

## Opinion

# Save sympathy for victims of violence

A friend of mine recently asked me to try to explain the situation in Northern Ireland, one that causes me great pain and with which I grew up — once having a terrorist bomb explode half a mile from my house.

Sometimes in the United States I sense an inadequacy of knowledge of international current affairs. In fairness, much of this may just be that it's hard to understand the social problems of our own countries, let alone other ones. Perhaps it also stems from a tradition of isolationism predating World War I and from economic and political overconfidence. A good example of it is the attitude widely expressed that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) are freedom fighters struggling against British imperialism.

How can anyone applaud an organization which not long ago attempted to murder the prime minister and cabinet of the legitimately elected government of one of the leading European nations and, incidentally, one of America's staunchest allies?

The situation is as follows:

Eire (Southern Ireland) is a republic — an entirely independent country with a Catholic majority. It is a full member of the European

**Jim Greenhill**  
Staff Columnist

Community in its own right. It happens to share a common frontier with Britain, as Mexico shares with the United States. The government of Eire condemns both the IRA and NorAid (the American fund-raising group). Membership of the IRA has been illegal in Eire under governments of both political parties for many years.

Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom just as Wales, Scotland and England are and in the same sense that Hawaii and Alaska are full parts of the United States. All of its inhabitants have the full civil rights of any citizen of the U.K. and carry British passports. It chose to remain part of Britain as a result of a free vote in the early 1920s, and it has a Protestant majority (as does mainland Britain) which has consistently fought any attempts to change that.

The IRA is a relatively tiny group whose objectives include the absorption of Northern Ireland, against the wishes of the majority of its inhabitants, into Eire. It is nothing more or less than a terrorist group. It has a

political wing called Sinn Fein, which endeavors to maintain as 'clean' an image as possible. An emphasis on the political wing this decade has been a reaction to the failure of violence and an attempt to appeal more to potential American supporters. Do not be conned by it. It remains the same organization with the same purpose, both stated and unstated.

The Christmas 1983 bombing of Harrod's, the famous London department store, is just one example of the obscenity of the IRA. Before the bombing, the organization called London's Metropolitan Police force and told them that there were bombs in a number of places at different ends of the city. This ploy was an effort to split the resources of the emergency services as much as possible to lessen their chances of finding the actual bomb before it detonated and to reduce their effectiveness in dealing with the ensuing crisis. They also called Harrod's and told them that there was a bomb inside the store — hoping that they would evacuate their large number of customers and staff into Hans Crescent, where the bomb was actually planted, and thus maximize injury and loss of life.

It is only through the foresight of

Harrod's management and the police that the store was not evacuated and a rapid covert search was instead carried out, thus substantially reducing casualties when the bomb exploded. A U.S. citizen was among those who died.

The fact is that the IRA — far from being glamorous freedom fighters — are criminal, inhumane terrorists.

There are British troops in Northern Ireland because the majority wish to remain part of the U.K. Britain has no desire to send her soldiers to their deaths in any part of the country. It is thoroughly inconvenient to have to use the army to prevent civil disturbance — a massive drain on Britain's defense resources and economy. It makes it much more difficult for the country to fulfill its considerable NATO commitments.

The IRA is a threat to stability in Ireland, the United Kingdom and Europe. Eire is politically and economically extremely weak. If Ireland were to be united as a republic, then it would inevitably be a weak country. There are very real fears that the IRA would act to create further disintegration and eventually bring about a left-wing government. Soviet weapons are frequently found in captured

arms caches.

For Americans to support such an organization is similar to the idea of the English supporting a small Mexican terrorist group which attempted to murder the president and his top advisers as part of a campaign to reabsorb Texas into Mexico against the wishes of the Mexican government, remembering that America took Texas by military force during the last century.

So next time you hear of a terrorist attack in Ireland or on the mainland, next time you hear mention of the IRA or Sinn Fein, do not have sympathy for the terrorists. Do not contribute to NorAid. Instead, remember the families of the soldiers and innocent bystanders, including women and children, who are killed and injured every year. Above all, remember the people of Northern Ireland and of Britain's cities who must live with the constant threat of terrorist outrage. Save your sympathy for a community divided by violence.

*Jim Greenhill is a senior journalism and English major from London, England. A slightly different version of this column appeared in The Tar Heel, Thursday, May 23, 1985.*

# A less filling look at beauty pageants

Did you see the Miss North Carolina pageant this weekend?

Do you want this woman representing our state?

Neither do I.

Now normally I don't mind beauty pageants. There's certainly nothing wrong with celebrating female beauty, and God knows I do that enough. But beauty pageants, I think, have run their course as a part of American culture, and it's high time we stopped judging women on the basis of their looks and started judging them on the size of their — I'm not even going to say it.

The reason I'm down on beauty pageants is because of the latest Miss North Carolina some boneheaded judges elected this weekend.

In the question-and-answer session, normally a forum for analyzing the depth of the contestant's knowledge, this woman was asked something like, "How do you feel the 'melting pot theory' has affected the United States?" First she asked the judges to repeat the question, and then she said something like, "That question is not within my focus of study." (I am NOT making this up.)

How many of you out there could answer this question? How many of your PETS could answer this question?

This woman obviously never watched "Schoolhouse Rock" when she was growing up, because it explained all about it in 30 seconds. Then again, she was probably practicing her acceptance speech.

And guess what her aim for her term as Miss North Carolina is? Go ahead, guess.

"The Fight Against Illiteracy." (I

**John Bland**  
Less Filling

swear I am not making this up. Sometimes real life is just too funny to ignore.)

Don't tell me, "Hey, John, get off the poor girl's back. She's been preparing for years and years for this honor, and she deserves the acclaim the title brings."

Yeah, right. She's been preparing that victory strut for so long she apparently didn't have time to crack a book. And the only books she's ever seen have been the ones she's stacked on her head to make her walk without a bounce.

This girl must keep Pearl Drops in business, because when she opens her mouth they can see those teeth in Guam. Probably because she's got about 12 more than the average human.

Sure, she's very attractive, and she sings very well, and she speaks clearly and with poise. But it's high time we stopped judging women on the basis of looks and speaking ability. In fact, it's high time we stopped judging women at all.

That's all I'm going to say on the matter. In the meantime I'm going to offer you a little history of beauty pageants. Sort of.

The term itself is derived from the Latin "beautius," which means "pretty decent looking," and "pageantius," meaning "a way to find more bleached-blond anchorwomen."

While excavating a prehistoric site

near Nairobi in 1978, archaeologists discovered the remains of the first-ever winner of a beauty pageant. Scientists figured the skeleton, "Cindy," must have been in some kind of a pageant because she had been buried with a fossilized bouquet of flowers, several pieces of jewelry and an Amana Radarange.

And beauty pageants have been popular in America from the very start:

Nov. 23, 1620 — The first-ever American beauty pageant was initiated at the first-ever American Thanksgiving, when, bored out of their skulls by the football game (Chiefs-Chargers) and stoned out of their gourds by the newly discovered American tobacco, the English settlers and their Indian guests (or is it the other way around?) asked their womenfolk to have a little "talent" contest. But when Priscilla Alden got up to sing "Feelings," the resulting

riot forced the settlers to outlaw beauty pageants until:

June 1, 1678, Salem, Mass. (AP) — Eliza Booberry is crowned the first Miss Congeniality at the 1st Annual Eastern Massachusetts Leech-Gathering and Barbecue. Two days later, Eliza is barbecued when it is discovered she used witchcraft to enhance her bust size.

Aug. 8, 1877, near Big Bend, Utah — In an incident which looked suspiciously like a rerun of "F Troop," Chief Big Guy of the Gungho tribe, on the lam from a local cavalry unit, disguised himself as a contestant in the 47th Annual Miss Big Bend Bronco Bustin' Pageant. Needless to say, the Chief won, helped by his soulful rendition of "Unchained Melody," and his courageous story has become an inspiration to transvestites and sitcom writers everywhere.

March 15, 1919, New York — Miss Eileen Dwork won the 1919

Miss New York pageant and then set herself ablaze with Chanel No. 5 as a martyr for the women's suffrage movement. She was immediately extinguished when the emcee, Bert Parks, wrapped her winning mink stole around her shoulders.

Nov. 20, 1993, Atlantic City — The last-ever Miss America pageant is held at Trump Palace. The winner, Miss Tina Vernon of Mississippi, leaves this tearful, heartwarming sentiment as a lasting tribute to all the strong, sensitive and talented women, contestants and winners alike, who have supported beauty pageants for hundreds of years:

"Ahhhh! I broke a nail!"

*John Bland, a senior English major from Charlotte, was named Miss Photogenic at the 1989 Miss Cleveland pageant. He thinks melting pots are dangerous and they must be stopped before someone gets seriously hurt by flaming radishes.*

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