denigrate all elected representatives who can't see that such a simple act of faith would put a few quid in their pockets (or the pockets of the Dublin companies for whom they work)!

But there is a serious side to this. If Ulster Unionism, and the Government, does not have a strategy of its own which can constructively counter the madness which clutches at simplistic solutions, then the naive and the malicious will hold sway with the Northern Ireland Office, and Ulster Unionism may once again find itself driven to the trenches.

The Sinn Fein/IRA tactics of the past 25 years have consistently been misjudged on the basis of the latest fortunes befalling that organisation. Too often Government and political commentators see an IRA setback as the beginning of the end of terrorism. That is why so many people misunderstood the 1994 ceasefire and saw it as a likely watershed in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

To better comprehend what is the future prospect for Peace, one should listen carefully to what Father Denis Faul says, when he points out the longer-term dangers which emanate from the IRA.

Whatever happens, he says:-

(a)  the militant side of Nationalism never intends to compromise on its demand for a United Ireland.

(b)  these Nationalists are convinced that their aspiration will never be realised through the democratic process, but only through violence.

(c)  the Provisional IRA is determined that this outcome will, and can only, be achieved through them.

Based on that assertion, with which I totally agree, one must then try to discover how to counteract the IRA's strategy over the next 10/20 years and to do that one must understand exactly what we face.

Since 1972 I have consistently worked on the assumption that the IRA has, since the failure of the 1956 - 1962 campaign, adopted and worked to the Mao Tse Tung blueprint for insurrection.

Mao categorised three phases of revolution:-

1.  THE STRATEGIC DEFENSIVE PHASE. Establishing organisational priorities; developing of an educational (propaganda) base; defining safe/base areas; creating structures and developing motivation.