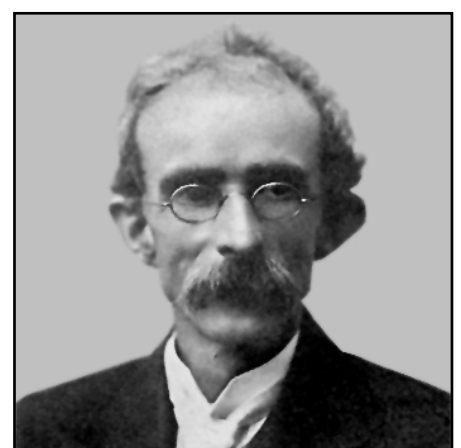
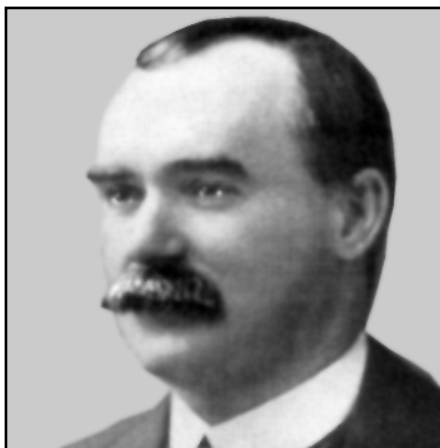
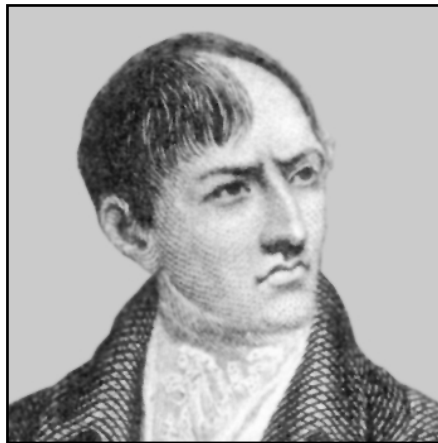


FORUM MAGAZINE

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Repatriations obstructed

Elaine Power

In 2003, James McCormack, an Irish republican from County Louth, was sentenced to 22 years' imprisonment by a British court for IRA related activities. Following his trial, McCormack applied to be repatriated to an Irish prison so that he could serve the remainder of his sentence in close proximity to his family - a right available to every prisoner under European law. In May of this year McCormack was finally repatriated from Full Sutton Prison in England to Portlaoise Prison in Ireland.

The families of three other republican prisoners, Michael McDonald, Declan Rafferty and Fintan O'Farrell, were recently informed by the Department of Justice that the

three men's repatriations are imminent. While *Forum Magazine* welcomes the fact that James McCormack has finally been repatriated, and that the repatriations of Michael McDonald, Declan Rafferty and Fintan O'Farrell are imminent, it would be remiss to ignore the fact that these men have had to wait over three years before their repatriation applications were completed by both the London and Dublin governments.

Historically, the British government has always adopted a vindictive and disruptive approach towards Irish republican prisoners who sought repatriation to Ireland. However, in the recent past, the Dublin government has been equally as reluctant and disruptive as the British government in expediting the transfer of republican prisoners opposed to the Belfast Agreement.

Indeed, such were the delays on the Irish side, James McCormack was forced to commence a judicial review against the Department of Justice in January 2006 in an attempt to reactivate his application, which - to all intents and purposes - had been stalled and ignored by the Justice Department. In contrast to the obstructive approach adopted by both governments towards Irish republican prisoners seeking return from English

jails, the British government repatriates most of its nationals from foreign prisons - even from non-English speaking countries - within a nine to twelve month period.

However, malicious and vindictive delays are not the only obstacles facing Irish republican prisoners in British jails. Noel Maguire's repatriation application was recently refused by the Department of Justice. Maguire is an Irish passport holder. His immediate family reside in southern Ireland. Therefore, Maguire satisfies all of the

Historically, the British government has always adopted a vindictive and disruptive approach towards Irish republican prisoners who sought repatriation to Ireland.

necessary criteria for repatriation. So not only is the Dublin government complicit with London in delaying the repatriations of Irish prisoners in British jails who are opposed to the Belfast Agreement, the Dublin government is now also vetoing valid applications.

The consequence of this policy is that Irish political prisoners are being stranded in British jails; and as a result the difficulties posed by distance and varying financial costs are the impediments families face when wishing to visit loved ones. Furthermore, republican prisoners have occasionally been moved to alternative prisons on the day before a scheduled visit, with the prisoner's family only being informed of the move when they arrive at the prison gates. This situation must not be permitted to continue. The Dublin government must facilitate all valid repatriation applications of all Irish republican prisoners in British jails who are opposed to the Belfast Agreement and it must expedite these applications without any vindictive and undue delays.

The New republican Forum is planning a number of pickets at the Department of Justice and the Department of Foreign Affairs over the coming months to highlight the repatriation applications of all remaining Irish republican prisoners in British jails. The London based Irish Political Status Committee will also be holding similar pickets and demonstrations.

Full details will be available on the NRF website.

McKevitt case revisited

Maria McCann

Last month, Marcella Sands, the sister of H-Block martyr Bobby Sands, published a book entitled *The Framing of Michael McKevitt*. A detailed, chronological examination of the circumstances surrounding the arrest and conviction of McKevitt - who is currently serving 20 years in Portlaoise Prison for membership of and directing an unlawful organisation - the book has provoked considerable reaction from veteran civil rights activists and a number of human rights organisations.

The kernel of the book relates to the circumstances surrounding the conviction of Michael McKevitt, a conviction that was solely reliant upon the evidence of David Rupert, an FBI informant of some thirty years standing and an MI5 operative since 1990.

Marcella Sands provides some amazing biographical details about Rupert. These details emerged during the McKevitt trial in the Special Criminal Court, but were largely ignored by the mainstream press. Before his arrival in Ireland as an MI5 operative, Rupert had a long history of involvement in criminality; a history which included various forms of fraud, smuggling and insurance rackets. On one occasion he was a suspect in a notorious incident concerning the unlawful detention of a young 15 year-old girl who had runaway from home. Rupert was also a multiple bankrupt who was hounded by the IRS for two decades. It was during one of his numerous bankruptcies that he agreed to work as an FBI informant, in order to avoid prison and evade the IRS.

Over three decades, Rupert's ties to the FBI, and the information he provided them about his criminal accomplices, ensured he never saw the inside of an American courtroom. When one reads the details surrounding Rupert's life, one's mind boggles at how the Special Criminal Court and the Court of Appeal could deem Rupert a credible witness.

In 1990 the FBI introduced Rupert to British intelligence. Rupert agreed to work for MI5 in Ireland and made no bones about the fact that he was financially motivated. In an e-mail to MI5, Rupert declared: "Tell me what to do, make it worth my while, and as

long as the money is right I'll do it to the best of my ability." Sands estimates that MI5 paid Rupert in excess of \$3.5m for the statements he concocted and the evidence he gave before the Special Criminal Court.

As the veteran human rights activist Father Desmond Wilson writes in the foreword to the book: "Brining in a witness who admitted he was motivated by money, opening the court to the free passage of police and government agents...This trial has been one



MI5 paid perjurer David Rupert

of the most frightening and revealing of the past forty years in Ireland's courts north and south".

The book does occasionally digress from the legal minutiae of the McKevitt trial. There is an interesting insight into the prior knowledge which MI5 possessed in relation to the Omagh bomb. The author also depicts the McKevitt family's treatment at the hands of various state agencies.

As Marcella Sands points out, Bernadette Sands-McKevitt and Michael McKevitt were never arrested or questioned in relation to the Omagh bomb. Nor were they named in an October 2000 BBC Panorama documentary entitled *Who Bombed Omagh?* Yet in August 1998 the family was locked out of their print business in Long Walk Shopping Centre, Dundalk: an unlawful, politically motivated act, which effectively deprived them a means to earn a living.

The author also describes in some detail the extent of the garda harassment to which the entire McKevitt family was subject during this period. The author describes how the Emergency Response Unit [ERU] regularly followed the McKevitt children [aged 11, 10 and 7] to and from school and took the names and addresses of the chil-

dren's friends every time they called to the family home. The intimidation of the children was reported to the relevant authorities, but it continued unabated over an eighteen month period.

On Christmas Day 1999 members of the ERU sat outside the McKevitt home with sirens blaring or shouting expletives from a loud-hailer. Anyone visiting the McKevitt home were detained by armed detectives, interrogated and intimidated. Postmen, window cleaners, and young people dropping leaflets - no one was immune from these heavy handed tactics. All of which proves that errant garda behaviour was not confined to Donegal during this period.

The author also recounts the morning when Michael McKevitt was arrested at home. Members of the ERU planted a small bottle of mercury in a kitchen press, while the McKevitt family was detained in another room. Sands implicitly asks why would parents keep a toxic substance in a kitchen press within the reach of three young children? Was this material planted to substantiate a membership charge in the event of Rupert being declared an unreliable witness at a future trial? Interestingly, the ERU withdrew the mercury evidence before the case went to court. Once again there are echoes of the recent Morris report and its findings concerning garda members planting evidence in pursuit of convictions.

As Father Desmond Wilson writes: The case of Michael McKevitt may well go to the European Court and when it does our fellow Europeans may well be shocked".

Indeed they will. But I would suggest that any Irish person reading this book will also be shocked and concerned at the nature of unethical garda behaviour, the machinations and activities of foreign intelligence agencies on Irish soil, the complicity of the Irish government in all of this and deliberate indifference of the mainstream press.

However, by publishing of *The Framing of Michael McKevitt*, Marcella Sands has ensured that, while official Ireland may wish to ignore this case, she will not allow it to be forgotten.

Justice and common sense prevail

Karen Gold

On the morning of the 3rd February 2003 at Shannon airport, five anti-war activists gained entry to an aircraft hanger which contained a US navy C40 transport plane. The plane, loaded with munitions and personnel, was a regular guest at Shannon while on route to Iraq in preparation for mass murder and aggression against an innocent population.

The group of five pacifists - Deirdre Clancy, Nuin Dunlop, Karen Fallon, Damien Moran and Ciaran O'Reilly, in their need to protect life and prevent greater damage to innocent people, entered the compound and decommissioned the navy C40 plane to their own satisfaction, before handing over their tools voluntarily to airport security.

The cost of repairs to the aircraft was estimated at over \$2.5m, which is only a drop in the ocean for a US government that spends more than \$400bn annually on war and militarism.

The US military budget for this year alone is \$441.6bn and the Bush administration has made a request for \$462.7bn for next year. The five activists rightly argued that they had a lawful excuse for doing what they did because they honestly believed they were acting to protect lives in Iraq - a nation that has suffered untold abuses at the hands of Britain and the United States.

The presumption of innocence until proven guilty did not apply to the Shannon Five. This was most evident in government and garda manipulated press releases. Within hours of the men's arrests, Garda spokesman Supt John Farrelly, told RTE radio news: "Five people went in to the hanger. They temporarily over-powered the guard. He managed then - had called for assistance - they did slight damage to the aircraft and they were arrested...The guard, though not physically injured, who was in there managed to stop any great damage being done to the aircraft."

This was utter fabrication and was proven so in all three trials. It emerged that the five did nothing to interfere

with gardai on duty at Shannon Airport. In fact they managed to comfort him when he became distressed by their sudden appearance.

Then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, on TV and radio stated: "I think now we see that maybe we've been a bit over-tolerant with peaceful protesters when they're not one bit peaceful - carrying axes and hammers and lump-hammers...As I said before, refuelling is 40 per cent of the business at Shannon...and there's a real danger



The Shannon Five after their acquittal

we'd lose that, which would be devastating for Shannon, all because a group of people want to participate in malicious attacks."

At trial the court heard and accepted Ciaran O'Reilly's statement that the pickaxe and hammers were "not weapons, but tools to disarm weapons". Ahern's statement was just media spin but it gives us a clear indication of government policy concerning US military activity at Shannon: a policy which places profit ahead of the slaughter of the innocent.

In court the five anti-war defendants relied upon what is known as the defence of lawful excuse, as they had an honestly held belief that the plane, through its involvement in the build-up of weapons and personnel for the illegal war on Iraq, was a threat to the lives of innocent civilians in Iraq.

In two previous trials concerning the Shannon five the presiding judges ruled against the use of this defence. Both trials later collapsed for reasons unconnected to this legal argument. In the first trial Judge Frank O'Donnell admitted his comments could give rise to a perception of bias against the

accused. In the second, Judge Donagh McDonagh recused himself late into the proceedings when it emerged he had a history of social contact with George Bush.

The climax of the most recent case came not with the dramatic verdict but with the historic and unprecedented ruling by Judge Miriam Reynolds.

After lengthy legal argument, she said she could not withhold the defence of lawful excuse from the jury's consideration. The defence allows for damage to property when the persons doing the damage honestly believe they are trying to protect lives or property and when that belief is reasonable in the circumstances as the accused believed them to be.

Judge Reynolds said only the reasonableness of the belief was at issue in this case and that the issue was so tied up with the facts of the case that she could not deprive the jury of its duty to adjudicate on it.

Previous judges had ruled that the lives allegedly being protected were so remote and/or the actions at Shannon so insignificant that this defence could not apply. These brave people had to wait nearly three-and-a-half years for their case to reach a jury.

Thankfully, it took the jury just three hours and six minutes of deliberation to find the five not guilty of criminal damage to the US Navy plane.

The jury seems to have agreed that to damage a US military plane could not, under the current situation, be perceived as a crime.

This unanimous verdict should send a message to our government about its policy of facilitating the US military at our airports.

It is now clear that the Irish people have spoken and that this government has no popular mandate to let Shannon airport be used as part of the American war machine.

The people of Ireland want no part in the waging of war on the innocent and demand that the refuelling of US warplanes and the facilitation of US troops through Shannon should immediately stop.

A discredited force

Eoin McGrath

On 27th July 2006, after a trial lasting almost a month, the jury in the case of Det Sgt John White took just under one hour to dismiss the case against him. For five years White had an accusation hanging over him that he planted a sawn-off shotgun at a travellers encampment in Donegal. Charged on June 20th 2001, he has always denied the claim. As White left the courthouse in Letterkenny he told waiting reporters that many of his former colleagues in the Special Branch let him down and the only ones who had helped him were some of the uniformed members of the force.

The Special Branch section of the Gardai has been surrounded by controversy for decades. There exists within that section a core of individual members who are prepared to lie and perjure themselves to secure convictions against any individual who they want removed.

Sgt White told the waiting media that he may take a civil case against the Garda force, however, it is unlikely that a civil case will ever see the inside of a courtroom. A civil case by White would severely damage the entire Garda organisation and could inflict irreparable and longterm damage to a force whose creditability is increasingly under pressure in the eyes of the general public.

Throughout the past five years White made counter allegations against individual members of the Special Branch and specifically against his former superior, presently one of the most senior detectives in the force. White claimed his superior, Assistant Garda Commissioner Dermot Jennings, had attempted to frame him and had told lies against him in the lead up to, and during, his trial. White's evidence would suggest that Jennings had perjured himself. However, on the other hand, Jennings also gave evidence in White's case and told the court very clearly that White was telling lies. This would also amount to an allegation of perjury against White. The jury accepted White's version of events.

In the past, allegations of wrongdoing were directed mainly against the Garda Special Branch by members of the public. However this latest development is a new departure. The allegations and counter allegations were

directed between the Special Branch themselves, each accusing the other of lying.

Lurking beneath the surface of these allegations and counter allegations is a discredited Garda force already under scrutiny with allegations of corruption, including a culture of fabricating evidence to secure convictions. To date many of the allegations against the Special Branch have been largely ignored or dealt with covertly, far from the public eye.

Of late an increasing number of members within the Special Branch



Det Sgt John White

have been accused of fabricating evidence to secure convictions during criminal and political trials in the non jury Special Criminal Court in Dublin. The most noticeable trials being those of Colm Murphy where two Special Branch officers were uncovered tampering with statements and the supergrass trial of Michael McKevitt where it was alleged that a senior detective, Dermot Jennings, conspired with MI5 to remove evidence in the lead up to the McKevitt trial.

During the Donegal trial Sgt White challenged Assistant Commissioner Dermot Jennings to take a lie detector test. In an unprecedented move White publicly accused Jennings of using his trial as a forum to brand him a liar in the public's eyes.

A number of common threads run through the White case and the McKevitt case: the Omagh bomb investigation, Senior Garda Dermot Jennings's perjury and lies. In White's case Jennings told the court that he vehemently rejected a suggestion that he told White to let a bomb through into Northern Ireland after receiving a tip off from an informant. He was responding to questions about an allegation that the Garda Special Branch allowed a car-bomb to cross the border to protect a confidential source in

1998. Jennings said it was an "absolute lie" that he made any such statement to White during a meeting in a Dublin pub in August 1998. White maintained that the meeting took place shortly before republican dissidents planted a bomb in Omagh, Co Tyrone. However Jennings agreed that the meeting did take place but that the allegations by White concerning the bomb were lies.

MI5 disclosure documents in the McKevitt case contained assertions that Jennings attempted to interfere with and remove documents in the lead up to the trial. Either the content of the MI5 reports were lies, or the denials from Jennings were lies, as both were in conflict.

The reports reveal that an MI5 agent informed Jennings that David Rupert made certain allegations against him. Jennings stated that the allegations were untrue. However, the MI5 agent pointed out to Jennings that if the defence - in McKevitt case - got hold of the report and he [Jennings] denied the content, that would make Rupert an untrustworthy source. What was significant about the report was that the conversation took place before McKevitt was charged or even arrested.

According to the MI5 document, Jennings "urged that the report be removed". The MI5 agent also informed Jennings that there was a few more such "trickinesses" in the paperwork which were being addressed. Jennings was asked to comment on the reports contained in an MI5 document dated 08-02-01 which stated that he urged the MI5 agent to remove the documents and ensure the defence didn't get hold of them.

In a statement Jennings attempted to defend his comments by stating that he would not have suggested that the MI5 agent should remove a document and that the agent may have misinterpreted his comments. Each of Jennings' comments in the MI5 disclosure documents were described by him as misquotes, lies or misunderstandings, just as he had stated in the White case.

Det Sgt White is a key figure in the three recently published reports from the Morris Tribunal into Garda corruption in Donegal.

Raytheon in the dock

John Hanley

John Hume spent the twilight years of his political career successfully convincing the Adams-McGuinness leadership of his belief that a continuation of armed struggle in pursuit of Irish freedom was futile. When the peace process was in its embryonic stages, Hume regularly resorted to a number of well-worn political soundbites that were tailored to enhance this claim. "We live in a post-nationalist world," "Europe has made the border irrelevant," "Britain has no selfish or strategic interest in Ireland," and "We should spill our sweat and not our blood". These were Hume's favourite political catch phrases.

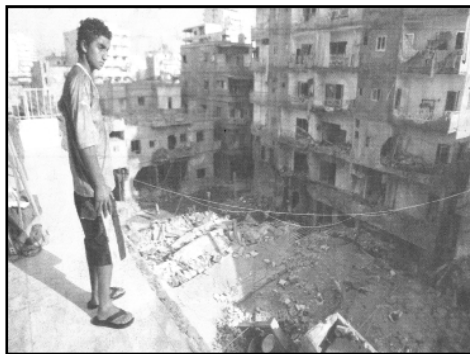
The former SDLP leader also spent a considerable amount of time and energy in encouraging US companies to invest in his native Derry. Fruit of the Loom was the most high profile US firm to invest in the north east during this period. However, Hume also managed to persuade Raytheon, a missile components manufacturer, to relocate one of its high-tech plants from the US to Derry. Raytheon provides the Pentagon with the electronic technology necessary to operate Tomahawk and Patriot missiles.

Hume was obviously indifferent to the hypocrisy of his position. While he urged his constituents to abandon political violence and spill their sweat and not their blood together, he had no qualms about their sweat being spilt in the production of US missiles that would spill no small amount of Arab blood on the streets of Baghdad, the Gaza Strip or south Lebanon. What a peculiar stance for a Nobel Peace Prize winner to adopt?

Raytheon has been a major beneficiary of what doctrinal managers in the media refer to as "the war on terror" or the US neo-conservative campaign of exploitation and domination in the Middle East. For the past number of years the annual US military budget has exceeded \$400bn. Throughout this period Raytheon has been the largest US military contractor and, as a result, has received a considerable slice of this annual \$400bn cake. In 2004 Raytheon acquired a staggering \$8.5bn of military contracts from the Bush administration, a phenomenal

increase on its previous year's allocation, due in no small part to the illegal invasion of Iraq. Raytheon's profits have also risen by 54%, and its shares have increased 12%, in the first six months of this financial year.

When Israel unleashed its recent blitzkrieg against Lebanon, the US government drip-fed the Olmert government a daily supply of missiles via Prestwick Airport in Scotland. Raytheon undoubtedly provided the vast bulk of missile technology for the bombs that were dropped on Lebanon, just as Raytheon technology has been utilised to execute the illegal occupa-



Raytheon technology guides US Tomahawk and Patriot missiles

tion of Iraq. Most people sit watching the daily television scenes from Iraq or Lebanon with a sense of moral indignation. But for the most part our protests go no further than a sense of moral indignation. However, on August 9th, nine men, including the veteran left-wing activist Eamon McCann, decided to protest against these ongoing war crimes. At 8am the men entered the Raytheon missile components plant in Derry, decommissioned a number of company computers, hung a placard reading "Raytheon is now decommissioned" from an office window and occupied the plant for eight hours in protest at the presence of the Raytheon in Derry and the company's complicity in war crimes in Iraq and Lebanon. The PSNI charged the men with unlawful assembly and with intent to cause unlawful damage. The Crown Prosecution Service later claimed that £350,000 of damage was caused to the Raytheon plant. The men were released on bail pending a trial date.

The nine men have made it clear that they intend to use the trial as an opportunity to focus public attention

on the part Raytheon plays in the US war machine. There is a strong likelihood that the defendants will be able to demand the disclosure of documents which will shed light upon Raytheon operations and expose the exact extent of the company's involvement in the US government's ongoing attempt to dominate the Middle East.

The political reaction to the anti-war protest was predictable. SDLP leader Mark Durkan bemoaned the affect the nine men's actions might have on future investment in Derry and decried the "destruction of property". However, his outrage at the destruction of a number of Raytheon computers contrasts with his silence surrounding the devastation of the entire civilian infrastructure of Lebanon, the death of 1000 Lebanese civilians, and the displacement of one million more.

Janice Treacy, the chief executive of the Derry Chamber of Commerce, said: "We could see a situation where potential investors could reject the Foyle region as a location for fear that its products may have tenuous links with conflict". Rather than expressing a fear that merchants of death will refuse to locate in Derry, Ms Treacy and the Derry Chamber of Commerce would be better served exercising an ethical approach to inward investment by refusing US-owned military companies the right to operate from Derry, while their profits are derived from war crimes and the illegal occupations.

Sinn Féin conspicuously issued no public statement on the Raytheon protest.

For our part the New Republican Forum commends and supports the nine anti-war activists who staged the protest at the Raytheon missile components plant on August 9th. This protest has exposed Raytheon's role in the immoral and illegal US war effort and it has highlighted the need for an ethical approach to inward investment in Ireland. No so-called "defence company" which plays any part in the Bush administration's criminal war effort should be permitted to operate on Irish soil. And no US military or intelligence personnel or aircraft should be permitted to avail of landing and refuelling facilities at any Irish airports.

A party driven by power not principle

Paul Maguire

Fine Gael TD John Perry recently invited New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to Sligo to unveil a monument to the Fighting 69th Regiment of the US Army. Formed in 1851 and initially comprised of Irish immigrants, the Fighting 69th fought on the union side in the American civil war. The Fighting 69th possesses close historical links with Ireland, but it is also part of the US Army currently occupying Iraq. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg is an avid apologist of both the occupation and the Bush administration's foreign policy. He recently declared that he had "no remorse for atrocities" committed in Lebanon during the recent US-sponsored Israeli invasion. When the Sligo branch of the Irish Anti-War Movement heard of the Bloomberg invitation to honour a regiment currently occupying Iraq, it decided to stage a number of protests.

The Irish Anti-War Movement urged Sligo's public representatives to boycott the civic reception planned for Bloomberg. Some local councillors agreed to boycott. Some even joined the Anti-War protest. However, three local Sinn Féin councillors attended the ceremony. "It's clear that their failure to participate in the demonstration was designed to appease Sinn Féin's wealthy backers," said Tim Mulcahy, Sligo Anti-War Campaign spokesperson. "It's not just about knowing in your heart that the slaughter of innocents in the Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine is wrong, it's about expressing these sentiments in public. But when it comes to a choice for Sinn Féin between money and principles, principles always lose out."

Quite a significant body of evidence substantiates Tim Mulcahy's stinging criticism of Sinn Féin's rather elastic political principles. Of course one could focus on the domestic and the obvious: Sinn Féin's acceptance of British rule in Ireland and the undemocratic unionist veto on Irish unity; its abandonment of traditional republican principles in exchange for power north and south; and its surrender of republican weapons at the behest of Downing Street while the British state obstructs Irish sovereignty. However, other less prominent examples abound.

Readers may recall Sean Crowe's [SF Dublin South-West TD] December 2000 visit to Bogota to monitor the trial of The Colombia Three. There Crowe met trade union officials and learnt that over 200 labour activists had been murdered amid a savage campaign of intimidation at Coca-Cola plants throughout Colombia. Thereafter *An Phoblacht* published several small articles documenting Coca-Cola's abysmal human rights record and its scurrilous employment practices. However, it later emerged that around this time Sinn Féin actually accepted \$15,000 from Coca-Cola,



Adams: a man of no principle

despite the allegations of murder and intimidation levelled against the company by Colombian trade union officials and numerous human rights organisations. Indeed Sinn Féin's acceptance of the \$15,000 came just four months before the United Steel Workers Union and the International Labour Rights Fund filed legal suits under the Alien Tort Claims Act against Coca-Cola and two Colombian bottling companies, alleging gross abuses of human rights. This is a good example of Sinn Féin's abject lack of principle. While Gerry Adams was proclaiming the party's socialist and internationalist credentials, his party treasurer was accepting a \$15,000 donation from a company infamous for the suppression of labour. For Sinn Féin, in this instance, pecuniary advantage outweighed political solidarity.

The decision not to attend the Irish Anti-War Movement's protest at the Bloomberg civic reception is not the first time that Sinn Féin has chosen to turn its back on the Irish Anti-War Movement in preference for a chance to converse with prominent members of the US political establishment. In April 2003, just one month into the

Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, Gerry Adams opted to meet George W Bush and Tony Blair during their infamous "war summit" at Hillsborough Castle, despite the pleadings of the entire Irish Anti-War Movement. One month earlier, on the eve of the initial Blitzkrieg of Iraq, Adams arrived late at the St Patrick's Day White House lunch in order to avoid having his photograph taken with the US Commander-in-Chief. However, he could not avoid the world's press at Hillsborough. When Adams emerged from his meeting with Blair and Bush he was questioned by a visibly frustrated reporter from Abu Dhabi television. The reporter urged Adams to "say more about your attitude to the war". To the Arab reporter's obvious disgust Adams meekly replied that "he wanted to see the war ended". No assertion of the war's illegality. No analysis as to why, or indeed how, the illegal war was being prosecuted. No comment about the appallingly high number of murdered and maimed children. No attempt to reaffirm the Iraqi peoples' right to self determination free from external aggression. He didn't even express a wish to see "the gun taken out of Iraqi politics". Hardly an assertive articulation of the anti-war position by an alleged, prominent, participating member of the Irish Anti-War Movement? Instead of outlining a principled and moral opposition to imperialism, Sinn Féin opted for an expedient silence, lest any criticism might diminish the party's access to those wielding absolute power and their wealthy US benefactors.

Sinn Féin will continue this despicable opportunism until it is punished by the electorate. In the meantime the party will continue to proclaim freedom in our time while scurrying to restore foreign rule. It will embrace Fidel Castro and shake the hands of George Bush, Tony Blair and Peter King. It will sympathise with Colombian trade unionists and accept substantial largesse from companies that use jackboot tactics against organised labour in Latin America. Some republicans are well accustomed to these Machiavellian Sinn Féin machinations. What is surprising, however, is that some sections of the Irish Anti-War Movement should be shocked by them.

Israel guilty of war crimes

Paul Maguire

Washington and Tel Aviv described the recent Israeli invasion of Lebanon as a "war of defence" motivated by a desire to rescue two captured soldiers. From the outset international opinion recognised this as a lie. This flimsy moral justification was absurd, especially when viewed against the backdrop of a horrendously disproportionate and punitive blitzkrieg. And while America and Israel may have offered an absurd "moral justification" for war, they certainly offered no legal justification. And they offered no justification for good reason: because no sound legal justification existed. This war was illegal under international law. And to compound an initial wrong, it was an illegal invasion which triggered a whole series of war crimes as prescribed by established international legal authority.

On 21 November 1945, Lord Lawrence, the then President of the International War Crimes Trial at Nuremburg, indicted the surviving Nazi hierarchy under four counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Count One charged the defendants with "the common plan or conspiracy to accomplish planning...or waging war of aggression" in violation of international law. Count Three charged the accused with "the commissioning of war crimes" which the Tribunal defined as "the violation of the laws or customs of war, to include...murder...ill-treatment or deportation...for any other purpose of civilian populations...wanton destruction or devastation not justified by military necessity". Count Four related to crimes against humanity which were defined as "murder, extermination or any other inhumane acts committed against a civilian population, before or during the war".

When the illegal invasion of Lebanon [a Count One charge of waging a war of aggression] commenced in late June, Israeli military planners, unwilling to countenance a land engagement with a skilled and determined Hizbollah foe, opted instead for what were labelled "surgical military air-strikes". But Israeli air bombings were far from surgical or military ori-

entated. The vast majority of air attacks were devoid of military purpose and were a savage and punitive assault - even by Israeli standards - upon the entire Lebanese population and its civil infrastructure.

Days into the invasion, Israeli jets dropped leaflets over south Lebanon warning civilians to leave the area forthwith or risk falling victim to Israeli bombs. But when civilians sought to flee their convoys were obliterated from the air. It was a cynical Israeli-style catch-22: Lebanese civilians could stay and be bombed or flee and be bombed.

Then there was Qana. Where Jesus

sequent 22-year occupation. But it will be many years before Lebanon recovers from this latest bout of US-sponsored Israeli aggression, and many years before it rebuilds its civilian infrastructure. Main motorways and arteries connecting Lebanese towns, coastal ports, recently installed telecommunications systems, electricity switch networks, airport runways, vital sanitary facilities, a huge swathe of the country's industrial infrastructure, and almost 15,000 newly built housing units were devastated by the Israeli blitzkrieg. What was the military justification for these attacks on Lebanon's civil infrastructure? Attacks

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which fell well within Count Three war crimes charges at Nuremburg, i.e. "wanton destruction or devastation not justified by military necessity".

There is a long and bloody history of Israeli aggression against Lebanon. In August 1969 the UN Resolution 270 "condemns the premeditated air attacks by Israel on villages in southern Lebanon".

Furthermore, UN Resolution 347 of April 1974; UN Resolution 425 of March 1978; UN Resolution 450 of June 1979 and UN Resolution 521 of September 1982 all condemn either Israeli military aggression against Lebanon or the murder of Palestinian or Lebanese civilians. The machinations of US diplomats ensured there was no UN Resolution of censure this time round, while an estimated one million Lebanese were displaced and over one thousand civilians were murdered, in what Condolessa Rice claimed was the "birth pangs of a new Middle East". How cynical it was to use a metaphor depicting the imminent arrival of life to justify wanton murder and destruction on this scale?

once turned water into wine, US-supplied Israeli missiles turned Lebanese infants to dust in an instant. Israel offered a mealy-mouthed apology and then reneged on a pledge to cease their aerial bombardment. But days previous, Haim Ramon, Israel's Minister of Justice, gave vent to actual official Israeli perceptions of south Lebanon's civilian population: "These places are not villages. They are military bases in which Hizbollah are hiding and from which they are operating...All those now in south Lebanon are terrorists who are in some way related to Hizbollah". Hence in the eyes of Israeli officialdom, Lebanese civilians inhabited not villages but military bases, which rendered them legitimate targets in a grotesque illegitimate war. Recent Israeli military attacks upon against Lebanese civilians fell within Count Three criteria at Nuremburg, i.e. "the commissioning of war crimes" and "the violation of the laws or customs of war, to include...murder...ill-treatment... of civilian populations".

Lebanon had just recovered from the 1982 Israeli invasion and the sub-

Israeli war planners and their US sponsors may never be brought to account for their war crimes. But if legal precedent, germane to international law, established in the aftermath of the Second World War was adhered to, both the Israeli and US governments would be indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity as prescribed in Count One, Three and Four at Nuremburg.

US-UK-Israel: the real axis of evil

Since the end of World War II, American imperialists have consistently viewed regional control of the Middle East as a primary strategic objective. George Kennan, perhaps Washington's most prominent post-War planner, declared control of Gulf resources as "a stupendous source of strategic power" and "one of the greatest material prizes in world history". Regional domination would ensure American capitalism's unfettered control over Gulf oil reserves, but as the Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's foreign policy advisor, also pointed out: "it will also give America indirect but politically critical leverage on European and Asian economies that are dependent on energy exports from the region". Hence "strategic power" equals cheap oil supplies and a crucial veto over competitive economic blocs.

While Bush administration's Middle Eastern objectives are by no means original, they are an extreme variation. With the main Gulf oil producing economies, such as Saudia Arabia, under the US "sphere of influence," it was no accident that US attention eventually fell upon Iraq, which possesses one of the world's largest un-tapped oil reserves that is extremely cheap to extract. A recent ExxonMobil report *The Outlook for Energy: a 2030 View* revealed that with non-OPEC oil production set to peak by 2010, US oil reserves face depletion in the short-term. Hence the attractiveness Iraq oil and the heightened necessity for US regional control of the Gulf. Right-wing apologists attempt to depict critiques along these lines as "conspiracy theories". However this analysis is far from conspiratorial. As neo-conservatives recognise, the realisation of these regional objectives are imperative if the American military-industrial complex is to retain global hegemony.

America is currently attempting to remould the Gulf region. The transformation of Israeli into a client state-cum-offshore military base, the continuing compliance of corrupt Arab oil producing regimes, the occupation and domination of Iraq, and regime change in Damascus and Tehran, are central to US regional aspirations. With the destruction and domination of Iraq well underway, Washington has now switched its attention to Iran.

Neo-conservative war planners have stated that they are not prepared to countenance the emergence of a nuclear Iran. Iran's sovereign right to develop civil-use nuclear power is anathema to neo-conservative considerations. On the nuclear question double standards abound. Israel is a longstanding regional nuclear power but is not a signature to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Israel is in violation of UN

resolution 487 which: "Calls upon Israel urgently to place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency." Yet Tel Aviv ignores the international community. However, there is no suggestion that Israel be subject to UN sanctions. Obviously America would veto any attempt to apply sanctions to its regional ally. Whereas Iran is a regional opponent and, therefore, in Washington's eyes, must be forced into compliance.

Seymour Hersh, the Pulitzer Prize-winning US journalist, recently disclosed that American and Israeli war planners



The US-sponsored Israeli devastation of Beirut

met last spring - months before the Hizbollah capture of the two Israeli soldiers - to chart the future strategic bombing of Lebanon. Pentagon sources informed Hersh that the assault on Lebanon would be a forerunner to a future US-sponsored Israeli aerial attack on Iran. Hersh's disclosures raise many questions. Was the aerial assault on Lebanon an opportunity to test the effectiveness of US bombs against Hizbollah underground facilities? Was it seen as an opportunity to strengthen the security of Israel's northern border, by driving Hezbollah back behind the Litani, prior to an assault on Tehran? If this was the motivation, then the US-sponsored Israeli invasion of Lebanon has failed.

Early in the conflict Condolessa Rice opposed a ceasefire proposal by stating that a return to the status quo ante was unconceivable. But the status quo ante was the exact point of return. Hizbollah is militarily intact, while its political support has increased exponentially. The Israeli air force performed poorly against Hizbollah underground facilities. On the last day of the conflict Hizbollah fired its largest number of rockets into Israel. So does this mean that the strategic inadequacies of the US-sponsored Israeli attack has postponed the prospect of an American or Israeli strike of Iran? Only time will tell.

It would be ideal if we lived in a nuclear free world. But when the lone global nuclear superpower is contemptuous of international law and is pursuing a foreign policy predicated upon the forcible domination and exploitation of oil producing nations in the Middle East, threatened nations outside of US domination will attempt to wrap themselves in the security of a nuclear blanket.

In the final analysis the real axis of evil encompasses those states that are forcefully and unlawfully pursuing regional domination and resource exploitation throughout the entire Middle East. Therein lies the primary threat to global peace and security.

Letters and articles (800, 1100 or 2200 words) can be sent to Forum Magazine at:

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

Flying Column

Keep your Yankee dollars!

In the aftermath of the criminal 33-day US-sponsored Israeli blitzkrieg of Lebanon, the neo-conservative rabble in the White House have attempted to recoup some credibility with substantial offers of financial aid to non-governmental organisations in Lebanon. However, all Lebanese non-governmental organisations refused all aid from the Likudniks in Washington. The message from Lebanon to the US government is clear and simple: "You cannot finance and supply the bombs which destroyed our country with one hand and then offer financial aid with the other". Perhaps it is high time for George W Bush to reacquaint himself with the definition of the hypocrite in the Gospels.

Viva Fidel!

While handing over power to his brother Raul, Fidel Castro sought to downplay his recent bout of ill-health: "I cannot invent good news because that wouldn't be ethical. And if the news were bad, the only one to benefit is the enemy," he was quoted in *Granma*, the Cuban daily communist newspaper. While friends and admirers of Cuba around the word looked on with concern, right-wing Cuban exiles danced in ecstasy on Miami streets, perhaps dreaming once more of a return to the days when Cuba was rendered an off-shore, US-mafia run holiday resort, with a cheap supply of labour and sugar. However, amid the hype and brazen euphoria in Florida, Raul Castro quietly assumed the reins of power. Senior Cuban government official Roberta Fernandez Retamur quenched the hopes and aspirations of the Miami rabble: "All those who have been dreaming that something terrible would happen in Cuba must have very swollen hands. A peaceful succession has taken place". Cuba's enemies probably believe the revolution will pass with Fidel. In this they are mistaken. Nor should they be under any illusion about Castro's will to live. And if they do possess any doubt on this point, then perhaps they should be reminded of the occasion when Castro was presented with a gift of a Galapagos turtle during a foreign visit to Asia. Having inquired about the turtle's life expectancy and having learned it was approximately 100 years, the Cuban president politely declined the gift: "That's the problem with pets," he said. "You get attached to them and then they die on you". This is one man who is no hurry to shake off the mortal coil!

More "strategic compromises"

During a recent Hunger Strike commemoration in Casement Park, Gerry Adams urged the provisional movement's grassroots to engage with unionism and to prepare for further "strategic compromises" over the coming weeks and months. For "strategic compromises" read acceptance of British policing structures and seats on the Policing Board. It won't be long before Adams and McGuinness start blath-

ering on about a "new era of policing" in "the transition to a free and independent Ireland". However, comments by Peter Hain illustrate the British government's somewhat different take on events. Hain recently told reporters: "As Northern Ireland is normalised, we're treating Northern Ireland in exactly the same way as England, Scotland and Wales, where the Security Services - MI5 - is in the lead on intelligence, and the police are in the lead on operational matters". Are these comments indicative of movement towards "a free and independent Ireland" or further evidence of a consolidation of the "union" with Britain?

The end of the line for Israeli engineers!

Veolia Transport Ireland operates Dublin's Luas light rail system. On three separate occasions over the past eighteen months a group of Israeli engineers and consultants visited Ireland and received training from Veolia. Apparently, the Israeli government is planning to construct a similar light rail system in occupied East Jerusalem. Upon learning of the ongoing co-operation between the Israel government and Veolia, the Irish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign informed the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, who just last month passed a motion calling for "economic sanctions to be imposed on Israel until all IDF forces and illegal settlements are removed from the occupied territories". After receiving protests and complaints from senior trade union representatives, Veolia cancelled all further cooperation with Israeli engineers and consultants. A small but significant victory for the Irish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign.

Foreign Fighters in Iraq?

During a recent White House press briefing George W Bush spoke of "the necessity of counteracting the continuing presence and menace of Al-Qa'ida's foreign fighters in Iraq". "Foreign fighters"? One never ceases to be amazed at how those who wield ultimate power twist and distort the English language to suit their barely-concealed ideological goals. Surely the largest body of "foreign fighters" in Iraq is the Anglo-American armies of occupation? When Soviet Russia occupied Afghanistan, politburo members regularly informed Kremlin press briefings of the malign intent of "foreign fighters" who were obstructing the establishment of Afghan democracy, while the noble and "democratic" intentions of the Soviet Union was implicitly accepted by the state-controlled press. Bush II is just as disingenuousness and the mainstream western press is just as complicitous and unquestioning. It is, however, important to recall that it was a combination of patriotism and militant Islam which drove Russia out of Afghanistan in 1989. Seventeen years on, perhaps this very same combination may once again be successful in driver foreign invaders from Iraq and Afghanistan?



The Writings of Bobby Sands

To coincide with 25th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike, this page publishes extracts from the prison writings of the H-Block Martyr Bobby Sands.

The Harvest Britain has Sown

A stretch of tarmac surrounded by barbed wire and steel is the only view from my cell window. I'm told it's an exercise yard. I wouldn't know. In my fourteen months in H-Blocks, I haven't been allowed to walk in the fresh air. I am on 'cellular confinement' today. That is three days out of every fourteen when my only possessions, three blankets and a mattress, are removed, leaving a blanket and a chamber pot.

I'm left to pass the day like this; from 7.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. How I spend my day is determined by the weather. If it's reasonably warm, it's possible to sit on the floor, stare at the white walls, and pass a few hours day-dreaming. But otherwise I must spend my day continuously pacing the cell to prevent the cold chilling through to my bones. Even after my bedding is returned at 8.30 p.m. hours will pass before the circulation returns to my feet and legs.

Methods of passing the time are few and far between, so I am left with many hours of contemplation: good times, bad times, how I got here, but, most importantly, why I am here. During moments of weakness I try to convince myself that a prison uniform and conforming wouldn't be that bad. But the will to resist burns too strong within.

To accept the status of criminal would be to degrade myself and admit that the cause that I believe in and cherish is wrong. When thinking of the men and women who sacrificed life itself, my suffering seems insignificant. There have been many attempts to break my will, but each one has made me more determined. I know my place is here with my comrades.

I think of the only break in the monotony, the forty minutes I spend at mass each Sunday - 'turn the other cheek', 'love thy neighbour' - and I wonder, because over the months I know that bitterness has grown inside me. A hatred so intensive that it frightens me.

I see it also in the faces of my com-

rades at Mass: the hatred in their eyes. One day these young men will be fathers and these attitudes will inevitably be passed on to their children.

This is the harvest Britain has sown: her actions will eventually seal the faith of her rule in Ireland.

It is frightening to see men become aged at eighteen and nineteen. Young men, who were fit and strong in mind and body a year ago, now resemble shrunken shells of human beings. Every aspect of H-Block life, from cold, empty cells and denial of every comfort, to refusal of medical treatment, is designed to grind down our resistance, but it will not succeed.

They may hold our bodies in the most inhumane conditions, but, while our minds remain free our victory is assured!

Diary Entry Wednesday March 4th*

Fr Murphy was in tonight. I have not felt too bad today, although I noticed the energy beginning to drain. But it is quite early yet. I got showered today and had my hair cut, which made me feel quite good. Ten years younger, the boys joke, but I feel twenty years older, the inevitable consequence of eight years of torture and imprisonment.

I am abreast with the news and view with utter disgust and anger the Reagan/Thatcher plot. It seems quite clear that they intend to counteract Russian expansionism with imperialist expansionism, so to protest their vital interests they say.

What they mean is they covet other nations' resources. They want to steal what they haven't got and do so [as the future may unfortunately prove] they will murder oppressed people and deny them their sovereignty as nations. No doubt Mr Haughey will toe the line in Ireland when Thatcher so demands.

Noticed a rarity today: jam with the tea, and by the way the Screws are glaring at the food. They seem more in need of it than my good self.

*** Bobby Sands kept a secret diary for the first seventeen days of his hunger strike. This was his entry for Wednesday March 4th.**

The following Irish republican prisoners are affiliated to the New Republican Forum:

Portlaoise Prison, Ireland

Tony Hyland
25 years

James McCormack
22 years

Michael McKevitt
20 years

Alan Patterson
9 years

Declan Carroll
7 years

Pascal Burke
7 years

Frank McGeown
5 years

Ciaran Dunne
5 years

Whitemoor Prison, England

Michael McDonald
28 years

Declan Rafferty
28 years

Full Sutton Prison, England

Fintan O'Farrell
28 years

Noel Maguire
18 years

Aidan Hulme
16 years

Long Lartin Prison, England

Robert Hulme
16 years

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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