

"THE TROUBLES" IN IRELAND

Jacquelin C. Peters

*'Tis Ireland, my country, the birthplace of heroes,
The home of the patriot, warrior and sage,
Of bards and of chieftains, whose names live in
story,
May they live forever, on history's page.
You once were a proud and glorious nation,
Your name and your fame were known all over the
world,
'Til misfortune came o'er you and sad desolation,
Your moral banner in slavery lay unfurled.
(excerpt from "My Own Native Land," a tradi-
tional song)*

"The troubles" is the euphemism used in Ireland to refer to the host of problems attending the conflict over British presence in that land. Irish history provides ample themes for music of struggle sung in the *scan-nos* ("old") style. There is much historical commentary on politics, persecution and the love and longing for the land; but there is also a wealth of contemporary expressions that address the tragedies of occupation and civil war, the loss of family members, and the corruption of childhood innocence. The old repertory, never abandoned and therefore never subjected to a "revival," provides historical context for the new songs that chronicle current events destined to become part of traditional lore.

Musicians who compose and perform traditional Irish songs of struggle include Paddy Tunney, a masterful singer and participant at the 1976 Festival of American Folklife; Tommy Sands, renown songwriter who expresses reconciliatory themes; Dermot Henry, a singer of "rebel songs" now residing in New York; and Cathie Ryan-Henry, also based in New York and possessed of an excellent voice and trained by her parents in the old style. Composer Christy

Moore, whose reputation in Ireland is comparable to that of the late Woody Guthrie in America, has written a wealth of songs on many social issues.

Frank Harte, the All-Ireland Champion singer from Chapelizod in Dublin, has a repertory of over 8,000 songs. Son of a "pub" proprietor and an architect by profession, Mr. Harte was introduced to traditional Irish songs by a fateful encounter with a man selling sheet music at a fair. This began a life-long passion for collecting songs and for the culture that goes with them.

CITATIONS AND FURTHER READINGS

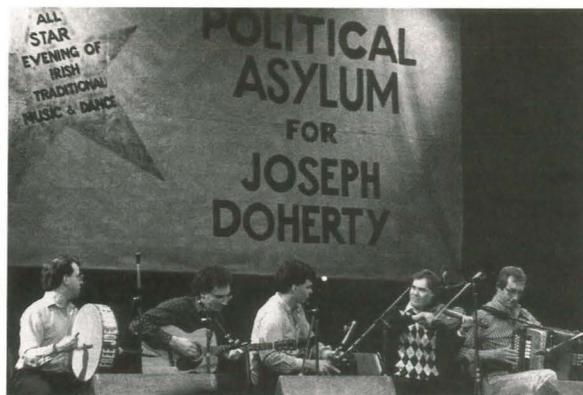
Cowdery, James R. 1990. *The Melodic Tradition of Ireland*. Kent: The Kent State University Press.

Ireland. 1985. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*. 6:378-382.

Kelly, K. 1982. *The Longest War: Northern Ireland and the IRA*. Dingle, Westport and London.

Moore, Christy. 1984. *The Christy Moore Songbook*. Dover, New Hampshire: Brandon Book Publishers.

Harte, Frank, ed. (In press). *Songs of Dublin*. Cork, Ireland: Ossian Publishers.



Traditional Irish music and dance were performed at a benefit concert in New York City in February, 1990. Performing are (left to right): Myron Bretholz — bodhran (Irish drum), Mark Simos — guitar, Jerry O'Sullivan — uilleann pipes, Seamus Connolly — fiddle, James Keane — Irish accordion. (Photo by Sarah Towle)

SUGGESTED LISTENING

Harte, Frank. *Daybreak and a Candle-End*. SPIN 995.

_____. *And Listen to My Song*. SPIN 994.

Men of No Property. *Ireland: The Final Struggle*. Paredon P 1039.

Moloney, Mick, Robbie O'Connell & Jimmy Keane. *Kilkelly*. Green Linnet Records CSIF 1072.

Moloney, Mick, Jimmy Keane, Robbie O'Connell, and Liz Carroll. *There Were Roses*. Green Linnet Records CSIF 1057.