social justice and an end to economic and political discrimination against Catholics were met with repressive legislation and increasing state violence. By the mid-1970s, a "general system of repressive practices and policies designed to maintain power of the incumbents [the British State], and benefits accruing to their allies [the loyalists]" (Lopez 1984:61) was in place. Thus, what Lopez refers to as the final stage in the development of state terrorism had been achieved in Northern Ireland.

O'Hearn (1987:97) writes of the escalating violence in the period leading to the first civil rights marches in 1968:

Actually, the main civil rights organization was formed in early 1967 and the several years before 1968 saw quite a bit of violence: almost
entirely by Paisleyite mobs against reformist government officials and the Catholic population, and by loyalist death squads against randomly-picked Catholics.

This violence intensified when, spurred on by the apparent successes of black civil rights marches in the United States during the 1960s, the Irish in Northern Ireland also began to organize marches to demand equal rights and an end to economic and political discrimination. The government declared the marches illegal and state forces joined loyalist mobs in brutal attacks on the marchers (see O'Hearn 1987:98; Rowthorn and Wayne 1988:40).

The marches were followed by a period of intense rioting. In 1970, a clause was added to the legal code to make a six-month sentence mandatory for riotous behaviour (Bambery 1986:52). Nationalists became the prime targets of this new law. Violence continued, and in August 1969 the unionist (loyalist) dominated government of Stormont requested that the troops be brought in to quell the unrest. A young man who had been ten years old in 1969, and who lived in a nationalist area separated from West Belfast by a staunchly loyalist district, describes his memories of the civil rights marches and early 1970s, saying:

I can remember my first recollections . . . standing there and seeing a big double-decker bus blocking off the street, people were collecting pavement stones. The word was out that war was to start. Apparently the Protestants had sent word
to "get your women and children out because we are invading." People were running up and down the streets packing their clothes and everything. I was young at the time and I couldn't go running around the streets. I used to stand down at the barricade and look around. There were barricades everywhere. There were guys standing with sticks. I noticed one guy at the bottom of the garden, an old fellow, an ex-British soldier from the war, and a couple of other fellows and they had an old forty-five, one of these old war guns. And he was showing them how to work it. They didn't know how to work it. That was the first time I ever saw a weapon in my life. And I was standing listening to them saying "Look, you do it this way," and there were other guys sitting in the bus with binoculars looking up and down the streets. People were just running around, back and forth everywhere.

So what happened in '69, just after Bombay Street is that all women and children, and I was among those, we were all put on double decker buses. A few men tried to sneak on but they were put off because they were not allowed to go. Men had to stay behind to do the fighting. I can remember getting on one bus and there was this man at the back trying to get under the back seat. I mean people were really panicking. Men were crying and everything to get out of the district. They weren't allowed to get out. I mean there were guys standing everywhere and they weren't letting men on those buses. They were told you're staying and you're going to fight and that was all there was to it. There were pensioners on the buses but a lot of older men didn't want to go. We were all herded on these double decker buses and there were these white sheets with red crosses put on them and they were hung up all around the buses. We got right through Belfast up to a school on the Glen Road. We even drove through a loyalist area and we weren't stoned. Anyway we were driving and there was just a mass of barricades and men around them. The troops hadn't even arrived at this stage. I never saw any actual violence. There was a barricade at every single street corner, and in the loyalist areas as well.

We stayed there for a period of time and then when the storm had sort of lulled we were brought back on buses again into the area. And when we
were driving back I saw the armed troops [British troops came in August 1969] just lining the whole way. They were just standing on either side of the road, ready for action or pulling barbed wire across. It was just like a battlefield. There were armed soldiers everywhere. There were actually tanks and all sorts of equipment. We all looked at it because it was exciting—we had played soldiers and that type of thing. And when we got back in the area, the level of violence that I saw was really armed soldiers on the street and people running about getting them tea. We started running about their bunkers. Everyone was friendly with them and were glad they were there. These were sort of makeshift ones [the bunkers] made up of sandbags and the troops were in them. They had started to build the peace lines as well. They were putting corrugated iron up and down [the road]. It is all walls now. But they started building that as far back as '69 to keep the two sides apart—that was the excuse they gave. To us kids it was all fun and exciting. We didn't understand the situation. One minute we were running in and out of the huts loving British soldiers and the next we were calling them names and throwing stones at them. I never understood why and never asked questions why. We just naturally started stoning them. I had to sneak out to go to riots. My ma would get paintbombed and everything else looking for me. I mean I would have gotten a bigger kicking in the house than if the Brits had caught me.

Army at this time were stationed all around the periphery of an area which meant that the Provos could have walked around the area armed to the teeth as there was no fear of soldiers. They would have avoided being seen by the army post. This was a silly thing for them to be doing because everyone knew what everyone else was doing.

Our house was near the line [between the loyalist and nationalist areas] and the peace walls weren't built yet. Every night there were gun battles. We had to sleep on the floor. Even if we were sitting at a meal a bullet would come in through the window. The bullets came from both sides.
I remember in the early '70s every house would have this basin of water sitting by the window sill with all these little rags in it. What these were for was that when the rioters got the CS gas thrown at them, they would just go to people's window sills and lift a damp cloth and put it around their mouth and it was able to protect them from the gas. Everyone used to leave their doors open for the rioters.

Often, nationalists would attempt to subvert the terror of their lived experience in the beginning of the "troubles" using humour. One woman from West Belfast constructs her experiences of the early 1970s as a series of humorous episodes:

[Incident 1:] One night there was heavy rioting and over seven hundred canisters of gas had been thrown into Ballymurphy. We like most of the Catholics had gone to the high windows in our places to watch the action. As we watched, a man and a drunk on a motorcycle approached the trouble spot. They were weaving along when suddenly the driver hit the wall of gas fumes. The driver jolted to a stop and the drunk fell off and lay on the ground. The driver grabbed the drunk by the collar and all you could see was the driver running away as fast as he could from the gas, down the road, dragging his drunk friend along behind him by his collar.

[Incident 2:] One night we were watching and spotted a gang from the Shankill approaching Ballymurphy near our home. I rarely use the Lord's name in vain but this night I said "Jesus, we are done for now." My daughter who was in university doing Celtic studies watched calmly as the shouts of the mob got louder. All you could hear were shouts of, "We are the boys from the Shankill. We are the boys from the Shankill." My daughter turned to me and said, totally
unconcerned, "You know that is the first time I have heard anyone in Belfast pronounce the Shankill correctly." [Note: "Shankill" is an Irish word meaning "Old Church."]

[Incident 3:] During the early troubles there was mostly brick throwing. What would inevitably happen would be that Catholics would be pelted by bricks from their own side. One day my husband and I were walking up the Springfield Road, at a time when we were still living on a Protestant estate. We were intimidated out in 1971 and moved into a house in Ballymurphy. Trouble flared when a patrol went by. Immediately bricks rained down on the patrol and on us. We were on the other side of the patrol. The soldiers waved us on towards their vehicles. So up the Springfield Road we walked, cuddled up to a saracen, as the lads from Ballymurphy stood on the other side heaving bricks.

[Incident 4:] In the middle of rioting one time a young lad from our side stood up and started shouting orders out with an English accent.

[Incident 5:] I was in a fresh meat shop in Ballymurphy one time in the 1970s when there was this long burst of gunfire. At the time we had just moved into the area and I was shaking. A woman came into the shop and calmly said, "Sounds like they're attacking from the Shankill and two pounds of whitefish, please."

The welcome that the Catholic population had cautiously extended to the British troops, quickly changed when it became apparent that the troops were more interested in rooting out the IRA than protecting nationalists from loyalists. The Falls Curfew in 1970, internment in 1971, and Bloody Sunday in 1972, are some of the more notorious incidents of these early days of the "troubles," that
profundely changed how northern nationalists perceived the British army. One man's recounting of his reaction to Bloody Sunday (when a British paratrooper regiment had opened fire on unarmed civilians, in Derry, during a march commemorating the anniversary of the civil rights marches, killing fourteen and injuring many more), embodies the intense emotional response I found common in nationalist Belfast to incidents involving the security forces:

I distinctly remember Bloody Sunday. I think Bloody Sunday was a big turning point for us as well, because when we saw that happen on the TV screens--I remember coming in and seeing the news and I will always remember this and it scares me even to think about it--I can never get this out of my head even to this very day. That I sat and watched that news and my mother watched and everyone else was sitting around watching it --even the little ones, and I heard this para-man saying "keep firing, keep firing, keep firing," He just kept shouting "keep firing" and the soldiers were standing there firing into the crowd. And I was livid and I was calling at the TV, "bastards, bastards" and all that type of thing. "Fucking animals," "you fucking murdering bastards," that was the way I felt then. So I would say from that day we really started getting militant towards them [the British army]. We really hated after that. We actually did hate them. At that time I would have literally cut their throats myself because I hated them so much. Imagine seeing that on your TV screen at that age [mid-teens]. You know, "keep firing, keep firing." I will never forget that day.
The British military's attitude toward peacekeeping and rule-by-force is best summed up by Robin Evelegh (1978:60-61), Commanding Officer of the Third Battalion of the Royal Green Jackets, based in the Upper Falls area of Belfast in 1972 and 1973. Evelegh writes:

The dilemma facing a democratic society is that the means needed to defeat terrorism and suppress insurrection are the very ones needed to enforce a tyranny. The methods that defeated the Communist terrorists in Malaya are those that sustained the Gulag Archipelago. The methods of the Gestapo and of the Swedish Special Branch, which was reported in 1973 to have operated a secret intelligence group that kept close tabs on left-wing members of the ruling Social Democratic Party and the trade unions, are of the same nature. Indeed, all the practices of these different internal security services, while of very different intensities and with very different limits, are basically the same because they are the only methods by which a society can protect itself against organized citizens within itself, who wish to destroy their own polity.

In the case of Northern Ireland, Evelegh argues:

...this meant that law enforcement in the republican areas...was more akin to that in a colony than to that in a self-governing independent state. Ultimately these Catholic areas could only be governed by the British by methods, however mollified, that all occupying nations use to hold down all occupied territories.

Given this line of thinking, military action in Northern Ireland, as Evelegh (1978:61) explains, is based on the belief that:
... the terrorist there can only be defeated and unwilling subjects kept from rebellion by considerable erosion of the liberties considered normal in a Western democracy. [In addition, the] substantial portion of the Catholic population [of Northern Ireland, which] simply does not wish to be a part of the British state or under British rule [can] in the final analysis only be governed by force of British arms, albeit tempered by political subtlety and material benefits.

Brigadier Frank Kitson, the proclaimed architect of military strategy in Northern Ireland during the 1970s, emphasized that the gathering and maintaining of up-to-date detailed intelligence files on members of a suspect population was the backbone of any successful counter-insurgency policy (see Kitson 1971:95-101, 126-131, 188-192). A series of techniques—which had been used in colonial emergencies in the past and had been developed and refined by Brigadier Kitson—with the combined aim of collecting as much information as possible on the IRA in particular and the Catholic population in general, were implemented (Hillyard 1983:37).

Each soldier was given training in intelligence work and instructed to find out as much as possible about the people in the area in which his unit operated (Ackroyd, et al. 1977:40). Much of the intelligence data on the nationalist population as a whole came from house searches. On July 3, 1970, a curfew was imposed on the Lower Falls area of Belfast, during which a house-to-house search was conducted of every home in the district by more than three...
thousand British troops. When the curfew was lifted, some thirty-six hours later, five civilians were dead and a further fifteen soldiers and sixty civilians were injured (Farrell 1980:273-274, O'Malley 1983:207). While over three hundred suspects had been arrested, this massive search operation had netted only one hundred firearms, many of which were unusable (Colleary 1985:83-88). House searching escalated, and in 1971, 17,262 homes were searched. This figure doubled in 1972 to over 36,000, and in 1973 (and again in 1974), 75,000 homes were searched. This represents approximately one fifth of all the homes in Northern Ireland (Bonner 1985:96; O'Malley 1983:259).

The effect of these massive house searches on the Northern Irish population was profound. A lieutenant in a parachute brigade told The Guardian, "You know when we were in Ballymurphy the people were really fed up with us, terrified really. I understand what the refugees must feel like in Vietnam . . . after every shooting incident we would order 1500 house searches . . . 1500!" (quoted in Ackroyd, et al. 1977:38).

Internment also had been used during this period as a way of collecting information on the general Northern Ireland Catholic population. McGuffin (1973:86-87) writes that, "Militarily, the initial internment sweep [August 9, 1971, was] . . . a complete failure. The IRA had known of it for some time and as a result virtually every senior IRA
man was billeted away from home." However, the massive arrests at random followed by in-depth interrogation, and for the majority, subsequent release without charge—a pattern introduced during internment and now institutionalized as normal procedure—was of immeasurable success. This process provided a means for the screening of, and the building of dossiers on the nationalist population. An offshoot of this policy provided a continuing source of "inside" information, gained from suspects induced into becoming informers (Ackroyd, et al. 1977:40-41; Bonner 1985:125; Boyle, et al. 1975:44-48, 67-69; Hillyard 1983:45-46; Kitson 1971: 102-112; Walsh 1983:33-40).

C. The Carrot and the Stick: A Mid-1970s Shift in British State Policy in Northern Ireland

By the mid-1970s, the State policy of mass arrests, mass house searches and general harassment of the nationalist population as a whole was replaced with a dual strategy of targeting republicans and appealing to more moderate nationalists. Steps were taken by the British government to isolate republicans by offering economic and social inducements to those sections of the nationalist population perceived to be less radical. Ó hAdhmaíll (1990a:830) describes this "carrot and stick" policy saying:
During the mid-1970s, the British Labour administration had copied many past British administrations in Ireland in adopting a carrot and stick approach to the nationalists. The carrot involved increased employment, social and recreational provision in areas like West Belfast. The stick was increasing security measures, controversial interrogation techniques at places like Castlereagh, and the increasing use of undercover ambushes of suspected republicans (also see Amnesty International 1977, 1978, 1979, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1990; Asmal 1985, 1990; Campbell 1984a, 1984b, 1984c; Boyle, et al. 1975:49; Hillyard 1983; McGuffin 1974; Munck 1985:146; Taylor 1980, 1987).

This "carrot and stick," or as it was officially called "normalization," policy had three aspects that were to permanently change the nature of the war in Northern Ireland. Beside the economic inducements offered to the moderate nationalist population in the form of more employment opportunities, better social services (especially in the areas of health and education), and improved community facilities, the policy included, "the new twin strategies of 'criminalizing' the paramilitaries, and 'Ulsterizing' the security forces . . . [so that from March 1, 1976, on] the government [could] present the conflict in the province not as a serious political problem, but solely as a matter of law and order" (Rowthorn and Wayne 1988:45, 47).

Ulsterization meant that the primary responsibility for security in Northern Ireland would be passed from the British Army to local forces. These regional groups were to
consist of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR)—a locally raised contingent of the British Army. Members of the RUC and the UDR were, and continue to be, predominantly Protestant (Rowthorn and Wayne 1988:45).

In 1972, Billy McKee, a Belfast man who had been interned in Long Kesh prison, went on a hunger strike to get political status for both internees and sentenced prisoners. McKee's hunger strike was successful and from 1972 through 1976, "political and ethnic origins of the prisoners were given recognition in the Northern Ireland prison system" (Feldman 1991:149). Thus, prisoners, both republican and loyalist, were accorded "Special Category" status and the following accompanying privileges:

(1) The right to wear their own clothing;
(2) The right to refrain from prison work;
(3) The right of free association (during recreation);
(4) The right to organize their own educational and recreational facilities and the right to receive one letter, one visit, and one parcel per week;
(5) The right to full remission on good behaviour.

Rowthorn and Wayne (1988:44-45) explain that the granting of Special Category status to the prisoners essentially signified that:

Until the mid-1970s "the troubles" were generally regarded as being political in origin,
and therefore needing a political solution. This meant that though the conflict was not actually described in this way, up till then, it was handled as a war over Northern Ireland's political future, which was being waged between a guerrilla army and a regular army.

Internment ended on December 31, 1975 and on March 1, 1976, the British government decreed that any person charged with a "scheduled offence" would in the future be classified as an ordinary criminal. This had the effect of rescinding Special Category status and all the privileges and rights it had accorded. The prisoners protested in the only way they felt open to them: they refused to wear the prison uniform, thus rejecting this perceived "badge of criminalization." This marked the beginning of the "blanket protest" (Coogan 1980), which escalated into the 1981 hunger strike, an event that would claim the lives of ten men (Adams 1986; Berresford 1987; O'Malley 1990).
II. Irish at the Door: The Blanket Protest and Hunger Strikes

A. Irish Language in the Prisons

1. Irish Language in the "Cages"\textsuperscript{13}

Many of the people who joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the early 1970s did so as a reaction to local oppression—a way to fight back against a seemingly unreachable force. These people had no particular revolutionary or cultural ideology in mind, but were motivated by what was happening on their streets and in the nationalist community. One such man, who started as a member of Fianna Éireann (the junior IRA) at the age of fifteen and eventually went to prison in 1978, told me:

I got involved in 1974 but I wouldn't say I was politically aware. I was never politically aware until I ended up in prison actually. [Did you speak Irish?] In the early 70s, I never even heard of the Irish language. I don't think that very many of us in the early 70s even knew the Irish had a language. I never understood that Ireland had a language. In primary school we were taught Irish but we didn't know how to speak Irish. We saw it on the curriculum with the other modern languages. But we just didn't choose it.

Another ex-republican prisoner explained that while people are much more politically and culturally aware today than they were in the 1970s, it is still the case that a
major force that motivates young people to join the IRA is the State's repressive and violent actions in their own communities. Referring to the 1970s, he commented:

Because of the way the struggle erupted, most of the people who ended up becoming members of the IRA were very young--sixteen, seventeen. They came into the struggle from a gut reaction to the State, but they couldn't articulate what was wrong with it. Their main concern was to fight a war against the British and to ensure that the British didn't catch them while they were fighting the war.

When these young men went to prison, they had a lot of time to think and to search for the reasons that would explain the violence that had disrupted their adolescent years and resulted in their present incarceration. They also wanted to find ways in which they could continue to contribute to the struggle, even though they had "been found out and exposed." A man who had been a sentenced prisoner in Long Kesh prison prior to 1976, explained how these young prisoners went about developing their cultural and political awareness after they had been captured and imprisoned in the "cages":

When we moved into Long Kesh and settled, we started to take more interest in what was actually happening politically and what we could do to help. We set up discussion groups, there were various political lectures. Of course you know about the Gaelic language revival that was taking place. We set up our own study huts. We had three of these different huts in the cages to
house prisoners and the other one was used for campaigning, sort of a work area. What we did was we separated the huts themselves and we had one hut which was only for the Gaelic language. You knew what type of character the person had really by what hut they were living in. In the Gaeltacht hut we really tried to put pressure on to get people more interested in politics. The majority of the people in our cage were sentenced and were going to be released within two or three years and some were going to be released in six months. So what we wanted to do was to try and educate ourselves so that when we went back out onto the street again we would be better equipped to fight the British and carry on the struggle.

After the identity of these prisoners had been exposed by their arrest and conviction, it was realized that they would be of little value to the IRA fighting units. Therefore they began to develop whatever talents they had, such as their artistic or writing ability, to convey their newly acquired interpretation of what was happening in Northern Ireland to the outside world, both locally and internationally:

We had our own newspaper going, and again because of my artistic talents I was used to produce the graphics in it and design the layout of it. We had other people typing it up. We had people who did the writing. We set up printing contacts with the outside--this was about '74 or '75, and we actually got them to produce a couple of the editions of the newspaper that we had produced in the jail, exactly the same as the Captive Voice now does.

We got copies of Republican News at the time and it seemed most of the campaigns on the outside were aimed at highlighting the plight of the prisoners. Every other article was talking about the conditions in Long Kesh, about visiting conditions for relatives, and people being beaten
in Long Kesh, about raids in Long Kesh—and we felt what had happened was this was allowing the British to propagate the idea that it [the situation in Northern Ireland] really wasn't to do with the British presence. It [the war] was [being portrayed as] more to do with just social upheaval, two religions. The British presence was very rarely ever mentioned except maybe by top level statements by Sinn Féin or something like that. So we thought that we should try to get away from the prisons issue and start concentrating on British withdrawal.

At first, the stuff we started to send out was just ideas—-they were not formal articles—we just sent them out to press and said do you think you could use this, and a lot of them were [used]. The people on the outside were dealing with the daily business of keeping the war going and the pressures that brought. They were really concentrating on getting more arms in, and getting more recruits in, and getting some safe houses.

Now you had a stronger political machine developing [i.e., Sinn Féin] which was based on people who had time to sort of read the books and educate themselves and discuss and debate the way forward. So a lot of these things we wrote were accepted. We then started to produce several pamphlets.

While conditions in the "cages" had been harsh, especially in the early years of internment, they began to ease somewhat by 1974-75. This more liberal trend, coupled with the Special Category status granted to these prisoners, enabled them to create, within their section of Long Kesh, a nationalist ethos in which to educate themselves both politically and culturally:

There was a relaxation on conditions in the period this was happening. [When the prisoners were producing their pamphlets and articles.] It was 1974, the IRA called a truce in late '74 and conditions in Long Kesh were quite reasonable.
I think taking your freedom away from you is the worst thing people can do. Those in under internment were under a lot of psychological pressure in that they were being held with no release date. They didn't know when they were going to be released. People like us in the sentenced pen, while we were serving eight years and we knew that in 1978 we were going to be released, or 1979, so we had two or three years to pass in the wee pen before going back into the streets again.

The conditions had relaxed to a certain degree in that they had started to supply us with beautiful cages after we had burned the place in 1974. And the conditions they supplied us with afterwards were actually more superior than what we had prior to that. And also with a bit of ingenuity from the people in the jail who knew a bit of electronics and things, we started to renovate inside the huts and everything. We acquired a typewriter machine and people sent things in from outside—wee bits and pieces, we formed a library. We asked all our relatives to start leaving a pound or two pound each week—each person in the cages was asked to do this—and everyone agreed, we had a big meeting and everyone thought it was a good idea. Our relatives couldn't afford to buy us the books that we wanted so we asked each relative to pay two pounds and we got in all the book lists—all different sorts of publishers who dealt with political books, and we used to do this every week and we used to select three or four new books. The money would all be pooled into one. We set up a library with maybe two or three hundred books, political classics, which up until then wouldn't even be allowed in Long Kesh and shortly afterwards were banned again.

For example we had [previously] banned books by James Connolly, and international books [Marx, etc]. When we got the books then, the political discussion took another form and sort of charged forward. You find that people were just sort of sitting reading each day. There would probably be two or three lectures a day that you could actually join. Whereas before that everyone was busting to go to a single nationalist lecture—which we all had a certain incentive to do. Now you sort of sat down in groups and people told you about what they had read and that sort of thing. It was an electrifying sort of a period.
Special Category status also meant the prisoners were granted a number of cultural privileges, including the right to: play Gaelic football; wear *An Fáinne* (the badge of the Irish speaker); and organize their own Irish language education. When the Normalization Policy took effect, these rights were denied to all republican prisoners charged after March 1, 1976.

2. Irish Language in the H-Blocks

On September 14, 1976, Ciaren Nugent, who had been the first person sentenced for a "scheduled offense" after the March 1 deadline, also became the first prisoner to refuse the wearing of prison clothes, proclaiming, "If they want me to wear a convict's uniform, they'll have to nail it to my back" (Adams 1986:73). This reaction to the new criminalization policy of the British government initiated the "blanket protest" which progressed to the "dirty protest" when prisoners, prevented from "slopping out" their waste buckets, decorated cell walls with the sordid contents. These actions culminated in 1981 with a hunger strike, which saw ten men eventually starve themselves to death. For men who had lost all privileges, who had been treated in a way perceived as unfair and unjust, who were facing an unreachable and oppressive captor, the Irish
language itself became a key to survival. This weapon of resistance would be used by prisoners to assert and affirm cultural and political difference, and hence a small degree of control, over their jailers.

Coogan's (1980) account of the blanket and dirty protests, details "life on the blanket." The men were locked up for twenty-four hours a day, with no exercise or fresh air. They were frequently subjected to beatings, as well as verbal and psychological abuse. Under these conditions the Irish language became a way of shutting out the brutal world in which the "blanket-men" lived. As one such man, quoted by Coogan (1980:5), put it, "Gaelic was a Godsend. Only for it, we would have been climbing the walls."

An ex-prisoner, whose prison term began at the start of the blanket protest and continued throughout the hunger strike, explained to me just how the Irish language had helped the prisoners cope with their brutal environment:

I went into prison in 1976. I was seventeen. When I was sentenced in 1977, a year later, I went to the H-Block in Long Kesh. I was . . . one of the first prisoners to be denied political status. During the blanket protest we had nothing whatsoever with respect to books to read, except the Bible given to us by the chaplain. There were two men there at the time. One was Bobby Sands who had been in the cages and was in for a second term in prison. Those two were fluent Irish speakers and they started teaching Irish at the doors. At that time education was a privilege but because we were on blanket protest we had lost all
privileges—visits, letters, and we were in the cells twenty-four hours. We got pens from our friends and sympathetic screws [prison guards], which we often lost during the many cells searches. There were no Irish speakers on our wing, so they would shout it over to me. We wrote the Irish on toilet paper, anything. If we were caught, their attitude was to charge him with defacing prison property. A pen was a prohibited article. Screws were hard on anything that was different from them: religion, culture, language.

The official policy was to "give them nothing," baths once a week, one to a cell. Individual screws could take any action they wanted.

Culture to us—the Irish language—was very important. The most obvious reason was that it's our culture, it's our language. We are in prison for being Irish. We therefore felt it was our obligation to learn Irish. We never got the opportunity in school to learn Irish. So now we were in jail, we decided that we should learn Irish. It had been offered in school but the brother who taught it didn't wind up teaching it, and besides, we were caught up in what was happening outside.

The first reason we learned it [Irish] was the obligation, and the second reason was we were living in a totally hostile environment. For the blanket-men in '78 and '79, the beatings became common. It was a way of communicating with each other that the screws wouldn't understand. We could build a defensive wall around ourselves. We spoke Irish, they spoke English. I could speak to someone across the wing and have a private conversation. This was a conversation that prisoners could hear—screws could hear it as well but they couldn't understand it. This gave us a comradeship. When you are talking about personal things and you're asking about how your mother is or how your wife is doing, there was always some screw on the wing listening and trying to pick up on it. We spoke in Irish—that was the difference between us and them. It was something they couldn't penetrate. They could take us out of the Block, they could bend us over a mirror and search us, they could beat us, but at least we could talk and they couldn't respond.
Unlike the formal Irish classes previously held in the cages, an entirely new education system had to be developed by the prisoners and adapted to the adverse conditions in the H-Block. A prisoner who was on the blanket protest, describes this new system:

The way we learned it was that a fellow got up and shouted the lesson out the door, the spelling of the words. It was just a methodical thing. You had a set of rosary beads, a screw, or a nail, and you scratched the lesson on the walls, which were whitewashed. The beginner's class was Monday, Wednesday, Friday between twelve and one p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays from about three to five you had advanced classes, and on a Sunday from twelve to two p.m. you had the class for the teachers, where the teachers all got together and improved each other's Gaelic. At the end of the week you would set aside a day of story telling, and then I done the history, Irish history all done in Gaelic from the head. The Gaelic was part of a whole education programme that Bobby Sands initiated, and it was all done from the head and by shouting out the doors. Some of us had been trained in the Cages for this. Bobby was the main advocate of cultural separatism. That was the message that came from inside the jails out to the whole community now. Bobby told us that the proof of the pudding was in the eating. The jails proved that when you become culturally separate it breaks the enemy, that it builds walls they can't cross, and people within those walls (quoted in Feldman 1991:212-213).

It was this image of naked men who were living in filthy cells and being beaten regularly, standing at the door of their cells learning Irish that was being projected to the local community and around the world. One mother of a prisoner described her horror, which was not unlike the
horror of many I spoke with, at what was happening in the H-Block:

That fellow who came in a little while ago with the blond hair, that was the guy that was in the H-Blocks. I used to go and see him, his hair was jet black and was down to there [shoulder length]. The lice used to be crawling up and down the side of his face. They never saw each other so they never knew how bad they were and you had to sit there with this fixed smile on your face because you were absolutely shocked out of existence, looking at them. But you couldn't let them see how bad they were.

You know I was watching my son, they allowed visits after he had been in about nine months. Once a month, you'd get thirty minutes with him. Sometimes you didn't get it. And you watch your son growing like an old man. They were never out of the cell. They never saw daylight. Stark naked. No books, no papers, no TV, no anything. They weren't allowed anything not even a sweet. He used to write with his nails on the walls, and they had to use their cells for a toilet and all. They started to use excrement on the walls to write and teach each other Irish. They developed this whole kind a system of teaching.

The prisoners had transformed their cells into "a pedagogical space" where they "scratched their accumulated learning alongside the fecal matter on the walls" (Feldman 1991:217), and in doing so triumphed over the repressive State that wanted to brand them as criminals. Their victory became an inspiration for the nationalist population outside the prison walls and sparked the Irish language revival that exploded in West Belfast in the 1980s.
B. Impact of the Hunger Strike on the Nationalist Community in Belfast

The State had hoped that the new normalization policy would erode support for the IRA and that once deprived of its "oxygen," the IRA would "wither away, and things would gradually return to normal," thus negating the need for any major political or structural change in Northern Ireland (Rowthorn and Wayne 1988:47). However, the State was unprepared for the bitterness the hunger strike generated in the nationalist—even the moderate nationalist—community. The extent of this bitterness became clear during an interview with a nationalist woman, who told me:

Maybe other people can do it but I can't and will never forgive the English, the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, and the Irish government and the professionals and people in this country for allowing those men to die. I'll never forgive them and God will judge them because in retrospect they will find out that the year of the hunger strike was a year when I believe everything changed in Ireland. Although it's difficult to say it when you are in the middle of it, but historians will write it up some day. It actually cleared a lot of confusion I had, because up to that point you sort of half hoped that the Dublin politicians, these so called people who call themselves nationalists, these people who stand around our tricolour and speak our language and sort of call themselves Irish citizens, but you sort of hoped that they would stand up to the British. You sort of hoped that somewhere among the church leaders that there was somebody with enough guts to sort of say what's happened to these guys as a result of brutality over a long period in prison, the dehumanization, the brutality, and they had no other redress but to embark on this protest and the culmination,
which is the hunger strike; you hoped that this sort of Christian charity which people and the church are always telling you about would have come across somewhere, but it didn't. Not by any in the South. Ordinary people came out by the hundreds of thousands and we had this march in Dublin. The Gardi beat the living daylights out of them. You get more punishment from the Irish police than the RUC. You know, the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, the British government, the Irish government, the professional people, the business people, all lined up clearly against the dying bodies of ten young men. It was so clear the way they were doing it.

The State also had not anticipated the way these deep negative feelings were to be expressed in the broader political arena. O'Malley (1990:211) writes that politically, "Sinn Féin and the IRA were seen as indisputable winners" in the aftermath of the hunger strike. During the hunger strike, Bobby Sands had been elected to Westminster and when he died, Owen Carron, Sands' election manager, was chosen to replace him. As well, two hunger strikers had been elected to the Dublin Parliament. In the elections that followed the hunger strike, Sinn Féin proved that it and indirectly the IRA, had the support of a far greater portion of the nationalist population than the establishment had ever imagined. Thirty percent of the Catholic vote was given to Sinn Féin in the local Assembly elections in the fall of 1982. In the general election of 1983, Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams was elected as the Westminster MP for West Belfast, and the party's percentage of the Catholic vote increased to forty-three. These Sinn
Féin victories at the polls, O'Malley (1990:213) adds, "sent shivers of apprehension through the . . . [British] political establishment."

III. Chapter Summary

During the early years of the new Northern Ireland state, the Stormont government tried to eliminate all "meanings and practices," it felt opposed those of the "effective dominant culture" which was narrowly defined by those in power to mean British culture. Emergency legislation was passed that gave the local Protestant security forces practically unlimited powers to suppress any political opposition and to censor any ideological or cultural material that conflicted with the views of the State. Official and unofficial violence during the first forty years of the State was sporadic. In the wake of the civil rights marches of 1968-69, when Catholics (and a considerable number of working class Protestants) demanded an end to political and economic discrimination, State violence in Northern Ireland became systematic and institutionalized and was directed primarily against the general Catholic population. This resulted in a period of intense rioting and the re-organization of the Irish Republican Army.
IRA recruits in the 1970s joined the struggle primarily as a "gut-reaction" to the State violence occurring in the nationalist communities. After a hunger strike in 1972, republican and loyalist prisoners were given Special Category status, which in essence gave political legitimacy to the war that was being fought. During this period, republican prisoners used their time in jail to study the conditions that led to their imprisonment, while concentrating on their political and cultural development.

On March 1, 1976, the British state changed its political and military strategy in Northern Ireland. A three pronged "Normalization Policy" was instituted which criminalized the republican struggle for self-determination; "Ulsterized" the security forces; and attempted to isolate the more radical elements of the nationalist population by offering economic and social inducements to the more moderate portion of the Catholic minority. The response of the republican prisoners was to begin a blanket protest. During the blanket protest and the subsequent dirty protest, republican prisoners refused to wear prison uniforms which to them symbolically represented the State's refusal to recognize the political nature of the armed struggle. To these men who had nothing but their bodies to use as a weapon of protest, the Irish language became a salvation, as it legitimized their cultural distinctiveness, and in so
doing gave them the strength to continue their protest. The Irish language also was a method of communication incomprehensible to English-speaking jailers. This enabled prisoners to create a bond of solidarity that the authorities could not penetrate. When the State showed no sign of changing its policy, a hunger strike began. As the world and the local nationalist community watched the ten hunger strikers die, the worst rioting erupted since the early 1970s.

After the hunger strike ended, rather than diminishing public support for the republican struggle, a significant portion of the Catholic electorate began casting their votes for Sinn Féin candidates in local assembly and Westminster elections. What had, prior to the hunger strikes, primarily been an armed struggle, was now a struggle that had been given a strong political voice—one which could no longer be silenced by State repression.

Seeing television images, reading newspaper accounts and hearing personal stories of republican prisoners, who during the blanket and dirty protests and the ensuing hunger strikes were living in Draconian conditions, yet teaching themselves to become fluent Irish speakers, was to permanently change the form of Irish language activism in Belfast.
Prior to 1980, alternative Irish language activists, had made no demands on the State, instead choosing to satisfy their cultural needs within the safe confines of the nationalist community. After 1980, the State was faced with both a resurgence of oppositional Irish language activism—in the prisons and from the politically victorious Sinn Féin—as well as much more vocal and organized alternative Irish language activism which now demanded not only that the State recognize Irish language rights but that it support and fund the Irish language.
The struggle for the restoration of Irish language rights at least to the level previously granted to republican prisoners in the "cages," did not end with the hunger strike. This investigation into the nature of oppositional Irish language resistance, therefore, will begin where it started—in the prison system—with an examination of the fight for cultural freedom both from inside and outside prison walls.

Embodied in the following comments by two former republican prisoners, who heralded the hunger strike as both a military and a political success, is the indication that the Republican Movement did not believe that the ten hunger strikers died in vain, even though the settlement of the strike fell short of restoring political status to the prisoners:

(1) The effect of the hunger strike was just total polarization in our society. Sinn Féin was coming on great guns. The IRA had more recruits than it could handle after the hunger strike. All sorts of support was coming in.
The blanket protest marked a turning point in the struggle. The IRA had to stop because of the hunger strike. Sinn Féin didn't want the hunger strike. But politically and militarily it was good. Politically Sinn Féin would not have been taken seriously without it. Connolly's political position was taken seriously because he stood outside the G.P.O., in my opinion. This didn't hurt the cause of republicanism any. If we had had a strong political side from 1975, we might not have wound up where we are today. You need politics.

The significant role the Irish language played in this political and military success did not go unnoticed by Sinn Féin. Even before the end of the hunger strike, Sinn Féin was developing a new political platform that would better reflect its elevated political status. Since the platform was to include a dynamic cultural programme, in 1982 the Sinn Féin Cultural Department was established. ó hAdhmaill (1985:6) writes that:

Prior to 1982 Sinn Féin paid lip service to the Irish language but was not closely identified with the cultural movement. However in 1982, the Sinn Féin Roinn Cultuir or Cultural Department was set up.

ó hAdhmaill (1985:6) suggests several reasons for this development. One was the role the Irish language had played in the prisons, both to create solidarity among the prisoners, and as a weapon of resistance which could be used against monolingual jailers. Sinn Féin had recognized that the hunger strike demonstrated that there was a link between
the "cultural struggle" and the "national struggle," and "... they felt that many in West Belfast agreed with this assessment." As well, a number of Irish speakers, inspired by the bilingual writing of Bobby Sands, had become involved in the hunger strike protests. As a result of these reasons, coupled with the effect of the influx of additional members into Sinn Féin, ó hAdhmaill concludes, "Sinn Féin leaders began to stress the importance of the language more."

This examination of Sinn Féin's construction of oppositional Irish language activism will begin by looking at the relationship between Sinn Féin and the nationalist community in Belfast. Many community action groups developed during the early 1970s when the state, preoccupied with the "troubles," all but abandoned the administration of community protection, housing, and similar social services. Sinn Féin's assessment of its role both in community action groups, and in the nationalist community generally, provides an insight into its perceived role in Irish language activism.

Sinn Féin's appraisal of its role in the Irish language movement will be investigated initially by probing how the Irish language fits into the overall revolutionary ideology of the Republican Movement. Then, Sinn Féin's assessment of its contributions to the Irish language revival which took place after the 1981 hunger strike, will be analyzed.
Sinn Féin's high profile in the Irish language movement has elicited the accusation from the State that Sinn Féin has "hijacked the Irish language." This charge will be probed first by examining how Sinn Féin has responded to it and then by examining how cultural or alternative Irish language activists view the State's claim. The concluding section will attempt to put in perspective the actual inter-relationship between oppositional Irish language activism and that of the alternative Irish language activist community.

I. Irish Culture Behind Bars: The Prison Struggle for Irish Language Rights

Prior to the implementation of the 1976 criminalization policy, republican prisoners had had a number of cultural rights granted to them at the time they were given "Special Category" status. These rights included the right: to play Gaelic football; to organize Irish language education; to wear the Fáinne (the badge of an Irish speaker); and to "carry on with cultural pursuits of the nationalist ethos" (Irish News 1990c:1). These cultural rights were rescinded for all prisoners sentenced after March 1, 1976.

The policy of the authorities concerning the denial of cultural rights was, however, inconsistently applied to republican prisoners. For example, while all internees had
been released by the end of 1975, the sentenced prisoners in
the "cages," whose release date—if they had one—was beyond
the March 1 deadline, continued to exercise the cultural
rights granted to them prior to 1976. Republican women
prisoners, convicted after March 1, 1976 had not been denied
the right to wear their own clothes and while they did not
go on the blanket protest, they did join the dirty protest
in support of their male counterparts in Long Kesh. Four of
these women prisoners also had participated in the first
hunger strike in 1980. These women republican prisoners
were not denied the cultural rights taken away from the men
in Long Kesh. As a result, they were allowed to organize
their own Irish classes, to wear Fáinne and to receive
Irish language books and papers15 (ó Néill 1984:1).

The months following the end of the hunger strike in
October 1981 saw the granting of most of the five demands
that had been made by the blanket, dirty and hunger strike
protesters. However, the authorities steadfastly refused to
re-institute pre-1976 cultural rights for the republican
prisoners in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, taking the position
that to do so would pose a security risk. Gaelic football
was now deemed to be a security risk because, unlike soccer
(an authorized prison activity), it involved eight more
players. The Fáinne was declared to be a political emblem
and as such offensive, and likely to cause a breach of the
peace. All Irish language publications were banned from the
prison, except books used in authorized "Irish classes for 'O' and 'A' levels [which had been made available to] a limited number of prisoners" (MacSiacais 1983:7). Security was also cited as the reason for terminating visits if the Irish language was used. For the same reason, letters containing Irish words or names could neither be sent nor received by the prisoners.

The government's intransigent position on this issue brought a storm of protest from a number of cultural groups who, like Sinn Féin, condemned the authorities for denying the prisoners their cultural rights. Ó Néill (1984:1) reports that:

**The British Government is coming under increasing pressure to give full recognition to the Irish Language and Gaelic games in the North's prisons.**

Both the S.D.L.P. and Sinn Féin this week expressed strong support for a demand from Conradh na Gaeilge (Gaelic League) that prison authorities provide facilities for any prisoner who wishes to learn or use the Irish language.

And the G.A.A. [Gaelic Athletic Association, a national sports league] has also condemned the ban on Irish culture in the prisons describing it as "a denial of basic rights."

The latest initiative to bring pressure on the British is being organised by the Roddy McCorley Club. A full page advertisement which appeared in last week's *Irish News*, detailing "the suppression of the Irish culture in the prisons" was sponsored by many cultural and sporting groups and attracted widespread attention. Letters detailing the suppression of Irish in the 6 Counties have been sent to Pope John Paul II, President Reagan, Cardinal Ó Fiaich, Geraldine Ferraro, Tip O'Neill, Edward Kennedy and other public figures world-wide.
The Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the governing body set up in Northern Ireland and controlled by Westminster after direct rule was implemented in 1972, took a defensive position in response to the accusations of cultural discrimination being made against it from many local, national and international groups, individuals, and Celtic organizations:

An NIO spokesman denied however, that there is a policy of cultural discrimination. "Any restrictions are purely of a security nature, and are not intended to suppress Irish cultural identity. It is not practical to check material in Irish but letters with a word or two in Irish should get through all right" [a claim refuted by the prisoners].

He was not aware of any plans to introduce censors with a knowledge of Irish, he said (ó Néill 1984:1).

While the campaign outside of the prisons in support of prisoners' cultural rights was building momentum, the prisoners themselves were waging a vigorous campaign from inside the prisons, in an effort to regain their lost cultural privileges. The State was equally as adamant that the prisoners would not have these cultural rights, defending their position on grounds of good order and security. As one ex-prisoner told me, "You can't argue with security." Using newspaper accounts of legal challenges and the narratives of ex-prisoners involved in this fight, the remainder of this section will attempt to derive the hidden
transcripts of both the prisoners and the State in this battle over Irish language and cultural rights.

That the Irish language was a weapon of resistance had been openly admitted to by the prisoners (see Chapter Five; also see Coogan 1980; and Feldman 1991). The prisoners' cultural demands were clearly stated in the following six-point programme:

(1) The right to receive and send letters in Irish;
(2) The right to speak Irish during visits;
(3) The right to play Gaelic games;
(4) An improvement in the lengthy delays in censoring Irish language books or papers, or for the system to be organised on the same basis as English language publications;
(5) The right to wear the Fáinne;

However, as the majority of these cultural rights only became security risks after the criminalization policy went into effect, the reasons behind the State's refusal to reinstate them seems less obvious. The use of the Irish language appeared to be allowed by the prison authorities as a privilege, thus forcing prisoner compliance in other areas. I was informed that:

In 1981 we got the right to education. Part of the settlement of the hunger strike was that prison work would still continue. But we wouldn't do prison work so we still lost privileges, although we got some privileges back.
The privilege of education was still withheld from us [the protesting prisoners].

Cardinal ó Fiaich had got an agreement from them [the government] during his talks before 1980 that he would be allowed to present us with Irish Bibles. He had just put together the Bible in Irish and it was a good achievement at the time. They said, "Yes they can have the Bibles as soon as they come off protest." One of the rights you are given is that they can't take your Bible. That is one right they can't take off you. They [the authorities] said they can have that Bible in Irish but it will be a privilege Bible because it is in a foreign language (emphasis added).

Irish was indeed considered part of the education curriculum, but Irish language material was restricted to government approved textbooks, written for "A" and "O" Level Irish language courses. All other Irish language material was viewed as a potential security risk prior to its translation. Yet the government made no attempt, until 1987, to appoint an Irish language censor (Andersonstown News 1987a:21). The following accounts related to me by two ex-prisoners, detail the extent of censorship in the prisons and outline the long and continuing battle being waged against it by the prisoners:

[Ex-prisoner 1:] So the first experience with written Irish was the Bible. Even so the Bible is not the most enjoyable reading. We were not allowed dictionaries even in English. We were allowed novels. We were not allowed any book at all that was political or of a factual nature. It had to be of a fictional nature, novels. No Sinn Féin publications were allow in. No Irish publications were allowed in. The Andersonstown News was banned. Republican News was banned. In fact the ban from the Republican News was only lifted last year [1990]. It was 1985 that the ban
was lifted on the Andersonstown News and Lá [a local Irish language newspaper]. They were under obligation by the European court to provide so many newspapers a day to each wing. Even then they [the newspapers] are subject to scrutiny and if they see something they don't like they cut it out. I was sent Lá for years and they all went to the NIO [Northern Ireland Office] and I reckon the NIO still have them. No books written in Irish were allowed in.

We protested. Then the attitude they took was that Irish, like German, French, and Spanish, is an educational subject, if you want to do this subject in foreign languages, we will do the classes. So those were the basic Irish books that we were allowed to get.

We were not allowed contact with Irish speakers. For a large number of prisoners speaking Irish,16 you have to have that flow, that sort of living contact with the language if you want it to survive. We weren't allowed that.

In the middle of '87 they agreed to allow us to get [Irish] books in. They didn't agree because they wanted to. They were getting accused of cultural oppression—an accusation that they didn't like. They decided to show themselves as liberals and show that they are not doing this.

Officially they decided to not support the language but not to suppress it either. However visits could be stopped for speaking Irish. Our letters were never sent out if they were written in Irish. Even if the person you wrote to just had an Irish name—a screw could stop that, saying that Irish is not allowed, and the government would back up the screw's decision.

In '87 they said they would allow us to get in Irish books. A Christian Brother sent me up some books. Now at this time we were allowed uncensored books—we were allowed uncensored publications. We were allowed almost everything. These books, [from the Christian Brother] which were story books in Irish that the kids would have in school [and] were left up for me in Christmas '87, and when I was transferred from the maze prison to Maghaberry prison work out scheme in [1990] . . . these books were given to me coming out the door. They were accepted in the prison and sat with the Northern Ireland censor for over three years. What they are saying is "Of course we will let them in, there is a slight delay, any prisoner knows that." But the delays are three to four years.
[Ex-prisoner 2:] It was a running battle for years and years over anything Irish. I mean if the *Irish News* printed an article in Irish— I mean you are talking about national newspapers, you are talking about the *Irish Times* which is the equivalent of the *London Times*— but that type of paper, if it carried Irish it would be censored. It wouldn't be allowed in. What they were saying was that they didn't have the facilities. But what they didn't have was the political will. You are not allowed to send or receive letters in Irish. Up until the court case you weren't allowed to send or receive Irish publications. I mean you have an Irish language newspaper called *La*, and that was coming into the prison and then they were saying, "Oh, this has to be sent away to be censored in case that it is subversive." So this daily newspaper was coming in and being sent to the censors in the jail, who were then passing the buck up and sending it to the Northern Ireland Office. At the end of the day it was just vindictiveness. The irony of it was that if you look at the whole Irish Celtic revival at lot of the people who were involved especially at the turn of the century in and around Belfast, the Irish language groups that sprung up at that time would have been Presbyterian. So they were actually denying part of their own heritage.

The campaigns by the prisoners for permission to wear the *Fáinne*, and to be allowed to play Gaelic games, was another long struggle, although one that had more successful results than the fight against censorship of Irish language material:

[Ex-prisoner 2:] Most of us learned the language on the blanket. Once the protest was over we all would have been fluent Irish speakers. The next stage was to sort of concretize that by just doing the exams. You know you have the silver *Fáinne* and the gold *Fáinne*. So we all put in for a gold *Fáinne*. And after a whole lot of debating and arguing with the NIO they decided to let an instructor come in to take us for the exam.
There was no problem of us passing it. Then we entered into the next struggle of being actually able to wear your gold Fáinne in the prison. We applied to have those sent in. We didn't even ask the administration to buy them. We said we would get our own relatives to send them in. And they said "No," that that was a political emblem. They talked about good order and discipline within the prison. This is a direct quote that they were using: That if we were to wear the Fáinne, this could be considered offensive by the other prisoners or prison staff and therefore it wasn't to be allowed.

[So even though republican and loyalist prisoners were segregated, the wearing of the Fáinne was still offensive?]

Yes.

[Was this because the Fáinne was offensive to loyalist prisoners?]

No, because they wouldn't have seen you. It was just sticking it in their gut really. And you are back to that innate sectarianism within the prison establishment. Ninety-five percent of the prison establishment is loyalist so therefore the prevailing ideology within the prison, and that goes from ground level to top management, right through all the different layers, within the prison would be by and large loyalist. And those Catholics who would take on the job, would be your token taigs, in one sense. They had to prove themselves, so they had to be twice the bastard that an ordinary loyalist would be.

[Were you ever allowed to play Gaelic games?]

No. They said we haven't got the facilities. We used to go down once a week to the football pitch. And soccer was no problem. But in terms of playing Gaelic football there was just a blank. They say they could not provide the facilities for Gaelic football or hurling. The point that they made about hurling was that you could use it as an offensive weapon. You got to give them a point there. But it is still the same football. Then they say it's a matter of security again. There
is fifteen a side for Gaelic football and it is only eleven a side for soccer. They said fifteen plus fifteen would be thirty, as opposed to twenty-two going down, therefore that would be a greater security risk. But basically they were just meaningless arguments. When you got a screw on his own or you got the governor on his own away from sort of taking the mass sort of line, he would say, "Look, you are just not getting it," and that was it. "The bottom line is we are in no way going to try to encourage you in your culture or in your belief as being nationalist. You are here to be punished because you are a republican."

In 1989 two Long Kesh prisoners took legal action to force the government to defend its refusal of the six cultural demands listed above. The Belfast County Court ruled against the claims of cultural oppression by the two men, and they subsequently appealed their case in the High Court (Andersonstown News 1990b:15). Before the decision of the High Court was rendered the NIO indicated that the wearing of the Fáinne no longer posed a security risk and that the authorities were studying whether it might be possible to allow Gaelic football. (Before the end of the High Court case, Gaelic football received NIO approval.) Ó Néill believes these actions by the government were prompted by the possible embarrassment that the High Court verdict may have brought:

During the High Court case . . . prison chiefs admitted that their ban on the Fáinne, defended for years on grounds of "security" had been lifted within the past month.

And the provision of Gaelic football and handball, previously regarded as "impracticable" is now being seriously considered.
A senior prison official told the Court that the prison authorities had met GAA officials within the last three weeks and that they now foresaw no long term problems about the provision of Gaelic football. The news of the u-turn by the NIO was being greeted with caution by prisoners but it was clear that they had scored a major success in forcing Long Kesh officials to concede that there are no security or other reasons for refusing to allow Gaelic football or the wearing of the Fainne, contrary to what they had argued for fourteen years. . . . Judgment has been reserved in the case which ended yesterday, but it became evident during the hearing that the prison authorities have eased their ban on Irish within the last few months in a deliberate attempt to avoid an embarrassing verdict in court (ó Néill 1990:2).

The official reasons given by the NIO for this apparent change of heart with respect to the Fainne and Gaelic games, and why the other demands could not be granted, were provided by:

The principal of the Regimes Development Branch responsible for Irish cultural matters, [who] said that a recent decision meant that prisoners are now allowed to wear the Fainne, because it was achieved as a result of the educational programme.

Prisoners' conversing and writing in Irish was forbidden because it could be detrimental to good order and discipline as well as prison security.

Prisoners were not allowed to change their names because it would lead to confusion in identification.

He said discussions had taken place with the GAA to see if the all-weather pitches at the Maze could be adapted for the safe playing of Gaelic football (Irish News 1990d:3).
The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and the Irish language group Conradh na Gaeilge, both cultural Irish language organizations, demonstrated their support for the prisoners demands by giving evidence on their behalf in the High Court. When the ruling was announced, it was against the claims made by the prisoners that the NIO practiced a policy of cultural discrimination. But while the ruling was in favour of the State, in his final summation, Justice Carswell made it clear that the court wasn't giving its approval to the Irish language ban in the prisons. Justice Carswell stated:

I am well aware that in some instances one may find a multitude of complaints about matters which can be justified individually, but which, when taken together, provide more convincing evidence of a discriminatory intention. I have considered the evidence as a whole with care in order to determine whether the restrictions when taken together demonstrate such an intention in the present case, taking into account the plaintiffs' complaint that they consistently operate to the disadvantage of Irish Nationalist prisoners. I have concluded that they do not. That is not to say that I am expressing judicial approval of each and every restriction or the way in which each has been handled (Andersonstown News 1991b:15).

The reaction of the prisoners was defiance, and a determination that they would continue the fight in the European Court of Human Rights:
[Ex-prisoner 2:] We said that we are not going to be treated as ordinary criminals. We had ten of our men die in there for the five demands [see Chapter Five]. And that struggle did not end when the hunger strike ended. We have kept on chipping away at them. We can operate as a body of men in prison who wanted to educate themselves—to get a political education, a cultural education, or whatever.

[Ex-prisoner 1:] Because the court case has been refused twice, we are now taking the case to Europe, to establish the same rights for Irish speakers as English speakers have. To get free access to books, written material, newspapers. Freedom to speak Irish on visits. The right to play all Irish games. Just total rights for an Irish speaker, the same for the Irish culture as for the Protestant culture or whatever you want to call it. As a result of that you are now allowed to wear a Fáinne. You are allowed to play hand ball, Gaelic football. Lá newspaper is allowed in. As far as the procedure for censoring material, it has been speeded up somewhat. It still goes to the NIO first, and there is a person in the NIO who did Irish at school who acts as censor. It's a girl who has her own duties as a civil servant. She wouldn't have the sort of Irish that you would need to read it. It would be sort of like beginner's Irish. Probably she would have her low level Irish which wouldn't match a book written by a fluent Irish speaker. So as far as I know that is speeded up but I don't know to what speed.

The prisoners and former prisoners are now using the Irish language rights they have gained to provide present republican prisoners with a cultural education within the prisons:

[Ex-prisoner 1:] As for ourselves, what we have done is because most of the Irish speakers were those of us on the blanket and we were out now, we had noticed that the Irish language had run down a
lot. So we done our own course. When we were in we were getting outside courses in Irish in. If you have been in for eight years and you have another eight years to go, the vocabulary of outside the prisons is alien to you because you are living in a different world. So we wrote our own course that deals with life in prison. It addresses the surroundings around you. It's a good basic course. So what we did last year about May [1990], we put this course into the prison. Part of the security is that you can be moved to a different block at any time. Some are moved everyday. That's very destructive for an individual especially if you are studying there, even just to settling down to prison life. So what we done was, we got this course printed, and got it photocopied in the [Sinn Féin] education department and had a copy of it put in each of the blocks. Then what we said was it was now compulsory for everyone to do this course. We didn't really say it was compulsory but we said we would like everyone to do it. So that leaves it to their own initiative because I think it is a good thing for everybody to do. If everybody starts doing the course and say I got moved from H3 to H4 everybody in H4 would be at the same stage as I was in H3 because we have it all boxed off. This is what you do in week one, this is what you do in week two. So even if you were moved you weren't disrupted, you just carried on. That culminated in August [1990] with the fun run [in support of the Irish language nurseries and primary schools]. That catches all the new blood that was coming in. That heightens the awareness of Irish. Even those that are just taking the basic course will have enough to converse and progress. We have a number of books and we have dictionaries. I think we will have an advanced level course. But even if people come through the first level they will then have the confidence to go on in their own way and their own classes. The course is ten to twelve weeks. You will be in an Irish speaking atmosphere.

The public transcript of the prisoners is similar to the hidden one articulated above: the republican prisoners want to be able to express their distinct
linguistic/cultural identity within an Irish-speaking environment they themselves have created in the H-Blocks. Even after losing their major court case against cultural discrimination, they proceeded, using the gains their struggle had produced, to set up their own Irish language education system in order to Gaelicize current republican prisoners.

The public transcript of the State was that the demands of the republican prisoners, if permitted, would jeopardize the "good order and security" within the prisons. However, when the actions of the State are examined the hidden transcript bears a similarity to the attitude expressed by the Stormont government in the 1920s toward anything Irish (see Chapter Four). The Irish language was treated as a foreign language, to be sanctioned only as an educational subject. All Irish language publications were treated as suspect and banned--including Irish language articles written in well respected newspapers such as the *Irish Times*. No effort was made, until 1987, to appoint a person to censor incoming and outgoing Irish material, and even then, delays of nine months to several years were common before the sender or receiver actually got the material.

The security argument also seems tenuous at best with regard to other expressions of Irishness. The wearing of the *Fainne* and the playing of Gaelic football were seen as security risks. (Hurling could legitimately be seen as a
security risk as it is played with a hockey-like stick.) However, the republican prisoners in the "cages" were allowed to continue to play Gaelic football and both they and women republican prisoners, were allowed to wear Fáinne. In 1990, prior to a decision on a case of cultural discrimination in the prisons against the NIO, the authorities decided that the wearing of the Fáinne and the playing of Gaelic football no longer posed threats to either good order or security in the prisons. Therefore, prohibitions on Irish language material and publications, the wearing of the Fáinne, and the playing of Gaelic games, appear to have had less to do with security concerns and more to do with the State's perception that the prisoner's oppositional language activism posed an intolerable threat to British linguistic hegemony.

II. Sinn Féin and the Nationalist Community

A. The Development of Community Action Groups in Belfast

During the course of the last twenty or more turbulent years in Belfast, little has been written on the local level organization of the city's community action groups. To a large extent, the material presented here will be drawn from
Griffiths' (1978) examination of the growth of community action groups during the years 1969 to 1975, and on information imparted to me personally by nationalists involved in some of these organizations. It should be noted that Griffiths' article concentrates on the development of loyalist community action groups, however he does provide some useful information on similar organizations in the nationalist areas.

Using religion and socio-economic class to divide the Northern Irish population, Griffiths (1978) argues that while Protestant and Catholic attitudes toward statutory institutions were different prior to 1969, neither community had a "real tradition of community action nor even community consciousness, except in relation to the political-religious divide."

Protestants (working, middle and upper classes), Griffiths claimed, were encouraged to believe that their right to exist and their livelihood depended on the continued existence of the Stormont Parliament, the Unionist Party, and the Orange Order. It was the perception of the Protestant community that any expression of "discontent or grievance" on its part would undermine the State and thus jeopardize its privileged position. On the other hand, the Catholic working class, according to Griffiths, had been pacified by the political rhetoric of the Irish government into believing Ireland would eventually be united once
again. This group, while "more militant in its interaction with statutory agencies," tended to allow the Catholic Church to control all social organization. The tradition of republicanism with its "Sinn Féin tradition of self-reliance" was alive during the 1960s but other than nurturing a low level community agitation against prevailing discriminatory political and economic condition (see Adams 1986:6-17), and producing a growing number of republican clubs, this tradition was still in a nascent stage of development with respect to generating any organized community action.

In the violent wake of the 1969 civil rights marches, the Northern Ireland political system faltered and the nationalist and loyalist communities began to organize action groups to take over functions that statutory agencies, such as the Housing Executive, no longer provided. With the creation of a "network of no-go areas, where the civil writ no longer ran" (Griffiths 1978:175), communities were left undefended. Local residents formed paramilitary and vigilante groups to protect their communities, usurping the responsibility for local security from the government.

As the violence escalated in the wake of civil rights marches, there was a massive displacement of population as families left or were intimidated out of the mixed areas and forced to seek refuge in more religiously and politically homogeneous sectors of Belfast. As Catholics continued to
pour into the nationalist ghettos and departing loyalists burned their former homes, the housing shortage in the area became acute. In the early 1970s, and particularly in later years, the only way to obtain a house was, in the local parlance, "to go and take a house." As Griffiths (1978:175) writes, "When pressed by a relief worker, the best advice that an official of the Housing Executive could give a family turned out of their home was to go ahead and squat."
The Housing Executive lost all hope of controlling the allocation of houses and along with it, its credibility in the community. It was out of this situation that the first tenant's groups were formed, to perform the duties that the Housing Executive had abandoned.

As the leadership of these groups matured and skill was gained in handling issues of housing and security, their attention was directed to other needs of the community, such as the provision of social facilities and amenities. While this served to increase local confidence in and support for the community action groups, it also created a dilemma for the groups:

Although they [could] . . . themselves undertake certain responsibilities for the provision of services and amenities to their own communities on a self-help basis, at the end of the day they must turn to the major institutions of society, not only for services, but even for the support which they need to do what they [could] . . . for themselves (Griffiths 1978:190-191).
With the advent of Direct Rule in 1972, came the forced relinquishing of political control by the Stormont Parliament. The resulting control exercised by London over Northern Ireland, served to further alienate the political system from local communities (O'Malley 1983:243-244). The political system now faced a dilemma similar to that of the community groups, which were unable to operate effectively without the support of the government:

How can it [the political system] effectively continue to operate as a form of representative government if its representativeness is continually challenged and its actions discredited and brought into disrepute by articulate and well-informed criticism and opposition? (Griffiths 1978:191).

As the process of politicization continued in the nationalist community, the pre-1969 style of government became less and less viable. The community action groups knew the needs of the community and how best to fill those needs--they also had the support of the local residents. But the statutory institutions, regarded by the community with militant distrust, controlled the resources necessary to satisfy these community needs. It was into this gap that Sinn Féin stepped as an answer to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's challenge to enter the political arena in the 1980s.
B. Sinn Féin assumes an "Encouraging" and "Supportive" Role in the Nationalist Community

When questioned as to the general role that Sinn Féin perceived itself to have assumed in the nationalist community, a Sinn Féin spokesperson answered:

Sinn Féin within the community sees itself as providing a service, and that service is more often than not a multi-faceted service. One is to help people to deal with the various statutory agencies that they come into contact with, many of whom are totally hostile to the needs of the nationalist community--completely hostile. Another--and it is a very important one, and it is one that takes up a huge amount of time--is adjudicating or negotiating between two sets of individuals. Two sets of families or two sets of residents on a street. To adjudicate and to negotiate a way out of the difficulties that are presented.

We have more advice centres in Belfast than all other political parties collectively have in the six counties. So we have a whole host of advice centres and they are community based advice centres. They provide the role we have mentioned, and that's to say we assist the community in a number of problem areas--welfare rights is one example of that, harassment by the British forces. These centres also provide another important focus, and that's they allow people to come to us and to complain about us--which happens occasionally. Now that method and mechanism of feeling confident that you can complain about what Sinn Féin did or didn't do or in fact, what the IRA did or didn't do guarantees a steady flow of understanding between the various sections of the community and of course ourselves who are a part of that community.

When asked about Sinn Féin's involvement in the local community-based groups, I was told:
We support and encourage other schemes and community groups that are certainly not organized by us but have our support. For example, there are a number of drop-in centres which are organized by small fairly hard working community groups who simply provide a drop-in centre for their immediate area. We would be in support of those projects.

The difficulty for us and indeed for them [community action groups] is that there is a continual attempt by the British propagandists to convince people that Sinn Féin for instance, despite our obviously large representation, that Sinn Féin somehow survives within the nationalist area by threat. Now what they have attempted to do to any community group or any individual who will not toe the line, that is, who challenges the British government's interpretation or propaganda line, they themselves are penalized. Their grants are removed, their buildings are allowed to run down, until it becomes impossible to have any kind of a drop-in centre or a community service. We are very conscious that those people—it would be really a disservice by us to them if those groups would be labeled as a Sinn Féin front. They are not a front. I mean they are people who have their own views, their own way of doing things. We support them. We don't always agree with them but we are in support of them.

Another Sinn Féin spokesperson, in reply to my question concerning the interaction between Sinn Féin and community-based groups, reiterated the previous response:

It's no good controlling single issue groups. It's no good controlling tenant's associations. We have proven it. We have learned by our mistakes because we've done it. There was a very small tenant's association and our people--because the area was so small--ended up controlling it and it ended up a disaster.

People saw it as the Republican Movement coming in and taking over their tenant's association, and they pulled back from it and we learned very, very, quickly by that mistake.
A. The Irish Language as Part of the Republican Ethos

Current revolutionary ideology of the Irish Republican Movement considers the restoration of the Irish language as an integral part of the struggle for self-determination. This ideology draws its authenticity and legitimacy (see Chapter One) from the legacy of the United Irishmen (1798), Thomas Davis (1840), Pádraig Pearse (1916), and other revolutionary heroes, who proclaimed economic and political freedom could only be achieved in a culturally and linguistically distinct Ireland (see Chapter Three). Therefore, as in the past, Sinn Féin today believes that cultural liberation is inseparable from political and economic freedom. ó Muilleoir (1986:20-21, 23) articulates the linkage between present republican cultural thinking with that of their forefathers:

Republicans have always realised that to be free, the Irish people must have a culture of their own, as distinct from that of the oppressor. Pearse said "chan amháin saor ach Gaelach chomh maith, chan amháin Gaelach ach saor chomh maith," i.e., not free merely but Irish as well, not Irish merely but free as well. Mellows [the leader of the Galway Volunteers in 1916] spoke of the fight to maintain our Irishness as the intellectual part of the Irish revolution when he said:
The revolution going on in Ireland, has a threefold aspect, it is intellectual, it is political, it is economic. Of the intellectual aspect it is sufficient to say that Ireland to be free, must be Irish, must be free from the domination of alien thought as from alien armies.

Sinn Féin accepts both the above statements and understands the necessity for urgent action to redress the neglect of culture and defeat cultural oppression. We realise we are oppressed not only economically and physically but that the oppressor also exercises a cultural and social control over our people. It is only natural then that resistance to the oppressor must take place on all these fronts.

We must replace the ideology of the oppressor with a republican ideology rooted in our own history and experiences.

Imperialism has been described as a situation where "The centre of gravity of a nation, i.e., its crucial decision making, is no longer in that nation but in some other." It is clear that while the cultural domination of Ireland continues, our "centre of gravity" will not be in our own country.

It is essential therefore that our struggle against economic and political oppression is united with cultural resistance.

Cultural resistance in republican ideology is based on the belief that to be a sovereign people the Irish must first regain control of their own destiny. The Irish language is seen as an essential element in restoring to the demoralized nationalist population a sense of this control, and as a step toward re-establishing their self-esteem and self-worth as a people. The belief that the success of the liberation struggle lies in building a stable, self-reliant people is put into practice by encouraging members of
the nationalist community to speak out and demand their civil and human rights. A Sinn Féin spokesperson explained:

From our point of view, we don't administer to the community. We don't simply provide a service to the community. We don't simply look after the needs of the community. That would be totally counter-productive. We see our role as being a vehicle through which community grievances can be heard. For example, if there is a problem with an individual housing estate, that has to be taken up with the Housing Authority, it's not Sinn Féin's role to go on behalf of the residents to raise that issue. It is Sinn Féin's role to go with the residents to raise the issue... if you like it is almost psychological, like training someone to be involved in athletics. If they can look after and stand up for their own rights on any given issue, they will stand up for themselves on every given issue.

I mean that's where we differ [from Southern and other Irish politicians], apart from the nature of our analysis--but that's why we differ tremendously from what is called a constitutional party [here referring to SDLP]. They see themselves as speaking on behalf of the people and they are full of baloney. I mean the people can speak on their own behalf. We are there to provide assistance for that. We are not the voice of the people, we are a voice with the people. And that's the only way Sinn Féin can go forward.

By assuming a supportive role in the community, Sinn Féin has encouraged the people to fight for their rights, to challenge the authorities directly. In the process, the northern nationalist population in general, and portions of the alternative Irish language community, have become strongly politicized.
B. Sinn Féin and the Irish Language Activist Community: A Self-Analysis

It would be unfair to say that Sinn Féin's cultural liberation ideology is solely a product of the prison protests of the late 1970s and early 1980s. For example, included in Sinn Féin's 1971 Social and Economic Programme is a section entitled "An Ghaeilge," which begins by stating, "One of the primary aims of Sinn Féin is the re-establishment of the Irish language in its correct place as the principal community language of the Irish People" (Sinn Féin 1971:39).

However, the prison protests did heighten Sinn Féin's awareness of a definite need to assume a much more visible role in the Irish language revival that had been spurred by the 1981 hunger strike. As Andrews (1991:100) commented:

The fact that Irish had helped to sustain republican prisoners through their worst experiences during the years of protest, including hunger strikes, had brought SF [Sinn Féin] to the realisation that the language could be equally meaningful outside the prisons as a distinctive expression of cultural identity and as a form of cultural resistance.

Sinn Féin's new role would demand the formulation of a definite plan of action to enable the reaching of their goals. At the 1985 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis (annual meeting) a series of proposals were put forward that were to become
incorporated into a Sinn Féin cultural policy document, issued in 1986. These proposals included:

(109) That the cultural department should then be responsible for increasing Sinn Féin involvement in the following areas and ways:

(a) **Classes**: the setting up of a Sinn Féin class in every Comhairle Ceantar [district council] in the Six Counties and in every Comhairle Limistéir [territorial council] in the 26 Counties; all public representatives to learn Irish; an Irish summer college to be set up.

(b) **Prisons**: That Sinn Féin publicises and agitates around the ban on Irish in Six-County jails and highlights the contribution by prisoners to the cultural revival.

(c) **Irish language education**: That Sinn Féin recognises the vital role of Irish language nursery schools in the cultural revival and pledges its active support to all such schemes.

(d) **Abroad**: To establish close links with cultural groups in Wales and Euskadi.

(121) That Sinn Féin pledges its support to the efforts of Irish speakers to obtain more programmes in Irish on television and radio and to the obtaining of an Irish television station.

(124) That Sinn Féin favours the use of Gaelic-only names on roads and in new housing estates.

(125) That Sinn Féin be seen to support Irish cultural organisations such as, Comhaltas Ceótoiri Éireann [Irish musicians association], fleádhhs [Irish festivals], etc.

(126) That this Ard-Fheis sends revolutionary greetings to all Gaeilge cultural bodies in Ireland and in particular to Conradh na Gaeilge, Cumann na bhFian, Comhdail Naisiunta na Gaeilge and Lá (Sinn Féin 1985:56, 61, 63).
Among the proposals that are not written into the official Sinn Féin Cultural Policy document but do reflect the desire of the leadership, and from my observations, a significant portion of the Sinn Féin membership, are as follows:

(117) That within five years, all republican publications be bilingual.

(120) All Sinn Féin members should have a basic grasp of the Irish language and where this situation does not prevail it should be the duty of the membership to attain this, either together as a cumann, comhairle, ceantair or through . . . night school classes.

(123) Sinn Féin members should change their names to the Irish equivalent (if in English) (Sinn Féin 1985:61).

(131) That it be made mandatory for all new members of Sinn Féin to attend Irish classes during the six-week probationary period.

(132) That members, candidates for elections and spokespersons in particular, recognise the importance and value of having a working knowledge of the Irish language. We propose that Roinn an Chultuir at national level organises facilities in neglected areas (Sinn Féin 1986:69).

The Sinn Féin Cultural Department had, prior to the advent of the 1986 Policy Document, involved itself in setting up almost thirty classes (twenty in Belfast alone). Many of these classes were taught by Irish teachers, who while not entirely in agreement with Sinn Féin's policy, were "broadly sympathetic" toward Sinn Féin's position on
Sinn Féin's President, Gerry Adams, now called on 1980's republicans to increase their involvement in the Irish language, even if only entailed the incorporation of a few simple Irish words and phrases into daily speech:

This [involvement] may take such small forms as deciding never again to say "cheerio" and always say "slán," or it may mean a total involvement in supporting the demands of the language struggle and the demands of the people of the Gaeltachtai by working actively alongside them (Adams 1986:147).

The media demand special attention because of their importance in influencing their audiences' opinions and values (Adams 1986:147).

Adams called on elected Sinn Féin representatives to use their:

... elected positions in both the 26 and 6 counties to promote Irish culture in such areas as the erection of street signs in Irish, grant aid for feiseanna [festivals], bilingual council stationery and signs, the use of Irish at formal council occasions, and an emphasis on Irish music and dances at council-sponsored social events (Adams 1986:147).

This sudden high profile of republicans in the Irish language movement shocked politicians, especially members of the SDLP who accused Sinn Féin of "hijacking the Irish language" to enhance their political position in the
nationalist community. The State echoed this charge. When asked about the interaction between Sinn Féin and the Irish language movement, a Sinn Féin spokesperson explained:

The Irish [primary] school had asked for money, but there was no demand for funding for Irish language arts on par with that for Wales; there was no demand for the government administration to deal with Irish speakers in Irish; there was no demand for the removal of the law that banned Irish street signs; there was no demand for people to be allowed to speak Irish in courts or when they were stopped by British army troops. That wasn't part of the organizations' themes because of this belief that it would be impossible and a waste of time. And then what happened and I think Sinn Féin can take some of the credit for this, is that as the policy of Sinn Féin developed we started making demands about housing, the environment, about women's needs, about children's needs, for play areas, and so on. And obviously we used the traditional methods of politics--of lobbying, of applying pressure--it was logical then to those people involved in the Irish language that Sinn Féin would embark on a similar course of action for the Irish language and we did. And we would have meetings with the broadcasting authority which is responsible for Ulster Television [UTV], and Downtown Radio. Ulster Television is the worst because it has always refused to broadcast anything in the Irish language. We would have meetings with them to press for Irish language programmes. We would have meetings with the Arts Council to talk about the funding for arts. We would have organized ourselves, or helped organize pickets of courts where people appeared on charges involved with the Irish language. We would have pickets in front of the BBC, and so on. So the principles that Sinn Féin has adopted for political work, we perhaps introduced to the Irish language movement. So you had for the first time the State being met with a lot of different demands from different fronts.
When a reporter for An Phoblacht/Republican News (1990:10) asked the head of the Sinn Féin Cultural Department:

How much of an impact has Sinn Féin had on the promotion of Irish language and culture in the Six Counties?

Gearóid ó hAra [replied]: There can be no denying that republicans have had an impact. Republicans have argued the case for political recognition of the Irish language in a forceful manner. Sinn Féin has raised the issue of the language in every arena and has forced the issue on to the agenda of all the political parties. Through various campaigns they have exposed the anti-Irish policies of the British government.

The profusion of Irish street signs, road signs, and murals in Irish throughout the Six Counties bear testimony to the energy and enthusiasm with which republicans promoted the language on the streets, and supported every community initiative in this field vigorously.

However, in 1990, when I asked a Sinn Féin Cultural Department spokesperson about Sinn Féin's accomplishments in implementing its cultural programme, his assessment expressed disappointment that they were not doing more in the restoration of the language:

On the question of what Sinn Féin is doing for the Irish language, my answer is not half enough. And in many ways the Sinn Féin attitude to the Irish language would be similar to the attitude of Fianne Fail or the SDLP. It wouldn't be part of my job to bolster Sinn Féin image or try to pretend that Sinn Féin is doing more work for the Irish language than they are. Sinn Féin is doing a modest amount of work, but it just seems to be an awful lot because the rest of them
parties] are doing nothing. We publish an occasional magazine in Irish. We have simultaneous translation at the Ard Fheis. We organize an annual political convention entirely in Irish. We have a page in Irish in our paper. And we have a lot of Irish language activists within the movement. But that's really not an awful lot.

It's difficult. Sinn Féin, like every other political organization in the country, except perhaps for a very small group in the West of the country, is an English language organization. But we just live with it— we suffer with it. It is very difficult to Gaelicize an organization which is an English language organization. An Phoblacht has 16 pages and only one or two in Irish. It's as bad as the SDLP paper or the Fianne Fáil paper.

Before turning to a discussion of the State's accusation that Sinn Féin has politicized the Irish language for its own purposes, this examination of Sinn Féin's activities in the Irish language movement, will conclude with an answer received to the question: How do republicans balance their political and cultural interests?:

I belong to Sinn Féin because I believe in more than just the Irish language. I believe in independence of this country and equality in this country. I believe in having a fairer type of society. So for all those things, I belong to Sinn Féin. There is no Irish language organization fighting to get the British army off our streets. So for all those reasons then and the additional baggage that I carry around with me—those beliefs— then Sinn Féin is the organization for me. There are other Irish speakers who believe strongly also in independence, but believe without the language that is impossible, so they just work solely on the language problem. I have a loyalty to Sinn Féin but at the same time I have an equal loyalty to the Irish language. Obviously there will be a conflict in what you do with your time.
But I have no great interest in being part of a free Ireland in which the language is treated the way it is today. That's a revolutionary view if you wish, but it comes from the recognition that cultural oppression is the worst and the most insidious type of oppression. As Stephen Bantu Biko said: "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the minds of the oppressed."

In his concluding remarks, the Sinn Féin Cultural Department representative emphasized that he did not want to leave me with the impression that involvement in the Irish language meant that a person was either a republican or at the very least a nationalist:

Just to close off, I think it is important that you don't associate the language completely with the Republican Movement or the Nationalist Movement. Everybody that speaks Irish are not republican regardless of what the government tries to say. And I think the other thing is not to attribute the Irish language revival to republicans alone, not only because Sinn Féin is an English language organization but because there are a lot of people working in the background, and working hard, and working because of their love of the language and for its status. It is a revival of interest. There are very few with our views. What they [the government] has done is that they have tried to get away with creating an image that the Irish language is subversive, saying that everybody who speaks Irish is republican.
C. Suspicions that Sinn Féin "Hijacked" the Irish Language after the Hunger Strike: The Alternative Irish Language Activist Community Responds

Sinn Féin's increased interest in the Irish language and in the rights of Irish language speakers, after the 1981 hunger strike, elicited the accusation, first from the SDLP and then from the establishment generally, that it had "hijacked" the Irish language for political purposes. This accusation served a dual purpose, in that the use of the word "hijacked" portrayed Sinn Féin's role in the language movement as that of a terrorist, and also it created the image that Sinn Féin's interest in the Irish language was purely political. In an interview with Gearóid ó hAra, head of Sinn Féin's Cultural Department, An Phoblacht/Republican News (1990:10) asked:

What do you say to the accusation that republicans have "hijacked" the Irish language?

Gearóid ó hAra: This is a negative argument and usually comes from people who are hostile to our vigorous promotion of the language and who in many cases are anti-republican.

It is true that republicans are prominent and numerous in many language initiatives but this is due to individual commitment and an understanding among republicans of the need to be active on the issue. They are doing the work to build groups, to create opportunities and to publicise their efforts, and in many cases none of that work would be done if they were not there.

It is impossible to de-politicise the cultural struggle or to separate it from the struggle for self-determination. I would welcome an opportunity to debate the issue publicly or privately with cultural activists who have an alternative view.
Adams (1986:146) also made it clear that Sinn Féin did not view the Irish language as a political weapon of the party, when he stated:

Culture is not a party political question or the monopoly of any one section of the people, but the destruction of our culture was a political act and its revival also requires political action. No progress can be made in any political struggle without the involvement of ordinary people, and the most pertinent point about the current modest revival is that it is happening because the ordinary people have identified with it (Adams 1986:146).

During my research, I asked a number of Irish language activists, none of whom were members of Sinn Féin and the majority of whom did not support the Republican Movement, what their feelings were about the accusation of Sinn Féin hijacking the Irish language. Most people spoken to, questioned the accuracy of the accusation. Some, however, echoed the view that, "Sinn Féin had hijacked the language," adding that "it does not belong to a political party."

[Respondent 1:] They [Sinn Féin] didn't have to [hijack the language]. It [the Irish language] is more identified with Sinn Féinism than anything else. The Gaelic League in the 1800s--like Sinn Féin, was born from the Gaelic League. But this was a cultural revival from the upheaval from the Fenians of the 1860s, and the Gaelic League in the 1890s. And then from the Gaelic League you had Sinn Féin and Irish Nationalism. They didn't have to hijack it you know.
[Do you see the attaching of Sinn Féin's name to the Irish language movement, as an attempt to make the language subversive?]

That's right. But I don't give that much room for thought even, because I'm an Irishman, and you know how much it has cost us to be Irish. And Sinn Féin—and there is nothing more Irish in Ireland than Sinn Féin—so how can Sinn Féin hijack something that is already theirs?

Still other respondents, such as those in the following two examples, did not see the involvement of Sinn Féin in Irish language activism as presenting any difficulty to the Irish language movement. Both felt that it would be foolhardy for any political party to attempt to hijack the Irish language:

[Respondent 2:] Conradh na Gaeilge in Twinbrook was the first group to rename all their streets in Irish. That was ten years ago. [There were 160 signs made] . . . and those signs were paid for by donations given by the Twinbrook people. But after that you see, Sinn Féin took it upon themselves to develop Irish as part of their strategy.

[Did you find that a detriment?] No, I didn't. It's a very difficult arrangement that we are in here because you find that quite a lot of our ex-workers also have republican tendencies. And you also have the opposite of course. So it doesn't necessarily fall that because you are a republican you are in favour of Irish. But it does follow that if you are an Irish speaker it doesn't matter if you are republican or not. You get this mixture all the time and it is very difficult to separate them.
[Does that mean that there are some people who use the language for political reasons and some cultural?]

Well that's very difficult to answer. To quote Gerry Adams at an event organised here about a year and a half ago, I got together a panel from across the political board. There was Gerry Adams himself, the General Secretary of the SDLP, Patsy McGlone, who is an Irish speaker of course. I got someone from the Communist Party and a person from the Alliance Party. Invitations also went out to different Irish groups like Conradh na Gaeilge and other groups--so there was a broad spectrum of views on the platform. And Gerry Adams actually said that it was time for Irish speakers to take the Irish language away from the politicians. Again you have this sort of common denominator between politicians that they want to leave the Irish language alone. It's above politics. The language is sacrosanct. They don't want to sully it in any way. And I think that although Sinn Féin's development has come through this period whereby the Irish language was part of the present, not ancient culture, the living part of the culture of Ireland and that it is part and parcel of the revolution--its our culture, therefore it comes on with us under the heading of Ireland and what it means and all. When the Rising of 1916 came about, Irish nationalism became the Gaelic language. Therefore it estranged the Protestant population to a degree.

[Respondent 3:] The Irish language movement is quite right wing. This myth regarding Sinn Féin being involved [in the Irish language movement] initially is ridiculous. This is a very right wing organization. You go to any Irish language gathering and you will see the suits and ties. It's very right wing. But the work of the Irish language movement would have been quite acceptable to the Government before Sinn Féin actually got a hold of the language and actually brought it down to the level of the people.

That is where the difficulty of politics comes in, because you have to be very careful about the things you do because you don't want to put a political image on the Irish language. So you have to watch. It can be used both ways. It can be used by the Sinn Féin members to say that you are discriminating against them if you exclude
them from a group, when all you are really doing is saying you are having nothing to do with them [some Sinn Féin members], because he/she is a bad person or why should you [the Sinn Féin member] do it because you haven't done any work before now. Or it can be used the other way where you do discriminate against them [Sinn Féin].

By the same token, the Irish language is divorced from politics in that it is divorced from party politics. Each individual has their own politics. You can't say the Irish language has nothing to do with politics—that's ridiculous. Politics is the people. The language is the people. And if they are going to try and demote the language in some obscure back room, you take action against this. If you chose between a black taxi and a bus, that's a political decision in a way. What I am saying is that it [the language] should not be manipulated to build the profile for anybody in the political movement.

The State has tainted the language by attaching it to politics. The Irish language, I always felt from when I was young, was part of me. I was always involved in the Irish culture and the language but I never liked the Irish language crowd. I always found them very, very clean, straight, Catholic, the three piece suit types. I mean they bore . . . me. Now you have the chance of having Protestant people being involved and I am very willing to have Protestants involved, because I am telling you, it needs a breath of fresh air. You've got to have people from all walks of life and all political persuasions. How can a language survive if it belongs to one particular political party? Even that political party [i.e., Sinn Féin] would likely admit that. There is no way any political party would want to hijack a language, because you can't. Because if everybody involved in the language was from Sinn Féin, how could you have a debate for a start. For example, what I find when I am teaching the language is that no one will start to speak it until the issue becomes more important than the language. When you are constantly worrying about grammar and the right way to say the words you will constantly go plodding along through it saying, "is this the right way to say that?" But if you have a debate, let's say on feminism, then language becomes alive because people are not stopping to worry about their grammar, or what kind of words they are using--the important thing is the point. The only way the language can
survive is for people from different political persuasions, different religious persuasions, different walks of life, and different interests, outlooks, different ways of dressing, different attitudes, to become involved. That's when a language lives. Not when there's a little group of people who say right, this is the way we pronounce this word here. Everybody say it after me.

Another person felt that the impetus for Sinn Féin's increased interest in the Irish language came from its president, Gerry Adams. In responding to my questions, this interviewee like others, emphasized the problems that a group would run into if it were to become stigmatized as a "Sinn Féin front":

[Respondent 4:] Republicans, since early '80s, have learned the language as a symbol of solidarity with the prisoners. Today the interest of republicans in the language is partly to do with the rise of Gerry Adams. Now this is guesswork. Quite a lot of the early leaders of the Republican Movement were from the ground in the North, that means they came from nowhere. They didn't have a background, that means they didn't know all that much about republicanism. Adams comes from a family with a long history of republicanism so whenever he moved up into the leadership, Irish began to have a high profile among republicans in the North.

Prison Irish drew attention to Irish in a way that nothing else had done—the fact that Bobby Sands wrote songs in Irish for example. This use of Irish by prisoners started in the '70s but didn't get as much attention as in the '80s. A lot of prisoners who initially went into prison learned Irish but dropped it when they came out. Now the numbers keeping their Irish up is increasing especially since the hunger strikes.

Sinn Féin has done a lot of work promoting Irish, and Irish is part of their ideology and more so since Gerry Adams has taken over the
leadership. The problem with politicians is that politicians like publicity, so that sometimes they have used the fact that they are involved in the Irish movement to promote their political ends. There is a tension there.

The problem with a group being connected with Sinn Féin is that members of that group who are not members of that party withdraw from that kind of activity because they don't want to be tainted. When there is a public perception that a community group, although they may be doing a lot of good, are in Sinn Féin's pocket, that takes the group out of the cultural and into the political realm. That's the danger, and is one of the reasons why people are wary about it. It particularly will be very hard to get unionists and Protestants involved in any group when it looks like it belongs to Sinn Féin.

D. The Role of Sinn Féin in the Irish Language Movement

The general position of the Republican Movement, and particularly that of Sinn Féin, appears aimed at creating an ethnically aware Irish nation, albeit not necessarily one of a republican persuasion. The prime motivating factor to this end is the example of others. Prisoners, who were able to teach themselves to become fluent Irish speakers while in hostile surroundings, served as an example to Northern Irish people that they indeed had a unique language, and separate, distinct culture. The prisoners' example made the Irish aware that they formed a "collective we" that was linguistically and culturally different from the British state and those Northern Ireland people who saw themselves as British--the "collective them."
Memories of the indignity and cultural oppression that resulted in "our Irish language" being replaced with "their English language," were rekindled, and ethnic consciousness strengthened by news of the adverse conditions faced by Irish-learners "behind the wire." As Ó Maolchaoibhí (1986:4) expresses:

The point must be made again that the English language has largely supplanted Irish in Ireland as the result of brutal British imperialism.

Many, including many non-republicans, were jolted into the ethnic awareness that they were members of a unique Irish nation with a unique language, and its own unique customs, beliefs and attitudes. This renewed ethnic consciousness stimulated a vigorous Irish language revival in the 1980s, a revival which shows no sign of abatement in the 1990s (see Chapter Seven). A researcher from the University of Ulster undertook a survey in 1985 aimed at measuring the extent of the Gaelic revival in West Belfast in the 1980s, and the reasons for the apparent intensified interest in the Irish language there. He concluded that:

Not only has there been an increase in interest in Irish during the 1980s in West Belfast, but much of the reason for the increase appears to be due to political conditions. Although people obviously vary in their reasons for learning Irish, a large portion of the growth in interest appears to stem from the H-block protest and ultimately the hunger strikes of 1981.
The H-block prisoners used the speaking of Irish as a form of resistance, and this coupled with the writings of Bobby Sands, many of which were in Irish, put the Irish language on a platform where previously it had not existed to any great degree. The hunger strikes, their political repercussions and the resultant effects they had on the N.I. conflict as acted out within West Belfast, led to increased anti-British feeling in the area (Ó hAdhmaill 1985:38).

Sinn Féin's cultural department has devoted much of its energy to the task of Gaelicizing the Republican Movement's own membership. Individual Irish-speaking Sinn Féin members are encouraged to pursue their cultural interests by joining and working with Irish language groups and associations, but Sinn Féin as an organization shies away from taking a direct controlling, leadership role in any of these groups. By distancing itself from community action groups in general, including Irish language activist groups, Sinn Féin assumes a supportive role, encouraging the nationalist population, either individually or collectively in groups, to speak up for themselves and make their demands heard by the State. Sinn Féin's stance of supporting and encouraging individual activists and single issue community groups to act on their own behalf, becomes a powerful weapon against the State. Far more powerful than "taking over" the leadership of a group directly, as the State has accused them of doing, or in the State's terminology "hijacking the Irish language."
Since Sinn Féin's only involvement with single issue groups, whose demands are refused by the State, constitutes an outsider's support and encouragement, then by all appearances the State discriminates against these minority groups by denying them the civil and human rights to which they are democratically entitled. By Sinn Féin's not assuming an active role in these groups, the government's accusations of "Sinn Féin front" or "paramilitary link" are difficult, if not impossible to substantiate, although directed toward that portion of the minority population the State wishes to win over or indeed to outside interest groups. For example, when these claims were used to justify the withdrawal of funds and other support from groups such as Glór na nGael, the government faced condemnation locally, nationally, and internationally (see Chapter Eight).

Therefore, Sinn Féin's "passive" method of oppositional activism not only encourages the development of a more ethnically aware nationalist population that can be mobilized in support of its overall objective, it also exposes the vulnerability and weakens the stance of the "effective dominant culture."
IV. Chapter Summary

The ending of the hunger strike in 1981, did not end the struggle in the prisons for the restoration of the cultural rights of the prisoners to their pre-1976 level. Many cultural groups supported the prisoner's demands and spoke out on their behalf. The State, seemed to interpret the Irish language activism by the prisoners and by those protesting on their behalf, as an attempt to replace the linguistically and culturally British environment inside the prisons, with one that was Irish—an interpretation that has some veracity. Any request for Irish cultural rights made by prisoners was met with the argument that such concessions would pose a security risk or would disrupt the good order and discipline of the prison. Through court cases and pressure from outside groups, the prisoners were able to force the State to relax some of its cultural restrictions, although many still remain in effect. The hidden transcript of the State, as derived from its performance in the public domain, appears to indicate that current State attitude toward the Irish language has not undergone any significant change from that of previous administrations. There still remain vestiges of a history of linguistic hostility, characteristic of prevailing attitudes from Tudor times to the present (see Chapter Three).
During the early years of the "troubles," many community action groups were formed to provide local protection, as well as social and housing services that had been abandoned by the statutory agencies. As these groups matured, they found that there was only so much they could do to meet the needs of the community before having to get State support. The State found that it had become alienated from the nationalist community by the violence of the period. This gap between the community and the government was filled when, in the 1980s, Sinn Féin entered the political arena.

The present place in the republican ethos of the Irish language is authenticated by the "glorious past" (see Chapter One) in which revolutionary heroes emphasized that Irish political and economic freedom was inseparably intertwined with cultural liberation. The main focus of the Republican Movement in the Irish language movement is the raising of ethnic consciousness through example. To this end, Sinn Féin's Cultural Department is actively involved in "Gaelicizing republicans." Sinn Féin maintains a supportive role in the Irish language movement, encouraging alternative Irish language activists to demand cultural recognition and support from the State. Given this stance, the attempts by the State to isolate republicans by stigmatizing Sinn Féin's activities in the Irish language movement as a "hijacking of the language" have not been effective.
During the years 1976 to 1981, the prison protests and the corresponding intensification of violence, brought a new wave of disruption to the lives of the citizens of West Belfast. Geertz (1973a:104) writes that in the face of chaos, individuals, as well as groups, require a cultural system more than ever. They require a system of symbols to provide them with, "not only . . . [the] ability to comprehend the world, but also, [in] comprehending it . . . [to give] a precision to their feeling, a definition to their emotions which enables them, morosely or joyfully, grimly or cavalierly, to endure it" (Geertz 1973a:104). For many residents of West Belfast, the Irish language had become the symbol--the "vehicle for a conception"--through which they could "render otherwise incomprehensible social situations meaningful" (Geertz 1973b:208n, 220).18

The resurgence of interest in ethnic distinctiveness in times of crises is not a new phenomenon in Ireland. ó hAdhmaill (1990a:238) writes:
In Ireland and then Northern Ireland, the promotion of one's identity or ethnicity has long been used by both Unionists and Nationalists as a form of protest or a compensation for defeat.

For alternative Irish language activists in Northern Ireland prior to 1980, the Irish language had indeed been used as a "compensation for defeat." However, for many of these activists in the years following the 1981 hunger strike, the Irish language was to be employed as a "form of protest." By using the Irish language in this manner, these cultural activists found a more acceptable way of challenging British cultural hegemony in Northern Ireland, and one superior to the often violent tactics of the IRA (opposed by most), or other forms of republican oppositional resistance. The campaigns for Irish language rights of the early 1980s employed some of the forms of political protest developed by Sinn Féin—those of lobbying and agitation—but they also drew on the well established Welsh model of civil disobedience. As the Welsh model of direct action was both heuristic and inspirational to alternative Irish language activists, it, and the British State's response to this form of language activism, will be described in the first section of this chapter.

The first two targets of alternative Irish language activists in the early 1980s were a discriminatory 1949 law that prohibited the erection of Irish language street signs, and the neglectful treatment of the Irish language in the
media. Section Two will examine these early campaigns and the State's response.

By the mid-1980s the State had decided to make funds available for what it considered "safe" Irish language projects. In 1984, the Bunscoil, Northern Ireland's first Irish-medium primary school, received government recognition and grant-aid. Within three years the Bunscoil was forced to place limits on enrolment. To meet the growing demand for Irish-medium education in Belfast, alternative Irish language activists began to devote much of their energy to the setting up of, and the raising of funds for a second Irish primary school (Gaelscoil), and a network of Irish play groups or nursery schools. The next section will explore the struggles of these experiments in Irish-medium education.

In 1988, a new Education Reform Bill was proposed which prioritized European languages and downgraded the position of Irish in the school curriculum. Irish language activist groups united in a vigorous campaign that culminated in a revision of the proposals contained in the new Education Bill. The "Hands Off Our Language" campaign and the State's response to this challenge will be discussed in Section Four. The concluding section will investigate some attempts made by the State to incorporate the Irish language into the "effective dominant" Northern Ireland culture, and the obstacles this new official policy faced.
I. Direct Action: The Welsh Model of Alternative Language Activism

The language of Wales, like that of Ireland, has suffered a long history of cultural discrimination (see Khleif 1979, 1985). However, since 1939 and the advent of the first Welsh-medium school in Aberystwyth, steady progress has been made toward Wales becoming a bilingual country. These gains have largely been due to persistent campaigning by Welsh language activists for Welsh language rights. Incorporation of the Welsh language and culture—in a manner not re-interpreted or diluted—into the "effective dominant culture" of the British, is the goal of alternative Welsh language activist groups. The campaigns and tactics used to achieve this goal will be discussed below.

The critical state of the Welsh language was reinforced by the 1971 census which showed that the Welsh-speaking population had declined to only about twenty-one percent of Wales' approximately 2.5 million people (Khleif 1979:348). This marked decline in the Welsh speaking population, first noted after the 1961 census, had already jolted both cultural and political Welsh groups into action. Khleif (1979:349) writes:

The steady decline of Welsh speakers in Wales has prompted both the Plaid Cymru (the Welsh National Party) and, in particular, the
Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, The Welsh Language Society (established in 1962 and composed chiefly of college-aged youth), to exert tremendous efforts toward winning increasing support for the use of Welsh in daily life.

The early campaigns of the Welsh language activists centred on alerting the Welsh people to the lack of public status that the Welsh language had in Wales. In the mid-1960s, these activists began their campaign by encouraging people to refuse to display English language licence decals in car windows, and to demand instead one in the Welsh language. Campaigns were organized against the post office, demanding that official documents be made available in the Welsh language. Welsh language activists also began to post "proclamations" on road signs, demanding they be replaced by bilingual signs. This campaign intensified to the, "painting over the English names on the road signs, and then finally in the 1970s the road signs were completely removed" (a Welsh language activist).

These campaigns did have an effect, and the British government's response was to enact legislation which made available to all citizens of Wales, official forms and documentation in Welsh and English. Bilingual services at all levels of government, including the courts, were also provided. Specific provisions, under the 1964 Welsh (Forms) Act included:
An absolute right for any person in Wales to use the Welsh language in legal proceedings (Section 1); a general power for the government to make provision for the use of Welsh for any other governmental purpose, such as the completion of official forms and documents (Section 2); a provision that anything done in Welsh for such purposes shall have the like effect as if done in English, provided that the English version of any form or instrument may be made to prevail (Section 3); and that references to England in future legislation shall not be deemed to include Wales (Section 4). It should be noted that the Act has been applied in a much broader field than the administration of Justice. It covers the whole range of official forms and many aspects of the operation of the education and other social systems. Many local authorities in Wales employ full-time language officials (Paragraph 8:30, Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights 1990:87-88).

By the mid-1970s, bolstered by the success of their earlier campaigns, Welsh language activists turned their attention to the media, and demanded that the State set up a Welsh language television network. The campaign, as described here in excerpts from a speech delivered by a Welsh language activist, began by using conventional methods to urge the State to respond to the needs of the Welsh-speaking population. When these tactics did not achieve the desired result, a campaign of civil disobedience ensued.

We start from a constitutional starting point. We exhaust all constitutional means of campaigning first—you know, writing letters and so on, building up evidence for the need for a television channel or whatever we feel is in question. It is only after drawing a blank from
the authorities that we then go on to decide which course of direct action to follow.

In the television campaign, there was a whole range of tactics used—sabotage of TV programmes, breaking into studios, damaging property, and we were involved in a couple of very colourful episodes such as the bombing of the BBC studio in [England] . . . and going in when they were broadcasting . . . [a television programme] live and that type of thing. And more seriously then, toward the end of the '70s, you have people raiding broadcasting installations, masts, and causing several thousands of pounds worth of damage. And you did get conspiracy cases arising out of that type of action and quite lengthy prison sentences.

Legal consequences notwithstanding, the campaign did produce some positive results.

It was not until the 1970s that any formal action was taken in relation to broadcasting and television in Welsh. The Crawford Committee, whose Report on Broadcasting Coverage was published in 1974, recommended the creation of a fourth television channel, which in Wales was to broadcast exclusively in Welsh. The Siberry Committee, which reported in 1975, recommended that the BBC and HTV [the ITV broadcasting affiliate in Wales] should have joint responsibility for a new Welsh language service on the new channel. This was eventually established as Sianel Pedwar Cymru in 1982 (Paragraph 8.31, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights 1990:88).

While the government did set up and fund a Welsh language television channel, Welsh language activists claim that this did not fully address their demands:
The campaign for a Welsh channel wasn't really won because there were three things that . . . [we were] campaigning for: first was the Welsh channel, the second was for an English language channel in Wales which addressed the needs of the community in Wales, and also for a Welsh broadcasting authority for Wales so that whatever came out of the media had a Welsh feeling to it. Currently the main problem with the Welsh channel is that we are getting the same Britishness—the same Brit propaganda—that possibly works more effectively because it is in the native language.

In the area of education, from a single school, humble beginning in 1939, to a network of more than seventy by the late 1970s, the Welsh-medium school had established itself as a significant alternative to the conventional system. On reaching the required enrolment of twenty-five pupils, funding for these schools was provided by the State, while Welsh-medium nursery schools were both funded and promoted by the State (ó hAdhmaill 1989:12). Therefore, the schools did not become a priority for Welsh language activists until the 1980s, when the goal became the development of a completely bilingual education system in Wales. A Welsh language activist explained that the objective of the first campaign was to, "press for a Welsh language development body." Three years later, the State met this demand, and a development board was set up. The State also responded positively to other education demands made by Welsh language activists:
In terms of education, as well as the Welsh language education development body—but also with education—another concession that we have won recently following our campaigns is for community studies to be part of the core curriculum in Wales. . . . we see that as an important front in terms of not only having education in your language, but in having the education that you actually see is relevant to the community where you live. So that education actually becomes relevant to where you actually live.

With impetus gained by these initial concessions of the government, a vigorous campaign was undertaken to demand that in Wales, Welsh be given equal status with English, thus making the country truly bilingual:

Currently there is the campaign for—and I will restate this—a new Welsh Language Act to supersede the current Language Act, which is not adequate. An Act that would give Welsh and English speakers in Wales the same linguistic rights.

The Education Reform Bill (1987:2), made a partial move toward establishing Wales as a bilingual country when it made Welsh a compulsory subject for all children aged five to sixteen.

In the 1970s, Welsh language activists realized that the influx of wealthy English people buying summer or retirement homes in the Welsh-speaking rural heartlands posed a threat to the Welsh language. Therefore, social and economic planning became very important fields of activity for Welsh language activists. As part of this campaign,
new policies were put forward which would ensure the Welsh language would be given full consideration in all future housing estates or tourist developments built in Wales. The activists produced a document, entitled "Community Control of the Property Market in Wales" which addressed the problems of migration into the area. The campaign has partially succeeded in that local planning authorities have said that consideration to the impact on the Welsh language will be given before approving any planning application put forward by communities in Wales. However, as one Welsh language activist put it, the campaign is far from over:

It could be argued that the campaign for the Property Act is possibly one of the most radical campaigns that the society has ever had. But in that field . . . the County council . . . [has agreed to meet with members of the group] and discuss the problems of in-migration. And there have been meetings with the local authorities because they see that there is a problem but they don't know how to address that problem. They now see us as an organization that has clear policies, and the only organization in Wales that has policies that really address the issues of immigration into Wales. As a part of that, there has been the campaign in Wales called "Wales is not for sale." The "Wales is not for sale" campaign, which is a part of the work of the socio-economic planning group, has been campaigning against estate agents, [and] campaigning against companies that are proposing big developments in the area.
Other strategies of civil disobedience that were employed in language campaigns in Wales, were described by a Welsh language activist as:

. . . very public rallies where the law is broken quite blatantly under the nose of the authorities or the police; [as well as] such things as government buildings being painted with slogans and the getting arrested . . . and court cases over the years have provided quite a good political platform and a further opportunity for civil disobedience within the court buildings themselves and outside. So you have people getting arrested, which creates further opportunities for intensifying and for the generating of the next round of campaigns.

The confrontational nature of the Welsh campaign of civil disobedience would preclude its direct emulation by alternative language activists in Northern Ireland. Severe consequences would befall any Irish language activists venturing to repeat the tactics of their namesakes in Wales. However, despite the limited utility of the Welsh example, it did provide a definite heuristic value, one which would find a place in the arsenal of maneuvers designed to extract and amplify the dwindling recognition granted the language of Northern Ireland.
II. The Radical Years: Alternative Irish Language Activism in the Early 1980s

The campaign strategies of the Welsh and their multiple successes were indeed well known to the alternative Irish language activist community in Belfast. In fact, the initial actions of this community in the early 1980s closely paralleled the original efforts of Welsh activists. Thus, two blatant examples of Irish language discrimination became targets of this early wrath: the 1949 legislation that banned Irish streets signs, and the lack of recognition by the broadcasting media.

A. Irish Language Activists Defy the Ban on Irish Language Street Signs

The Public Health and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1949, made it unlawful for any official body to erect street signs in Irish (Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights 1990:89). The law was originally enacted to prevent the nationalist controlled local council in Newry, County Armagh, from erecting bilingual signs on the town's streets (ó hAdhmaill 1985:2).
The initial steps against this discriminatory law were taken in Twinbrook by Conradh na Gaeilge. In 1980, the group procured some 160 Gaelic street signs with funds contributed by the local citizens of the area. At the time, Twinbrook had about 1,600 dwellings, and an unemployment rate of seventy percent, however the £1,500 necessary to pay for the Irish street-signs was donated willingly (Naíonra na Fuiseoige 1988:15). To erect the signs, groups of Irish language activists went around the area nailing up the Irish street signs on corner houses. One participant told me that looking back on this campaign, it was almost like a television comedy show. They would post a lookout who would warn those putting up the signs when an army patrol was approaching. The sign erectors would then run to a street that the patrol had just left and start nailing up signs once more, until the next patrol arrived. He continued:

You could be charged with defacing property [for putting up an Irish street sign]. The point is, they tried to charge us with this. Lisburn council got a solicitor to charge the people who were putting up these street signs, and the problem was the only way they could charge us was if the people who owned the property objected. The people who owned the property were the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and they just said that it wouldn't be a good idea for community relations for them to charge us . . . they only just got the office in the area. The vast majority of people in this estate squatted originally, so they [the Housing Authority] had no control over the allocation of the houses. There were big rent arrears in the area. All of a sudden the Housing Executive were doing their damndest to win back the support of the
people—to get the agreement of the people. They were saying "we would do your repairs if you pay your rent, please," and "we'll make you a legal tenant," and all this type of stuff—if you pay your rent. And most people felt happier that way anyway because nobody likes to be sort of labelled as being an illegal person or of occupying something illegally or whatever . . . so they [the Housing Executive] weren't concerned about the Irish street names on their buildings.

Even though the Housing Executive refused to press charges, "many of the organisers were arrested, and many of the signs removed by the RUC and British Army, but local people replaced them again" (ó hAdhmaill 1989:7).

The actions of the local residents of Twinbrook have been echoed in other nationalist areas of Belfast, and the phenomenon of the Irish street sign has been a ubiquitous part of city life since 1982. High unemployment rates have presented no deterrent to the generosity of residents in bearing the costs of the new sign programme. As a result of another campaign by Irish language activists, many of the shops, businesses, doctors’ and solicitors’ offices, as well as community centres, especially in West Belfast, have erected Irish language signs (see Andersonstown News 1991a:9).

While the Irish street sign replacement programme continues in the nationalist areas of Belfast, it faces an uncertain future. A law prohibiting this cultural ingress exists, unenforced, but having a latent potency with
inauspicious overtones. The Standing Commission on Human Rights (1990:89-90) warns:

There is no constitutional or other formal guarantee that either under continuing direct rule or in the event of the devolution of powers on such matters to a Northern Ireland Assembly, similar or otherwise objectionable measures might not be enacted in the future.

However, at the time, this bold first venture in the assertion of Irish language rights was considered by local language activists and citizens of nationalist Belfast alike as a successful venture, and as such, one whose techniques were bound to be repeated.

B. Media Campaigns for Irish Language Broadcasting in Northern Ireland

Tempting as it would have been to emulate directly the Welsh example of campaigns directed toward an unfair and unilingual broadcasting media, such tactics would have been counter-productive as applied to a Northern Ireland context. The war of liberation of the 1980s would preclude many of the methods--despite their success in Wales--from being adopted by the Irish. Initially, demands for Irish language programming in the media were made known via letters to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Independent
Television Network (ITV), written by individual Irish language activists acting on their own initiative. By January 1980, a sufficient number of these letters had been received to warrant the BBC issuing a public response to defend its position. Hence the stance of the government controlled medium was to indicate that while it had no immediate plans to include Irish language programmes at the present time, it may, if money became available, consider such plans in the future:

The BBC is well aware of the wish among some people in Northern Ireland for programmes which would support the teaching of the Irish Language and is sympathetic to their views. Such programmes will be provided, albeit on a modest scale, if and when we have the money and other resources necessary, but not in the immediate future.

The School Broadcasting Council for Northern Ireland accepted a recommendation from its Programme Committee for three additional series of Schools Programmes, and for the priority to be given to each. The BBC had hoped that a series in support of the teaching of Irish would be launched by September 1982, but this will depend on a major re-appraisal of BBC finances which is now taking place, following the new licence fee (from BBC Information Broadcasting House Belfast, January 14, 1980 and quoted in Andersonstown News 1980a:3).

Thus 1980 saw the formation of the first organized media reform campaign. Instigated by a group calling itself Gaeil an Tuaiscirt (Northern Gaels) (later renamed Meán--Irish for media), this action was designed to bring attention to the continuing negative position of both
the BBC and ITV toward Irish language programming. A spokesperson for this group told an *Andersonstown News* reporter that:

For too long, Irish speakers have acquiesced [in] the deliberate discrimination practised by I.T.V. and B.B.C. as regards the Irish language. Irish has been spoken here without a break for 2,000 years... The census of 1911 was the last time that the language was entered on a census form here and it showed that almost 2½ percent of the population of the Six Counties [29,423, of whom 7,595 lived in Belfast] had a good knowledge of Irish. We estimate that this percentage has remained stable since then, allowing for the decrease in native speakers and the increase in people who have learned the language. Irish is the most widely used language in the Six Counties outside of English, and it is about time Irish speakers cast aside their inferiority complex and demanded justice and fair play for their language from the broadcasters. I.T.V. and B.B.C. are not reluctant to broadcast in a second language in Scotland and Wales, but when it comes to "Northern Ireland" they operate a policy of deliberate discrimination. We are determined that this will end before long (quoted in *Andersonstown News* 1980b:1).

As an initial move, Gaeil an Tuaiscirt circulated a petition to give visual authenticity to latent popular support. This petition was soon accompanied by the following plea for support, both to encourage further public backing and to explain some of the motivating factors behind the campaign:
We are a completely non-political and non-sectarian group . . . but, we are proud of our Irishness and determined to proclaim it. The response to the petition so far has been overwhelming and anyone wishing to help us with the petition should contact us through the Andersonstown News (quoted in Andersonstown News 1980b:1).

Tempted by the inevitable comparison with Welsh successes, Gaeil an Tuaiscirt and its supporters were dismayed at the cool reception from the Northern Ireland media. An editorial in the Andersonstown News evaluating the BBC announcement that as of October of 1981, it would commence broadcasting a half-hour programme per week in Irish, claimed that while it represented a significant change of attitude, it was a concession made under duress rather than one responding to the needs of the Irish-speaking community:

It [the BBC's announcement] signifies an awareness by the broadcasting authorities here that the cultural imperialism practiced by them for decades has become unacceptable to the nationalist population and has to be modified before the accusation of cultural discrimination is taken to the International Court of Human Rights or some similar body. Therefore, it is important that we understand that this "change of heart" by the BBC has been brought about not by an eagerness to do the right thing, but rather by the fear that its "cultural Nuremberg" may not be far off (Andersonstown News 1981:4).
The editorial went on to state that the granting of "a thirty minute programme at some off-peak hour will [not] satisfy the appetite of the culturally-starved nationalist people of the Six Counties." The claims of the BBC that it had not been pressurized into making this decision were also discounted in the editorial which gave credit to:

the members of the Irish Language Movement who put together a well-researched and presented document on the Irish Language in the Six Counties which highlighted the BBC's blatant discrimination against Irish culture in general and the Irish language in particular. . . . We understand that the document was so devastating that it would have been difficult for the BBC to have ignored it (Andersonstown News 1981:4).

This campaign represented a marked change from the stance of non-confrontation adopted by pre-1980 Irish language activist groups. The editorial acknowledges this change in strategy, when in its conclusion it congratulates members of the Gaelic League, the Shaws Road Irish Community, and academics, professionals, and other Irish language enthusiasts who had put together a "well organized" campaign. The structure of this campaign, the editorial stated, represented a significant, "new departure for Irish language organisations, who too often in the past have let their case go by default, through lack of co-ordination" (Andersonstown News 1981b:4).
Campaigning for Irish language programming continued throughout the early 1980s with protest rallies, pickets, petitions and demands from the Irish language activist community for discussions with BBC and ITV executives, as well as appropriate British government officials. In 1985, UTV (the ITV broadcasting affiliate in Northern Ireland), commissioned a survey carried out by Ulster Marketing Research, to discover if the audience claimed by Irish language activists actually existed. The survey revealed that at least twenty thousand people or two percent of the Northern Ireland population were fluent Irish speakers and that there was a potential audience of well over seventy thousand people for any Irish language programmes (Andersonstown News 1985c:18). Despite these statistics, UTV executives stated that they were not considering the introduction of any Irish language television programmes (Andersonstown News 1985c:18).

A double setback to the efforts of the Irish language media pressure groups came in 1985. The BBC announced planned cutbacks in Irish language programming by seventy-five percent (from one hour per week to fifteen minutes per week), and the Arts Council revealed that none of its £2.5 million budget was to be allocated to Irish language projects (MacAoidh 1985:14). The Irish language activist community first reacted by organizing a carol singing picket in front of BBC headquarters in Belfast on
December 21, 1985. Through a series of demonstrations, pickets, letter writing campaigns, and meetings with high-level representatives of the BBC, the Irish language activists were able to force the BBC to reconsider its proposed cuts. A response from the BBC was elicited and a programming change ensued. An Irish language activist explained that the new schedule included:

... a programme each night at seven o'clock on Radio Ulster for twenty minutes. They then expanded it to a half hour, four days a week and they have an hour with music and discussion one day a week and then they have another bilingual programme on Sunday.

In 1985, one group of Irish language activists took matters into their own hands and attempted to satisfy the needs of the Irish language community without State assistance, by setting up an illegal radio station. This radio station's first transmission was to be on St. Patrick's Day 1985, but technical difficulties postponed its inaugural broadcast until December 29, 1986. The new radio station, christened Raidió Feirste, is described by Mallon (1986:1) as:

operated by Irish language enthusiasts who wish to remain anonymous ... [and] based at a purpose built mini-studio in West Belfast. Its content consists mainly of music, with some notices, news bulletins and occasional interviews. ... According to one of the radio operators, Raidió Feirste intended to provide a much needed
service for the Irish speaking community, while exposing the lack of Gaeilge provided by the main broadcasting powers.

It is understood that the organizers hope the Belfast Irish Schools, Irish nursery schools, and night classes will all avail of the radio for educational purposes.

New broadcasting regulations in 1988, prompted Raidió Feirste to apply for a licence to legalize its operations (Andersonstown News 1988:4). It was hoped by the group that if it was granted a licence it would be able to give "community and special interest groups" access to commercial radio (Andersonstown News 1988:4). A spokesperson for Raidió Feirste told Andersonstown News:

It's twenty years now since Irish language groups here first met with the BBC to ask them to provide an adequate radio service for Irish speakers. The British Government and the broadcasting authorities have had plenty of time since, to provide such a service and didn't. It's clear to everyone now that they aren't interested in doing so. We are (Andersonstown News 1988:4).

Raidió Feirste did not receive approval for its licence in 1988. When the group again tried to obtain a licence in 1990, the license was granted instead to Belfast Community Radio (BCR). As part of its mandate, BCR broadcasts a one-hour bilingual programme weekdays between 10:30 and 11:30 p.m. The BBC is still producing fewer than four hours of Irish language programming on Radio Ulster each week. Raidió Feirste continues, when financial resources permit,
to broadcast illegally to Belfast's Irish language community. In the assessment of the following Irish language activist, the media campaigns produced few results:

It wouldn't be true to say there is still a [media] campaign going. BCR had to have one hour a night [of Irish programming]. There is a campaign going on all over Ireland to try to pressurize the Dublin government to establish a national Irish TV station. The BBC has said it is going to put on some programmes next year [1991] and no doubt they will be looking to Stormont to fund them. UTV haven't made any kind of commitment at all. Not very promising. BBC has an Irish language producer now so they must be going to use him.

The minimal response of the BBC to the demands of Irish language activists would indicate that the "effective dominant culture" in Northern Ireland was a great deal less permeable (i.e., less open to the incorporation, in any form, of the subordinate Irish language and culture) than it had been in Wales or Scotland. The shifting of priorities by Irish language activists that occurred in the mid-1980s, was not the result of acquiescence, but the acknowledgement of other pressing Irish language issues. It was deemed prudent at this stage to divert energy to establishing the daily Irish language newspaper, Lá—the first of its kind in any Celtic language—and to the setting up of an Irish language education system to meet a rapidly increasing demand. Thus, the campaign for Irish language rights would continue, undaunted by past frustrations and temporary setbacks.
Concessions gained in early 1980 campaigns by Irish language activists paled in comparison with those attained by similar groups in Wales. Yet, for Irish language activists the gains represented significant progress over the days when the Irish language had been totally ignored by the British State. Thus, the Irish language movement had been infused with new hope. Irish language activists began to devise ways that would channel the momentum of the Irish revival occurring in Belfast, into the building of a permanent Irish language infrastructure—the element they felt had been lacking in all previous language revivals, and one which had doomed them to failure. This infrastructure was to be founded on two key elements. The first, the establishment of a daily Irish language newspaper. The second, the development of an Irish language education system.

A. Lá: The Celtic World's First Daily Newspaper

In 1981, a decision was made to found an Irish language newspaper. Initially, this publishing dream of an Irish community seemed bound to fail, since no government aid was available for Irish language projects, and the sole source
of funding would be the donations of an economically deprived nationalist population. However, despite the odds, *Preas an Phobail* began publication on an irregular basis in September 1981, but not without the inevitable financial woes. One of the newspaper’s founders explains:

We were always, through those years, we were always trying to get government help. We were always going up to Stormont asking for money. In 1982, we began to apply to the Arts Council and anywhere else we thought might give us money, but there was no money available from the North. The South listened to our case, but had no money to give us. In 1983, we got some money for equipment from Dublin—a miracle. All this time we were trying to build up a community to support the paper and build up a school of writers. We managed to produce a weekly paper.

The weekly distribution of the paper soon rose to one thousand copies, six hundred in Belfast and the remainder in major centres such as Derry and Dublin (*ó hAdhmaill 1985:12*).

In 1984, the paper was able to qualify as an employer in the local job creation scheme, Action for Community Employment (ACE). Under this scheme, a local employer would provide on the job training for an unemployed person for one year, in return for a government subsidized wage for the employee. *Preas an Phobail* was given five ACE workers, and was able to borrow money toward the purchase of printing presses. At this point the decision was made to
initiate daily publication of the newspaper, and the first daily paper of its kind in any Celtic country was born. The paper was renamed Lá, which is Irish for "day," and launched on August 13, 1984. Initially Lá was distributed within the nationalist areas of Northern Ireland, however some Irish-speaking Protestants were among the subscribers.

A severe setback to the fledgling enterprise occurred in May 1985. A fire at the Ard-Scoil, the headquarters for Lá, resulted in the destruction of the paper's printing equipment, thus forcing a reluctant termination of publication. However, undaunted, on June 21, 1985, Lá reorganized itself as a company, offered one hundred thousand shares to the public, and used the resulting funds to begin again (Andersonstown News 1985a:3). Soon, another setback to the venture would come from its unwitting relocation of operations to Conway Mill. Conway Mill also housed the first of many community groups to be blacklisted by the government (see Chapter Eight), therefore when Lá moved its operations into the Mill, it would lose government funding for its ACE workers.

The next years were a continual struggle to raise enough money to keep the paper in operation. ó Muirí (1991:9), on the occasion of Lá's first year of continuous daily publication, describes the determination of the group:
The destruction in 1985 of the Ard-Scoil in Divis Street in Belfast, where it [Lá] was based, was a grievous blow. But the staff refused to lie down and die.

Like the lost tribe of Israel, they wandered in the desert of West Belfast for many years before reaching the promised land (otherwise known as Andersonstown), in 1990, acquiring offices from the Andersonstown News. And, yea, there was great rejoicing.

The newspaper began to appear again on a daily basis and quickly regained some of the lost ground. That Lá has stayed in production for a year is a great testament to the energy, commitment and (at times) sheer stubbornness of the staff not to abandon their aisling.24

One would have thought common sense would dictate that a weekly newspaper would have to suffice for Irish-speaking Ireland, but the staff wanted more than a weekly news sheet and refused to bow to the pressures.

During this period, Lá had managed to boost its daily circulation to over one thousand copies, the main recipients being the citizens of West Belfast (ó hAdhmaill 1985:12). The publication was to become a "cultural movement" in itself, giving "birth to the north's only Irish bookshop, An Ceathrú Póilí, to Belfast's most successful Irish drama company, Aisteoirí Aon Dráma, and to a (hibernating) radio station, Raidió Feirste" (ó Muirí 1991:9).

While money worries for Lá and its progeny are far from over, at present money from the government is giving the group time to build its strength. When asked whether being reliant on government aid posed any problem for the organization, a member of the group replied:
It means that we are in a situation—say Lá and other things that we are involved in—even though the centre or the kernel of it is the strength we have in our staff, people who are committed to it, we are virtually dependent on the government support. None of us want to go back to the old days where you're huddled over the typewriter and that's about all.

Now, it has never come up yet that something has been written where we have had to say, well you can't write something like that because you are going to jeopardize your job. There are laws, there are libel laws, but I am not talking about that, I am talking about political content. We have always been very determined to have a strong political line, not particularly a republican line, certainly in the Irish language. If we think the government should be doing more in the Irish language, we say that. I feel it is important for a paper to take a strong line, whether it is a strong loyalist line or a strong republican line—as long as you can argue against it... The question is where do you draw the line?... You have to bear in mind that we depend on government funds and that's always going to be there. And I don't want to go back to the days when we were totally free to write what we wanted but we had no equipment, no premises, no money, we were just determined and depressed. So it is a compromise between those two things.

B. A "Carrot" for Moderate Irish Language Activists: Government Money for Irish Language Education

Whenever the State elects to make available the resources necessary for the subordinate culture to propagate its own "meanings and practices," motives are always suspect, sometimes legitimately so (see Chapter Eight).

After the hunger strike the British state chose to make some
money available for the promotion and development of the Irish language. At first, the government was very leery about funding anything to do with the Irish language. As one Irish language activist told me, "It was as if you had an Irish dictionary in one hand and an AK-47 in the other." However, as the 1980s progressed the government did make money available to moderate Irish language groups. The reason behind this "change of policy" was not articulated by the British government, and has stimulated a wide range of speculation from within the Irish language community. For example, Andrews (1991:100) suggests that the British government may have added Irish "to the political agenda in Northern Ireland . . . to undermine nationalist support for SF [Sinn Féin]." A second Irish language activist commented:

I don't feel that it [funding] is being done because the English have any great love for the Irish language or indeed that they recognize us as an ethnic minority. We have to fight very hard for recognition of the Irish language. If the English government had genuinely felt kindly toward the Irish language, the money would have been there for the Irish language. By the same token if they really wanted an ethnic minority to grow and develop they would have had money for the Irish language right from the word go, in 1922.

A third Irish language activist provided two very different interpretations of the State's decision:

If you want to be cynical--the most cynical possible reason would be that by under-funding it
[the Irish language] they [the British State] can claim that they are doing their best for the language and get the Irish fighting amongst themselves--between those that get the money and those who don't. And also they will be able to politicize it so that Irish language issues cannot be used by Sinn Féin. That is one interpretation.

Another possibility is that there has been a genuine change of heart and the government is trying to rectify both the anti-Irish and anti-Catholic discrimination of the past.

Whatever the reason behind the Government's decision to provide funds for the Irish language, one of the first Irish language groups to benefit was the Bunscoil (see Chapter Four). The legitimation that came with government recognition and funding of the Bunscoil gave a tremendous boost to Irish language education in nationalist areas of Belfast. In 1984, the time of funding, Bunscoil enrolment had reached 152. Parents were placing the names of their newly born children on the waiting list in an attempt to ensure them of a future place at the school. By 1986, enrolment had increased to 260 pupils, and a limit of seventy-five was put on the number of children that the Bunscoil would admit to Primary One each year (Glór na nGael, 1986).

In 1978, the Bunscoil decided to allow children from English speaking families to attend the primary school. To facilitate the integration of these English-speaking children into the Irish-medium atmosphere of the Bunscoil, the Shaws Road Irish nursery school/play group was
established. The attendance of this Irish play group, like that of the Bunscoil itself, escalated in the 1980s. By September 1982, forty-five children were enrolled, and by 1986 this figure had jumped to one hundred (Glór na nGael 1986). As in the Bunscoil, enrolment in the Shaws Road Irish-medium nursery school was necessarily restricted in 1986.

The phenomenal success of the Bunscoil and its Irish nursery/play group, served as an inspiration to parents in other nationalist areas of Belfast, and soon similar Irish-medium play groups began to be established. In 1987, the Gaelscoil, a second Irish-medium primary school, was set up to meet the demands of parents whose children had attended the Irish nurseries for two years, but were unable to be registered in the Bunscoil. A number of different Irish language activist groups who were involved in these various Irish-language education projects, decided to unite their efforts under one umbrella group. Thus, Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee, which had been formed in 1982, assumed the task of coordinating this rapidly developing Irish-medium education system.
C. Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee: Irish-Medium Education Becomes a Priority

Glór na nGael, "The Voice of the Irish," is a voluntary Irish language organization that was established in 1961 by a society of Irish-speaking priests. Its primary function is the staging of an annual competition to promote the use of Irish in local communities. The West Belfast Committee of Glór na nGael was set up in 1982, and almost from the beginning, it seemed inevitable that this committee's defiant stance regarding Irish language issues would bring it into direct conflict with the British government.

The decision to set up the West Belfast Committee of Glór na nGael, came from the informal discussions of three Irish language activists, who were trying to determine a way of organizing the massive interest in the language by West Belfast's nationalist population:

Glór na nGael began as many other things in Irish, on the fireside, where you have three people who come together and say, "I have a terrific idea, we will set up ourselves as an organization of people interested in Irish education. And along with that we can put out information about the Irish language, we can push for Irish language signs, we can encourage people to go to classes, and we'll be a tool to promote the language." These three started it off, then others got involved in it who were of like thought.
One of the founders of Glór na nGael, was a well-known Irish-speaker and a member of Sinn Féin—later a West Belfast city councillor. But as the following three Glór na nGael members (all non-republicans) explain, any influence Sinn Féin may have had was quickly diluted by the additional ideas of many cultural organizations that did not hold similar republican views:

[Respondent 1:] At that point, [1982] Glór na nGael and the Irish language were political. They set up in Divis Flats after a period of time, and others got involved in it. They did lots of things but their whole aim was to attack the government for not providing for the Irish language.

You have to take yourselves back to that time and ask yourself--what were they [Irish language activists] doing then, what was Sinn Féin doing then. Sinn Féin was interested in promoting themselves and getting into the community. All the initial people had in common was their interest in the Irish language, all had their own notions of nationalism. I don't think that everyone who started with Glór na nGael was involved with Sinn Féin.

These people who were involved in it [Glór na nGael] were all interested in the Irish language. The way they decided to vote may have been different, but that's all right. The contract that was written on paper was a healthy contract. And Glór na nGael was not unlike any other organization where you have a diversity of opinion. At Glór na nGael one element of opinion seemed to go sway over all others for quite a long time. But that ceased to be in the late '80s.

[Respondent 2:] In the beginning S. [the Sinn Féin member] ran the show and people knew [he] ran the show. And a lot of people wouldn't have anything to do with Glór na nGael [because of this] . . . . We had to establish a separate identity whereby other groups including Sinn Féin would have input but Glór na nGael ran the show. This we did.
[Respondent 3:] The people who first got involved, the people who began Glór na nGael, one of them was involved in a political party. But he [the Sinn Féin member] did do a lot of things. He did bring recognition to the Irish language. He did a lot of things, he had good ideas.

And then as time progressed other people got involved who were not in political parties. But they had similar aims about a united Ireland. As time progressed again, other people became involved with Glór na nGael who had clear, concise notions of propagating the Irish language as the means for anyone in the North of Ireland to re-identify themselves with a rich past. Some of these people had been responsible for the Bunscoil. By this time the initial political stand had gone out of it [Glór na nGael]. And the people who were involved in Glór na nGael were people who were very involved in the Irish language and wanted to promote it [the Irish language]. There are some people who have got nationalist feelings. And there are people who want to promote the Irish language for its own sake.

Glór na nGael did change its image quickly, and very soon "every language organisation in West Belfast [was] involved in the Glór na nGael committee—Conradh na Gaeilge, Bunscoil/Naiscoileanna, Cluain Ard, Meán, Lá, and the Sinn Féin Cultural Department" (ó hAdhmaill 1985:12). The aims and objectives of the organization were written up in its constitution, the first three articles of which are quoted here:

Constitution of Glór na nGael (West Belfast Committee)

(1) The name of the organisation shall be Glór na nGael, Coiste Bheal Feirste Thiar (The West Belfast Committee of Glór na nGael).
(2) The aims and objects of the organisation shall be:

(a) To act as an umbrella group for all Irish language and cultural groups in the West Belfast area.
(b) To help co-ordinate Irish cultural activities in the West Belfast area, and organise such activities in association with other groups.
(c) To educate the public about aspects of Irish Culture and the Irish language in general.
(d) To promote the speaking of Irish in West Belfast.
(e) To enter West Belfast in the annual national competition organised by Cumann na Sagart, where prizes are awarded to the areas in Ireland who are doing the most to promote the speaking of Irish.

(3) Membership of the organisation shall be open to all groups, organisations and associations in the West Belfast area, agreeing with its aims and objects. There shall be no religious, political or racial restrictions to membership. Non-Irish cultural groups which agree with the general aims and objects of the organisation shall be welcome to affiliate (Glór na nGael 1982).

Initially, much of Glór na nGael's energy was devoted to campaigning for the rights of Irish speakers. In the early 1980s, the group was particularly prominent in the campaign to erect Irish street signs, as well as the campaign to get funding for the Bunscoil on Shaws Road. "The committee met with various Government Ministers and politicians to further its campaign, organised pickets and marches, met with language enthusiasts from Scotland and Wales and organised public seminars" (ó hAdhmaill 1990b:31).
By the mid-1980s, Glór na nGael had assumed the role of an umbrella group for Irish-medium education in Belfast.

During the early 1980s, and especially after the Bunscoil received recognition from the State in 1984, parents began to set up Irish-medium play groups in nationalist areas throughout Belfast. According to Na Naíonraí Gaelacha (1990) and Naíonra na Fuiseoige (1988:9) these Irish play groups or Naíonra, were set up by groups of parents to provide Irish language pre-school play and educational facilities for children aged between two and five. The Naíonra were run by committees of parents, who encouraged all other parents of students to take an active part in their children's education; to become involved in the day-to-day activities of the Naíonra, to create a positive atmosphere toward Irish in the home, and to learn to speak Irish themselves.

As it did at the Shaws Road Irish-medium play group, the attendance at these new play groups grew rapidly. Government regulations demanded that every eight children attending a play group be supervised by one adult. Therefore, with the rapid increase in enrolment came the need for additional adult supervision, and as none of the groups received any financial support from the State, Glór na nGael was turned to for help. Since 1985, Glór na nGael had been endorsed as an employer under a local job creation scheme, Action for Community Employment (ACE), organized and
funded by the Department of Economic Development for Northern Ireland. A Glór na nGael committee member explains how the group became involved in Irish-medium education and describes some of the problems it faced:

We found with the upsurge in the numbers of nurseries and the demand for the education of the children in Irish, that [Irish language education] became our priority in the sense that we had no other choice.

We got more workers, and more and more nurseries were springing up, so it [the Irish-medium play group] became the base bulk of our work, which was to put our [ACE] workers into these nurseries, and to take some sort of controlling hand. One thing, is that all the nurseries being autonomous and kind of independent, makes this a difficult job to do. We often get complaints from the nurseries that Glór na nGael is not keeping a close enough eye on them. But by the same token if you do keep a close enough eye on them, they tell you to mind your own business. So it is a very delicate situation. The thing about it, is that we are very, very jealous of our independence here in the North for the simple reason that we haven't had it. So any kind of community independence that we have had, we guard very jealously right down to the last individual. So that you're very careful that you don't walk on any toes.

Anyway, most of the nurseries are filled to capacity. Not so much so that there is a waiting list because these are two-year courses to prepare children for the bunscoils. They receive no funding at all. Funding is basically from voluntary collection of one description or another. The only way we are funded in a roundabout way is that the government supplies us with money to run this employment scheme [ACE]. That means that we can put workers into the nurseries, thereby alleviating financial demands on the committees.

But again we are trying to work on that because we find that this type of a scheme is in fact detrimental to the development of the nurseries. This is because of the one-year contracts that the workers have. When a worker
leaves, you lose the continuity of the teaching, therefore this hurts the child more. Each new teacher has to be newly trained, and teachers and students have to get used to one another, and that break is detrimental. The goal is to employ two possibly one (hopefully two), at all times in the play groups and use this ACE development scheme to supplement actual teachers. We could train a pool of teachers and have that ready-made pool to draw on in the future. These are our targets.

When asked why Irish language education, became so important to Glór na nGael, the committee member responded:

The bulk of our work became involved with the education because it became the hopes of people that the children would carry forward the language and the language [would] actually become alive. As I said, most of the things that we became involved in were to do with the education part, because it is important. People saw the language as living and not this thing that you brought into the Cluain Ard or that you brought into certain places and spoke it for a hour and a half and then left and went home. It was something that we could say all the time. Most people say "slan" [goodbye] on the phone even if they haven't another single word of Irish. . . . The language is actually becoming a part of what people say without people even knowing they are saying it. This means that you have the beginning of a bilingual society. They are not thinking in Irish when they are saying those things.

Glór na nGael's ACE scheme grew rapidly, soon involving twenty-one ACE workers. Glór na nGael was required to hire a full time manager, and set up a managing committee to administer the £90,000 annual grant from the government. When queried as to whether or not the ACE scheme had been helpful in furthering Irish-medium education, the committee
member pointed out that there had been some negative effects. However, he added that the overall benefits to the community were positive, not the least of which were the "ripple effects" that the ACE scheme (like the Irish-medium play group programme) had produced:

ACE is bloody awful. To train a teacher, and to have them perfected, and then at the end of the year they are out of a job again. That was the bad thing about it. The good thing about it was that every year you were able to bring in a new set of people and these people would flood into the community, and you know the effect of dropping the pebble in the pond. The same thing [happened] with the nurseries. Parents were setting up these nurseries and when they set them up they would be very proud of what they had done and they would keep the nurseries going. There is a nursery in our area. The grannies and the uncles, the cousins and the sisters, the brothers, they are all saying, "Our wee sister started that nursery around the corner you know. Gosh! speaking Irish is great." Maybe the kid has only got about four words, but he comes in and he understands a lot. And they're saying, "He's only four and you ought to hear him, he's singing songs in Irish," and they go along and say if he can do it I can do it, not realizing that a kid's mind is like a sponge. What you have to do is, when you have got them [the adults] interested you have to hold them there. You've got to be able to say to them what I just said before, "don't compete with anybody, the three words today are three words more than you had last week. Keep going." When the kids are young, they are not embarrassed about using Irish because after all it is not unnatural. So they [parents] start talking to the kids in Irish and they go on from there. You've got a whole thing here. It may not be very apparent but in West Belfast you've got a whole gaeltacht there. You could go through the whole day just speaking Irish. The other thing, is that nearly everybody you meet on the [Falls] Road will have at least one sentence in Irish. And it [the Irish language] is very much alive.
[Have all your ACE workers become Irish-speakers?]

We have had very few failures--I think two in the whole time we have been here. I feel essentially it was because the people were just taking the job because it was a job. I would judge them a failure if they came along for the interview saying they were very enthusiastic about the Irish language and really they never turned up for work. They never learned the language. They weren't really all that interested.

What I would term a success would be someone coming in here resentful, with a chip on their shoulder, no hoppers--"[I'm] not really much good anyway but I'll do the job"--and at the end of that year seeing this bright confident person going on to university or going back out feeling more a person. Now maybe their language isn't as fluent as we would like to think but they got this whole new vision of themselves and of life. We would consider that a success, where we make a complete person.

It was recognized that the centuries of ridicule and denouncement of the Irish language by the British had produced a general feeling of inferiority among the Irish population. Therefore, a major priority of the Irish-medium education system was to attempt to quell the passage of this stigma to future generations. I then asked, "What do you see Irish-medium education as accomplishing in West Belfast?":

...
They haven't the hatred that we have. I don't want to see that hatred there. I want them to feel, this is my language and my culture. I don't want them to feel embarrassed that nobody else speaks it. It is totally natural to them and they are growing up with less of a chip on their shoulders than I have, even though they are Catholic, most of them.

Up to now we've been living on the top of the Boyne, and the only way out we had was to take up arms or shout about things. Wouldn't it be nice if we had a society that said, this is an island called Ireland and we are from it and this is what we are and this is where we came from. And to go forth into the world and not feeling that we have to defend our right to be Irish. And not feeling that we are uncomfortable feeling Irish because we are seen as ignorant peasants or revolutionaries. That sort of image is portrayed by the British Government, not by us but by the British Government. We would like to have our own image so that we can easily mix with other countries. I mean, when I was younger, I wanted to be French, Spanish, German, any other bloody thing but Irish. Because the French were cultured. The Germans were strong, sturdy businesslike people. You never heard anyone saying the Frenchmen were all stupid. But you do hear them saying that Irish people are stupid. But we're not.

[Therefore Irish-medium education offers] not a hope that everybody will be turned on to the Irish language, that's a hope that may never happen. It's a hope that my kids and their kids will never have to feel second-class because they are Irish. They will not have to go around defending their Irishness. What they will say is, "I'm Irish, so what! It's a nationality like any other nationality." That they will take it [their Irish identity] for granted. That they will feel comfortable with it.
D. West Belfast becomes "The Irish Language Capital of Ireland"28

Since 1982, the work of the West Belfast Glór na nGael committee has been recognized by annual awards of various prizes in the Glór na nGael competition. For example, in 1982-83, the West Belfast committee of Glór na nGael was awarded the prize as the best new entry in the Glór na nGael competition; in 1983-84, it won for its promotion of An Fáinne, the badge of Irish speakers; and in 1984-85 it won for its campaigning efforts to get credit unions, banks, community groups, and the GAA to promote the use of Irish in all their dealing with the public (ó Muilleoir, January 19, 1985, page 11). Glór na nGael has also engaged in a poster campaign to promote the use of Irish, distributing one thousand posters bearing the seasonal message "Beannachtaí na Nollaig oraibh" [Greetings at Christmas]. In another campaign, Glór na nGael urged all schools in West Belfast to upgrade their standard of Irish. The West Belfast Committee of Glór na nGael, has continued to win major awards in the Glór na nGael competition in every year since 1984-85.

The top Glór na nGael prize of 1989-90 was awarded to the West Belfast Committee for their establishment of a cultural drop-in/learning centre for Irish language improvement, and for their general efforts toward cross-community understanding. Glór na nGael's manager explained the rationale of this cross-community endeavour:
One of the problems that we face with the Irish language is that people look upon it as a West Belfast phenomenon and they tie it in with the troubles of the past twenty years—which is of course partly true and partly untrue. So in an attempt to break down this myth we have been trying to take Irish out of the ghetto, in effect. So we contacted several groups like the Ulster People's College in the South of the city [considered a more neutral area of Belfast]. And we ran an intensive Irish course there that lasted six weeks. Most of the people who attended were Protestant people who had some cultural feelings, also some were there who were curious—I don't know what their motivations were—maybe to find out what Catholics were and what makes them tick, you know, what was the Irish language about. I know one or two of the people, having spoken with them, that that was their motivation—to try and understand a bit more. So since then, we have run mini-colleges. These are one-day events dealing with everything that has to do with our culture—drama, Irish classes, music, dancing, singing. We also ran one or two of those over there [at Ulster Peoples College] and this went down very well. We tell the people that you don't have to be Catholic to speak Irish, it doesn't belong to us for that reason.

Bringing of the Irish language to the Protestant community and the purchase of this house to develop as a cultural resource centre—these were the major factors in the winning of this prize.

Belfast now has a fully operational Irish-medium education system, brought about by the combined efforts of Irish language activists and a responsive nationalist community. As one activist put it:

What's happening here is that we have two primary schools, and another one being set up which is a stream in a Catholic school, and we've
got nine nurseries, and we've got a secondary school opening in September (1991) and all without the aid of the Church, and all without the aid of the State. The people have set up a whole education system. Which, believe it or not, is much better than the State education system.

The Irish language activist community can also boast of providing more than seventy Irish classes for adults in West Belfast alone; producing a daily Irish language newspaper, "Lá"—a first for the Celtic world; opening the only all Irish language bookshop outside of Dublin, "An Ceathrú Poilf"; setting up an Irish language community on Shaws Road; and encouraging an increasing number of shops in West Belfast to erect Irish only signs. By putting politics aside and coordinating their efforts, Irish language activists found they were able to force the British state not only to acknowledge the subordinate Irish culture, but to begin to provide it with some financial support. Therefore, with very limited funding from the State, and a great deal of energy and ingenuity, Irish language activists are constructing an infrastructure that they hope will endow the Irish language revival with a permanent legacy.
IV. "Hands Off Our Language": A Victory for Irish Language Activists

While by the late 1980s most of Glór na nGael's work was in the area of Irish-medium education, the group continued to have a high profile in the challenging of government policy toward the Irish language. In 1988, proposals for a new Education Reform Bill, were released by the Minister of Education. The treatment of Irish in this new education reform package would be reminiscent of its treatment in the Education Acts of the early years of the Northern Ireland State (see Chapter Four). However, unlike in the past, now Irish language activists would join together to organize a campaign designed to prevent these education proposals from becoming permanent. Glór na nGael was to play a prominent role in organizing this successful, "Hands Off Our Language" campaign.

At the time the Minister of Education in Wales was drafting a new Education Reform Act, making Welsh language training compulsory for every child in Wales aged five through sixteen, the Minister of Education in Northern Ireland was putting together a new Education Bill which would in effect downgrade the status of Irish to that lower than other modern European languages. Paragraph 14 of "Education in Northern Ireland: Proposals for Reform" (1988) states:
In secondary schools where Irish forms part of the curriculum, it follows from Paragraph 11 above that pupils would have to learn two modern languages other than English; similar considerations would apply to schools where the teaching is through the medium of Irish (Department of Education for Northern Ireland 1988:9).

In other words, secondary students would be required to study a modern language, such as French, German, Italian, or Spanish as part of their core, to which seventy to seventy-five percent of curriculum time was devoted. In the remaining twenty-five to thirty percent of curriculum time, the student would be given the choice of courses such as, "the classics, home economics, or a second foreign [i.e., Irish] language" (Department of Education for Northern Ireland 1988:9, emphasis added).

Khleif (1979:327) writes that "an attack on one's language is but an attack on one's personal integrity, and on one's group's integrity" (see Chapter One). This is how the Irish language activist community and other Northern Irish political and religious groups interpreted the government's attempt to downgrade the status of the Irish language. The effect of centuries of ridicule and demeaning of the Irish and their language by British society, surfaces in the reaction to the new proposals by one Irish language activist who took part in the protest:
There was that legislation that Mawhinney [the Northern Ireland Minister of Education in 1988] was trying to bring out. Irish was going to be downgraded in the sense that it was going to be on the timetable but not as a core subject. And [Irish was] not even on the same level as Spanish or French. You had to do French, Spanish, or German, and Irish was kind of optional. The way it was written, there was going to be no room on the timetable for it anyway because they were going to basically cut [Irish]. What they were saying is that Irish was not on the same level as any other language in the world, in fact it was lower, which in effect was downgrading the Irish people. We were sort of morons and not even fit to be on the same level as other minority languages in all the world. Our language has been oppressed, it has happened for centuries, which is why basically we have an inferiority complex.

The Irish language has never had any credence with the English government. [The government's attitude is,] "It's a dead language, why do you want [to keep] it," all this sort of thing. And you find a lot of Irish people with the same frame of mind, "What use is it? Nobody uses it." What they don't realize is that that [the British attitude] is where they are coming from. And this is one of the things that has held the Irish language back.

The new educational proposals were protested via a broad based campaign, which included Northern bishops, the SDLP, Sinn Féin, and many Irish language activist groups (ó hAdhmaill 1990b:31; Sawey 1989a:1). As part of Glór na nGael's contribution to the campaign against the new education proposals, it produced a poster with the slogan, "Hands Off Our Language," and organized a demonstration to coincide with the St. Patrick's Day parade held in Belfast on March 17, 1989. A member of Glór na nGael provides details of this campaign by the Irish language activist community:
With the Mawhinney campaign, for the first time ever, somebody stuck their head up. For the first time everybody leapt on his back because he had literally set himself up as a dictator saying, "This is what we are going to do folks, and its a great idea." No, it bloody well wasn't, and they started attacking him. So we were able to run a really good campaign, a strong campaign because it was directed at one specific issue. We [Glór na nGael] were the people who organized the parade last year [1989] against the attack on the Irish language.

Several thousand people turned out to take part in the St. Patrick's Day parade, five hundred of whom stayed for the rally at Casement Park in West Belfast (Andersonstown News 1989:20-21). Glór na nGael took this campaign beyond Northern Ireland's borders by inviting as a guest speaker for the "hands off our language" rally, the former chairperson of the Welsh Language Society, Ffred Ffrancis. He began his speech by comparing, "the British Government's treatment of Welsh and Irish with the behaviour of the South African and Israeli regimes" and added:

What's the first thing repressive governments around the world do when they are faced with peoples on the move? . . . they close down the schools because they're afraid of education. We have the same aim in Wales and Ireland--that every child should, through the education system, come to learn their native language. Everybody who wishes to have their education through the medium of Irish should have the opportunity to do so. The education itself should be a relevant education. It should be an Irish education, and a Welsh education . . . any education system in Ireland which doesn't give its proper place to the Irish Language is unfaithful to the truth. By asking for a Welsh or Irish education system we
are asserting a new set of values. We're asserting that we are after truth and freedom; that we are building justice (Andersonstown News 1989:20-21).

Glór na nGael's part in the success of this campaign was praised in the Irish News: "Certainly Glor na nGael has played a prominent role in forcing what many activists believe to have been a climbdown on the part of the Department of Education when it came to the teaching of Irish in the classroom" (Kelters 1990b:6). The "climbdown" referred to by Kelters was reflected in the new Education Reform Act (1990), which stated that Irish could now be taken as a core subject instead of other modern languages. However, all schools--even Irish-medium schools--had to provide their students with the opportunity to study another modern language in addition to Irish:

Secondary schools must offer all pupils the opportunity to study at least one of French, German, Italian, or Spanish. They may offer Irish as well, and if pupils decide to take Irish as their language they will not have to take another language unless they want to. Irish is a compulsory subject for pupils in Irish speaking schools. Primary schools don't have to teach a language other than English but may do so if they wish (Department of Education for Northern Ireland 1990:10).

This change was welcomed by many Irish language activists, one of whom pointed out that:
Now some of the schools provide courses like mathematics and history through the medium of Irish. That has been a new development, and also anyone can study Irish if they wish now.

However, most of these activists also pointed out that the financial burden to many schools—and especially to the new Irish-medium secondary schools—of having to provide facilities for two languages other than English would be extremely difficult if not impossible, in many cases. Thus, while the status of Irish was improved in the new reform package, its availability to students wishing to study it may not have been enhanced.

Glór na nGael had, in Scott's (1990) terms, acted like a "cheeky subordinate" throughout the 1980s by repeatedly breaching the "apparently calm surface of silence and consent" that dominated relations between the State and the Irish language community prior to this time. However, the government appeared to "ignore [Glór na nGael's] symbolic challenge[s]," at least in the public domain, but after the "hands off our language" campaign, relations between the government and Glór na nGael did appear to cool. In announcing his decision to change the offending 1988 proposal, the Minister of Education had "denied that he was anti-Irish or intent on killing the language," and lashed out at "un-named groups" that he felt had "subject[ed] him to 'personal abuse'" (Livingstone 1990a:16; Sawey 1989b:4).
Prior to this campaign, Glór na nGael had been able to set up meetings with appropriate government officials to discuss the concerns of the Irish language community. But after the parade and rally, one Glór na nGael member told me "no one in the government would have any contact with us [the committee] any more."

V. Cultural Diversity: Fitting the Irish Language into the Northern Ireland Context.

A State has two choices, according to Williams' model, when the "effective dominant culture" is challenged by "meanings and practices" that have been "recovered" and made an "effective element of the present" by the subordinate culture. One of these choices is to "neglect or exclude" the subordinate culture, and the second is to find some way to incorporate it into the "effective dominant culture" so as to neutralize its hegemonic challenge. For most of the life of Northern Ireland, the British state chose to neglect or exclude the Irish language. A marked change in strategy took place in 1989, when the State made a step toward the re-interpretation of the Irish language into the Northern Ireland context by setting up the ULTACH Trust to channel funds to Irish language projects that were "sound." In the 1990 Education Reform Bill, another attempt was made to re-interpret the Irish language into the Northern Ireland
context, through two new education programmes. "Education for Mutual Understanding," and "Education for Cultural Understanding," were to be made compulsory for all schools in Northern Ireland. This section will begin with a discussion of the ULTACH Trust, followed by an examination of the two new education programmes. An assessment of the obstacles faced by this new government policy of incorporation will then be made. To conclude this section, an analysis will be made of the various suppressive attitudes adopted by dominant groups in Northern Ireland toward any attempt to give recognition to the traditional heritage of Irish culture and language.

A. Bridging the Gap: ULTACH

The alienation between the State and the Irish language activist community posed a major problem for the government when it decided it would make funds available for Irish language projects. To bridge this gap, a Trust was established in September 1989 (becoming operational in February 1990), to channel government funds into Irish language projects that were considered to be "safe." Hence, the ULTACH Trust was born, its name an acronym for "Ulster Language, Traditions, and Cultural Heritage" (the name also meaning "Ulster" in the Irish language). A representative of this Trust told me:
We were set up because at one stage the Government was having a great deal of difficulty directing funds to the Irish language, because of the history of discrimination against Irish. They had made a policy decision that they would fund the Irish language. The problem was because they had had nothing to do with the Irish language for seventy-odd years and because they had no contacts on the ground, and also because of the very high profile that Sinn Féin had in the Irish language [movement] they didn't know how to fund it. So the Cultural Heritage Group, for example, should have been given money for funding Irish. But Dr. Mawhinney is a very, very cautious man and for some particular reason he was afraid of funding Irish. This group [ULTACH Trust] was set up deliberately with a cross community mix of Catholics and Protestants on the committee. And all were respectable people who had never shown any support for the provisionals or any kind of paramilitary activity anywhere. So that it would be a respectable group for Dr. Mawhinney to go through, to then fund the Irish language. So he could actually channel funding to other groups.

The State's cautiousness in any matters concerning the Irish language is also reflected in an interview with James Hawthorne, the chair of the Cultural Traditions Group, and former Controller, BBC Northern Ireland. Hawthorne emphasized that it was the government's aim to encourage those Irish language enthusiasts who were "sound" or "right" however, he doesn't elaborate as to the criteria used, "I believe it [the Irish language] is being studied and kept alive by people who are interesting and sound. It took some years, going back to the BBC, to fend off the deputations, to get to the right people, so that the language would have a place" (Smyth 1989:28, emphasis added).
The ULTACH Trust was, according to a Northern Ireland Office spokesperson:

... established in September 1989 with the aim of widening appreciation of the contribution which the Irish language makes to Northern Ireland's cultural heritage, and to increase knowledge of the language throughout the community (McAdam 1990:6).

Initially the Trust was given £50,000 by the government to use for small grants to Irish language organizations during the 1990-91 period. The Government made a further commitment that it would give the Trust a grant of £1 to a maximum of £250,000 for every £3 raised from private donations. The ultimate aim of the Trust was to become financially independent of the government. It planned to establish a permanent capital fund, that in the future would provide money for the Irish language from that earned as interest on invested capital.

An information leaflet described the operation of the ULTACH Trust:

(1) AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: To advance the Irish language traditions and cultural heritage, and to make the same more readily available to the people of Northern Ireland. One of the central functions of ULTACH Trust is to help extend the appeal of the language to sections of the community, in which there is little or no Irish-language tradition.
(2) TRUSTEES: Are, so far as is practicable, so constituted as to include persons who when taken together are capable of commanding respect and acceptance across the community as a whole in Northern Ireland [N.I.]. The two main religious traditions in N.I. are equally represented in the composition of the Trustees.

(3) ACTIVITIES: The Trust will seek to pursue its aims through:

(a) Acting as funding agency.
(b) Giving advice on grant applications.
(c) Widening understanding of the importance of the Irish language to the cultural heritage of the entire community.
(d) Encouraging interest in the Irish language across the political and religious divide.
(e) Facilitating the learning of the language wherever possible, and helping to set up structures in which the language can be used in a social context.
(f) Providing support, facilities and recognition to those already working in these areas.
(g) Setting up an Information Centre.
(h) Liaising with statutory and non-statutory bodies where this may further the aims of the Trust.

(5) INFORMATION: The Trust will open files and attempt to keep up-to-date information on Irish language organisations, grant applications for Irish language activities, Irish language events--classes, seminars, courses, festivals etc.--in N.I., Gaeltacht Courses, Irish in schools in N.I., Irish language television and radio.

The Trust itself was prevented from giving support to any campaign that appeared to attack the government's position toward the Irish language. For example, at an Irish language conference, a representative of the Trust was asked to explain the Trust's stance concerning the "prison ban on Irish" (see Chapter Five):
[He commented that] the group had not been set up by the NIO, but its constitution prevented it from backing any campaign--such as that against the prison ban on Irish. He also revealed that the Trust had refused to appear as "expert witnesses" in a court case against the ban being brought by two Long Kesh prisoners, "because it appeared to us that that case was also part of a campaign" (Andersonstown News 1990c:22).

The Trust also was prevented from giving any group or organization funds until it received a signed declaration attesting to the absence of paramilitary involvement in the organization. As its name suggests, ULTACH Trust was established to promote the contribution that "the Irish language makes to Northern Ireland's cultural heritage," by providing funds for "Irish language projects which enhance awareness and appreciation of the language, in the context of promoting greater mutual understanding across the whole [Northern Ireland] community" (NIO spokesperson, quoted in McAdam 1990:6). Hence, the British State's recognition of the Irish language as part of "Northern Ireland's cultural heritage," appears to be a significant departure from its previous view of the language as being foreign and subversive.
B. Tolerance and Understanding in the Schools: A New Curriculum

The education system was also to become a vehicle for implementation of the government's new strategy. In the 1990 Education Reform Order, two courses were included which were to be taught in all Northern Ireland schools with the aim of "improving understanding and tolerance between the communities in Northern Ireland" (NIO 1991). These two courses, "Cultural Heritage," and "Education for Mutual Understanding," are described by the Northern Ireland Office (1991):

Two of the compulsory cross-curriculum themes, regarded as essential and to be studied by pupils in the full range from 4-16, are Cultural Heritage, and Education for Mutual Understanding. The former is designed to enable pupils to understand and evaluate both the common experience of their cultural heritage and its distinctive aspects. This study also places weight on the transnational nature and mutual dependence of cultures. Education for Mutual Understanding is meant to teach them self-respect and to understand the other person's point of view; to appreciate how people depend on one another within society; to know about and understand what is shared, as well as what is different in their cultural traditions, and to appreciate the benefits of resolving conflict by non-violent means.

Thus, the apparent purpose of these new courses was twofold. In an attempt to reduce the challenge being made by Irish language activists to British cultural hegemony,
the courses were designed to aid in the "process of incorporation" of the subordinate Irish culture into the Northern Ireland context. In addition, they were intended to act as a resolution mechanism, encouraging an attitude change as a way of ending what the British state perceived as a war between "two religious communities."

While the actual content of these courses was still to be decided in May 1991, the obstacles faced by this new direction in education for Northern Ireland were already being articulated in the local press. Boyd (1990:9), for example, questions whose history would be taught in these programmes:

Who will explain to children in the state schools, where portraits of Queen Elizabeth II and the Union Jack are on permanent display, that Theobald Wolfe Tone and Roger Casement were Irish patriots?

Casement was executed and Tone committed suicide under threat of execution for aiding and abetting the enemy when Britain was at war.

And how could it be possible to explain to children brought up in the Nationalist tradition that Casement and Tone were traitors and deserved execution?

Would a difficulty such as this be dealt with by explaining to children in ALL schools that to Ulster loyalists Tone and Casement are traitors but to Irish Nationalists they are patriots and martyrs?

In that case the teaching of Irish history may as well remain as it is now.
A Catholic teacher attacked the implicit assumption in the new education policy, that attitudinal rather than structural change would solve the conflict in Northern Ireland. The *Andersonstown News* (1990a:8) reported that the current issue of the *Catholic Teacher* contained an article by Fr. Martin Callaghan of St Mary's Training College who "challenges the basic philosophy" of the "Education for Mutual Understanding" (EMU), because it "assumes that there are two groups of people here who do not understand each other's different cultural traditions and that this lack of understanding leads to intolerance and division--hence the necessity of increasing understanding through the education system which will lessen the intolerance and division." Fr. Callaghan explained that the problems in Northern Ireland were due to "years of injustice, both political and economic [that] have created dominant and subordinate groups in society and that this political and economic injustice still abounds, perpetuating division and intolerance that exists. None of this is addressed by EMU" *Andersonstown News* (1990a:8).

The Irish language is indeed to be an important part of these new programmes, but as Pritchard (1990:32) points out, neither its inclusion, nor the courses themselves are likely to reduce tensions, especially those of the teachers of the course material:
Indeed, it has been pointed out above that the study of Irish as a medium is supposed to make a major contribution to the themes of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage. The fact that these themes must be sustained in all schools, not only Irish-medium ones, is a source of difficulty to many teachers. They believe that it is unrealistic to expect the schools to heal rifts which are the outcome of centuries of history; such is the intransigence of some parents, that teachers have been physically threatened for attempting to teach tolerance and understanding for the "other point of view." The Ulster Teachers' Union has expressed grave disquiet about the afore-mentioned cross-curricular themes, and many parents are said to be openly hostile to the concept of EMU (Pritchard 1990:32).

A Belfast Presbyterian, who while supportive of the Government's concept of "Ulsterizing" the Irish language, did not hold much hope for its success, assessed the British government's new policy toward the Irish language:

I don't think the British Government is particularly well thought out on its approach to the Irish language. I think also there has to be an effort to build up the Irish language in a Northern Irish context which kind of fits into the whole cultural traditions thing that has been going on for the last couple of years. If there is no way of locating the Irish language within the North then the British Government isn't too pleased with it for whatever reasons. They have no reason to stay here but they are still here and they are trying to get some kind of working settlement that includes the Protestants and the Catholics in a Northern Ireland context. I would say that is the reason for ULTACH. I would not say that everyone in ULTACH is operating at this level, but in terms of the thrust of the thing it has to be seen as a specifically Northern Irish input into the Irish language--which isn't there in the Irish language as a whole, I would think.
The struggle for the British Government is that in order to make the Irish language acceptable it has to become acceptable to Prods [Protestants], especially in the RUC, for example, or in the British army, so that they don't get fazed when somebody says their name and it is an Irish name that they can't recognize or whatever. Or, for example, when the Orange bands march and get down below the Ormagh Road and see the Irish [street] names up—that they shouldn't tend to think that this is foreign territory. I don't think that this is going to happen. So the British government strategy is not going to work.

[Is it possible to sell the Irish language as something that is desirable within the Protestant community?]

I don't see it as a possibility at the moment. Until there is a solution to the political problem, the national identity of the Protestants is still threatened and the language is tied up with that. The flack will dissipate when the question of identity and the question of siege mentality is no longer a problem for the Protestant community, which for me will come when there is a British withdrawal and some sort of political solution in the Northern Ireland context.

The most positive response toward these new education programmes came from the Irish language activist community itself, which felt that the Irish language would act as a unifying mechanism eventually bringing Northern Ireland Protestants and Catholics together in a united Ireland. While the activist community was cautious about giving its endorsement to these programmes, the view of the following Irish language activist and teacher is representative of the hope that the new courses will make the Irish language and culture more acceptable to Protestants:
But now at this point more interest is being given to the Irish language and to the culture and to the dance, to traditions and to literature; and it is seeping into the Protestant community as well; and into the Education Act itself, when they put in this culture for mutual understanding and the cultural heritage, which are both compulsory on the curriculum. So they [the Irish language and culture] have to be studied now. But it is the same old thing again--it's up to the individual teacher to give their opinion, or not to give their opinion. It is a bit more definite. There are certain things that they will have to teach in State schools and there won't be any getting away from it because this will be written up and printed and it will have to be followed. But you still have your prejudices. But it will provoke thought in the schools. Amongst children there will be debate, there will be discussions. So it's a revolution if you like that should have been in a long time ago. In fact I am very surprised that anybody actually allowed these things to come into the curriculum. Sometimes you say the English do things for one reason, and it actually backfires and it turns into something good. I feel this is a possibility, but time will tell if that is true or not. Whenever people begin to investigate their own beginnings, well the Irish language has to feature in that. Slowly but surely the Irish language will be given recognition. I don't see the Irish language being spoken in all of Belfast or indeed in all of West Belfast. I do see an ethnic group of Irish speakers over the whole island. I think that will always be the case. But I think what you will find, if things were to be that the connection with Britain is broken and we have the island of Ireland, I can foresee that the Irish language activists will then have to turn their attention toward the Southern government.

How the aforementioned obstacles to the new government policy of incorporation are to be addressed when the final decision is made on course content, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. It is, however, apparent from the
diversity of reaction to this new policy, that the future viability of these programmes is in serious doubt. Thus, while the subordinate culture, for different reasons than those intended by the government, see some possible good in the new education policy, the intense rejection of it by some Northern Ireland dominant groups could prove more damaging to the future of British domination in Northern Ireland than the present challenges presented by the Irish language activist community.

C. Irish Language in the Northern Ireland Context: A Hegemonic Nightmare

While the Irish language activist community was becoming more united in its campaign for official recognition of the Irish language, British cultural hegemony in Northern Ireland was experiencing severe fragmentation. The internal differences between the dominant groups over the incorporation of the subordinate Irish culture and language into Northern Ireland's "effective dominant culture" will be briefly outlined in the remainder of this section.
1. The British State as "Honest Broker": Bringing "Tolerance and Friendliness" to the "Two Communities" in Northern Ireland

In an attempt to neutralize resistance from Irish language groups and resolve what was perceived as "the problem" in Northern Ireland, the British state would utilize the education system as a primary "force of incorporation." In so doing, some "practices and meanings" of the subordinate culture could be "re-interpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture" (see Williams 1980:39). This strategy of incorporation guided the discussions of the Cultural Traditions Group at two formal sessions in which an attempt was made to devise a workable approach to the introduction of the concept of "cultural diversity" into Northern Ireland schools (see Crozier 1989, 1990). Chairperson James Hawthorne of the Cultural Traditions Group, summarized its aims as developing ways that would reduce "enmity" between the "two communities" in Northern Ireland, and ensure that "one community should not take any action to prevent the other community from doing what it likes and what it believes in," adding, activities that "don't threaten" should be allowed "to flourish" (Smyth 1989:29). The role of the group, Hawthorne added, was not to work toward integrating the "two traditions" in Northern Ireland toward
"one fused culture" but instead it was to emphasize what the "two traditions" had "validly in common," and to further the understanding of those cultural aspects that were distinct. The ultimate goal, Hawthorne concluded was to change sectarian attitudes through mutual understanding of each other's cultural traditions, so that both communities could "co-exist and maintain contacts of friendliness and tolerance" (Hawthorne, quoted in Smyth 1989:29, 30).

2. Protestant Reaction: The Irish Language and Northern Ireland Culture

In a sociological survey carried out in 1968, it was found that in Northern Ireland thirty-nine percent of Protestants thought of themselves as British; twenty percent as Irish; and thirty-two percent as "Ulsterites" (Fitzgerald 1988:198). While the last twenty-three years of war have perhaps changed these percentages somewhat, three distinct identities still exist, each with a different view of Irish language and culture. These views will be discussed individually below.
a) We are British: There is No Room for the Irish Language in Northern Ireland

When a newly elected Sinn Féin Councillor attempted to challenge the ban on the Irish language in effect at Belfast City Council meetings, Sammy Wilson, an outspoken Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) councillor called for a vote. With echoes of Wilson's comment, "There'll be no leprechaun language here," the vote was carried twenty to thirteen, not only to continue the Council's unilingual policy, but to bar the challenging councillor from the rest of the meeting (Andersonstown News 1987b:15). This incident is representative of the strong negative feelings held by many members of the Protestant community toward the "threat" of Irish. These emotions engendered the threats of violence toward the teachers who attempted to introduce "tolerance" and a cultural tradition other than British to their students (see Pritchard 1990:32, above).

b) We Are Irish: It's Our Language

When I asked a Belfast Presbyterian (quoted above) why Protestants would consider learning the Irish language, he replied:
I think there are two strands. The first strand would say that it is simply love of language. There wouldn't be any particular sense of identity coming through.

The other one [strand] that seems to be more authentic was that Protestants who wanted to learn the Irish language were making a statement that in fact they were not unionist. That would be a much stronger irony in the sense that it is a double bind that the government sponsored ULTACH Trust will find itself in. That those Protestant who are looking to learn the Irish language and take it on board will have become nationalist in some sense, at least there will be some emerging sense of nationalism. That seems to me the most authentic reason.

When I spoke with a student taking the six-week intensive course offered by Glór na nGael at Ulster People's College, his reasons for learning Irish confirmed that he was part of the "second strand" mentioned in the above quote. While he had been born and raised in the Shankill area of West Belfast, the student no longer considered himself British. He told me that he, like many he knew who had been unionists at one time, no longer supported the party, and blamed the unionist inflexibility for causing the Troubles. He said that if the unionists had been willing to enter into some form of power sharing agreement, the arms struggle would not have occurred. He continued by explaining that he now felt that his identity was Irish and that eventually, "a long way in the future," he did believe that there would be "some sort of unification of Ireland."

His rejection of unionism had led him to pursue a degree in Irish studies at Queen's University. Irish, he told me was
"part of the other tradition," and as such was not offered in the State schools, nor was it included in the courses he studied at Queen's to get his degree. The programme he had taken had concentrated on economics and politics, rather than language and culture. He had decided to take the intensive course in Irish at Ulster People's College because he felt that that language was part of his culture.

c) Ulster Irish is Part of Our Ulster Heritage: Ian Adamson's Re-interpretation of the History of Ulster

The rejection of the Irish language is not a sine qua non for members of the unionist persuasion. In fact some unionists, while considering themselves politically British, identify culturally with Ulster. The work of Adamson (1986, 1987) has enabled these people to accept Ulster Irish (a different dialect of Irish than Munster Irish or Galway Irish), as part of their Ulster-Scot identity.

Ian Adamson is an Irish speaker, a Belfast doctor, a unionist councillor on Belfast City Council, a Trustee of ULTACH, and as reported by Galliher and Degregory (1985:179, 188-189), a senior advisor to the recently proscribed UDA (a loyalist paramilitary group which has endorsed his concept of Ulster identity). [Note: Adamson is probably not now affiliated in any capacity with the UDA.]
Adamson argues (1986, 1987) that a people closely related to the Scottish Picts, known as the Cruthin, formed a pre-Gaelic population in an area of Northeast Ulster approximating that of present day Northern Ireland. According to Adamson's theory, the Cruthin were driven by the Gaels east to what is now England, and north to Scotland, finally settling in the Scottish lowlands, about the seventh century A.D. Adamson argues that the settlers who were "planted" in Ulster in the seventeenth century by Elizabeth I, most of whom were lowland Scots, were descendants of the same Cruthin driven out of Ulster a thousand years before by the Gaels. Therefore, the planters were actually the aboriginal or indigenous population of Ulster, returning to reclaim their ancestral home.

The appeal of Adamson's argument for Ulster Protestants, Buckley (1989:194) claims, is that:

In short, the Cruthin argument addresses directly the rhetorical challenge of Irish nationalist history. It makes the claim that Ulster Protestants, and particularly those who emigrated from Scotland, have at least as much right to live in Ireland as do Irish Catholics. Second, it takes from the nationalist heritage many of its most treasured traits by arguing their Cruthinic rather than Gaelic origins. And finally, the historical linchpin of Irish nationalism, the Plantation of Ireland, is transformed from a conquest by an oppressive people into a reconquest by a people who had formerly been forcefully expelled.
This diversity of reaction toward the Irish language by the ruling majority in Northern Ireland reveals that they, like the "Piedmont bourgeoisie" (Gramsci 1971), do not form a homogeneous group, and the attempt by the British state to use the schools and other institutions as "forces of incorporation" has seriously ruptured their fragile unity. As a result, the British government is in a position in which, because of strong oppositional and alternative Irish language resistance, it can not "exclude" the Irish language and culture in Northern Ireland, or will the internal differences of the dominant groups allow the neutralization of this Irish language resistance by a "process of incorporation." Hence, what has developed is a deadlock, a form of paralysis serving to subdue any move to ameliorate the conditions interpreted by the majority of Northern Ireland citizens as culturally stifling.
VI. Chapter Summary

Alternative Irish language activists in the post-1980 period left the "safe" confines of the nationalist areas and confronted the "effective dominant culture" directly, demanding in their way that Irish language rights be recognized by the State. In both Northern Ireland and Wales, initial campaigns to de-stigmatize the language were aimed at areas where cultural discrimination was most blatant—the 1949 law that prohibited the erection of Irish language street signs, and the media. The concessions achieved by these early campaigns were minor when compared to the gains toward a bilingual society made by the civil disobedience campaign of Welsh language activists. However, sufficient motivation was provided to give Irish language activists hope that their dream of constructing a permanent Irish language infrastructure in Belfast would be possible. Major components of this Irish language infrastructure were a daily Irish language newspaper, and an Irish-medium education system.

A challenge to the fragile progress that Irish language activists were making in raising the public status of the Irish language came in 1989 when the Minister of Education released proposals that would once more treat the Irish language as a foreign language, to be studied in schools in
addition to a modern language. The Irish language activist community joined together and waged a successful campaign which forced the Minister to change the proposed Education Bill. While the proposals were indeed changed, hints that at least one Irish language group had lost favour with the State as a result of this campaign came when government officials would no longer meet to discuss Irish language issues with Glór na nGael.

After the "hands off our language" campaign, the British state adopted a new strategy toward the Irish language and culture. In this new approach, the subordinate Irish culture and language were to be recognized not as part of the "Southern tradition" hence foreign and subversive, but as part of one of the cultural traditions of Northern Ireland. ULTACH Trust was established in 1989, to begin this "Ulsterization" of the Irish language by directing government funds to approved Irish language groups. The schools became the vehicle for the second phase of this policy of incorporating the Irish language and culture into the Northern Ireland context when in 1990, two cross-curricular themes The Cultural Traditions, and Education for Mutual Understanding programmes were made compulsory for all Northern Ireland students aged four to sixteen. Having recognized that there were "two traditions" in Northern Ireland, the British state attempted to devise
ways that would make the barrier that separates these two cultures "permeable" enough so that they would be able to exist together peacefully (see discussion on a "Common Discursive Framework," Chapter One, Section Two).

This new approach by the British State, which sought to solve the Northern Ireland conflict through attitudinal rather than structural and political change, led to division among hegemonic groups, and resulted in the exposure of the potential vulnerability of a seemingly firmly entrenched British cultural hegemony in Northern Ireland.
Chapter Eight

Flexing Hegemonic Muscles: The Blacklisting of Glór na nGael

On August 28, 1990, a letter was received at the Falls Road offices of Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee, which would portend grim developments ahead. The group was informed that in terms of the policy set out in the Parliamentary Statement of June 27, 1985 made by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Douglas Hurd, all public funds would be withdrawn. A copy of the following statement was attached to the letter, and as it is the only justification ever given by the government for the removal of funds, I will quote from it at length:

It is the Government's policy to encourage voluntary and community-based activity which has the genuine aim of improving social, environmental or economic conditions in areas of need. . . . However I am satisfied, from information available to me, that there are cases in which some community groups, or persons prominent in the direction or management of some community groups, have sufficiently close links with paramilitary organisations to give rise to a grave risk that to give support to those groups would have the effect of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly (House of Commons, Written Answers, 1985).
In the Northern Ireland context, this type of blacklisting by the government has a twofold effect. First, it removes funds from Northern Ireland community-based groups, working in a region described as being the "most economically deprived area" in the European Economic Community; and second, the implied stigma of Hurd's statement jeopardizes the security of all those who work for and associate with the group, setting them up as potential assassination targets. Local sentiment was clearly expressed in the comment, "people have been killed for less."

Scott's model of resistance based on the "dialectic of disguise and surveillance," will be used in this chapter to investigate of the circumstances surrounding this blacklisting, and the possible hegemonic purposes behind it. To understand the "etiquette of power relations" that Glór na nGael's conduct breached, this chapter will begin by briefly reviewing the public transcripts of the government, and the Irish language activist community in the period leading up to August 28, 1990. In the following section, an examination will be made of the government's public transcript in the months after the blacklisting (a term used in Belfast is "political vetting") of Glór na nGael. An analysis will then be made of the immediate local, national, and international reaction and of the ensuing successful campaign waged by Glór na nGael to clear its name.
In the concluding section, the response of the Irish language activist community to the political vetting of Glór na nGael will be examined.

I. Glór na nGael: "A Cheeky Subordinate"

Clearly, the history of British state policy toward the Irish language prior to 1980 was one of suspicion, if not open hostility (see Chapters Three and Four). Eradication of the language seems to have been a constant theme underlying this policy, dating back to the days of the Statutes of Kilkenny, 1367. In the newly formed Northern Ireland State, everything Irish was regarded as subversive. A series of education acts and amendments eliminated all gains that had been made by the Gaelic League prior to partition (see Chapter Three), and reduced the status of Irish in the schools to an optional, foreign language subject (see Chapter Four). Thus, prior to 1980, the public transcript of the British state in Ireland and subsequently Northern Ireland, could be characterized as being dominated by hostility to the Irish language and what Andrews (1991) describes as a "planned policy of neglect." This public transcript was to change in the 1980s, when the government decided that it would make limited funds available to "sound" Irish language groups, especially those engaging in
the cross-community promotion of the Irish language in the Northern Ireland context (see Chapter Seven).

Within the Northern Irish language activist community in the pre-1980 period, open resistance to government policy was negligible. A number of Irish language groups, the most prominent being Comhaltus Uladh and the Cluain Ard, did set up Irish classes within the "safety" of nationalist areas, to compensate for the dearth of Irish language instruction in the education system. These groups also sponsored many Irish language activities and events. While they did perpetuate the Irish language and culture, their membership was not large, and the groups made no demands on the State to support their endeavours. Thus, the British state was content to coexist with language activists who presented neither a challenge nor a burden to Northern Ireland's "effective dominant culture."

There was one exception to what seemed in the pre-1980 public domain to be an acceptance of State cultural oppression. In 1969, on Shaws Road in West Belfast, a small Irish speaking community was born. Six families, having purchased land and built homes, took a further bold step. In 1971, without any State assistance, they build the first Irish-medium primary school. Now their children, who had been raised with Irish as their first language, could receive education in their mother tongue. To many in the
area the Shaws Road School became the, "heart of the whole Irish language movement in Belfast" (see Chapter Four).

Despite the distraction and potential threat of the "troubles," linguistic hegemony in Northern Ireland was able to be maintained by the State. The pre-1980 efforts by the Irish language activist community posed no threat to the status quo. This situation, however, was soon to change and the end of the prison protest period (1976-1981, see Chapter Five) saw both oppositional (see Chapter Six) and alternative (see Chapter Seven) Irish language activists beginning to demand recognition of Irish language rights in Northern Ireland.

When Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee, was established in 1982, it immediately involved itself in two campaigns that were direct challenges to the State's cultural hegemony: the campaign against the 1949 law that prohibited the erection of Irish street signs; and the campaign to get government recognition and funding for the Bunscoil (see Chapter Seven). Discussions were held between Glór na nGael, and various government ministers and politicians concerning the Irish language issues involved in the current campaigns (ó hAdhmaill 1990b:31). The group also organized information seminars, as well as marches and demonstrations to demand Irish language rights.

One of the founding members of Glór na nGael was also a member of Sinn Féin, and was "regarded, even by critics, as
a man fiercely committed to promoting the language. One source diametrically opposed to the Sinn Féiner's politics paid tribute to his work in putting the language 'on the map' in West Belfast" (Kelters 1990b:6). The image of Glór na nGael as being "in Sinn Féin's pocket" soon changed when its membership was expanded to include a variety of cultural groups with vastly differing political backgrounds. The founding Sinn Féin member remained with Glór na nGael until 1990, after which he left the group, claiming "irreconcilable differences":

He [the Sinn Féin member of Glór na nGael] felt the committee he helped found was moving "in the wrong direction." He said he had wanted more active lobbying on certain key survival issues such as education, broadcasting, and relationships with statutory bodies. [He] wanted more "doing constructive work" and less of the administration that comes with around 20 ACE posts (Kelters 1990b:6).

After 1985, Glór na nGael's work had indeed become largely centred on administering the ACE scheme, and by the time it was blacklisted in August 1990, a total of twenty-one people were employed. These ACE workers had been placed in seven of Belfast's eight Irish-medium playgroups. One of the ACE workers also conducted beginner's and advanced Irish classes for interested Protestants and Catholics, both at the Falls Road location and at Ulster People's College in South Belfast.
Commitment to the development of Irish medium education in West Belfast, however, had not silenced Glór na nGael in campaigns for Irish language rights. In 1989, Glór na nGael played a prominent role the "Hands Off Our Language" campaign, a successful, broadly based campaign demanding that the Minister of Education reverse his proposal to downgrade the status of Irish in Northern Ireland schools (see Chapter Seven). While in the public domain, the State appeared to continue to ignore Glór na nGael's symbolic challenges to its cultural hegemony, after the "Hands Off Our Language" campaign State officials stopped having any formal interaction with the group.

II. Glór na nGael's Symbolic Declaration of War, Challenge and Counter-Challenge

A. The Public Transcript of the State: Silence, Secrecy and Unsubstantiated Allegations

The government, when challenged to prove its allegation against Glór na nGael, replied that "individual cases were not discussed" and requests for further information simply evoked a copy of Douglas Hurd's 1985 parliamentary statement (Kelters 1990a:1, 2; 1990b:6). Many, especially the Committee for the Administration of Justice (CAJ), claimed that this procedure was contrary to natural justice in that "no evidence has been produced to justify the Government's
claim of vetted groups 'improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation'" (Ritchie 1990:22). CAJ argued, "the correct procedure would be to prosecute individuals for contravention of Section 21 of the Emergency Provisions Act (1978) and Section 10 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act" (Ritchie 1990:22). Because the State had not indicated concern for the security of the thousands who had been charged--the majority of whom were later found innocent--in contravention of the above mentioned sections, the government's reluctance to name individuals left the impression in most peoples' minds that they had no evidence to support their allegation. Adding to the confusion over whether Glór na nGael had any paramilitary connections was the arrival--on the same day that the notification came that funds were to be withdrawn--of permission from the Royal Ulster Constabulary for Glór na nGael to hold a street collection the following month. Neither the government nor the RUC changed its position; and neither would discuss the apparent contradiction posed by its actions (Watson 1990). The government's case was further weakened by the fact that at the time Glór na nGael's funds were withdrawn, a man serving a life sentence had been employed by them as part of his work-out programme prior to release from prison. An ex-prisoner on a similar work-out scheme told me that, "If even one person on an organization's staff is deemed to have
'paramilitary' connections, the organization is not eligible to hire a lifer on the 're-entry programme.' It is up to the prison officials to determine the organization is 'clean.' As this man was not removed from Glór na nGael's employ until the day after the letter from the government had been received by the group and its contents published in local newspapers, it would indicate that, like the RUC, the officials at the prisons had no prior knowledge of the government's decision and had nothing in their files to indicate Glór na nGael was a security risk. With that in mind, the public reason given for withdrawing funding from Glór na nGael is a dubious one at best.

B. Glór na nGael's Campaign to Clear Its Name

The news that funding was to be withdrawn from Glór na nGael was met with dismay and confusion. Glór na nGael's chairperson, told reporters that, "'we're working with kids, how the hell, can we be paramilitaries,' [a reply which] mirror[ed] the response of many Gaeilgeoires" (Kelters 1990a:1). In an interview, shortly after the blacklisting of Glór na nGael, a member expressed the committee's initial reaction:
We felt . . . a bit confused. Why have they done this? Our books are perfect. Politics have never been discussed in this place. We have encouraged Protestants. Not very many because we don't have very many applying. We have different kinds of people on our committees. If they are political it doesn't come into their actual work in here. You sort of get confused when this happens. I mean, obviously it's a mistake.

Glór na nGael responded to the government's action as it had done during the "Hands Off Our Language" campaign. To bring attention to its current plight, it began a publicity programme aimed at concerned citizens and groups both locally and worldwide. In Belfast, the withdrawal of funding quickly developed into a cause célèbre. On August 29, 1990, a large public meeting was held at the offices of Glór na nGael, attended by many Irish language activists and representatives from community groups. Those in attendance included Catholic Church officials, politicians from all nationalist parties, trade union groups (Glór na nGael workers were members of NUPE), and many members of the general public. As the meeting progressed, a consensus was reached by its participants that they would use whatever contacts--local, national or international--they had available to them to pressure the NIO to reverse its decision.

A press conference was held on August 30 at which Fr. Matt Wallace, head of the Church ACE schemes, Patsy McGlone, SDLP secretary, and Patricia McKeown of NUPE, expressed
their support for Glór na nGael, and together with the chair of Glór na nGael, Ms. Nóirín Ní Chléirigh, they answered questions from local newspaper reporters. During the following months, a poster campaign appealing for funds was launched, and a committee of trustees drawn from "respectable" organizations such as the Catholic Church, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, the Committee for the Administration of Justice, and the Belfast Law Society was organized to administer money donated to Glór na nGael. Local pickets and demonstrations in support of Glór na nGael were organized. A speaking tour of Ireland, both North and South, was also arranged (Kelters 1990g:2).

Glór na nGael's campaign efforts drew widespread support and condemnation of the British government's action. Local newspapers reported that, "The NIO declaration [had] stunned Irish language activists from all parts of the island" (Kelters 1990b:6; also Livingstone 1990a:16). The Irish News (1990b:7) demanded that the "NIO should own up to its mistake and rectify it," adding that the government's action against Glór na nGael had, "united the nationalist community in outrage--and stimulated interest in the Irish language, an interest that this perverse decision seems designed to suppress." Another article told of the "fury" of churchmen, politicians and community groups at the government's attempt to link Glór na nGael to "paramilitary activities" (Irish News 1990a:7).
Local support was not confined to nationalists and Catholics. A paper noted for expressing a unionist point of view, the Belfast Newsletter, interviewed several students taking the intensive six-week Irish course at Ulster People's College, at the time Glór na nGael was blacklisted. Reactions expressed were all supportive of Glór na nGael:

Belfast man, Louis McGookin, said he had been learning the Irish language while at sea with the Merchant Navy. Mr. McGookin, a Protestant, said the withdrawal of funds made him even more determined to study Irish. "They don't seem to be able to come out with an intelligent reason rather than an arbitrary statement which no one can reply to."

Protestant woman, Mrs. Ruth Hume, who has already got an O-Level in Irish, said she was attending the class to improve her conversation in the language. "I feel Irish and I think it's a very rich heritage which I hope is there for all to share. . . . It's a very great pity that obstacles are being put in the way of learning one of the oldest languages in Europe."

Mrs. Hume, from Helen's Bay, said she wrote the education Minister Brian Mawhinney and Secretary of State Peter Brooke protesting about the withdrawing of funds.

Belfast woman, Ms. Gráinne McAloon, who has been learning Irish for almost a year, said she was saddened when she heard the funding announcement (Belfast Newsletter 1990).

These sentiments were echoed by students attending an Irish language course at Ulster People's College. Their protest took the form of a letter addressed to Secretary of State, Peter Brooke:
We who sign this letter represent a group of Protestants who are sharing in a six-week intensive Irish language course at the Ulster People’s College, Adelaide Park, Belfast. We are writing to you to question the seemingly arbitrary decision announced last week to withdraw funds from ACE, which supports Glór na nGael.

We pursue these courses because we wish to: Enjoy the language and increase our understanding of another tradition; cure bigotry, starting with ourselves; share in the rich culture available to everyone in both parts of Ireland; [and] play a small part in bringing a solution to our present troubles.

Our tutor . . . is an excellent teacher, who approaches the language in a pleasant, logical, clear and apolitical manner. We are extremely dismayed that he and others will have their livelihood and present contribution to the language withdrawn. We understand that the Glór na nGael association is making a very valuable contribution both at adult and junior levels; presently, their staff are voluntarily honouring their responsibilities by continuing to teach unpaid.

We trust that you will be able to look into this situation as soon as possible, as we feel that there should be a re-allocation of funds at the earliest opportunity, to redress what must be a counterproductive decision in the present situation.

Dismay at the NIO’s decision to withdraw funds from Glór na nGael was also expressed by the director of the ULTACH Trust, who told reporters that:

It [will have] a devastating effect on cross-community initiatives that Glór na nGael was working on [at Ulster People’s College]. . . . We have written to the Government expressing our dismay at the withdrawal of the Glór na nGael grant and asking them to restore the funding. . . . Glór na nGael is doing a lot of things that we cannot--it is doing a lot of work on the ground--we’re just a bureaucracy--they’re getting things done and they’re one of the most effective groups doing this (quoted in Kelters 1990d:6).
The publicity campaign of Glór na nGael and its supporters was also being felt internationally, and worldwide reaction to the perceived cultural injustice was predictably vehement. Celtic League groups from Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, and the Isle of Man sent letters of support to Glór na nGael and protest letters to the Secretary of State, Peter Brooke (Irish News 1990g:5). In its protest the Celtic League from the Isle of Man described the British government's actions "as an act 'tantamount to political child abuse'" (Kelters 1990f:6).

The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action made known it intended to raise the Glór na nGael case at a special meeting of the International Council on Social Welfare, in Sweden (McGinn 1990:1). Messages of support came from such diverse sources as Mayor Flynn of Boston, noted German professor Dr. George Broderick (Director of Celtic studies at Mannheim University), and the Irish American Labour Coalition (Irish News 1990g:5; Kelters 1990f:3). The "Union of Students in Ireland" set up a protest picket in front of the British Embassy in the city of Dublin. The student protest was reinforced by the carrying of banners proclaiming, "Hands Off Our Language," and the Irish equivalent, "Ligigi dar dteanga" (Irish News 1990e:3).
The blacklisting of Glór na nGael also brought condemnation from political leaders in London and Dublin. In expressing his support for Glór na nGael, "Mr. Kinnock described the political vetting of the group as 'disabling the community rather than enabling' . . . and criticised the withdrawal of funds as 'absurd'" (Kelters 1990k:3). The Irish Minister of State, Mr. Pat Gallagher criticized the action of the British authorities saying:

"I will be pursuing this issue as vigorously as possible. This is much bigger than finance. This is suggesting and is giving the view that Irish language organisations are involved with violence." He added that the suggestion by the NIO that Glór na nGael was associated with a paramilitary organisation was one that he did not accept. He said he had visited Belfast this year to present a prize to Glór na nGael for promoting the Irish language. He added: "They [Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee] are recognised nationally and this is a severe blow to an organisation that is non-political, non-sectarian and embraces all sections of the community" (Belfast Telegraph 1990).

Civil rights activists from all over the world added their objections to the manner in which funding had been removed from Glór na nGael. They claimed that the unsubstantiated allegation of "paramilitary links" indicated that there existed "a secretive body within the [British] government that has the power to remove funding from voluntary organizations without having to produce any evidence to justify such a decision, [adding that this is]
incompatible with a democratic society" (Irish News 1990f:7; also Kelters 1990h:3).

While the government continued with the stance that "It is not our policy to discuss individual decisions," it actively took measures to ensure that potentially embarrassing questions about those decisions were not asked. The effects of this strategy of reticence were experienced in diverse areas—for example, at a Belfast meeting of the EC Lesser-Used Languages delegation. A Basque member of the delegation discovered that in an upcoming meeting with NIO civil servants, he would have to agree not to ask any questions concerning the recent decision to withdraw funding from Glór na nGaeil. Faced with this prospect, he and three other delegation members refused to attend (Livingstone 1990b:18). He stated that, "Before the meeting we were told we would have to give guarantees to organisers of the trip that we would not ask embarrassing questions about the British Government's policy on the Irish language . . . I was unwilling to be manipulated in that way and decided instead to pull out" (Livingstone 1990b:18).

Further evidence of the government's sensitivity to questioning came when Dr. Mawhinney refused to appear on the BBC Northern Ireland programme, "Spotlight," dealing with the funding of Irish language schooling, after hearing he would be quizzed about Glór na nGaeil (Kelters 1990i:1). Shane Harrison, producer of the October 4, 1990 edition of
"Spotlight" on "The State of the Celtic Revival and the Health of the Irish Language" stated simply that:

At the last moment Dr. Mawhinney pulled out of recording an interview for this programme because he was unwilling to answer questions touching the Glór na nGael issue (Harrison 1990).

While the Minister of Education would not appear on the "Spotlight" programme, the host did include a segment featuring Dr. Mawhinney attempting to defend the government's Irish language funding policy to his southern counterpart Mary O'Rourke, saying:

To a number of people in Northern Ireland, the Irish language is very important. It has deep cultural importance. It touches cultural roots. And I have to find some sort of balance between that recognition and the importance of our young people learning to speak fluently and competently major European languages. Bearing in mind that they are going to be growing up in a much more internationalized world (quoted in Harrison 1990).

As evidenced by the campaign to clear its name, Glór na nGael's public and hidden transcripts were devoted to using embarrassment in the local, national and international arena in an effort to force the government to withdraw its allegation and restore the group's grant-aid. The government's defensive actions to protect itself from controversial or embarrassing questions, thus minimizing
any further political damage, and its stance of refusing to issue any statement on the vetting of Glór na nGael, lends credence to the effectiveness of Glór na nGael's approach.

C. Glór na nGael Takes the Government to Court

In response to mounting local, national and international pressure, Peter Brooke vowed that he would review Glór na nGael's case. On October 22, 1990 he announced his decision in a letter to Glór na nGael, which read in part:

As you are aware from earlier correspondence the decision to withdraw funding from the West Belfast Committee of Glór na nGael was taken in terms of the policy set out in the Parliamentary Statement of 27 June 1985 by Mr. Hurd. The policy is designed not only to protect public funds against direct abuse but also to ensure that public funding would not otherwise have the effect of improving the standing and furthering the aims of paramilitary organisations either directly or indirectly. It does not provide, as some have suggested, for a system of "political vetting"; political belief is not an issue. In the light of the representations received, I have reviewed the applications of the policy to the West Belfast Committee of Glór na nGael but, after careful consideration of all the information currently available to me, I am satisfied that the circumstances are such that public funding should continue to be withheld from the West Belfast Committee.

Some people have misinterpreted the decision to withdraw funding from the West Belfast Committee as applying to Glór na nGael at large and as being directed against the Irish language and culture. Any such allegations are
demonstrably untrue and I reject them utterly.

The aims and objectives of Glór na nGael as a language and cultural movement are not in question. Indeed, the Government clearly recognises and respects the importance of the Irish language and culture to many who view it as an integral part of their tradition. This is reflected in the curricular structures announced for schools as part of the recent education reforms and the substantial public funding for the teaching of Irish through the statutory school system in Northern Ireland, including teaching through the medium of Irish where a sufficient demand exists. Alongside this, the Government will continue to support efforts to enhance the awareness and appreciation of the Irish language within its Cultural Traditions Programme and additional resources have recently been made available for this purpose. These are initiatives to which I, and Dr. Mawhinney as the Minister responsible, attach great importance. However Government is not prepared to support what are otherwise wholly desirable activities where the circumstances described in Mr. Hurd's statement prevail (Northern Ireland Office 1990).

Upon the receipt of this letter, Glór na nGael authorized its lawyers to begin legal proceedings to demand that the government prove its allegations. In taking this action, Glór na nGael was to become the first vetted group to make a legal challenge via judicial review. A member of Glór na nGael's committee explains what transpired:

We were the first group that had taken judicial review. What happened to other groups is that they thought they were getting their money back because all of the groups that were vetted may have political people in them but they were actually doing community work. All of them thought this was a mistake and they'd get their money back, and they had all waited too long. Judicial reviews have to be taken inside of three months. The reason we did not wait too long is
because there was so much pressure being put on Peter Brooke from everywhere—America and England and the South of Ireland—that he [Brooke] had given us an answer quickly, and again the answer was no, so we took him to court.

But what was expected to happen was that when we were due to go into court, the government would produce a public interest hearing—which is where they say, "In the interest of public security we can not answer these questions." So we were actually ready to go to the Ombudsman in England, who would have to get the answers.

Our barristers were taken aback at the end of the case when the barrister for the Crown turned around and said, "Well actually there must be some misunderstanding here because Mr. Brooke has agreed that fifty documents can be seen with some pieces of them covered up."

My first impression was, because I was in the courtroom, "Oh my God, what have I done that would fill fifty pages that I don't know about?" 31

Glór na nGael viewed the Crown Council's announcement that it would release fifty documents as a manoeuvre in a propaganda war being waged against them, and took measures to limit any possible damage. The Glór na nGael committee member continues her narrative:

It's all done through the press. All we've got to do is to counter attack through the media. It's all a war through the media. We counter by saying, "Right, the copies of those documents are on view in the offices of Glór na nGael." They can't stop us from allowing people to come in and read them. But they can stop us talking about them maybe.
When Glór na nGael received these documents, members of the press, general public, and myself were given access to them to read. As the documents were marked "Confidential," and there is some uncertainty about the legality of disclosing their contents, comments on them here will be restricted to those made in local newspapers. The Andersonstown News (1990e:1), concluded that rather than containing any "damning evidence" against Glór na nGael the documents, "actually bolster the group's case against the withdrawal of their funding." The newspaper report continues saying, "the NIO documentation, shown to this paper yesterday, consists of letters to the Secretary of State from Glór na nGael supporters enraged at the axing of the group's grants" (Andersonstown News 1990e:1). Lawyers for Glór na nGael concluded that:

Nothing in edited documents revealed the reason for the Secretary of State's decision to withdraw funding . . . it was claimed in the High Court yesterday. Mr. Reginald Weir QC made the claim in a further application seeking the complete disclosure of the documents, parts of which had been sealed and covered for security reasons and for which public interest immunity was claimed (Belfast Telegraph 1991:5).
Lawyers for Glór na nGael then made application to the High Court to obtain the unedited version of the documents released in November 1990. On March 1, 1991, this application was denied. In handing down his judgment, Mr. Justice Carswell made the following statement:

"Discovery is not necessary to probe them [the documents] further . . . I am of the opinion that discovery was not the purpose of disposing fairly of the case. It follows that production of the documents sought is not necessary for that purpose, and the application must fail." (Irish News 1991a:4).

On March 27, 1992, with Glór na nGael's case still before the courts (and thirteen days before the Westminster election), Secretary of State Peter Brooke announced that "circumstances had 'changed significantly' since August 1990," and funding would be restored to Glór na nGael. Glór na nGael's chairperson, Nóirín Ní Chléirigh, said she "was delighted with the announcement but refuted Peter Brooke's [claim] of 'changed circumstances.'" She added that, "Glór na nGael's membership has not changed during the fight to clear its name . . . I still can't understand why we were blacklisted" (An Phoblacht/Republican News 1992a:5).

Nearly two years of legal battles, political wrangling, and unjust sentiments were finally quelled when, on July 22, 1992, funding was restored to Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee (An Phoblacht/Republican News 1992b:2).
In its wake, the process would leave confusion and resentment, and a renewed passion portending inauspicious times ahead for the fledgling Irish language movement.

III. Reaction in the Irish Language Activist Community: the Mask of the Oppressed Thickens

The enigma of the blacklisting of Glór na nGael would be foremost on the minds of the Irish language community as it attempted to chart its future course. Few people, anywhere, actually believed that Glór na nGael was involved in any activity that was directly or indirectly linked to a paramilitary organization. Most, as articulated below, believed that government funding was being used as a weapon to indirectly discourage support for Sinn Féin:

Glór na nGael, that's a political issue in the sense that language and culture are part of a political agenda. But the other part of the agenda is that there is a war going on here and that there will be civilian casualties on both sides, and it really depends on how well you have your propaganda as to who gets the blame. It is the British Government's intention, with the help of those who support them on the nationalist side, to uproot Sinn Féin's influence from society. That means going in everywhere and putting it into people's heads that if you want this or you want that you won't get it if you have any connection with people we don't favour. It is straightforward military tactics, if you like. It's part of the psychological war and it is very insidious, but you have got to look at it in terms that Irish is part of that war.
This view was reiterated by ó hAdhmaill (1991):

Few people involved nowadays in the community work/voluntary sector in N. Ireland believe that the Hurd policy had/has anything to do with paramilitaries as such. It is largely believed that the policy was initially brought in to try to stem the growing tide of support for the Sinn Féin political party in nationalist working class areas in the early to mid-1980s. At the time, it was suggested that part of this support was due to Sinn Féin’s work in the community at grass roots level. The policy seems to be aimed at trying to marginalise Sinn Féin involvement in such areas. In this respect, therefore, it is believed that the policy is aimed more at preventing people with particular political views from playing an active role in their local communities rather than at preventing “paramilitary” abuse of Government funds, etc.

The government’s policy of reticence when its actions were questioned constituted its public transcript, and reinforced the belief that “vetting” was a “stick” used to force compliance with the State’s political views. Queries regarding its actions toward Glór na nGael were considered as lèse majesté, and as such would elicit the predictable reply, “We do not discuss individual cases,” or be simply responded to with a copy of Douglas Hurd’s 1985 statement. The hidden transcript of the government was perceived by community groups in nationalist areas as contradicting its public transcript. Most community organizations, and especially Irish language activist groups, felt this hidden transcript sent a strong message to all community-based
organizations. The message was clear, that if they didn't isolate and marginalize Sinn Féin, and stop publicly embarrassing the government over its Irish language policy, they would find themselves without any sources of financial assistance. If this was the intended hidden transcript of the government, the public transcript of the Irish language community gave every indication that the government's "meta-message" had been received.

Many community groups were careful not to be seen publicly with members of Sinn Féin, even though they were their elected representatives. In an editorial in the *Andersonstown News* (1990d:6) titled, "Our own worst enemy," it was noted that:

... with almost every week that passes, we see West Belfast community groups open new centres or facilities without inviting the MP of the area [Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams] to the event. ... and there is no limit to the ludicrous extremes to which groups in receipt of aid are expected to plummet. In recent months this paper has noticed an increase in the number of requests from community groups to ensure photographs which include people known to be radical, if not even members of Sinn Féin, are not published lest they should offend the grant-givers.

The groups that had been vetted, even Glór na nGael to a certain extent, found that other groups in receipt of government aid often avoided them. The Political Vetting Of Community Work Working Group (1990:25) cited two of the most commonly given reasons for this marginalization by other
groups: "firstly, many believed that there is 'no smoke without fire,' and secondly people and groups feared they too would be labelled 'paramilitary supporters.'"

Internal scrutiny of the groups' membership was done by their organizers to ensure that no controversial people were on their committees. For example, one head of an Irish language organization that had received some government funding told me, "There are people who I know that if they were available to work for [us] I could not ask them to join the staff even if I wanted to because it would put the whole thing at risk." Another Irish language activist spoke of the generalized fear among community groups of allowing any person who was political to become a member:

I know myself from the little experience I have in community politics, people are totally paranoid. People who want money to get projects off the ground in any area, not necessarily just the language but any area at all are totally paranoid about being prevented from getting the money by virtue of their political association. So they would vet themselves.

The fate of Glór na nGael created a guarded attitude within the community as a whole. Avoidance was made of controversial issues, or activities openly critical of the government, notwithstanding their importance to the community (Political Vetting of Community Work, Working Group 1990:25-28). During the period that a group's funding
was under review, an extra effort was made to behave in a way that would not jeopardize its favour with the State. An Irish language activist explained that vetting was an injustice but for the good of the language, public denunciation of this policy or any other government policy was better not made:

The government's money is my money as far as I am concerned. Although the business of vetting is an injustice, life must go on. Sometimes I feel that you have got to make a sacrifice for the pure good of all the people, as opposed to one sort of group of persons. Really it is a moral dilemma that we are all in. So if you're involved in the Irish language what do you do? Do you get involved in this whole vetting thing and say, "Well, right we are going to go up on this platform and be involved with all these people who are against vetting." You can do that, yes, but you can also do your work, and if there is money to be had. And don't forget that the State was set up by various people who are manipulating all of us. They are manipulating anyone who takes money from them. But at the same time this money that they are handing out, it's my money. It belongs to all people who have worked hard in this particular setup state anyway. So therefore should we not be allowed to spend it on the Irish language if it is offered to us? Always remembering at the back of our minds that we have to be careful. They [Glór na nGael] should have known that. We all have to be careful all the time.

It appeared in the public domain that Irish language activist groups had chosen to "consent" to their cultural oppression by complying with what they believed to be the hegemonic purposes behind the vetting of Glór na nGael.
However, in discussions with members of Irish language community groups, I found that rather than an acceptance of their cultural oppression what really occurred was a "thickening of the mask of the weak." This response was adopted out of the fear that any breach of the hidden transcript would result in the denial of funds at what was considered a crucial time in the development of the Irish language. Indeed, the goal of the language revival was the building of an Irish language infrastructure that would be permanent and some day lead to self-reliance, regardless of the outcome of the present situation. This solid foundation for the language had been lacking in all previous revivals and had been a contributing factor to their failure. The development of a stable infrastructure would help ensure that future generations of Northern Irish nationalists would live in a bilingual society. As one Irish language activist put it:

We have our own agenda [and that is] getting the infrastructure of the Irish language in place first, then we'll be controversial. Minority languages everywhere require government money. The thing is to get the money and work around the rules to survive. Not only does government money give you an amount of legitimacy but it gives you a certain security that you are going to be able to continue with the work in the future. It starts people thinking about institutions and infrastructure rather than just learning the language. The next big thing is to get an Irish-medium secondary school. Then it will continue on its own momentum. When they come out of secondary school they will have spent most of their formative years in the Irish language and
they will be ready to start their own family. When this happens, the whole focus of the Irish language movement will have to change. There is no use in investing all that time, energy and money into teaching and educating them through Irish if they are going to take the first plane to America or Australia or England or Dublin. You have to keep them here. So you have to create the overall environment that will keep them here. Not just jobs, but everything, houses, jobs, media, everything.

IV. Chapter Summary

Alternative resistance from Glór na nGael, an independent Irish language group, persisted in an effort to control Irish language development in West Belfast. The manner in which this was carried out was perceived by the State as a direct threat to its cultural domination. The State thus made attempts to neutralize the group's influence by branding it as having paramilitary connections.

Scott (1990:10) has referred to a "hidden transcript" as a necessary element of a method, or model, of resistance. The blacklisting of Glór na nGael when viewed in the light of Scott's model, can be seen to expose the contrary aspects of the private and public transcripts of what was hitherto considered a "safe" Irish language group.

Hence, Glór na nGael, the "cheeky subordinate" that made the hidden transcript of Irish language activists
public, presented symbolic challenges that could no longer be ignored by the State. The apparent unity among the Irish language community and nationalists in general, was engendered and indeed strengthened by the moves of the British state. Present but less obvious was an undercurrent of diffidence among community groups that would ensure the State that its intended message was being received.

Despite necessary outward appearances of compliance with the State's hidden transcript, in effect what transpired was a "thickening of the mask of the weak," based mainly on the community recognition of this as a crucial period in the development of the Irish language revival. Thus the ostensible submission in the public domain of the Irish language activist community, after observing the State's wrath evoked by Glór na nGael's actions, would conform to the deceptive appearance of the compliance predicted by Scott's model of "disguise and surveillance."
Chapter Nine

General Conclusions

The object of this dissertation has been to conduct an investigation into the dynamics of domination and resistance in Northern Ireland. Central to my methodology has been a focus on the nature and development of Irish language activism in West Belfast, and the subsequent response of the British state. This chapter will present the general findings of my investigation as they pertain to the power and vulnerability of British cultural hegemony, when challenged by two forms of Irish language activism in Northern Ireland.

I. Alternative versus Oppositional Activism within the Irish Language Movement in West Belfast: Differences and Links

Throughout this analysis, I have argued that not all Irish language activism is motivated by revolutionary ideology. To use Williams' terminology, both alternative and oppositional ideologies are major components of the
Irish language struggle. As Williams points out, the demarcation between alternative and oppositional resistance is hazy. Hazy indeed, and especially with respect to methods used by the groups to achieve their aims, but I have argued that the two forms of resistance do differ in their adherents' visions of a future for Northern Ireland. Alternative Irish language activists are seeking a permanent space for the Irish language and culture in Northern Ireland regardless of its future political status. Oppositional Irish language activists, on the other hand, have incorporated the Irish language into the revolutionary struggle for a "free and Gaelic" thirty-two county Republic of Ireland.

While the ideology of these two forms of Irish language activism differs, it could be argued that the strategy alternative Irish language activists utilize to reach their goals is potentially beneficial to oppositional Irish language activists. Theoretically, an ethnic minority group that is self-aware of its uniqueness and aware that it is culturally and linguistically different from the "effective dominant culture" can be defined as a nation group (Connor 1978; also see Chapter One, above). Through efforts to unify and mobilize the people of West Belfast to challenge the "effective dominant culture" that is suppressing "our language" and "our culture" in favour of "their language" and "their culture," alternative Irish language activists
are creating a nation group. This nation group, in which Sinn Féin is able to claim bona fide membership, is challenging the legitimacy of a common enemy--the British State--demanding it give recognition and support to the rights of Irish speakers. Therefore, alternative Irish language activists in mobilizing an ethnic group that is necessary to achieve their own goal of creating a permanent Irish language infrastructure, are also creating a nation group which can be a pool of both latent and actual support for the goals of Sinn Féin. In addition, the cross-cultural efforts of alternative Irish language activists are of potential benefit to Sinn Féin because they may serve to re-spark Protestant nationalism, thus making Irish-speaking Protestants more receptive to a united Ireland. Given these potential benefits, indirectly any activity that promotes the Irish language and makes the people of Northern Ireland aware of their distinctive Irish cultural identity, can be said to be "improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary group."

II. British Cultural Hegemony: The Struggle for Legitimacy

It is very easy for the British Government to defeat Sinn Féin in a propaganda war because they have control of the newspapers and they can make them look like murdering thugs. It would be very hard for them to defeat an Irish language movement in the same way because it does not carry arms,
and it does not carry any obvious power. It is actually more powerful than any guns (the Irish language movement), because you can unite people in it (spoken by an alternative Irish language activist).

The passive strategy of Sinn Féin is one of encouraging and supporting Irish language groups, rather than of direct involvement. This policy has made it difficult for the State to deal effectively with the challenge to its cultural hegemony made by alternative Irish language activists. While the State can deny republican prisoners cultural rights by claiming that the granting of such rights would pose a security risk, the State is less able to ignore or suppress the cultural demands made by non-revolutionary alternative Irish language activists. Therefore, as was argued in Chapter Six, Sinn Féin's tactic of encouraging cultural groups to demand Irish language rights—demands that if denied constitute discrimination—exposes the vulnerability of the "effective dominant culture." By not involving themselves directly, that is by not assuming controlling positions within the Irish language movement, Sinn Féin also weakens the State's attempt to stigmatize nationalist-minded Irish language groups as having paramilitary connections.

Finding that it could not ostracize the Irish language from Northern Ireland, the State then attempted to assert the legitimacy of its "effective dominant culture" by
using a different approach. By the re-interpretation of the
Irish language into a Northern Ireland context, the State
hoped to maintain control of, and to placate, increasingly
vocal members of the Irish language community. Seen as a
positive move by many alternative Irish language activists,
the State's recognition of Irish as a traditional language
of Northern Ireland caused a division within the ranks of
the dominant unionist/loyalist population. Thus, opposition
from sufficiently powerful sources placed the success of the
State's new venture in serious peril.

As was described in Chapter Seven, the State would now
find itself involved in a stalemate. Due to gathering
opposition, it could neither force the banishment of the
Irish language, nor incorporate it as part of Northern
Ireland's cultural heritage.

Cognizant of the potential threat to its cultural
hegemony offered by this stalemate, the British state would
be partially successful in quelling alternative Irish
language resistance via its regulation of government
funding. Most Irish language activists, such as the one
quoted below, know the need for State funding if their
dreams of securing a permanent place for the Irish language
in Northern Ireland are to be actualized. If the appearance
of hegemonic subjugation is necessary to ensure the
continuation of funding, then they are willing to maintain
such a ruse:
You have to work with the State. I don't see any difficulty there as long as you keep your eyes on the right light. Things are very clear to me. I know in what direction I am going. I am also aware of the realities of life here in Northern Ireland.

State funding then, could be described as a "carrot" offered to Irish language activists to entice them to support the government's policy of re-interpretation, and ultimately British cultural hegemony in Northern Ireland. In another aspect, State funding is the "stick" that accompanies this metaphorical carrot. As such, funding is used to minimize the cultural challenge made to the State's hegemonic legitimacy by more radical, nationalist-minded elements in the Irish language movement. In addition, as was argued in Chapter Eight, withdrawal of funding from one group can be used as a mechanism to indirectly control the behaviour of similar groups. Therefore, despite potential threats to its control, the British state is able to maintain its dominant position.

To summarize, Northern Ireland Irish language activists, both alternative and oppositional, have recovered the Irish language as "an effective element of the present," and are using it to challenge the legitimacy of the "effective dominant culture." In response to these two forms of resistance, the British state first tried to
exclude or dismiss the Irish language as inferior, dead, and having no place in twentieth-century Europe or modern British culture. When this failed, it then attempted to incorporate the language, using Williams' terms, in a form which supported "or at least [did] not contradict the effective dominant culture." The exercise of hegemonic control over a group united by common culture and language is therefore fraught with constant challenges. The situation I have described in Northern Ireland illustrates the potential vulnerability of British cultural hegemony, when defied by both alternative and oppositional forms of Irish language resistance, and how controlling tactics and methods must be constantly reviewed and adjusted in order to ensure the continuation of Crown and Empire.
Notes

1. This commentary was written on the occasion of the re-publication of Rev. William Neilson's book, *An Introduction to the Irish Language*, first published in 1808. Neilson was a Presbyterian minister, who in 1798, "was carted off by the yeomanry to Downpatrick gaol on a charge of inciting treason. His crime—-an intention to preach to his congregation in Irish. He was released when his sermon was translated and was found to be an innocuous plea for moral rectitude" (Macauley 1990:11).

2. Femia (1981:38) defines "forced compliance [as a case whereby] one may conform because of the fear of the consequences of non-conformity, which may produce punitive deprivations or inflictions, including the loss of honour or self-esteem. This is conformity through coercion, or fear of sanctions—-acquiescence under duress [and] unconscious adherence [whereby] one may conform because one habitually pursues certain goals in certain ways in response to external stimuli. . . . Conformity in this sense is a matter of unreflecting participation in an established form of activity."
3. Nagata indicates that this assumption of "non-ethnic/ethnic" classification is a legacy of the colonial era.

4. The "beyond the community" approach to the study of ethnic relations investigates the links between and effect upon ethnic relations of local, regional, national, and supranational levels of organization within a world system over time (Beck and Cole 1981; Boissevain 1975; Cole 1977; Rebel 1989a, 1989b; Roseberry 1989).

5. Much of the data analyzed in this section was drawn from my M.A. thesis (Kachuk 1987).

6. The Great Famine (1845-48), which mainly affected the predominantly Gaelic-speaking western half of Ireland, also had a major effect on the reduction of Irish speakers. However, the 1861 census revealed that there were still 1,105,536 Irish speakers which represented a fifth of the population of Ireland. By the 1890s Irish speaking areas had been reduced to small pockets along the Atlantic seaboard from Donegal to Kerry, Cork, and Waterford (Cronin 1981:20). O'Snodaigh (1973:22, 24) writes that the number of Irish-speakers in Ulster fell from 6.8 percent of the total population in 1851, to 1.3 percent in 1891. Since both sets of statistics indicate a dramatic fall in
the number of Irish-speakers, and the data were gathered
after the period of famine, the impact of the national
school system could be considered a major causative factor
in the decline.

7. Cronin (1981:3) identifies five strands of
Nationalism:

a) Traditionalist Nationalism: Catholic and often Gaelic.
b) Constitutional Nationalism: influenced but not controlled
   by the Catholic Church, believes in a sovereign
   independent Ireland, and opposes violence.
c) Physical-Force Republicanism: refers to Tone and the
   United Irishmen for its justification, but is often
   socially conservative.
d) Radical Republicanism: argues that there can be no
   political change without social revolution and stresses
   the values of the secular state.
e) Cultural Nationalism: emphasizes the nation and its
   language rather than the state.

8. Also see ó Fiaich (1968:109-110) for a discussion
of the contrasting attitudes of O'Connell and Davis toward
the Irish language.
9. The IRB (Irish Republican Brotherhood), was made up of volunteers in the army led by Padraig Pearse in the 1916 Easter Rising.

10. Many of the provisions of the 1922 Special Powers Act have been incorporated into the current Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency (Provisions) Act.

11. Stohl and Lopez (1984:7) define the dimensions of state coercion as: (a) Oppression: the denial of social and economic privileges to whole classes of people regardless of whether they oppose the authorities; (b) Repression: the use of coercion or the threat of coercion against opponents or potential opponents in order to prevent or weaken their capability to oppose the authorities and their policies; and (c) Terrorism: the purposeful act or threat of violence designed to create fear and/or compliant behaviour in a victim and/or audience of the act or threat.

12. One in four Catholic men between sixteen and forty-four has been arrested at some time during the current troubles (Hillyard 1988).
13. The "cages" refer to the areas of confinement in Long Kesh prison, prior to the building of the H-Blocks. They held both sentenced "Special Status" prisoners arrested before March 1, 1976, and internees. Adams (1990:16-17) gives an insider's view of the cages before they were burned in 1974:

... the huts here are like some surrealistic limbo; made of corrugated tin sheets, they are unpainted Nissen huts. Leaky, draughty, cold, they are locked up at nine o'clock every night and unlocked at 7:30 every morning. We're inside them of course: us and our lines of bunk beds, lockers, our electric boiler, a kettle, a row of tables, a television set and a radio... There are four or five huts to a cage, depending on the size of the cage; two-and-a-half huts or three-and-a-half for living in, an empty hut for a canteen of sorts, and the other half-hut for "recreation", with a washroom and a "study" hut thrown in. Wired off, with a couple of watch-towers planted around, and that's us.

14. James Connolly, a leader in the 1916 Rebellion, claimed the GPO (General Post Office) as a stronghold of the initial confrontation.

15. While women republican prisoners continued to receive Irish language publications after 1981, I was told that they must wait a year or longer before receiving any written material of a feminist nature. The male republican prisoners on the other hand, are able to receive any type "hard core" pornography available. A former male prisoner confirmed that this was the case.
16. In a survey carried out in 1985 it was revealed that there were 385 prisoners in Northern Irish jails who were Irish speakers or learners (Andersonstown News 1985b:10)

17. Partial results of a survey of Irish language learners (ó hAdhmaill 1985:Appendix)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Encouraging Factor</th>
<th>Percentage of the 234 Surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinn Féin/Republican Movement</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish identification/nationality</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Army/RUC oppression</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunger strike/POWs/Bobby Sands/prison protest</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The troubles/unspecified political events/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greater political awareness</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our own language/culture</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunscoil/Naiscoil</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Other]</td>
<td>[21]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. ó hAdhmaill (1990a:239) found that forty percent of the 234 Irish learners surveyed in 1985 had first decided to learn the language sometime between 1982 and 1984. When provided with a list of possible reasons for their decision to learn the language, 86 percent selected, "to strengthen my Irish identity" (ó hAdhmaill 1990a:239). The other reasons, and the appropriate percentages were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The desire to promote Irish in everyday life</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends speak Irish</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child attending Bunscoil</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastime/hobby</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help with exams/careers, etc.</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The cogent point here is the low importance placed on the reasons, "pastime/hobby," and "to help with exams/careers, etc." (ó hAdhmaill 1990a:236). ó hAdhmaill adds that the upsurge of the interest in the Irish language was not restricted to those who actually decided to learn it. Many of the people donating money for schools and street signs, neither spoke nor were learning the language.

19. The quotes in this section are from two Welsh language activists, who attended a 1990 Irish language conference in Belfast, and described their local campaign.

20. "A report published by Conradh na Gaeilge in 1978 estimated that every year some 5,000 to 6,000 school children from Northern Ireland travelled to the Gaeltacht areas to study Irish. As well as this, some 2,000 English speaking pupils sit "O" and "A" level examinations each year in Irish. In 1979/80 nearly 28,000 school children were studying Irish at school according to the Department of Education (N.I.). Similar numbers of pupils are thought to be learning Irish in English medium schools in Northern Ireland in 1986. . . . In 1978 it [Conradh na Gaeilge] estimated that over 1,000 people attended . . . classes [held at their 80 branches throughout Northern Ireland] annually, "producing as many as 25,000 fluent speakers of Irish in a ten-year period" (Glór na nGael 1986).

22. Welsh speakers, who in the 1981 Census represented nineteen percent of the population of Wales, have a Welsh language television channel. The approximately eighty thousand Scottish Gaelic speakers who represented 1.6 percent of the population of Scotland in 1981, enjoyed twenty-eight hours of BBC Gaelic radio programming per week. They also had available about one hundred hours of Gaelic television programming per year, produced by the combined efforts of BBC Scotland, Grampian Television, and Scottish Television (Paragraph 8.31 and 8.33, Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, 1990:88-89; Sweeney 1986:6, 7).

23. Conway Mill was originally a flax mill located in West Belfast. It was closed in 1974, and re-opened in 1982 by a community group, to promote economic development in the area and offer adult education. An ACE scheme was approved by the government, and workers were provided to operate a crèche while mothers attended education classes. The Mill was the first organization to be blacklisted by the government in 1985 for alleged paramilitary links.
As in the case of Glór na nGael (discussed in Chapter Eight), no evidence to support this allegation was supplied, but any group that occupied space in the Mill automatically lost all government money (see Best 1990:13-14).

24. *Aisling* (vision) poetry was composed by Irish poets of the eighteenth century who, Cronin (1981:18) writes, wanted to restore Gaelic power to its former status under the Stuart monarchy:

The poets looked at a restoration of Gaelic power, through the Stuarts. The *aisling* (vision) poetry preaches treason in the guise of love poems, although not all such verse looked to the Stuart's return. The poet rests, falls asleep, dreams, sees a beautiful maiden weeping, asks her why? She is Ireland. She tells her sorrowful tale. The poet urges her to be of good cheer: the prince from over the water will rescue her in time.

25. The Irish-medium nursery schools, sometimes just referred to as "nurseries" are technically play groups. A nursery school requires its personnel to have special government approved teacher training. The Labour government had encouraged play groups and did provide some funding for them, however the Conservative government placed its emphasis on nursery schools and provided no funding for play groups. The Irish medium play group system was run in accordance with a similar system set up in the South.
26. A second Irish-medium primary school, Gaelscoil, opened on September 7, 1987, to provide those children who could no longer enroll in the Shaws Road Bunscoil with the opportunity to receive Irish-medium education. The Gaelscoil began with six students, and four years later (September 1990), it had forty-five continuing students, plus twenty-five newly enrolled students. In September 1991 a further twenty-eight children were to begin at the Gaelscoil. Unlike in Wales where Welsh-medium schools receive funding after attaining an enrollment quota of twenty-five students, in Northern Ireland, Irish-medium schools must have 175 students enrolled and show positive indication that those numbers will be consistent over the next two years, before the school may receive maintained status (Mallon 1987:10, 1990:16, 1991:13; Connolly 1987:7). In 1990, the Gaelscoil was inspected by the Department of Education and declared as meeting education standards set out for primary school education (Andersonstown News 1990f:4).

27. One Irish-medium play group opened in Short Strand in 1980, followed by another in Twinbrook in the same year. Subsequent years saw play groups opening in: Ardoyne (1984); Lower Falls (1985); Ballymurphy (1986); Markets (1988); and Springfield (1988) (Naionra na Fuiseoige 1988:13, 15). An Irish-medium play group was to open in
Turf Lodge in September 1990. Every nationalist area in Belfast now has an Irish-medium play group preparing children for the Irish-medium primary schools. Over one hundred children attend these play groups.

28. "Largely as a result of [Glór na nGael's] work, West Belfast was dubbed 'the Irish language capital of Ireland' by the Irish magazine Agus" (Ó hAdhmaill 1990b: 31).

29. On August 10, 1992, the UDA, the largest and last legal loyalist extremist group was proscribed by the government, meaning that the government recognized that the group "actively and primarily engaged in the commission of criminal, terrorist acts" (The Globe and Mail, August 11, 1992:A7).

30. As outlined in Tajfel's theory of intergroup actions (see Chapter One, page 34), this statement by the Minister of Education is but a rationalization for the under-funding of Irish language education. What is being implied here, is that while the Irish language is culturally important to some, it is of little value in the modern western capitalist world.
31. I spoke with members and staff of Glór na nGael and found a real sense of fear among them. I was told:

But what actually happens is you start looking at road blocks set up and I felt that it was for me particularly—but I'm not that important, but when there was a policeman at the door I was actually shaking, "What's he coming for?" You start looking at everything you're doing. You're afraid to open your mouth because you think, "My God, if you say this it might be interpreted as that." And it doesn't matter what you say, people are going to interpret it whatever the hell way they want... you would automatically feel targeted.

I was told by another Glór na nGael member:

I don't speak Irish in the centre of town. I'm a coward. Sometimes I will [show my Irishness] sometimes I won't. It depends on how secure I am feeling. I don't use the Irish form of my name when I am stopped [by the RUC or British Army] because I am pretty sure it would invite more harassment. There is also the worry in the back of your head that if you did say whatever to the police, your name will get passed along by the police and it will end up with some nasty group that would know that I worked for Glór na nGael, so definitely I would be a target. People say I'm paranoid.
Bibliography


Adams, Gerry

Adamson, Ian

Alverson, Hoyt S.

American Anthropological Association

Amnesty International
Amnesty International (continued)


*An Phoblacht/Republican News*


*Andersonstown News, The*


Andersonstown News, The (continued)


Andrews, Liam S.

Asmal, Kader

Bambery, Chris

Barth, Fredrik

Beck, Sam and John W. Cole

Beckett, J.C.

*Belfast Newsletter, The*

*Belfast Telegraph, The*


Bell, J. Bowyer

Bennett, Richard

Berresford, David

Best, Elsie

Boissevain, Jeremy
Bonner, David  

Bottigheimer, Karl S.  

Boyd, Andrew  


Boyle, Kevin, Tom Hadden and Paddy Hillyard  

Buckley, Anthony D.  

Budge, Ian and Cornelius O'Leary  

Burton, Frank  

Busteed, M.A.  

Campbell, Duncan  
1984a "Victims of the 'Dirty War.'"  
*New Statesman* 107(2772): 8-11. (May 4.)

1984b "Kidnap Plots, Booby Traps and Bank Raids."
*New Statesman* 107(2773): 12-14. (May 11.)

1984c "Terror Tactics."
*New Statesman* 107(2774): 10-11. (May 18.)

Clarke, John, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson & Brian Roberts  
Cohen, Anthony P.

Cohen, Ronald
1978 "Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology."

Cole, John W.

Colleary, John

Collins, Kevin

Connolly, Moira

Comerford, Maire
1969 *The First Dáil, Jan 21/1919.* Dublin: Joe Clarke.

Connor, Walker
1972 "Nation Building or Nation Destroying?"


1978 "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a . . . ." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1(4): 377-400.

Coogan, Timothy P.

Coolahan, John

Cronin, Séan
Crozier, Maurna, ed.


Curtis, Edmund
1937 *A History of Ireland.* London: Methuen and Co.

Curtis, L.P., Jr.

Curtis, Liz

Darby, John

Democratic Unionist Party, The

Department of Education for Northern Ireland
1988 *Education in Northern Ireland: Proposals for Reform.* Belfast: HMSO.


Descombes, Vincent

Devereux, George

DeVos, George
Donnan, H. and G. McFarlane


Douglas, Jack D.

Dumont, Jean-Paul

Dowling, P.J.

Education Reform Bill, Proposals put to Parliament

Ellis, P. Berresford

Evelegh, Robin

Farrell, Michael


Feldman, Allen
Femia, Joseph V.

Fishman, Joshua A.

Fitzgerald, Garret

Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Office

Gal, Susan

Galliher, J. and J. Degregory

Geertz, Clifford

Gellner, Ernest
Gellner, Ernest (continued)

Giddens, Anthony

Giles, H., R.Y. Bourthis and D. M. Taylor

Globe and Mail, The
1992 "Britain Outlaws Ulster Extremists."

Glór na nGael
1982 "Constitution of Glór na nGael (West Belfast Committee)." (Typewritten.)

Gramsci, Antonio

Greaves, C. Desmond

Griffiths, Hywel

Hammersley, M. and P. Atkinson

Harkness, David
Harris, Rosemary

Harrison, Shane

Hayden, Mary and G.A. Moonan

Hebdige, Dick

Hechter, Michael

Heiberg, Marianna

Hillyard, Paddy

House of Commons, Britain

House of Commons, Written Answers

Huizer, Gerrit

Irish News, The
Irish News, The (continued)


Jackson, Harold
London: Minority Rights Group.

Kachuk, Patricia

Kelley, Kevin
1982 The Longest War: Northern Ireland and the IRA.

Kelters, Seamus


Kelters, Seamus (continued)


1990g "Glor's Fight For Funding Goes Into Top Gear." Irish News. September 27: 2.


Khleif, Bud B.


Kitson, Frank


Lando, Michael de L.

1981 Erin and Britannia: The Historical Background to a Modern Tragedy. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Larsen, Sidsel S.

Larsen, Sidsel S. (continued)

Lears, T.J. Jackson

Leyton, Elliott


Linz, J.J.

Livingstone, Robin


Lopate, C.

Lopez, G.
McAdam, Noel

MacAoidh, Cian

McCann, May

Macauley, Conor

McGinn, Daniel

McGuffin, John

MacPóilín, Aodán

MacSiacais, Geórgítí

Malcomson, Anthony

Mallon, Tom
Northern Ireland Office, The
1990 "Personal Letter to Ms Nőirín Uí Cléirigh, Chairperson, Glór na nGael, West Belfast Committee." From Peter Brooke, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. October 22. (Typewritten.)

1991 "Education in Northern Ireland: A New Direction." (Typewritten.)

Northern Ireland Public Records Office, The

ó Cuív, Brian

ó Fearaíl, Pádraig

ó Fíaich, tAthair Tomás

ó hAdhmaill, Féilim


1991 "The Political Vetting of Community Work in Northern Ireland: Information Update." (Typewritten.)

ó hAilín, Tomás
O’Hearn, Denis

O’Malley, Pádraig

Ó Maolchraoibhe, Pádraig

Ó Muilleoir, Máirtín

Ó Muirí, Pól

Ó Néill, Eoghan

O’Snodaigh, Pádraig

Olesen, Virginia and E. Whittaker

Palmer, Richard

Pearse, Pádraig
Pi-Sunyer, Oriol

Political Vetting of Community Work, Working Group

Presbyterian Church in Ireland, The

Pringle, D.G.

Pritchard, Rosalind M.O.

Probert, Belinda

Punch, Maurice

Rebel, Hermann


Republican Movement, The
Richmond, Anthony H.  
1987 "Ethnic Nationalism: Social Science Paradigms."  

Ritchie, Michael  
1990 "Political Vetting: The Civil Liberties Issues."  

Roseberry, William  


Roseberry, William and Jay O'Brien  

Rowthorn, Bob and Naomi Wayne  

Sagarin E. and J. Moneymaker  

Sawey, Marion  


Scherman, Katharine  
Schutz, Alfred

Schweitzer, David


Scott, James C.


Segal, Bernard E.

Sinn Féin


Sluka, Jeffrey A.

Smith, Anthony
Smyth, Damian
1989 "Cultural Pluralism, or Plain Sectarianism?"
[Interview with James Hawthorne, Chair, Cultural Traditions Group.] Fortnight 278 (November): 28-30.

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, The
London: HMSO

Stocking, G.
Man 6(3): 369-391.

Stohl, Michael & George A. Lopez

Sugar, Peter F.

Sweeney, K.

Taylor, Peter

Thornton, Chris

ULTACH Trust
1990 "Information Leaflet." (Typewritten.)

Ulster People's College Students
1990 "Personal letter to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke." September 3. (Typewritten.)
Ulster Unionist Party, The

Ulster Volunteer Force, The

Walsh, Dermot

Ward, Margaret

Watson, David

Weinsheimer, Joel C.

Whittaker, Elvi


Williams, Raymond


Woolard, Kathryn A.