

# Irish Girl Airs Londonderry Conflict In Parliament

London — A 21-year-old Irish girl last week held the House of Commons spellbound with a maiden speech of quiet eloquence and powerful emotion on the Northern Ireland conflict.

Bernadette Devlin, barely 5 feet tall, looked like a shy schoolgirl as she stood in the crowded Labor back benches. But there was no shyness as she spoke.

The record books show no other case in which a member made a speech on the day of swearing-in. She also broke tradition by speaking on a controversial subject.

She was there, she said, for "the oppressed people" of Northern Ireland—Roman Catholic and Protestant. She bitterly attacked the Unionist (conservative) politicians who have controlled Ulster for 50 years as men who encouraged religious hatred to preserve their own privileges.

Civil rights demonstrators in Ulster are demanding electoral reforms to establish the principle of one man, one vote for local elections, now subject to property qualifications and districting that insure Protestant control.

No single sentence Miss Devlin spoke in the House is likely to be picked out and preserved among great political utterances. What mattered, in her passion and her courage, was that London was at last hearing a voice not of the Irish Establishment but of the tormented ordinary people of Ulster.

"Electrifying," was the description of one Tory member, Norman St. John Stevas. He said it was the greatest maiden speech since the celebrated effort of F. E. Smith, later the Earl of Birkenhead, in 1906.

A hardened British Broadcasting Corporation commentator, Conrad Vossbark, called it "a speech for human freedom, illuminated by poetry." The Commons itself, hushed for long moments and then bursting out in delighted laughter at her sallies, seemed to agree.



Key Men in Crisis

The Rev. Ian Paisley, left, head of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ireland, presently in prison, who is violently anti-Catholic and has accused the present government of Northern Ireland of discriminating against Protestants. Northern Ireland's Prime minister, Capt. Terence O'Neill, right, has placed his political career at stake in an effort to secure a "one man — one vote" reform. (RNS)

The setting was dramatic because the Commons was holding an emergency debate on the crisis in Northern Ireland. It was the more dramatic because one of the first

speakers was a representative of the Unionist aristocracy that Miss Devlin opposes, Robert Chichester-Clark.

In an upper-class English

accent, he told how he had toured Londonderry after the riot last Saturday night and found "stark misery" of fear among the people. He blamed the Irish Republican Army for the weekend bombings.

Miss Devlin was called next by the Speaker. Beginning "Mr. Speaker, sir," in a small Irish voice, she talked for 22 minutes with only a glance or two at some notes in her hand.

The policy of the Unionists, she said, is to keep Protestant working people agitated against the Roman Catholics so they will not rebel against the general poverty of Ulster.

She agreed with Mr. Chichester-Clark in his phrase "stark human misery" for Londonderry. But, she said, "I saw it not in one night of broken glass but in 50 years of stark human misery."

"There is no place for us, the ordinary peasant, in Northern Ireland. It is a society of the landlords, who by ancient charter of Charles II still hold the rights of ordinary people in Northern Ireland over such things as fishing and paying ridiculous and exorbitant ground rents."

She drew laughter and Labor cheers when she dismissed Mr. Chichester-Clark's I.R.A. charge as "tripe."

Then she spoke again of the rioting last Saturday night in Bogside, the Catholic section of Londonderry, and again scoffed at Mr. Chichester-Clark by implication.

"I was not strutting around with my hands behind my back," she said, "touring the area and examining the damage and tut-tutting every time a policeman had his head slightly scratched."

"I was building barricades to keep the police out of Bogside because I knew it was not safe for them to come in."

"I saw that night on the Bogside, with my own eyes, 1,000 policemen come in a military formation to that economically and socially depressed area, six then 12

abreast like wild Indians screaming their heads off, to terrorize the inhabitants so they could beat them off the streets into their houses."

While denouncing the Unionists, she also had hard words for Labor, saying "any Socialist government worth its guts would have got rid of them long ago." Prime Minister Wilson, who was listening intently, joined in the laughter.

After the jabs and the ironies, Miss Devlin came to a bitter conclusion, fatalistic and very Irish. She said this whole debate was coming "much too late for the people of Ireland."

What could the British Government do? she asked. It could have troops take over altogether in Northern Ireland. "But the one common point among all Ulstermen," she said, "is that they don't like Englishmen telling them what to do."

## Merton Collection Left to College

Louisville, Ky. — (RNS) — Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk, poet and author who died last December, left most of his literary and personal writings to Bellarmine-Ursuline College.

Hundreds of Merton's unpublished works will be deposited in the college's Thomas Merton Room, opened in 1964 to honor the man some have called "the greatest spiritual writer of our generation." Manuscripts, tape recordings, notes, journals, letters and photographs are included in a collection believed to be unique in its breadth and depth.

The Trappist was accidentally electrocuted in Bangkok, Thailand, last Dec. 10, during a Par East tour.

## Buffalo Group Formed on 'Doctrinal Crisis'

Buffalo — (NC) — An association of laymen and priests called "Credo" has been formed here to "become a focal and vocal point for the faithful, silent majority of Catholics concerned" with "the current doctrinal crisis facing the Catholic Church."

The group's formation at an invitation-only meeting of 80 persons came at a time of proliferation of liberal groups in the diocese of Buffalo.

The last year has seen the formation of an independent priests' association, an independent social action group called Independent Catholic Action Now (I CAN) and the formation of a third group called "Vox Populi," which came to being during the dissent over Pope Paul's condemnation of artificial birth control.

"Credo" listed as its objectives the development of richer spiritual life among its members, the promotion of Church truth and the refutation of error, implementation of "authentic renewal of the Church," and support of the pope and bishops.

The group also listed among its special concerns unauthorized liturgical experimentation, unorthodox catechetical texts and religious instructions, disobedience to Church teaching and authority, "aberrant" sex education and drives to relax or abolish abortion laws.



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## ANGLICAN BISHOP ASKS PRAYERS FOR POPE

Colombo, Ceylon — (RNS) — Anglican Bishop Harold de Soysa of Colombo has asked his people to pray for Pope Paul VI.

Writing in The Ceylon Churchman, he asked readers to look sympathetically upon the difficulties being experienced by the Roman Catholic Church, to pray for their Catholic brethren and especially for Catholic adherence to Church authorities.

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**MEETING WITH POPE**  
Vatican City — (RNS) — Bernard Cardinal Alfrink, primate of the Netherlands, had a private audience with Pope Paul. Details of the meeting were not revealed but some sources said the continuing dissent of Dutch Catholics on priestly celibacy and birth control were discussed.

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## AROUND THE COUNTRY

**New Bibles for 'Deep Freeze'**  
New York — (RNS) — The Chapel of the Snows, the only house of worship on the continent of Antarctica, now has specially marked Protestant, Catholic and Jewish editions of the Bible — gifts of the Laymen's National Bible Committee.

Capt. Milton Prince, USNR, of Brooklyn, presented the volumes to Rear Adm. Lloyd Abbott, commander of the U.S. Antarctic Support Force, in a ceremony at the chapel Jan. 27. Capt. Prince recently returned here from his 13,000-mile round-trip mission.

**Connecticut Bishops in Abortion Fight**  
Hartford — (RNS) — Connecticut's Catholic bishops have urged state legislators to reject a bill before the General Assembly which would liberalize state statutes on abortion. The measure is supported by the Connecticut Council of Churches.

In a statement read at a public hearing the bishops emphasized "our nation's historic concern for the basic rights of the individual as enunciated in the Declaration of Independence."

They charged that to liberalize existing abortion laws "would be to pursue a discarded totalitarian philosophy that some people are, in the social order, more desirable than others."

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