

Murrays' Execution Stayed

Fifth Estate Collective

On December 9th the Irish Supreme Court set aside the death penalty for anarchists Noel and Marie Murray, charged with shooting an off-duty policeman during a bank robbery. That's the good news, but there's not much to feel victorious about, since Noel has been resentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor, while Marie is to have a new trial before a special criminal court.

These are pretty much the actions suggested by Stuart Christie to the *Fifth Estate* last month ("Latest in Murray Case," FE 279, December, 1976). Christie, a Scottish contact, predicted the government would be unwilling to carry out its first public execution in 22 years in the face of growing international protest. An Associated Press dispatch of December 9th called the move a postponement of a showdown over the death penalty, which is being fought by many members of the ruling Irish Labor Party.

As previously suggested, the Irish government probably called for the death sentence for the Murrays to assure potential Common Market investors that their capital outlays would be well protected in the Irish state. But their strategy backfired when even liberal politicians of Common Market countries (like France and the Netherlands) denounced the harsh sentences; hence the government's retrenchment. It's doubtful that the special criminal court will be any more fair than the first monkey-court; but image is all that counts for the government at this point.

Both Christie and the London-based *Freedom* fortnightly say the defense committees will work for a retrial with a jury for both Marie and Noel. Marie's new trial may relate to the charge that she actually fired the shot killing the policeman, but in any case, if they were tried together and the court was found by the government to be unfair, then both should be given new trials.

The defense committees themselves are employing a variety of methods to draw attention to the case which is rarely mentioned in the straight press. A group in Bolton, Lancashire, recently staged a bit of street theatre/ mock lynching and leafleted a large audience, but the gathering was quickly snuffed by the police. Another group occupied an Aer Lingus Airlines office in Birmingham, England. We'll pass the word on other activity as we get it, but our main contact in Dublin has been somewhat slow in passing the info along.

Meanwhile, letters of protest can be sent to the Minister of Justice, 72-76 St. Stephens Green, Dublin, Eire; or the Ambassador, Republic of Ireland, 2234 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington D.C., 20088; if you can send a donation to help the main committee, their address is the Murray Defense Group, Box 2, Rising Free, 138-142 Drummond St., London NW1.



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