

manchester MARTYRS commemoration

RALLY:- 3 pm in Mandela Building, (Polytechnic Students Union) Oxford Rd.

The following organisations and individuals have been invited to speak:

Sinn Fein

Irish Republican Socialist Party

The newly formed committee of relatives of Irish political prisoners held in English jails.

Women and Ireland to speak on Strip Searches, the degrading and humiliating practice suffered by women prisoners in Armagh jail since November 1982 and now also being used to try and break two Irish women prisoners in Brixton prison, England.

The Irish in Britain Representation Group to speak on the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Eileen Murphy, author of the play 'Where the Fenians Sleep' to speak on the Manchester Martyrs.

A representative of the Dunnes Stores Strikers, from Dublin, who are showing their solidarity with the struggle of the Azanian people by refusing to handle South African goods.

Pakistani Workers Association (Britain)

Dave Douglas, National Union of Mineworkers.

Support Irish Republican Prisoners!
Stop Strip Searches! Ban Plastic Bullets!
Repeal the P.T.A.!

manchester MARTYRS commemoration



ATTACK ON THE PRISON VAN AT MANCHESTER, AND RESCUE OF THE FENIAN LEADERS.

"God Save Ireland,"
said the heroes,
"God Save Ireland,"
said they all.
"Whether on the scaffold high
Or the battlefield we die
O, what matter when
for Erin dear we fall!"

from 'God Save Ireland'
(The Prayer of the Manchester Martyrs)
(9th song by T.D. Sullivan)



SUNDAY 24th NOVEMBER 1985

MARCH:- Assemble 12.30pm Longsight Market.
Dickenson Road, MANCHESTER 13.

RALLY:- 3 pm in Mandela Building, (Polytechnic Students Union) Oxford Rd.

Support Irish Republican Prisoners!
Stop Strip Searches! Ban Plastic Bullets!
Repeal the P.T.A.!

William Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien

Since being publicly hanged at the walls of Manchester's New Bailey prison on the 23rd November, 1867, William Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien have been honoured and remembered as the Manchester Martyrs. These three Fenian volunteers were executed in revenge for the accidental death of a policeman during the successful rescue of two Fenian leaders in the aftermath of the Irish uprising of March 1867.

In March the Fenians had led an armed uprising in Ireland to liberate it from British rule and to replace this with an Irish Republic. The insurgents were defeated, followed by widespread arrests and heavy sentences. Irish public protests led to the death sentences being commuted. Thus the Manchester Martyrs are the only people who as a result of the uprising were executed for the Republican cause, and the annual commemoration upholds the tradition of the Fenian uprising and of fighting and dying for the Republic.

The Manchester Martyrs or The Smashing of the Van

On the Eighteenth of September, it was a dreadful year,
When sorrow and excitement ran all through Lancashire,
At a gathering of the Irish boys they volunteered each man,
To release those Irish prisoners from out of the prison van.

Chorus

Hurrah, my lads, for freedom, let all join heart and hand!
May the Lord have mercy on the boys that helped to smash
the van!

Kelly and Deasy were their names, I suppose you know them well;
Remanded for a week they were in Belle Vue Gaol to dwell.
When taking of the prisoners back, their trial for to stand,
To make a safe deliverance they conveyed them in a van.

The trial of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien was organised to ensure their conviction and execution. The jury contained six M.P.s, two baronets and the rest local businessmen. The judge (known as the 'hanging judge') dismissed vital legal points. Much of the evidence was contradictory and unreliable, but the jury took only just over an hour to return guilty verdicts.

Michael O'Brien in his speech, after being found guilty, declared his regret for the policeman's death and his innocence of the charge of murder, but "not for the sake of mercy. I'll have no mercy." He added:-

"I'll die, as many thousands have died, for the sake of their beloved land, and in defence of it. I will die proudly and triumphantly in defence of republican principles and the liberty of an oppressed and enslaved people."

Commemorate the Manchester Martyrs
SUNDAY 24th NOVEMBER 1985

In Manchester one morning these heroes did agree
Their leaders, Kelly and Deasy, should have their liberty;
They drank a health to Ireland, and soon made up the plan,
To meet the prisoners on the road and take and smash the van.

With courage bold these heroes went, and soon the van did stop;
They cleared the guards from back and front, and then smashed
in the top;

But when blowing open the lock they chanced to kill a man,
So three must die on the scaffold high for smashing of the van.

One cold November morning in Eighteen Sixty-Seven,
These martyrs to their country's cause a sacrifice were given.
"God Save Ireland!" was their cry, all through the crowd it ran,
The Lord have mercy on the boys that helped to smash the van!

Street Ballad written in 1867

SUPPORT IRISH REPUBLICAN P.O.W.S IN ENGLISH JAILS!

The struggle in Ireland against British rule carries on in 1985, 118 years after the Manchester Martyrs gave their lives "in defence of republican principles and the liberty of an oppressed and enslaved people".

Today, as in 1867, there are Irish Republican Prisoners in English jails. Relatives of the prisoners have issued a statement saying:

"There are currently 46 prisoners; 35 of these are members of the I.R.A. The other 11 ... are serving sentences after a series of frame-up trials, designed to placate British public opinion.

We believe neither category of prisoner have received a fair trial, so whether captured soldier or innocent victim, we regard

them all as political prisoners.

These men will serve out their sentences, some in 'control units', all of them hundreds of miles from their families."

The relatives of Irish political prisoners held in English jails have set up a committee to campaign for the prisoners' five demands, and we have invited someone from this committee to speak at the Rally. We urge all people to support those five, just demands:

1. Repatriation to Ireland on demand
2. Release of prisoners framed by the British police
3. An end to Solitary Confinement and Special Control Units.
4. Release of Patrick Hackett on medical grounds
5. Abolition of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.