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Ireland's drink culture

By Kenneth Patterson

Ireland is often portrayed as a society with a drink culture. In recent years, through media reports, we have seen the ugly side of this culture. The media has highlighted the problem of alcohol abuse among our youth and young adults. It has reported the effects this problem is having in our cities, with the rise in both violence and unsocial behaviour. On TV news reports, graphic pictures have been shown of drunken acts of mindless violence, images of the effect that binge drinking is having on young people. The casualties of alcohol abuse can be seen nightly in our hospitals' A&E departments. This in turn is putting even more pressure on hospital resources that are already inexcusably stretched due to shameful cutbacks and lack of funding from the government.

Because of the media coverage highlighting the problem, and the resulting public outcry, the government has finally decided to act. Recently, they announced new measures to tackle binge drinking. The new Intoxicating Liquor Bill involves a proposal for a mandatory ID cards for under 21-year-olds, if they want to buy and consume alcohol in licensed premises. Although this seems on the surface like a reasonable proposal, civil liberties groups are worried that it could be a first step towards introducing a national mandatory ID card system for all. The government's proposals also include new and tougher penalties for drunkenness on licensed premises, along with penalties for licensees who continue to serve persons who are drunk or disorderly. Plain-clothes Gardaí will be able to enter licensed premises to detect under-age drinkers. They will also be able to use video evidence in the detection and prosecution of offences. Other proposed measures include the banning of children and young persons under the age of 18 from drinking premises after 8pm. In addition, currently popular practices such as the infamous 'pay in and drink all you want' promotions will be outlawed.

It could be argued, however, that all these new measures will also punish moderate social drinkers, and that their effect will be to unfairly penalise the many responsible young people in our society.

One area that has not been examined by the government in this regard is the high prices charged in pubs and clubs across the country. A pint of minerals, for example, can actually cost more than a pint of Guinness. Surprising also is the fact that a bottle of non-alcoholic beer can cost the same as one that contains alcohol. In practice, these facts do not exactly encourage

young people to abstain from drinking alcohol. If the government is serious about tackling alcohol abuse, then such drinks should be a lot cheaper to buy. Drinks such as alcopops, which are high in alcohol, are currently a very popular drink with young people. This is no accident. The drinks industry has specifically targeted young people as a primary market for these products, using cynical advertising campaigns to promote their consumption as part of a 'sophisticated' lifestyle. Again, if the government is seriously concerned with the welfare of our youth, then measures should be put in place to stop the advertisement of such products.

The abuse of alcohol is not only happening in the pubs and clubs of our city centres. It is also happening in our communities. In some areas it is not uncommon to see youths hanging around the streets drinking alcohol, sometimes in large quantities. If asked why they do it, a common answer to be heard is, 'because there is nothing else to do'. To stop a social problem like this from happening, the government should put properly funded facilities such as youth clubs in place in all communities. These would provide young people with a safe place to go and meet, and a means to occupy themselves without resorting to alcohol.

Statistics have shown that alcohol consumption in this country has increased by over 40% in the last ten years. Participation in regular alcohol abuse or binge drinking by persons of all ages can lead to alcoholism. Alcoholism is progressive and affects a person physically, psychologically and socially. It also has very harmful consequences for the addict's family. For an alcoholic to hold down a job can be difficult, so this in turn will have financial implications for the family. To help both sufferers and families affected by alcohol addiction there are associations and groups that do commendable work in counselling and therapy. Organisations like these should have proper and adequate resources available to them so they can keep working to give both help and support to those who need it.

There are those people who would say that nothing can be done, that the problem of alcohol abuse in our society is just an unfortunate feature of who we are. This isn't necessarily so. Legislative changes will not make the problem totally disappear; more must be done. But if we are to succeed, then people's attitudes - not just the young, but everyone's - must change towards the drinking of alcohol.

Kenneth Patterson is a republican POW in Portlaoise Gaol.

The Civil War remembered

By Malcolm Kerins

80 years ago, on the 24th May 1923, the 11-month Irish civil war ended with a cease-fire called by republican forces. This period of Irish history was marked by the bitterness of the fighting, with both families and friendships destroyed and former comrades becoming sworn enemies, the legacy of which lasts to this day. The triumphant side were the Irish reactionaries, who ascended to political and military power in the new Free State where they remain to this day willing puppets of the British government.

The history of any conflict is always written by the victors and the Irish civil war is no exception. For 80 years, the position taken by those opposed to the Treaty with Britain has been misrepresented by Free State propaganda, with the IRA being portrayed as a minority rump of the republican movement, die-hards who used violence for the sake of violence and who, in the process, had destroyed Ireland's chance to gain nationhood. This simplistic analysis has remained, to this day, the official view of the period, clouding the fact that the Irish state was founded, by quislings, on the blood of republicans.

It is probably true to say that nobody in Ireland wanted a civil war, the only beneficiaries of such a confrontation were of course the British imperialists who had tried and failed miserably to suppress the Republic declared in 1919. Faced with a military stalemate and international condemnation for atrocities carried out in Ireland, the British government initiated a truce, and negotiations ensued with the representatives of Dáil Éireann. But no matter what treaty came back from the negotiations it would have split the Dáil, simply because that body was not only composed of republicans but included a wide spectrum of Irish political opinion. The only common bond between the various groups was the struggle for national self-determination. It was this fatal flaw in the national movement that the British government sought to exploit. By fracturing the unity of the Irish nation the British could impose a settlement that would save face and also guarantee their interests in Ireland. It was a failing on behalf of the republican leadership that this weakness was allowed to be exploited. This lesson seems to have been sadly forgotten by republicans judging by the state of our struggle 80 years on. It was naïve of republicans in the 1920s to think they could successfully negotiate with Britain. It was criminal to think the same again in the 1990s, given the lessons pro-

vided by history.

When the Treaty eventually came before the Dail it was not surprising that a small majority - 64 to 57 - were in favour of accepting Britain's terms. It was inevitable that the anti-Treaty TDs would withdraw from the assembly because justifiably they felt that once the Treaty terms were approved, the assembly ceased to be Dail Éireann and instead became the provisional government as established under the terms of the London treaty. It was at this moment



that the leadership of the IRA missed the opportunity to seize the initiative and confront what was an unelected government whose only legitimacy came from the British. It is easy to accept without question the position taken by the republican leadership of that time but republicans today must not be afraid to look back on the history of their struggle and analyse the failures of the past. If this means criticising figures who previously have been seen to be above reproach then so be it, it is only by learning from the mistakes of the past that we can hope to build a successful struggle in the future. If the IRA had moved quickly against the Free State, instead of going on the defensive, the disastrous civil war could probably have been avoided. At the time of the split within Dail Éireann the IRA was mostly an anti-Treaty body with only a small number of units siding with Collins. The embryonic Free State army was based in Dublin's Beggars Bush Barracks and consisted of pro-Treaty IRA units and IRB members but they were vastly outnumbered by anti-Treaty forces. The IRA leadership, by being so defensive in its thinking, lost a golden opportunity to destroy the Free State and continue the struggle for a Republic.

The only offensive action taken at this time was the seizure of the Four Courts by Rory O'Connor and his comrades. This was actually done in defiance of the IRA's executive. The IRA's procrastination allowed time for the Free State army to swell its ranks with former British soldiers from disbanded Irish regiments. As well as new

recruits the British quickly provided arms in the hope that there would be a confrontation between the two opposing forces. The provisional government also used the time to draft a new constitution and to call for elections. De Valera, who believed the election could be won, entered an ill-fated pact with Collins giving the Free State more credibility.

So on June 16th, 1923 it came as no surprise that the election showed a pro-Treaty majority. After all the Irish people were given the stark choice of bloody war with Britain or ratifying the treaty (this tactic was echoed in 1998 on the Good Friday Agreement referendum; the Dublin government didn't forget the lessons of the past.) After the election the situation quickly deteriorated, on June 22nd Sir Henry Wilson was shot dead in London. Wilson was a fanatical anti-Irish bigot. It was said that Collins had actually ordered the killing but whether he issued the order or not, British Prime Minister Lloyd George insisted the order came from the Four

Courts garrison and he ordered Collins to deal with the anti-Treatyites. On June 24th, Sir Neville Macready, General Officer Commanding of British forces in Ireland, was ordered to attack the Four Courts. This order was later countermanded because the provisional government proved more than willing to undertake the task themselves.

Collins was probably taking a calculated risk when he made the decision to attack the Four Courts. He couldn't have known that the rift between Rory O'Connor and the IRA executive had been resolved. Perhaps Collins still believed that civil war could be avoided but the minute his order to use British guns against Irish republicans was given, Collins was beyond the pale. On the morning of June 28th, at 4am, the first shots were fired in the civil war. Free State forces, using weapons provided by Britain, became willing tools of British imperialism and helped to destroy the republic the British themselves could not defeat.

The IRA fought bravely for 11 months in defence of the Republic but, out-gunned and out-manoeuvred, and in the face of numerous atrocities that even the British would be shamed by, their struggle was defeated. The civil war must go down in Irish history as the greatest lost opportunity of achieving a 32 county Republic. Even to this day, 80 years on, the Dublin government has shown itself to be uninterested in restoring Irish sovereignty and is still willing partners in the continued suppression of republican ideals.

British espionage

In 1991 English-born businessman Samuel Rosenfeld agreed to become a covert agent for the Joint Services Group (JSG). This British intelligence unit was the successor to the now notorious Force Research Unit (FRU). Rosenfeld's handler, a military captain, was also the handler for Stakeknife. Rosenfeld's brief involved passing on information about Republicans and later on he was encouraged to infiltrate the IRA. The difference from other British spies was that Rosenfeld was to gather intelligence south of the border. He moved to a house in Enniskillen where he made contact with another agent, who introduced him to republicans in Fermanagh, Leitrim and Donegal. For the next year most of his work was carried out in the 26 counties. It has been reported that he was in regular contact with three Gardai and some army officers in the south who passed on intelligence to him. This included photos and details on suspected Republicans. At least one of the Garda was paid for their information. Rosenfeld wasn't the only British agent operating south of the border. Frequently he would drive British military intelligence officers over the border to plant listening devices and carry out surveillance on suspects. The SAS were also known to cross into the south.

But because a turf war erupted between military intelligence and the RUC Rosenfeld's short spying career came to an end. He was arrested by the RUC who wanted to question him about his involvement with British Army intelligence. Without revealing anything to the RUC he was released. He then moved to England where he was later arrested on foot of an RUC warrant accusing him of car theft. Brought back to the six counties he was found guilty and deported to the south where he lived for 18 months. He later returned to England where he was again arrested, this time for breaching the deportation order. The charges were later dropped. Rosenfeld then issued proceedings against the British Ministry of Defence claiming it had endangered his life and breached his human rights.

Importantly all this proves British spies and military personnel were, and probably still are, operating south of the border. The most sickening aspect is that the Irish government seem to turn a blind eye to such activities. But of course this is nothing new.

Robert Emmet - 200 years on

By Sean Mulligan

Republicans around Ireland will this month be commemorating the 200 anniversary of Robert Emmet's ill-fated rebellion - the second republican uprising in Irish history.

Emmet was born in Dublin on the 4th March 1778, the youngest of three sons. His father, Dr. Emmet, was well known for his radical political views, which all his sons seemed to inherit. Like his two brothers, Temple and Thomas Addis, it was originally thought that he would go into the legal profession. With that in mind he entered Trinity College. Ireland was in an agitated state at the time; the Society of United Irishmen was forming itself and secretly meditating action against the government. Ireland, in the eighteenth century, had become a peasant nation, harried and poverty stricken. In the famine of 1740, 400,000 are said to have perished. One contemporary writer described the scene, 'I have seen the labourer endeavouring to work at his spade, but fainting for the want of food, and forced to quit it. I have seen the aged father eating grass like a beast, and in the anguish of his soul wishing for dissolution. I have seen the hapless orphan exposed on the dung-hill and none to take him in for fear of infection; and I have seen the hungry infant sucking at the breast of the already expired parent.'

The poverty of the Irish people and the misery and death that ensued as a result, was explained by those who exploited the people, as being due to the laziness of the people themselves. Theobald Wolfe Tone commented on this in his 'Essay On The State of Ireland In 1720' which he read before the political club formed in Dublin in 1790, 'it is a favourite cant under which many conceal their idleness and many their corruption, to cry that there is in the genius of the people of this country, and particularly among the lower ranks, a spirit of pride, laziness and dishonesty, which stifles all tendency to improvement and will for ever keep us a subordinate nation of hewers of wood and drawers of water...idleness is a ready accusation in the mouth of him whose corruption denies to the poor the means of labour.'

Young Emmet joined the emerging movement and his speeches at the debating society of the college were 'democratic' in the extreme. These did not go unnoticed and he and twenty others were expelled in 1798 when he was twenty years of age. He witnessed the defeat of the 1798 rebellion and the cruelty with which it was put down. Emmet, instead of being discouraged by this disaster, redoubled his efforts. He made

contact with the Jacobins in Paris and with the hope of French help, he returned to Ireland to help organise a rebellion. His father had died and left him £1,500, a large sum at the time. With the cash he bought pikes and gunpowder in large quantities. However there was an accidental explosion, which destroyed the house in which they were stored, killing one man and injuring others. He continued with his plans despite the setback.

On the 23rd of July 1803 he, along with a hundred insurgents, attempted to take Dublin Castle, the seat of British power in Ireland. On the way to the Castle, a Colonel Brown was shot dead and a crowd killed Lord Kilwarden, the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, along with the Rev. Wolfe. Emmet and the other leaders lost control of the crowd and thus the carefully planned insurrection, which was to have gained so much for Ireland, was all over in a few hours. His friends did their best to aid his escape, but delay proved fatal and he was arrested at Harold's Cross by the infamous Major Sirr. He was brought to trial for high treason in September and sentenced to death, a sentence that was immediately carried out.

The British had thought that given Ireland's impoverished state and the suppression of the 1798 rebellion, as well as the Act of Union of 1800, all possibility of any insurrection was remote. They believed that the spirit of freedom had finally been quenched. At twenty-five years of age, Robert Emmet had proved them wrong and his action and death inspired others to act in like fashion. Thomas Moore, the poet, who was a friend of Emmet's said of him, 'were I to number the men among all I have ever known who appeared to me to combine in the greatest degree pure moral worth with intellectual power, I should among the highest of the few place Robert Emmet'.

When speaking of Emmet, it is only fitting to leave the last words to himself. 'Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man, who knows my motives, dare now vindicate them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them rest in obscurity and peace! Let my memory be left in oblivion, and my tomb remain uninscribed, until other times and other men can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then and not till then, let my epitaph be written.'

Sean Mulligan is a republican POW in Portlaoise Gaol.

Irish banking scandal

Irish banks have again found themselves embroiled in controversy. The cause this time is their failure to pass on the recent European Central Bank (ECB) interest rate cut of .5%. Dozens of Banks across the eurozone have already passed on the cuts to consumers, but not in Ireland, where mortgage rates are already among the highest in Europe. With thousands of people barely able to afford housing, it's about time the banks were forced into line and made to realise that people's homes and lives are more important than profit margins.

Consumer groups have been rightly critical of the stance taken by the banking industry, considering that Allied Irish Bank made record profits last year of €1.37 bn, making it one of the most profitable banks in Europe. By delaying the interest rate cut the banks could actually fleece Irish consumers for up to €100,000 a day. If the cut was passed on to consumers, €30 a month for a 20-year €1000,000 home loan or €40 for a 150,000 loan borrowed over the period could be saved. At a time when the cost of living is skyrocketing such a small relief could make the difference for some families.

The political reaction to the current situation has been nothing less than a disgrace. The Tanaiste, Mary Harney, stated recently on the radio that she would be very 'disappointed, surprised and angry' if the cut wasn't passed on to consumers. Her empty words are unlikely to fill the banking industry with fear. The banks have a long established relationship with the political and business establishment. But it's now time for the government to break what is in effect a banking cartel. In fact, the banking industry is currently being investigated by the Competition Authority, not that they will be overly worried by this development.

Over the past two years banks have failed to pass on full interest rate cuts made by the ECB. Between December 2000 and December 2002 the interest rate fell from 4.75% to 2.75%, but only about half of this cut was passed on to consumers. Whilst the banks have delayed cuts for borrowers, however, they were quick to slash the interest rates for saving accounts - it's little wonder that Irish banks are richest in Europe.

Considering the track record of the Irish banking industry, their stance is hardly surprising. New ethical banking laws must be introduced if this particularly ugly form of capitalism is to be curtailed.

Collusion and the media

By Colm Byrne

Several weeks have now passed since *The Observer* revealed on its front page of June 8th that the Loyalist suspected of murdering *Sunday World* journalist Martin O'Hagan is working for British Army intelligence. *The Observer* went on to allege that the agent is effectively being protected by his Army handlers and as a result is unlikely to face charges. The unnamed agent is also suspected of involvement in several sectarian murders in the north Armagh area.

Of course, the existence of collusion between the British security forces and Loyalist death squads has been known about for a long time. Since the early 1970s, Republicans and others have continuously highlighted clear instances of the British state using Loyalist paramilitaries as a proxy army to carry out its dirty war against the Nationalist community. The number of people killed as a result of collusion will probably never be known but it almost certainly runs into the hundreds.

The killing of Martin O'Hagan represented a new twist. It was the first time in over thirty years of conflict that a journalist had been killed. And while at this stage it does not appear that British military intelligence itself actually targeted O'Hagan, it does seem that at the very least they were completely indifferent to his - and others - fate at the hands of their agent. Given the British state's track record on such matters this is unsurprising.

What is shocking, however, is the reaction of the Irish and British media to the revelations. In the days following *The Observer* article when one might have expected the Irish and British media to be full of outrage at the killing of a colleague by a British agent there was only silence. Not even *The Irish Independent*, part of the Tony O'Reilly-owned group which also owns Mr O'Hagan's former paper the *Sunday World*, managed to find any space in their paper to cover the story.

Contrast this with the frenzied response to the murder south of the border in 1996 of *Sunday Independent* journalist Veronica Guerin. In the aftermath of that killing, it seemed for a period that Independent Newspapers were virtually able to dictate government policy on crime. Neither ink nor paper was rationed as the Irish media went on the hunt for those it deemed responsible. Draconian legislation quickly followed. And yet Ms. Guerin's murder, deplorable as it certainly was, was not carried out by people working for the state's intelligence services.

Coincidentally, in the week leading up to

the *The Observer* article on Martin O'Hagan's killing, much of the Irish media had spent several days discussing the exhibition in a Dublin gallery of a portrait of one of the men convicted of Veronica Guerin's murder. A surreal moment occurred when newspapers who had spent years gleefully exhibiting this individual's photograph across their front pages - before he was even convicted - screamed outrage at the sight of someone else exhibiting a painting of him. Irony is alive and well in Ireland.

Perhaps the lack of media interest in ensuring Martin O'Hagan's killers are brought to justice is not totally surprising given the recent spineless conduct of the *Sunday World's* Dublin-based editors and owners in dealing with Loyalist paramilitaries. Fresh from shooting dead the *Sunday World* journalist, Loyalists, upset about having their drugs empires exposed, have, in recent months, been forcing shops in certain areas of the six counties to refuse to stock the paper. But rather than supporting their beleaguered northern-based journalists the hierarchy in Dublin have put profits before principle and taken to spiking articles which show the Loyalists in a poor light. A clearer example of appeasement is unlikely.

It is a sad but true fact that there is a long established principle within the media that there are both worthy and unworthy victims. A civilian killed by al-Qaeda in New York is worthy of our compassion, a civilian killed by US forces in Baghdad is not. Now it seems that the Irish media are categorising their own in the same cynical manner. As yet another Hollywood movie based on Veronica Guerin's life opens in Dublin, Martin O'Hagan's death at the hands of a British agent is apparently considered unworthy of proper investigation.

It has been suggested by some that it is time for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Ireland to deal with the past thirty years. When one considers the continuing existence of collusion in Ireland one must suspect that any such commission would amount - like the Decommissioning Commission - to little more than a one-sided attempt by the British government to retrospectively criminalise the Republican struggle in Ireland. The truth about *all* killings should come out. People deserve to know why their loved ones were killed and by whom. But why not start with the case of Martin O'Hagan and the other often forgotten victims of collusion?

Rethinking the Stakeknife affair

It has long been assumed that British Intelligence used their informers to influence the direction of the republican movement. Brian Moore argues that what has not previously been considered is that this policy was directly in the interests of some elements of the IRA leadership itself.

Question: who remembers Stakeknife? Swarthy Italian guy, Belfast accent, made a big splash in the media a couple of months back. Something to do with the IRA, I think. I can't be sure, as my memory of such distant and insignificant events is fading fast. Strange, that - it all seemed so important once; but now, like a teenage obsession with some long-forgotten pop star, the whole episode appears somewhat trivial and embarrassing. Perhaps it was all just a bad dream.

Or was it? Surely, if we think hard enough, we can all remember Stakeknife - Britain's top spy in the IRA; the man who single-handedly brought the Army to the negotiating table; breather of fire and slayer of the republican faithful; a man who killed without mercy before sitting down to breakfast each morning. Of course we all can. All of us except the media, that is - the very people who brought us this fanciful character in the first place. So what happened to him? Can I really be alone in finding it peculiar that, while Stakeknife the Republican Slayer generated over three years of media-fuelled hype, Alfredo Scappattici - the man behind the monster - merited no more than a bog-standard fifteen minutes of fame?

Fire without smoke?

They say there's no smoke without fire, which probably isn't true, but when there's fire and no smoke its time to get genuinely suspicious. Especially when that fire is licking around the heels of some of the most powerful figures in the Provisional movement. Even allowing for the media's notoriously short attention span, it is clear that someone has gone to a lot of trouble to silence the speculation surrounding the Stakeknife revelations. Who and why are questions all republicans should be interested in.

But let's start for now with a different question: who remembers Ivor Bell? Bell, a West Belfast volunteer, was once a prominent and influential figure in the republican movement. As Gerry Adams' right-hand-man throughout the 1970s, he rose through the ranks of the IRA to become Chief of Staff in 1982. His relations with his former mentor soon soured, however, and his tenure at the top was short-lived. Adams, at this time, was pushing the IRA to accept his strategy of electoral politics, which Bell opposed on the grounds that it would leach resources away from the military campaign. Bell was about to move against Adams when, in September 1983, he was arrested on the word of an informer. In accordance with the IRA constitution, he lost all rank as soon as he stepped through the prison gates. Adams' policy was adopted, resulting almost immediately in the decline in military operations Bell had predicted. Released less than a year later, following the collapse of his trial, Bell began to gather support for an extraordinary Army Convention to reverse the electoral policy - a move he was sure would secure the overwhelming support of IRA volunteers. Adams' response was swift. Bell, along with four others, was court-martialed and found guilty of treason. Spared execution, he was expelled from the IRA, never again to play a part in the republican struggle.

So what's the link between Bell and Scappattici? As far as I am aware, there is no *direct* link between the two, but their individual careers both fit a broader pattern of evidence, raising serious questions about the way in which the IRA has evolved over the past three decades. The key to understanding this pattern is the political strategy of the Adams/McGuinness leadership. Bell, and the IRA's

armed struggle, were both victims of Adams' electoral ambitions; Scappattici, it has been alleged, may have played a role in furthering those ambitions.

It has long been suspected that British Intelligence used its informers in the IRA to selectively mould the leadership and overall direction of the organization. By assassinating or imprisoning key individuals, while allowing others to remain free, it has been in a powerful position to influence the internal dynamics of the republican struggle. Bell's arrest in 1983 may have been one such incident. But there is nothing surprising about this idea - it is merely what one would expect from an enemy in such a position. The evidence, however, raises a much more intriguing possibility - that the IRA leadership itself may have used similar tactics against its own membership. The key question here is: did the Adams/McGuinness leadership utilize British informers in a similar way to the British themselves, sabotaging the armed struggle in order to promote their own political strategy?

The Eksund

A good place to begin any investigation into this issue is with the betrayal of the Eksund in 1987. To understand the significance of this event, however, it is necessary to appreciate the perilous state of the republican movement at that time. In the early 1980s, the IRA's military campaign was stagnating. Weapons were in short supply, and the prospect of victory seemed remote. At the same time, resources were being diverted from the armed struggle to facilitate Sinn Féin's move into electoral politics. Many in the Army realized that something had to be done if the IRA was to survive, and a radical plan was conceived to restore its fortunes.

Between 1985 and 1986, 150 tons of heavy weaponry was imported into Ireland - a gift from the revolutionary Libyan government of Muammar Qaddafi. A final shipment of 150 tons - including much of the most modern material - was to be imported on the Eksund in 1987. This weaponry was intended to revolutionize the armed struggle, facilitating a major guerrilla offensive in the six counties based on the Vietnamese 'Tet Offensive' of 1968. In a coordinated series of surprise attacks, IRA units would capture and hold large areas of the North, destroying or occupying British military facilities across Derry, Tyrone and South Armagh. Elite flying columns of full-time volunteers, equipped with heavy mortars and anti-aircraft missiles, would be established along the border to engage British forces in a large-scale guerrilla campaign.

Had it succeeded, the offensive would have had a devastating effect on the British occupation, inflicting heavy casualties on the British garrison and radicalizing opinion across the island. Unfortunately, it never got off the ground. The Eksund was betrayed and captured, and with both the material and the element of surprise lost, the offensive was abandoned. This outcome was a severe setback for the 'militarists' in the IRA. The Army now had enough weaponry to keep the struggle going indefinitely, but without any prospect of success. The almost inevitable outcome of this state of affairs was the 'long surrender' strategy of the peace process.

So who betrayed the Eksund? There have been numerous theories, of course, but some disturbing facts have never been adequately explained. Security around the whole operation was extremely

tight, and the evidence would seem to indicate that only an informer at leadership level could have been responsible. So far, so normal, but the behavior of certain members of the leadership at the time remains almost inexplicable. Martin McGuinness, then O/C of Northern Command, was one of the few individuals privy to the details of the operation. In the months leading up to the capture of the Eksund, while those responsible for organizing the shipment were out of the country, he conducted two briefings on the forthcoming offensive which can only be described as bizarre. In each case he briefed groups of volunteers - the Army Executive and a committee of unit O/Cs - suspected of including informers or individuals close to informers. (Suspensions that would later be confirmed.)

The only logical explanation for this bizarre behavior is that McGuinness wanted the Eksund compromised. But why? It has since become clear that certain members of the leadership were only too happy to avoid the prospect of a new military offensive. We know now that, since the early 1980s, Adams and McGuinness had been conducting secret talks with the British government - talks which would form the kernel of the later 'peace process'. These talks, and the electoral strategy which accompanied them, would have been seriously compromised by a major IRA offensive. The suspicion cannot be avoided that the capture of the Eksund was deliberately engineered to prevent this from happening.

Loughgall and Roslea

Numerous other incidents could be called on to support this theory, but consideration of just two should be sufficient to establish the general pattern. One particularly notorious example is the ambush of the elite East Tyrone ASU at Loughgall in 1987. Two members of the unit - Jim Lynagh and Padraig McKearney - had been amongst the foremost proponents of the 'flying column' strategy, and were bitterly opposed to the electoral policy of the Adams/McGuinness leadership. In the months prior to their deaths, Lynagh and McKearney had held discussions with other IRA 'dissidents' about setting up an independent flying column to implement their ideas. Before this plan could come to fruition, however, both men, along with their entire ASU, were killed in a devastating SAS ambush while attempting to destroy an RUC station at Loughgall. The operation, it was believed, had been compromised by an informer at Northern Command.

Less than two years later, a similar disaster was narrowly avoided when an experimental flying column attack on a British Army outpost at Roslea went badly wrong. The column, which had been established by Northern Command to test the viability of Lynagh and McKearney's offensive guerrilla strategy, came under unexpectedly heavy fire from concealed soldiers, and a key component of the planned attack - a 400lb van bomb - was found to have been sabotaged. The column was lucky to escape intact, and the policy of large-scale attacks was abandoned.

Many suspected at the time that new structures introduced by the Adams/McGuinness leadership to ensure political control over military operations were having a seriously detrimental effect on the organization's capabilities. Prior to 1986, most operations were vetted at a local level, but after that date McGuinness secured for Northern Command the right to vet all proposed operations in the

North. It is highly likely that, by increasing the potential knowledge-base for well-placed informers, this policy directly compromised numerous operations, including those at Loughgall and Roslea.

Scappattici

But what has all this to do with Alfredo Scappattici? Scappattici, many informed republicans now agree, was probably an informer, although whether he is *the* 'Stakeknife' is a very different issue. Either way, his career provides us with further evidence of the

Adams/McGuinness leadership's bizarre attitude to informers in general. As noted in the last issue of this magazine, Internal Security - Scappattici's power base for most of his IRA career - was long believed by many volunteers to have been compromised. No investigation was ever carried out, however, leading many to suspect that the unit was being protected by senior elements in the leadership. Scappattici himself - a close associate of Adams and McGuinness - was certainly not above suspicion, having been directly involved in one of the most notorious informer-related incidents of the conflict: the Fenton debacle.

Joe Fenton, a Belfast estate agent with close personal links to senior members of the Belfast Brigade, was exposed in the late 1980s as one of the British Army's top informers in the IRA. Fenton had been supplying 'safe houses' to the brigade for years, and was believed to have been responsible for 'turning' several senior members of the brigade staff. In 1989, Fenton was arrested by Internal Security and held for questioning. A specially assembled unit had been tasked to carry

out his interrogation, but when they arrived they found that Fenton had already been shot. A priceless opportunity to dismantle much of the British Army's intelligence apparatus in Belfast had been lost.

Many suspected at the time that Fenton was shot to protect other informers in the organization, but no serious investigation of the incident was ever carried out. The reason for this failure may be intimately bound up with the reason Scappattici himself survived for so long - such informers were too valuable to the plans of the Adams/McGuinness leadership to be lost.

It has long been assumed that British Intelligence used their informers to influence the direction of the republican movement. What has not previously been considered is that this policy was directly in the interests of some elements of the IRA leadership itself. By compromising the viability of the armed struggle, the presence of highly placed informers in the IRA ensured that Adams and McGuinness's 'peace process' strategy would come to be adopted as the only viable alternative. There was therefore no incentive to remove them - indeed, the very opposite.

If true, the idea that senior figures in the IRA leadership turned a blind eye to the activities of informers would have serious repercussions for both the current Provisional leadership and the peace process as a whole. Such an outcome would please neither Dublin nor London - sufficient reason, perhaps, for the current media silence on the implications of the Stakeknife affair.



The golden age of deception

By Tony Hyland

In the sphere of international politics we have truly entered the golden age of deception. This was never more evident than during the lead up to the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. In February the British government outlined its case for war in a nineteen-page dossier entitled *Iraq: Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation*. Downing Street published the dossier on its official website and informed the general public that it contained 'up-to-date intelligence' concerning Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme.

The truth, however, was somewhat different. It subsequently emerged that the dossier was not the work of the British Security Services, but was in fact compiled by a coterie of Downing Street spin-doctors led by the Prime Minister's Press secretary, Alastair Campbell. However, deceit and deception did not end here.

It later became apparent that a large section of the dossier was plagiarised from a Californian student's Ph.D. thesis, written twelve years ago and subsequently published in an Israeli based journal, *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*. A further section was derived from *Jane's Intelligence Review*, a commercial publication, while Voices in the Wilderness, an anti-war group, identified another significant passage that was transcribed from *Saddam's Secrets*, a book written by Tim Trevan and published in 1999.

Evidently, the Anglo-American justification for the invasion of Iraq was not only devoid of 'up-to-date intelligence', it was founded upon an extract from a commercial magazine and several secondary sources, some of which were over a decade old.

In a speech delivered before a plenary session of the UN Security Council on February 5, Colin Powell actually quoted from the fraudulent dossier. He went on to outline the US case for war by accusing the Ba'ath regime of possessing between 100-500 tons of chemical agents, all of which were allegedly produced at 65 WMD sites throughout Iraq. Obviously, Powell made a conscious decision to mislead the UNSC, for at that time he was fully aware of the existence of a CIA report, published in July 2002 at the behest of the US Senate Intelligence Committee, which concluded that the likelihood of Saddam Hussein possessing or deploying weapons of mass destruction was 'very low for the foreseeable future'.

Clearly, truth became the first casualty in the scramble for Iraqi oil and regional control of the Middle East. As Peter Kilfoyle,

the former British defence minister and close colleague of Mr. Blair, accurately stated, the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq was war based upon 'a farrago of half truths, assertions and over the top spin'.

A minority of journalists attempted to highlight the fraudulent nature of the Downing Street dossier, but its mendacity was overlooked in the ensuing haze of war hysteria. The appalling destruction that was wrought upon Iraq in human, financial and cultural terms has been well documented. However, the salient fact remains that

In the sphere of international politics, we have truly entered the golden age of deception

almost three months after the invasion no trace of WMDs has been detected.

Interestingly, Jack Straw has recently stated that it is irrelevant whether Saddam Hussein had or had not WMDs. Clearly, the deception has served its purpose and can now be reduced to a footnote in history, while the Anglo-American alliance proceeds to subdivide Iraq's lucrative reconstruction contracts and privatises the nation's oilfields.

However, several journalists who actually dared to question the morality of, and motivation behind, the Anglo-American invasion have recently been the subject of unprecedented criticism.

During the recent World Association of Newspapers (WAN) conference in Dublin, Lord Conrad Black, one of the world's most powerful media tycoons, directly accused certain journalists of 'mindlessly pandering to the emotion of envy in their coverage of the US' and urged them 'to stop denigrating the US, the one country of fact and purpose in the world'. Black singled out *The Independent's* Robert Fisk and *The Mirror's* John Pilger for unprecedented criticism. 'To run all that stuff by Pilger and Fisk was awful, not to mention their endless carping and their broad consensus that the current US administration is objectively bad'.

Why were Fisk and Pilger the subject of such overt criticism? Could it be that their ongoing scrutiny of Anglo-American foreign policy has earned them the wrath of the political establishments in Washington and London? An increasingly jingoistic Anglo-American press repeatedly attacked

Fisk during the invasion of Iraq. The reason? He exposed the lies emanating from the US Military High Command.

In the aftermath of the bombing of Baghdad's Al-Shaab and Al-Nasser markets, the Pentagon's spin-doctors repeatedly denied US involvement. However, Fisk investigated the scene of the Al-Nasser catastrophe and recorded the serial number of the US missile that killed and maimed dozens of Iraqi civilians, thus disproving US accusations that responsibility lay with a stray Iraqi missile.

Fisk also disputed the official version of events surrounding the US attack on Baghdad's Palestine Hotel, which housed many journalists from around the world. 'As for the shell that hit the Palestinian Hotel and killed my colleagues, the commander of the US first infantry division claimed that light arms fire had been directed at his tank on the bridge, that the tank had fired at the Hotel and the shooting ceased. This was a lie, I was between the tank and the Hotel and there was no shooting. Had there been, I would not have been on the streets that morning'.

John Pilger and Robert Fisk have won numerous accolades for their reporting. They are without doubt two of the finest journalists of their generation. Pilger was to the fore in exposing US support for the Indonesian campaign of genocide in East Timor, while for the past twenty-seven years Fisk has provided a continuous in-depth analysis of political events in the Middle East. We should not take this for granted. We live in an era that has witnessed numerous "embedded" journalists don military fatigues while escorting invading armies. In short they have become nothing more than apologists for international grand theft. In contrast Pilger and Fisk stand apart as the embodiment of professional integrity. Antonio Negri wrote 'the first task of Empire is to enlarge the realm of consensus that supports its own power'. As an advocate of Anglo-American imperial project, Lord Conrad Black chose his targets well.

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articles on issues of
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interest.

Ireland's house of cards

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - the OECD - recently pronounced the Celtic Tiger to be dead. And yet at least one part of the economy, the property market, is still booming. In April of this year, the average price for a house in this state reached a record €214,146. In Dublin, the figure was €279,815.

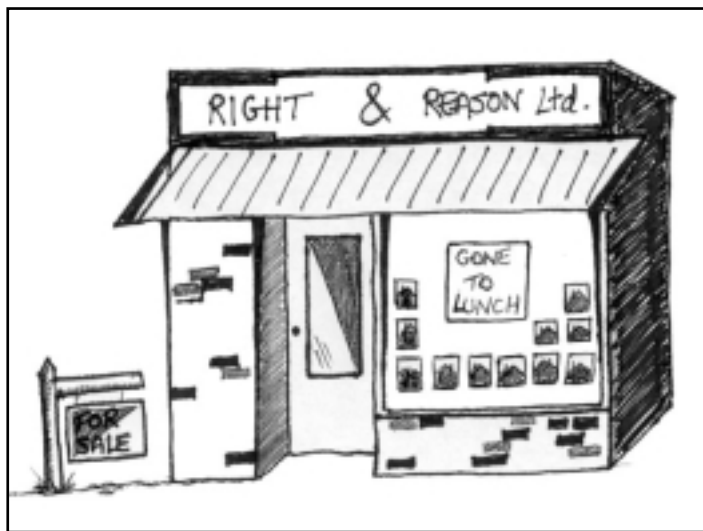
The three often-stated reasons for the property boom are the strong performance of the economy combined with low interest rates and an increasing population as emigration ended and immigration began.

But this doesn't tell the full story. Amazingly, Ireland is now the third most expensive country in the world in which to buy a home. Only houses in Japan and the Netherlands cost more. Supply of land is an important factor in these two countries. They both have very high populations in relation to the physical size of their country - 336 and 388 people per square kilometre respectively - whereas Ireland has only 54 people per square km. Clearly, supply of land should not be a problem in Ireland. Yet somehow it is. Through the Flood Tribunal revelations - where corrupt councillors were bribed by developers to distort the planning process - we are getting a glimpse as to why the supply of land is not what it should be. There is also evidence, particularly in the east of the country, of developers hoarding land zoned for housing. The rationale for hoarding is as simple as it is despicable. By artificially reducing the supply of zoned land, the demand - and thus the price - for remaining land increases. It is hardly a secret that Irish people are being ripped-off in this way - the Taoiseach has commented on it several times - but little has been done to end this disgraceful practice.

But it is not only greedy developers and ineffective government that is to blame. In recent years banks and other lending institutions have abandoned their own guidelines on mortgage allocation and, for the privilege of owning the roof over their heads, have saddled a generation of young people with enormous debt. Meanwhile the banks' insatiable greed continues to ensure huge profits.

All this is bad enough but what will happen if the housing market collapses? Some - especially those with a vested interest - say this is a fanciful suggestion. But others believe that rapid house price inflation is unsustainable. They describe the Irish housing market as resembling a bubble. Inevitably bubbles burst. They point to the dotcom fiasco of a few years ago when some people believed that old economic rules no longer applied and that prices, in this case for internet shares, could keep on rising forever even though they were not built on any firm financial ground.

So it is with housing. If unemployment or interest rates were to significantly increase in Ireland in the next number of years - are our memories so short that we can so easily discount this possibility? - the results would be catastrophic. Thousands of people, unable to keep up their mortgage repayments, would lose their homes. Demand for houses would decrease and so too would house prices. Even those able to keep paying their mortgages would find themselves in the unenviable position of owning homes whose value is less than the amount they owe. The Economist recently predicted that Irish property prices could fall by as much as 20% in the next four years.



In some ways though, those gambling on the housing market are the fortunate ones. According to the Dublin Simon Community, the number of newly homeless people on the streets of our capital city has more than doubled over the past year. The government's response has been to pretend the problem doesn't exist. Recently, in the Dáil, the Minister of State for Housing, Noel Ahern, claimed that "about 79" people are sleeping rough in Dublin. This contradicts both the Simon Community's and official figures released by the Economic and Social Research Institute

(ESRI) which puts the figure at over 300.

On top of this, 48,000 households or 109,000 individuals are currently on local authority housing lists. This is hardly surprising when one considers that at a time when average prices of homes in Dublin are more than a quarter of a million euro the minimum wage is still at a miserly low level. For many owning their own home has become impossible.

While the Irish economy is to some extent at the mercy of international economic forces, there are measures the government can take to address the housing problem. Firstly they need to rein in the developers and the banks. Some proposals have already been made such as enhanced compulsory purchase orders for land, a referendum on property rights, and ending developers' ability to hoard land under a 'use-it-or-lose-it' policy. These proposals need to be acted upon. Secondly, homelessness and housing waiting lists needs to be sorted out. Since government money is obviously finite, this is a matter of prioritising expenditure. Perhaps a first step would be to cancel the €100 million government jets. That would at least take the homeless off the streets.

In a decent society adequate affordable housing should be a right not a dream.

Letters and articles can be sent to Forum Magazine at:

The New Republican Forum, PO Box 10, Dundalk Sorting Office, Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland.

Guantanamo Bay: into the twilight zone

By James Burke

The many changes which have occurred to the world over the past two years have still not fully filtered through to us. We are of course aware of the more obvious ones, like the war in Afghanistan and the more recent Iraqi conflict, along with all the hype and propaganda involved, not to mention the death and destruction. We have seen the arrogance of various political figures from the US, Britain, Spain and Italy, to name just a few countries, who, despite the opinions of their populations, nevertheless engaged in these military adventures. Disturbing as these actions were, there was still a certain amount of transparency about them, as can be seen from Tony Blair's present difficulties with regards to the missing Iraqi 'weapons of mass destruction'.

But more sinister aspects of these recent developments have been largely unseen, and the general populations have either not become aware of them, or, when they have, there has been a tendency for people to pretend they didn't exist. There seems to be a new ideology of ignorance which makes people believe that the unpleasant can be made to go away if only they don't think too much about it. Why should we bother about something, they seem to ask themselves, if it doesn't affect us directly? If changes are made to our society for security reasons, why should we be concerned - after all it's for our 'protection'?

Sadly, the real world is never that simple. Even in Roman times you would have seen Latin graffiti on the wall of the Senate: 'Who guards the guards?' In the international arena, we have lived for fifty years with the United Nations and its various charters governing aspects of international conduct and interaction. Respect for human rights and the Geneva Convention have been our moral baseline for over half a century. These fundamental standards have more or less been torn up since September 11 2001. Despite crocodile tears from the front-men of the US Administration, like cold warrior Donald Rumsfeld, the American government has done its best to make sure that the internationally accepted standards which existed in the past no longer apply. Might is right, and whatever is seen as being in the security interests of America is now the new standard we all should agree to, whether we like it or not. George Bush's comment that 'you are either with us or you are against us' is the New World Order. If

America cannot buy a country, then it will do everything in its power to overthrow the government and install one which will do its bidding. If this course of action entails breaking laws which were once thought of as being an international standard, then so be it. After all, who can do anything about it? Who is willing to do anything about it, and who cares even if there is someone out there with a conscience left?

One particularly notorious example of this new arrogance in international affairs is the US government's continuing use of Guantanamo Bay in Cuba as a concentra-



tion camp to hold 600 men and boys - prisoners from the 'War on Terrorism' and the invasion of Afghanistan. Almost two years on from the end of this war, these men, some as young as fourteen years of age, are being held not as prisoners of war but under the title of 'unlawful combatants'. Like the 'humanitarian intervention', this is a new term invented by the Americans to justify the unjustifiable. While the United States shouts about the need for their troops, caught invading other countries, to be treated according to the rules of the Geneva Convention, they in turn create new categories of prisoner to justify their blatant breach of international law. These men and boys are held behind razor wire in small cages open to the elements, with little or no privacy, exercise, or other basic facilities. The United States by its actions has informed the world that those who oppose its imperialist project will not be subject to the Geneva Convention and will have no rights under International Law. Camp Delta is, by its location, beyond the legal constraints of the US's constitution and judiciary. The detention of several children in the camp is contrary to UNICEF's convention on the rights of the child, which was adopted by the UN in 1989. Every country in the world ratified it, with the exception of the US and Somalia.

The images of these men being transported to Guantanamo Bay in orange boiler suits, hooded and chained, gave us all a fair

idea of how they would be treated. The fact that there was little or no evidence to say that any of the men had done anything to justify this treatment only added to the injustice of it. The few cases that have received media attention reveal frightening levels of incompetence, and a complete disregard for any concept of justice. One prisoner, it was revealed, had gone to Pakistan to get treatment for a skin disease and had never set foot in Afghanistan. Another had gone to get married and a third, a Jordanian who had spent 15 years in a Pakistani prison but who had been released after serving his sentence, was picked up in Bahrain, when his plane home had stopped off there. He was then hauled off by the Americans and has been held in Guantanamo ever since.

Despite the appalling treatment of these prisoners, the silence from around the world is frightening. Not one single government seems willing to raise its voice to denounce what is going on. While the CIA and American Special Forces run amok across the globe, western governments cower like terrified rabbits afraid of getting in the way of a crazed predator. Casualties mount daily, as hyped-up American troops repeatedly massacre innocent civilians in theaters as diverse as Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Philippines. The US government does not deny its actions, even the use of sensory deprivation techniques to torture people captured by them, like the men in Camp Delta in Cuba. What makes the American actions even more insulting to one's intelligence, however, is its criticism of the Cuban government for putting on trial those engaged in actions against it, including hijacking boats and planes. While Cuba holds public trials of these people, in an occupied area of the same country America hides the innocent victims of its criminal activities from the world. The only 'justice' these men can hope to see will be handed out in secret trials by military courts, itself in flagrant violation of America's own laws. Unless there is a radical change in the world's attitude to such crimes against humanity, these men, and many future victims of US imperialism, will be condemned to remain in limbo in the new twilight zone of Guantanamo Bay.

Iraq: weapons of mass deception

By Kevin Lally

There is little doubt that the genesis of the recent war in Iraq is to be found in the first Gulf War of 1991. But to remind ourselves of the 'official' rationale we need only return to August 26th, 2002, when US Vice President Dick Cheney said, 'Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction (WMD)'. Similar sentiments were echoed by various senior members of the US administration, not least US President, George W Bush.

Fast-forward four weeks to the 24th September, when British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, stated matter of factly in the House of Commons, 'Saddam's WMD programme is active, detailed and growing. He has chemical and biological weapons, an existing and active military plan for their use, which could be activated in 45 minutes; and he is actively trying to acquire a nuclear weapons capability'. Most vocal in support for Tony Blair was Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw; most notably when he made an impassioned plea at the United Nations to French Foreign Secretary, Dominique de Villepin, as to the just and reasonable grounds for war.

However, the most memorable incident to be etched in the minds of all interested parties will be the performance given by US Secretary for State, Colin Powell, before the United Nations on the 5th February 2003. With the aid of a shot-by-shot slide show, and extensive quotations from US and British sourced intelligence reports, he claimed that Iraq had tens of thousands of litres of Anthrax, tonnes of lethal NX nerve agents, a wide range of biological weapons, and a nuclear programme. A spotlight was also shone on the lengths the Iraqi government were supposedly willing to go to to throw UN weapons inspectors off the scent, with reference made to the mobility of weapons producing laboratories.

Nine days later, on 14th February, those best placed to pass comment on Iraq's WMD, or a lack thereof, openly questioned the legitimacy of the evidence the US delegation placed before the United Nations. The UN's chief weapons inspector, Dr. Hans Blix, and the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohamed El-Baradei, stopped just short of branding the US delegation's mouthpiece a liar.

Others also remained strongly sceptical, most notably Russian president Putin, German chancellor Schroeder and French

premiere Chirac. Indeed, Schroeder fought an election in Germany on a promise that he would never support military action against the people of Iraq, even in the event of a UN resolution on the matter. The French, and Chirac in particular, were severely berated by the Americans when, in the face of demonstrations across the globe against a new war in the Gulf, they reconsidered an earlier agreement they had made with Bush to support a UN resolution.

Throughout the remainder of February



and into the first days of March, it became apparent that a resolution to disarm Iraq was beyond reach. With both the US and the UK having already decided on a military course of action, a new method was sought to facilitate the invasion of Iraq. Whilst public opinion in the US was easily shaped and duped by the White House and the Pentagon, due in no small part to the unsubstantiated linking of the Iraqi leadership to al-Qaeda, the same could not be said of Britain. The case for war had to be advanced in the strongest possible terms by the British government, and its claims of having proof as to the existence of WMD are now undergoing the most stringent scrutiny.

Primary in advancing Blair's cause was Lord Goldsmith, the British Attorney General, principal legal officer representing the state and responsible for furnishing government with legal advice. It is said that it was Goldsmith's feelings on the matter that swung the pendulum in favour of Blair, although the war faction didn't come through the Commons debate and vote totally unscathed. Former Foreign Secretary and leader of the Commons, Robin Cook, resigned from government, citing an unwillingness to trust an intelligence assessment of Iraq's WMD. Indeed, Blair's pro-war faction failed to come close to attaining Labour's House of Commons majority of 165 votes.

However, at the outset of hostilities, all talk of WMD faded away. It was only in the weeks after the capitulation of Iraq that it has once again come to the fore. Sceptics began to question the failure of the Coalition to find any of the supposedly abundant evidence of the 'active, detailed and growing' weapons programme that could be activated within '45 minutes'. Both the UK and US administrations began an about-face on the issue, playing down the significance of a lack of finds.

As the noise became louder with regard to the absence of evidence, cracks began to appear in the 'gospel' of both administrations. Indeed, the politicians appeared to become estranged from their friends in the intelligence community, when unnamed intelligence sources claimed that Blair, through his communications chief, Alastair Campbell, ordered the security services to 'sex up' evidence on Iraq's alleged WMD programme - with an emphasis to be placed upon the deployment of same within a 45 minute time frame.

These revelations are not exclusive, however, to the UK. In the US, intelligence officials have claimed that both Dick Cheney and Deputy Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, encouraged them to write reports suggesting a link between Saddam Hussein, September 11 and the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. The same sources also claim to have received encouragement to strengthen the case against Iraq with regard to WMD.

Dr Blix stated in the days preceding, and indeed, throughout the war, that he suspected Iraq had no WMD. He described the Coalition's evidence as, at best, 'shaky to say the least'. In an interview conducted on 23rd of May, he went even further, 'The justification for war was WMD, and it may turn out that in this respect the war was not justified'.

With each passing day it seems increasingly likely that the only WMD in Iraq were the ones raining down upon its people at the hands of US and UK forces. If this proves to be the case, the electorate in both the United States and Britain would not be unreasonable in demanding the resignation of both Bush and Blair, on the grounds that both prosecuted an illegal, needless war which resulted in countless unnecessary deaths.

The New Republican Forum

The New Republican Forum is a coalition of political and community activists, founded to challenge the political status quo in Ireland by providing a radical Republican alternative to the mainstream political establishment.

The New Republican Forum:

- Stands for the reunification of Ireland and opposes all aspects of British interference in Irish affairs.
- Opposes the Belfast Agreement, which subverts the Irish people's inalienable right to self-determination.
- Stands for the creation of a just society in Ireland, based on principles of equality, social justice and genuine democracy, underpinned by a comprehensive charter of inalienable human rights.
- Supports the promotion and development of Irish culture.
- Opposes the resurgence of imperialism as a political ideology, led by the United States, its allies and client regimes.
- Supports all oppressed peoples struggling for national liberation.
- Opposes any attempt by the Dublin government to aid or assist any Western military alliance.

Our aims are:

- To establish a credible Republican opposition to British rule in Ireland.
- To critically reassess and analyse the history of the Republican struggle in Ireland, and by so doing, chart a course for the future of the Republican movement.
- To establish, support and coordinate the activities of Republican, community-based and other progressive organisations, forging a basis for a new national movement.
- To liase with other progressive forces, nationally and internationally, including anti-capitalist groups, trade unionists and environmental movements, along with national liberation movements worldwide, to further the cause of anti-imperialism.
- To establish a range of independent media outlets providing Irish people with alternative sources of information on political and social issues.

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