

Clergymen Urge Calm in Northern Ireland

Belfast, Northern Ireland (RNS) — Irish church leaders and rank and file churchmen played a leading role in trying to dampen violence and mediate in the Northern Ireland crisis as Irish Republican Army (IRA) hunger striker Bobby Sands neared death by fasting, in order to force the British government to grant non-criminal political status to IRA prisoners in the Maze Prison near Belfast.

Tensions ran high as riots flared in Londonderry, Belfast and other centers.

In eight nights of rioting in

Londonderry, up to 300 youths hurled Molotov cocktails, sulphuric acid bombs, hand grenades, stones and bricks at soldiers who replied with hundreds of plastic bullets.

Resentment at British treatment of Sands was further inflamed by the killing of Londonderry youths James Browne, 16, and James Gary English, 19, who died when an Army Land Rover crashed into them during rioting. The Army said it was an accident, and the police are investigating, but Londonderry Catholics regard the killings as

deliberate.

While fury raged in Londonderry and rioting broke out in West Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland, church leaders tried hard to calm inhabitants in the British province.

Sand's fast was begun to allow a number of prison reforms, and to refuse prison work. He also called for non-criminal, prisoner of war status for all IRA prisoners.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher refused all, and confrontation between British forces and the

IRA seemed inevitable with Protestant paramilitaries lurking in the wings.

Pope John Paul II addressed 25,000 people in St. Peter's Square April 22, saying that the joy of Easter had been marred by violence in Northern Ireland and other countries.

In Dublin, the papal nuncio, Archbishop Gaetano Alibrandi, met relatives and supporters of Sands and there were hints that the pope might be asked to intervene directly.

In Ireland, itself, Catholic leader Cardinal Thomas O'Fiaich suggested that British flexibility would go a long way to solving the crisis. Derry's Catholic Bishop Edward Daly confessed that he was extremely worried about the violence if Sands died.

Meanwhile, four church leaders — Cardinal O'Fiaich, Rev. Donald Craig, a Presbyterian moderator; Archbishop John Armstrong, of the Church of Ireland (Anglican); and the Rev. Sydney Callaghan, a Methodist leader — issued a joint statement and appealed for calm.

Shortly after they met, however, another murder was committed. This time John Robinson, 38, a former member of the mainly Protestant Ulster Defense Force, was gunned down.

In a related development, two members of the European Human Rights Commission, at the request of Sand's sister, Marcella, went to the Maze Prison in a last attempt to prevent his death and the turmoil that was expected to ensue. The initiative failed, however, when Sands declined to see the visiting commissioners.

The Church retains a last word on the affair. Sands, a Catholic, has received the last rites and the Roman Catholic Church has set its face against the grave step of excommunicating members involved in paramilitary organizations, despite demands from Protestants to do so. Paramilitary members who die, whether by their own wish or not, are still given a Christian burial — on both sides of the religious divide.

Courier Launches Circulation Drive

The Courier-Journal, official newspaper of the Rochester diocese, has launched its first circulation drive in 11 years.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has sent a letter to all pastors informing them of the drive and asking their support in promoting the Courier-Journal among all the Catholics of the diocese.

The newspaper, the bishop said, "Gives us a practical means every week to teach with the Church, as well as reaching out to the unchurched. It is also an extremely valuable means of

keeping our people informed of diocesan-wide needs and programs."

Speaking about the letter, Bishop Clark says he feels that such a voluntary method of increasing circulation is better than any mandated plan. "I hope that through this effort our people will be encouraged to read the Courier-Journal and lend their support to the important work it does."

The bishop also has directed the management of the newspaper to work closely with priests on the project and to continue to work for improvement in the paper.

Quality of Care to Be Topic

"Advocacy for Quality of Care" will be the topic at the 22nd annual meeting of the Mental Health Chapter from noon to 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 13, at the Country Club of Rochester.

I. Joseph Harris, state commissioner of quality care for the mentally disabled, will be the speaker. He will address quality of care with emphasis on the people affected by the mental health system — the patients and clients.

Health Seminar

A health seminar will be sponsored by the Seton branches of St. Mary's Hospital beginning at 9:30 a.m., Friday, May 15 in the Bishop Kearney Lounge. Featured speaker will be Dr. Gerald Rubenstein, area psychologist. Dr. Rubenstein

will discuss the stresses women face in today's changing world, according to a St. Mary's release. For reservations or further information those interested may call Mrs. Richard Maurer, 328-3300.

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

Recognition For Catholic Schools

James S. Coleman hit a hot button when he released his study which contrasted the achievements of public and private schools.

The first anguished reaction of the public education lobby expressed all the open-mindedness and subtlety we have come to expect from the National Rifle Association.

I'm not going to attempt any critical judgment of this report. Clearly, that competence in the Catholic press belongs to Father Greeley who has been doing this kind of research for years.

But a few general observations on the widespread public attention being given to the Coleman study and to the education of America's children:

Apart from the problems of the public schools, it is good to see public acknowledgment of the valuable service to particular children, and to the nation, by those people who have given much to serve in the Catholic schools.

RSMs Slate Vocation Evening

Women in the process of discerning their vocation have been invited to an evening of prayer and reflection, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 13, at St. John the Evangelist Convent on Humboldt Street.

The evening will include celebration of the Eucharist, and is one of a number of events sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy Vocation Team as part of a Faith Sharing program for women making choices regarding vocation.

Further information on the program is available through Sister Kathleen Mary O'Connell, 83 North St., Geneseo, 14454; (716) 243-4663.

SPRING DINNER
MAY 20
The Alumnae Association of St. Mary's Hospital will hold their Spring Dinner, Wednesday, May 20 at the Diplomat Party House. Reservations can be made by calling Ruth Courtney, or Mary Ann Palermo, program chairwoman, at 385-4307. They must be made by May 8.

been a particularly difficult time for them. Economic pressures, the changing populations of parishes, the decline in the number of teaching Sisters — all these forces must have given the teachers and administrators the feeling that they were being asked to staff the Titanic.

It's difficult to maintain the personal enthusiasm and dedication necessary for this exhausting service when everyone is telling you that the ship is sinking.

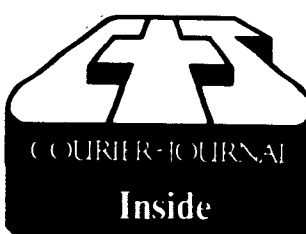
Personally, while I have always had great respect for the service offered in the Catholic schools, I've never been able to understand how so many of them have been able to survive the economic pressures of the past 15 years, especially those which remained in troubled inner-city areas.

That they have survived and that the Coleman study recognizes their superior service is testimony to an immense amount of personal dedication and generosity on the part of people who haven't had much encouragement or recognition.

It would be mean-spirited and unpatriotic to gloat over the findings which describe the problems of the public schools.

But it is only honest to note that these Catholic school educators received little or no recognition and support from their colleagues in the public schools, particularly from the spokesmen of the public education lobbies.

These spokesmen, almost universally, have portrayed



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the work of the private schools not as a contribution to the educational needs of the nation, but as a threat to the funding which was too often described as the only obstacle to better public school education.

However, the most offensive criticism used to protect and expand the funding of the public schools was that the Catholic schools denied their students the opportunity to be fully American. It was as though American citizenship required not only birth or naturalization, but also a diploma from a public school.

The public education spokesmen either knew or should have known that Catholic schools taught the nation's history and values as well as a religious tradition.

There were no black children in the Catholic schools I attended; nor were there any in the public schools I might have attended. The state law forbade integration in both.

There were no Jewish children, either. But when I played with a Jewish friend after school, I suspect that I had a better understanding of his tradition and values than did our public school companions. My religion classes gave me some understanding of that.

The difficulties of the public schools are of concern to all of us. Parents who choose to use private schools cannot ignore the institutions which educate the majority.

But, given the judgments of the Coleman report, it's about time for the public school lobbyists to recognize with honesty the contribution of those who educate in private and religious schools.

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