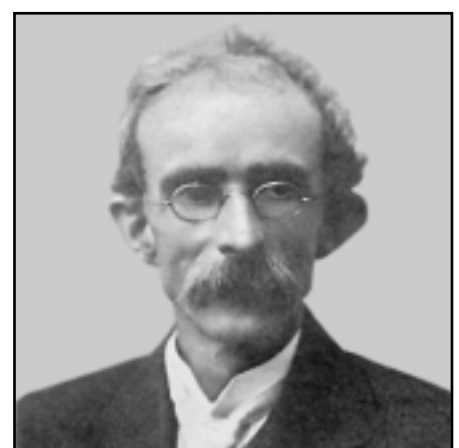
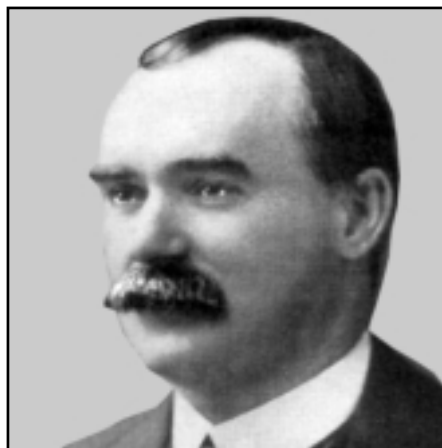


# FORUM MAGAZINE

An Irish Republican Journal

Issue 22: Aug-Sept 2005

[www.newrepublicanforum.ie](http://www.newrepublicanforum.ie)



Special Feature: Provisional's surrender now complete \*  
Republican prisoners \* Why did Al-Qa'ida bomb London? \*  
The Rossport Five \* Loyalist weapons? \* Edward Heath \*  
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# Loyalist weapons?

Paula Kennedy

The provisional's decision to decommission its arsenal should have placed loyalist weapons and the ongoing collusion between the British state and loyalist paramilitaries under renewed scrutiny. But unfortunately the destruction of the pro-British weapons responsible for murdering hundreds of Irish nationalists is clearly not a priority for the main players in the peace process. A cursory glance at the British state's role in the re-arming of loyalism and the continued existence of this arsenal highlights the irresponsible nature of the provisional's decision to decommission at the behest of the British state.

In the mid-1980s the Thatcher government took a strategic decision to equip loyalism. The motive? To terrorise and demoralise the nationalist community into submission. The Force Research Unit [FRU] was a highly secretive and unaccountable branch of British military intelligence. Its main task was to recruit and handle informants within the PIRA and the UDA. In the mid-1980s FRU agents infiltrated the UDA. The FRU's prized asset was Brian Nelson, the Belfast UDA's chief intelligence officer. With the help of his FRU handlers, Nelson compiled files on hundreds of nationalists. From this vantage point Nelson enabled the British State to directly target certain republicans, while also keeping FRU informed of every planned UDA attack in Belfast, thus enabling them to protect their informants within the PIRA. More than 80 people on Nelson's file were attacked by the UDA. Of these, 29 were murdered.

In January 1988, with the full knowledge of his British Army handlers, Nelson travelled to South Africa and imported 200 AK47 assault rifles, 90 Browning pistols, 500 fragmentation grenades, 30,000 rounds of ammunition and 12 RPG7 rocket launchers on behalf of the UDA, UVF and Ulster Resistance. These weapons fueled the UDA/UVF murder campaign between 1988 and 1994, in which more than 200 people were murdered. Of these 200 murders, RUC ballistic reports confirmed that 85 were carried out with Nelson's South African weapons. During the Stevens' inquiry a further 54 ballistic reports concerning these murders were 'misaid'. The

British government is directly implicated in most if not all of the 200 murders during this period.

Alarming, the vast bulk of these weapons remain at large. According to recently disclosed RUC-PSNI statistics, there were more than 700 grenade and pipe bomb attacks against nationalist homes between 1998 and 2004. And in 2002 the nationalist Short Strand community was attacked for seven months with pipe bombs, blast bombs and gunfire.

In its recent statement the PIRA declared that: 'The issue of the defence of nationalist and republican communities has been raised with us. There is a responsibility on society to ensure that there is no re-occurrence of the pogroms of 1969'. The failure to protect the nationalist community from RUC-loyalist pogroms was the gravest charge that breakaway provisionals levelled against the Goulding leadership in 1969-70. Since then the PIRA has deemed itself the last line of defence for the nationalist community. But with its decision to decommission the provisional leadership has breached this duty of care. So who will defend the nationalist community in the event of further pogroms? Adams suggests that responsibility rests with 'society'. But the six-county state is an abnormal society. Is Adams suggesting that the nationalist community should rely upon the PSNI for protection? The force that recently fraternised with armed and masked loyalists in the Garnerville Estate? The militia, which according to the British Irish Rights Watch, continues to run UVF/UDA informers? Surely the duty of care to protect the nationalist community should always rest with republicans?

It is a tragic irony that the provisional leadership has decommissioned its arsenal in order to administer the very state which armed death squads to murder citizens from whence it drew its support. By decommissioning the provisional leadership has left the nationalist community at the mercy of state-sponsored loyalist paramilitaries and the PSNI. But others will fill the vacuum and ensure that the nationalist community is not left unprotected, now that the provisional leadership has decommissioned its arsenal in pursuit of power in partitionist institutions.

# David and Goliath

Karen Gold

*Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance* - Robert Kennedy

On June 29 the High Court jailed the Rossport Five for refusing to comply with an injunction forbidding them to obstruct the construction of a Shell gas pipeline from the Corrib field 70km offshore through their land to a processing plant 9km inland. The five Mayo men [Willie Corduff, Michael O'Seighin, Philip McGrath, Brendan Philbin and Vincent McGrath] are objecting to the inland pipeline on grounds of public safety. In effect the men were jailed for protecting their families and the surrounding community from the installation of a high-risk natural gas pipeline. The High Court ruled that the men are to remain incarcerated in Cloverhill Prison until they 'purge their contempt' and give an undertaking not to obstruct the proposed pipeline.

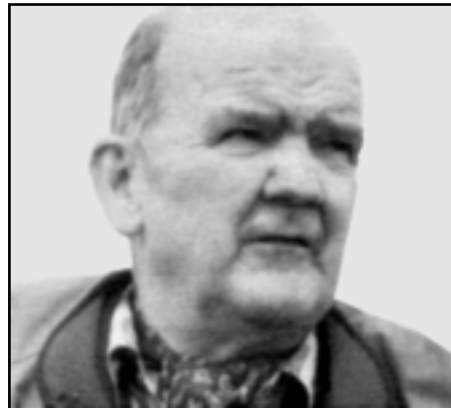
Shell Oil has dismissed the men's safety concerns. Andy Pyle, Chairman of Shell Ireland, recently stated that: 'It is absolutely rubbish to suggest safety is not our primary priority. It is deeply regrettable that the unfounded fears of some landowners have been recklessly stoked by some who must bear some of the responsibility for the current situation'.

Is the Chairman of Shell Ireland correct? Have the fears of the landowners been recklessly stoked? No. The truth of the matter is there are genuine safety concerns surrounding the proposed gas pipeline. And what is more, there exists a strong body of evidence to support the men's objections.

According to the US Office of Public Safety, between 1986-2005 there were 4280 accidents involving natural gas pipelines which resulted in 382 deaths, 3061 injuries and \$780m damage to property. Last year, a Belgium natural gas pipeline exploded, killing 15 and injuring 120 people. In August

2004 a gas pipeline explosion in Carlsbad, New Mexico, killed 5 people. The Carlsbad pipeline operated at a lower pressure than the proposed Mayo pipeline would.

Shell's Corrib pipeline will pump what are in effect explosive materials at very high, very dangerous pressures through what is an unstable landscape, as recently demonstrated by the Dooncarton landslide at nearby Pollathomas. The proposed operation



**65-year-old Michael O'Seighin: one of five jailed by the High Court**

of such a high-pressured natural gas pipeline through such an unstable landscape is undoubtedly a recipe for disaster.

So contrary to the spin emanating from Shell Ireland, the landowners' fears have not been recklessly stoked. Clearly, Shell Ireland is attempting to downplay any risks that may be attached to the pipeline. However, the jailing of the five men has placed the pipeline, its concomitant risks to public safety, and the circumstances surrounding Shell's original access to the Corrib field under public scrutiny.

In 1992 Shell Oil was presented with what amounted to an economic windfall when Ray Burke granted the foreign multinational access to the Corrib gas field. In doing so Burke set aside traditional legislative criteria whereby the exchequer would receive substantial royalties and a 50% shareholding in the enterprise. As a consequence of Burke's machinations, when Shell activates the Corrib gas field the State will be buying Irish gas from this foreign multinational - as if it were buying gas from Russia - at full market price. Colm Rapple, a leading Irish economist, recently referred to these contract terms as a 'rape of our natural resources'. In essence, the Irish

people will gain nothing from the Corrib gas field, while the Rossport community will bare all of the personal and environmental risks.

Many environmentalists have asked why Shell cannot process the natural gas at sea. Shell has stated this is not viable. However, it was recently disclosed that by processing the gas onshore Shell Ireland will make an annual saving of \$300m and knock 40% off annual operating costs at the Corrib field. Hence profit is being placed ahead of the welfare of a local community. And this despite the fact that Shell's annual profits increased by 39% to \$17.5bn last year.

The extent of Ray Burke's generosity to Shell is further illustrated by contrasting Venezuela's treatment of foreign oil companies. Last year the Chavez government increased all royalties on foreign oil to 16.6% and announced that it intends to increase tax rates on foreign oil production from 34% to 50%.

It is unreasonable to state that Ray Burke auctioned off the Corrib gas field. He did nothing of the sort. He gave it away for nothing to one of the world's largest multinational oil producers. This is nothing short of a national scandal. Perhaps one of the many tribunals currently in session in Dublin Castle may inquire as to whether Ray Burke received any payment for his inexplicable generosity with our nation's natural resources?

The proposed construction of Shell's onshore Corrib gas pipeline represents a grave risk to those living adjacent to it. The statistics provided by the US Office of Public Safety and the circumstances surrounding the explosion at the Carlsbad pipeline illustrate this beyond doubt. Willie Corduff, Michael O'Seighin, Philip McGrath, Brendan Philbin and Vincent McGrath are being unjustly jailed - at the request of Shell Oil - for protecting their families and communities from obvious disaster. Whereas those who facilitated the rape of our natural resources and those who would place profit ahead of the safety of the Rossport community remain at liberty. At the very least let us hope that the proposed onshore pipeline is jettisoned and that once again David slays Goliath.

# Remembered with affection?

Maria McCann

On July 17 last, the former British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, died aged 89. Nowadays when a prominent politician passes away commentators and politicians regularly put a positive gloss on his political achievements and legacy. The positive aspects of his tenure in high office are accentuated, while the victims of his policies, the pain and suffering, are concealed.

The almost unanimous sympathetic treatment of Edward Heath's political career was totally in line with modern trends. Within hours of his passing, various politicians described him as 'a man of great integrity and courage'; 'a political giant'; and 'a very great man and a great patriot'. Bertie Ahern joined in this chorus of historical revisionism and political dry-cleaning. When asked for his reaction to Heath's death, the Taoiseach replied: 'Sir Edward Heath will be remembered with particular affection in Ireland because it was he who negotiated the Sunningdale Agreement of 1974, which in many ways was the model for every subsequent effort to bring about peace and stability on the island of Ireland'. Remembered with particular affection in Ireland? I doubt it. There are some who will associate Heath with Sunningdale. But for many others the name Edward Heath will forever be synonymous with the Falls Curfew, internment and Bloody Sunday.

Edward Heath became British Prime Minister in June 1970. The six-county state was teetering on the brink. Heath perceived the solution to the increasing political instability in 'security' or repressive terms. Hence any further movement towards political reform was suspended and the British army and the unionist political establishment were granted carte blanche to act. The outcome was an escalation in state repression against the nationalist community.

Three weeks after Heath's election victory, the British Army Commander in Ireland, Lieutenant General Sir Ian Freeland, ordered a curfew in the Lower falls District of Belfast. Thousands of British soldiers swarmed the area under clouds of CS gas. They conducted house-to-house searches for republican arms. Larger caches of

loyalist weapons were ignored and left untouched. In the Lower Falls the British Army was confronted with stone throwing youths and exchanges of gun-fire from a nascent PIRA. The British Army responded by killing four unarmed people. Nationalist hostility to the British Army snowballed and hundreds applied to join the PIRA.

On 9 August 1971 the British state interned hundreds of Irish nationalists



Edward Heath

in an attempt to quell the growing resistance. The widespread use of detention without trial was accompanied by the widespread use of torture. As a consequence the Dublin government brought the British government before the European Court on human rights abuses. From a British perspective internment was both politically and militarily counterproductive. Most of those arrested were not PIRA members and thereafter violence soared to unprecedented levels. Furthermore, the use of detention without trial and the widespread use of torture was a major propaganda own-goal by the British state. On the day internment was introduced Edward Heath was sailing his yacht, *Morning Cloud*, to victory in the British Admiral Cup.

By 1972 the British government was at war with the PIRA. However, some British officials questioned the effectiveness of state policy. Three days prior to Bloody Sunday Edward Heath received a memo from a senior civil servant, Sir Burke Trend, advising the Prime Minister to review the modus operandi of the Parachute Regiment 'because the regiment has gratuitously provoked resentment among peaceful elements of the

Roman Catholic population'. Heath did not respond to Trend's memo. Instead he met unionist Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, to discuss the pending Derry march. Details of the discussion between the two leaders and details of the decisions of the military strategy committee which also met prior to the civil rights march were withheld when state papers were released in 2002 under the 30-year-rule.

In the aftermath of the slaughter of fourteen unarmed nationalist marchers Heath appointed Lord Widgery to investigate the events surrounding Bloody Sunday. On the day of the appointment Heath informed Widgery: 'It has to be remembered that we are in Northern Ireland fighting not only a military war but a propaganda war'. The subsequent Widgery Report was a whitewash. Nationalist Ireland was unsurprised. Heath and the British establishment closed ranks and withstood worldwide criticism.

Eleven years into a PIRA ceasefire and not much changed. At the recently convened Saville Inquiry, the British state continually refused to disclose documents concerning the meeting between Heath and Faulkner and the decisions of the military strategy committee. During one of the Inquiry's sessions, Michael Lavery QC asked Heath if innocent people were murdered on Bloody Sunday. Heath replied with contempt: 'I didn't make a statement about that matter at the time and I refuse not do so now'. Even thirty years after the event Heath refused to acknowledge the crime that was Bloody Sunday: a crime for which to date not one British soldier or commander has been prosecuted.

It is a sign of the times that an Irish Taoiseach can openly declare that a British prime Minister who oversaw the murder and internment of Irish citizens 'will be remembered with particular affection'. Perhaps Bertie Ahern has forgotten that it was a Fianna Fail government which hauled the Heath government before the European Court on human rights abuses? The southern political establishment may mourn the loss of Edward Heath. But in working class nationalist areas of the six-counties - which bore the brunt of Heath's repressive policies - he will be remembered with the contempt he deserves.

# Why did Al-Qa'ida bomb London?

John Hanley

A week is a long time in politics. The first week in July was certainly a long week in British politics. It began in hope. The Live 8 concert in Hyde Park. One small part of a global call to make poverty history. Within days Londoners commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the end of WWII. On Wednesday the mood swung from commemoration to jubilation with the announcement that London would host the 2012 Olympic Games. The atmosphere was euphoric. However, a day of joy was followed by a day of intense shock. On Thursday July 7, as G8 leaders gathered at Gleneagles, London was rocked by four no-warning bombs which claimed over 50 lives and maimed hundreds more.

The first no-warning bomb exploded at 8.51am 100 yards into the underground tunnel from Liverpool Street station. The immediate force of the device claimed 7 fatalities. Exactly five minutes later, a second explosion, on the underground between King's Cross Station and Russell Square, claimed 21 lives. The third explosion took place at 9.17am on a train entering Edgware Road underground station. A further 21 people were killed. Fifteen minutes later London Underground suspended its daily service, when it became clear that the capital was under sustained attack. At 9.47am, an explosion, on a commuter bus near Tavistock Place, killed 13 civilians. Four minutes later train services into the capital were suspended. Mobile phone signals were closed down. All London hospitals were placed on major alert. The FTSE index dropped one-hundred and sixty points. There was a brief run on the pound. A hitherto unknown Al-Qa'ida offshoot claimed responsibility for the bombing, citing the Anglo-American war in Iraq and Afghanistan as motivation.

In the immediate aftermath Tony Blair and George Bush placed the bombings in an almost quasi-religious 'good versus evil' context. Bush stated that when taken against the backdrop of the G8 Summit the bombings illustrated the contrast 'between those who respect human liberty and human rights and the evil-doers who have hate in their hearts. The war on terror goes on', he concluded. Blair portrayed

the attacks as a clash of civilisations in which jihadis were invading the west and 'destroying what we hold dear'.

This is the normal disinformation that Blair and Bush continually propagate. It is pure apolitical nonsense. Al-Qa'ida is not an apolitical group of sociopaths. It is a loosely-aligned, militant Islamic movement which possesses clearly defined political grievances and objectives. Initially, Al-Qa'ida was formed as a radical Islamic reaction to American presence in the Arabian Peninsula prior to the 1991 Gulf War. However, it is sustained and



Bus explosion in Tavistock Place

fuelled by a well-founded conviction that the west [dominated by the Anglo-American alliance] is intent on dominating the Islamic world.

Cast a cursory glance at a number of previous Al-Qa'ida statements. Here one can find the political grievances and objectives that sustain this organisation. Here one can read repeated protestations about the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian people through the continual resettlements in the West-Bank; resentment at the West's unquestioning support for Israel and corrupt Arab client regimes; wrath at a decade of genocidal UN sanctions which resulted in the deaths of 1 million Iraqi children; outright opposition to the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan; horror at the continuing detention and torture of Islamic prisoners in Bagram Airbase and Guantanamo Bay; and seething rage at the countless number of Iraqi civilians that have been butchered by Anglo-American bombs since March 2003. How perverse and hypocritical George Bush's description of the assembled G8 leaders as protectors of 'human liberty and human rights' must have sounded to many in the Islamic world.

America and Britain are currently

attempting to re-colonise the Middle East. It is a war motivated by strategic and economic self-interest. And as is the case with all wars, people die. Over 3000 people died in the 9/11 attacks. More than 200 people were killed in Madrid last year. It is estimated that over 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died since the commencement of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq.

But for a moment let us examine how this war is portrayed. In March 2003 US aircraft dropped one 5,000lb bomb on Baghdad's Al-Shaab and Al-Nasser markets, murdering 80 Iraqi civilians in the process. Over 50 civilians died as a result of the recent London bombings. Both attacks are similar in that innocent civilians lost their lives. But there is one important difference. When Iraqi civilians are killed it is referred to as 'collateral damage'. But when western civilians die it is 'barbaric terrorism'. There is a profound moral ambivalence at the heart of western political discourse, which seeks to dehumanise Arabs and implicitly inflate the relative worth of any western fatality. The perverse use of language was further exemplified by Bush and Blair's recent dishonest categorisation of Al-Qa'ida operatives as apolitical maniacs who are out to 'destroy what we hold dear'. This cant may fool some of the British electorate. But it will be seen for what it is in the Islamic world - and regarded with contempt.

As a consequence of their Middle Eastern imperialist project, America and Britain are at war with militant Islam. Bush and Blair would like to portray this conflict as a clash of civilisations. It is nothing of the sort. It is a political conflict which requires political solutions. The Vietnam and Afghan-Soviet wars proved that there are no military solutions, irrespective of how dominant the superpower. So what are the prospects for a resolution? The prognosis is poor. But the broad outlines of a resolution must involve the following: Washington and London must reverse the historical narrative that is Palestinian dispossession, end their support for Israel and corrupt Arab regimes, and vacate the Islamic lands of Afghanistan and the Middle East. Until they do so the recent spate of London bombings are bound to be repeated.

# Provisional's surrender now complete

Paul Maguire

*This document [the Belfast Agreement] clearly falls short of presenting a solid basis for a lasting settlement...there will be no decommissioning by the IRA - PIRA statement, April 1998*

*Implementation by the two governments and the parties of their commitments under the Agreement provides the context in which Irish republicans and unionists will, as equals, pursue their objectives peacefully, thus providing full and final closure of the conflict - Gerry Adams, October 2004*

*I leave, for the guidance of other Irish revolutionaries who may tread the path which I have trod, this advice: never treat with the enemy, never surrender at his mercy, but to fight to a finish - Eamonn Ceannt, Kilmainham Jail 1916*

On 28 July 2005 - eleven years after its 1994 ceasefire - the Provisional IRA formally ended its armed campaign against the British state in Ireland and authorised its appointed representative 'to engage with the IICD to complete the process to verifiably put its arms beyond use'. Thus, thirty-five years after the organisation was formed, with hundreds of its volunteers martyred, thousands more having served terms in jail, the PIRA has left the field without having attained its original political objectives and without its arsenal intact. By any standards this is an ignominious end for a once proud revolutionary army. The recent provisional announcement represents the consummation of a decade-long process of republican capitulation, which is colloquially referred to as the "peace process". But this process is unique in that political surrender preceded military surrender.

## Political surrender

The seeds of the provisional's political surrender were sown in the late 1980s, at a time when young men and women were being ordered to confront the British war machine in Ireland - often with tragic consequences. For this author one particular month in 1987 symbolises the combination of courageous sacrifice and cynical treason which has characterised and

bedeviled modern Irish republicanism. On 11 May 1987, three days after the SAS ambush of an entire PIRA ASU at Loughall, Sinn Féin held a picket outside of Fianna Fáil's party headquarters in Lower Mount Street, Dublin. Angered by Fianna Fáil denunciations of the IRA in the wake of the ambush, a banner hung across the footpath which read "Fianna Fáil - 'The Republican Party,' Collaborators with SAS murderers".

Two days later Gerry Adams delivered the funeral oration at Jim



Gerry Adams at a Loughall martyr's funeral in May 1987

Lynagh's graveside and lambasted the Fianna Fáil government. 'The British government understands Charles J. Haughey...as it understands Fitzgerald and Spring', Adams said. 'It has always understood the Shoneen clan - it bought them off with partition. It does not understand the Jim Lynaghs, the Pádraig McKearneys or the Seamus McElwaines. It thinks it can defeat them; it never will'.

However, according to Ed Maloney's groundbreaking *A Secret History of the IRA*, 'it would have been later the same day or not long afterward, that Tim Pat Coogan was ushered into Charles Haughey's residence with a lengthy letter from Fr. Alec Reid that outlined Gerry Adams' proposals for an alliance between Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil and the extraordinary offer of an IRA ceasefire. The letter, fifteen pages and over 7,000 words long, was written some two days before, when the gunfire over the coffin of Jim Lynagh was still echoing around the streets of Emyvale and the angry shouts of Sinn Féin protestors were ringing outside Fianna Fáil offices'. Thus, at a time when IRA volunteers were fighting and dying to attain national liberation,

Gerry Adams was laying the foundation stones of a partitionist settlement.

In that same year Sinn Féin published *A Scenario for Peace* in which it replaced the explicit republican demand for a British government withdrawal with the more ambiguous objective of 'national self-determination'. 1992 saw the publication of *Towards a Lasting Peace* in which Sinn Féin called for the establishment of a 'pan-nationalist alliance' to pursue republican objectives. However, this so-called 'pan-nationalist alliance' between Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the Dublin government was predicated on an acceptance of the unionist veto and the exclusion of traditional republican objectives. These policy documents molded the provisional grass-roots and created the climate for the abandonment of traditional republican objectives. Thereafter, Sinn Féin stressed the need for an 'agreed Ireland' - a woolly political slogan which encapsulated an implicit acceptance of the unionist veto and a continuation of British sovereignty in Ireland.

The 1993 Downing Street Declaration laid down the parameters of any subsequent agreement. The Adams-McGuinness controlled provisional leadership rejected the Document but remained wedded to the process. The 1995 Framework Document envisaged the establishment of a power sharing arrangement in Stormont along with the creation of minimalist cross-border institutions. Gerry Adams stated that he would accept a return to Stormont if it were a 'transitional measure'. This statement ensured that the Adams-McGuinness leadership would sell any future partitionist arrangement as 'transitional', while obfuscating the absence of any concrete transitional mechanisms for change. This admission also represented a revision of the long-standing republican belief in the irreformable nature of the six-county state.

The substance of the Belfast Agreement came as no surprise. The Agreement saw the deletion of Articles 2 & 3 and the entrenchment of British sovereignty in Ireland. It resuscitated a Stormont power-sharing assembly, created minimalist cross-border bodies, reformed the RUC, and left the infamous RUC Special Branch intact. In short the Belfast Agreement represented an Irish republican Versailles.

As David Trimble observed, the Agreement had transformed the provisionals from 'militant separatists' into 'structural unionists' and it had forced them to accept that Irish unity was purely aspirational.

It is essential to recognise that the importance of the provisional movement's political surrender far outweighed its subsequent military surrender. The Irish republican struggle is first and foremost a political struggle with clearly defined democratic, political objectives. The struggle was never about the right to bear arms or wage revolutionary war. A revolutionary organisation can destroy arms and go on to procure more. But it can never redeem a political principle once abandoned.

So when the PIRA abandoned traditional republican objectives by accepting and administering British rule in Ireland, they divested themselves of any vestige of republicanism. And once the republican project was abandoned, the provisional's arsenal became redundant and its only value for the Adams-McGuinness leadership lay in its potential bargaining power.

### Military surrender

The initial demand for PIRA decommissioning came from Sir Patrick Mayhew during a March 1995 visit to Washington. The provisional leadership dismissed these demands as a deliberate attempt to frustrate all-party talks. "Not a bullet, not an ounce" was their response. In 1996 a PIRA Convention unanimously passed a motion which ensured that: 'The Army Authority shall retain, maintain and ensure the safety of all armaments, equipment and other resources of Oglaiigh na hEireann until such a time as the sovereignty and unity of the Republic of Ireland has been attained. Once a settlement has been agreed, leading to a united Ireland, all decisions relating to decommissioning of armaments, equipment and other resources must be ratified by an Army Convention'. This adopted motion protected IRA armaments and tied the hands of the Adams-McGuinness leadership.

In October 1997 the PIRA split. Opponents of the Adams-McGuinness strategy departed and reconstituted the IRA. The Adams-McGuinness leadership moved with speed to remould PIRA policy on future acts of decommissioning. At a December 1998 PIRA Convention, the Army Council was

reinvested with the power to decide when to decommission PIRA weapons. This was a direct reversal of the decision taken by the October 1996 Convention, which vested this authority in an Army Convention.

Despite the repeated cries of 'Not an bullet, not an ounce', and despite the repeated declarations that there would be no destruction of PIRA arms, in the period between October 2001 and October 2003, the provisionals completed three 'significant acts of decommissioning' under the auspices of the IICD. As a consequence of their 28 July 2005 statement the organisation has instructed its appointed representative 'to engage with the IICD to



The final salute: was it all in vain?

complete the process to verifiably put its arms beyond use'. The completion of PIRA decommissioning is expected sometime in the autumn.

The destruction of provisional weaponry is the logical conclusion of the Adams-McGuinness 'peace strategy'. These weapons were originally procured to resist British rule in Ireland and to achieve national liberation. But now that the provisional leadership has abandoned the freedom struggle and consented to 'administer British rule in Ireland for the foreseeable future', these weapons are no longer needed. Clearly, the continued existence of the PIRA and its arsenal had become an electoral liability for Sinn Féin and frustrated its access to British ministerial portfolios in Stormont and its involvement in a future coalition government south of the border.

The provisional movement is not the first republican organisation in Irish history to have been unsuccessful in achieving the objective of a free and independent Ireland. But it is the first republican organisation in Irish history to destroy their weaponry at the behest of a British government, so that they can administer British ministerial

portfolios and accrue political power south of the border.

The surrender of arms is an act imposed upon the vanquished in battle. By compelling the provisional movement to decommission the British state has attempted to humiliate republican Ireland and absolve itself of moral responsibility for the conflict in our country, while enhancing its long-standing objective, namely, the pacification of Ireland while maintaining British sovereignty over the six-counties. But the provisional movement had long given up the fight and had politically capitulated before any military surrender of arms had taken place. So what now of the PIRA? Its leadership may be pre-occupied with selling defeat as victory, but as a revolutionary organisation it exists in name only. The whole *raison d'être* of the PIRA was to wage armed struggle against the British state in Ireland, in pursuit of a 32 county socialist republic. But now these objectives have been abandoned and its military arsenal is soon to be destroyed. In real terms Adams and McGuinness has rendered the organisation a footnote in Irish history.

Yet genuine republicans must not be disheartened. Yes, we must accept that a national liberation struggle has been jettisoned by a counter-revolutionary leadership which settled for a reformed British state in Ireland. Yes, we agree that it is unconscionable to accept British rule in Ireland and to destroy republican arms at the behest of London. Yes, we regretfully acknowledge that the Belfast Agreement has strengthened Britain's constitutional hold over the north. Yes, we are not blinded to the fact that a "peace time" garrison of 5,000 British troops will remain in the six-counties in perpetuity. Yes, we will never forget that the graveyards throughout Ireland are full of young IRA men and women who fought and died for a free and independent Ireland and not for equality within a British six-county state. But not for one moment do we accept that the political and military surrender of the provisional movement entails the end of resistance to British rule in Ireland. What we are currently witnessing is a strategic reversal in the inexorable march towards Irish freedom. But if the pages of Irish history teach us anything, they teach us that as long as Britain occupies one sod of Irish soil, future resistance is inevitable.

# Lessons learnt from Cathal Goulding

Eoin McGrath

11 January 1970 was a day of political controversy in Dublin. A contentious international rugby match between Ireland and South Africa was scheduled for Lansdowne Road. The match provoked intense opposition due to the racist and oppressive policies of the then South African government. However, the game eventually went ahead, as did the anti-apartheid demonstration which took place outside the ground. The anti-apartheid protestors made their point and the afternoon passed off without incident. But this wasn't the only political flashpoint in Dublin that day.

Over at the Mansion House the annual Sinn Féin Ard Fheis was taking place. It was one of the most acrimonious republican gatherings in years. Cathal Goulding, having secured the support of a recently convened IRA Convention, narrowly pushed through a motion ending the republican movement's longstanding policy of refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the partitionist institutions established under the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty.

The policy shift was part of Goulding's strategic implementation of his 'Three Stages Theory' whereby the republican movement endeavoured to [1] establish a functioning liberal democracy in the north via a successful civil rights campaign; [2] create a broad-front national liberation movement throughout the island; and [3] successfully establish a 32 county-socialist republic through revolution. Importantly, the entire strategy was predicated upon an end to the IRA's armed confrontation with the British state.

Coming on top of the Goulding leadership's failure to defend the beleaguered northern nationalist community during the 1969 unionist pogroms, the political recognition bestowed upon Stormont parliament and Leinster House was the straw which broke the camel's back for the republican traditionalists in attendance. Before the vote was taken, and realising they were about to be defeated, the dissidents made their way to the Intercontinental Hotel, where they

announced the formation of Provisional Sinn Féin and elected Ruairi O'Bradaigh the first Provisional Sinn Féin president. The Official republican movement withered into political oblivion over the coming decades.

Reflecting upon the 1970 split and the formation of the provisional movement in *Before the Dawn* [1996], Gerry Adams wrote: 'At the very least the [Goulding] leadership should have recognised the need for new priorities and suspended its pursuance of the new departure in republican strategy until a more settled time. For many of the dissidents the issue was not

effort in favour of a purely constitutional approach: 'Join us comrades, we will lead you to the Republic', declared McGuinness. How ludicrous those words seem now.

However, the most prophetic note was struck by Ruairi O'Bradaigh, who before departing to form Republican Sinn Féin, warned delegates that this policy shift was only the thin end of the wedge. O'Bradaigh cautioned that the decision to enter Leinster House would be accompanied by a gradual abandonment of armed struggle and that over time the provisional leadership would move to enter Stormont parliament. 1994 witnessed the first PIRA ceasefire. Four years later the provisional leadership traveled further down the road of political compromise by agreeing to enter the reconvened Stormont parliament and administer British rule in Ireland.

Historical symbolism is important to Gerry Adams. So on July 28 last, the day the PIRA announced its intention to decommission its weapons

and declared a formal end to the war which it hadn't fought for eleven years, Gerry Adams returned to that same Dublin 4 hotel which saw the formation of Provisional Sinn Féin. It has been a long journey to get back to where Cathal Goulding left off all those years ago. However, unlike Goulding, Adams left little to chance. Over a fifteen year period Adams isolated his uncompromising opponents [who subsequently departed from the provisionals], neutralised and bought off others less steadfast and continually promoted his loyal supporters, while cautiously revealing - over time - the true extent of his ideological u-turn. Adams may gloat over his ability to succeed where Goulding failed. But after the historically symbolic Dublin 4 publicity stunt Gerry Adams returned to his native Belfast, where the Union Jack still flies over Belfast City Hall. No amount of political subterfuge or spin can disguise or detract from this fact. Our patriot dead must be turning in their graves. Cathal Goulding must be smiling in his, now that 'the provies' have finally turned 'stickie'.

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abstentionism itself but what it had come to represent: a leadership with a wrong set of priorities which had led the IRA into ignominy in August'.

It is clear from the above passage that Adams' main objection to the 1970 Goulding strategy revolved around clumsy tactics and poor timing. However, Adams learnt well from Goulding's mistakes. Throughout his tenure at the helm of the provisional movement he never gambled by adopting Goulding's policy of wholesale confrontation. Instead he would first isolate opponents and introduce any ideological u-turn or wholesale policy change over a period of time. Adams deployed these tactics to some effect.

Adams 'more settled time' came in 1986 when he successfully and painlessly accomplished what Goulding failed to achieve in 1970, namely, the ending of abstentionism without provoking a major split within the republican movement. During the acrimonious 1986 debate on abstentionism, Martin McGuinness rejected any suggestion that the provisional leadership was intent on winding down the war



## Rationalising failure and sacrifice

*And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed - if all records told the same tale - then the lie passed into history and became truth* - George Orwell, 1984

Tony Blair described the PIRA's July 28 statement as 'unparalleled'. When viewed within the context of modern Irish republican history the statement is indeed unparalleled. The provisional movement is not the first republican organisation to have failed to end the British occupation and achieve Irish independence. But it is the first republican organisation to destroy its weapons at the behest of London, so that it can administer British rule in Ireland. In the past, when faced with an adverse objective political environment, the IRA Army Council ordered its volunteers and units to 'dump arms'. Such was the case in 1923 and 1962. These orders were a recognition that a phase in the national liberation struggle had come to an end. But it also intimated an intent to resume revolutionary resistance against the occupation when objective conditions were more favourable.

In its recent statement the PIRA attempted to preserve continuity with the past. It ordered a formal end to its armed campaign and stated that: 'All IRA units have been ordered to dump arms'. This was a desperate attempt to save face and leave the field with some semblance of self-respect. However, in reality, provisional arms were not being dumped. They were being decommissioned at the behest of London. The PIRA statement continued: 'The IRA leadership has also authorised our representative to engage with the IICD to complete the process to verifiably put its arms beyond use'. For the provisionals, this gesture did not herald the end of a phase in the national liberation struggle, nor did it denote an intent to resume revolutionary resistance at a future date. This statement heralded an end of the provisional's involvement in the national liberation struggle and the conclusion of a decade-long rapprochement between the provisional movement and the British state in Ireland.

When the 1994 PIRA ceasefire was announced, it was met with jubilation on the streets of Belfast. Some republicans even claimed the war had been won. Joe Cahill repeated this assertion at the 1995 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis. However, over time reality set in. In contrast to the 1994 euphoria, the recent PIRA statement was met with broad indifference throughout nationalist Ireland. There were no victorious cavalcades along the Falls Road. No chants of victory. After a seemingly endless catalogue of political compromises, all

that remained was a grim acknowledgement of the inevitable: the PIRA had exited the field without having achieved its objectives and without its arsenal intact. However, with the passing of time, many republicans may ask the salient question: What was it all for? For what did hundreds of IRA volunteers pay the ultimate sacrifice? What was the purpose of all those endless years in jail?

Provisional spokespersons - and their apologists - have been quick out of the starting blocks in an attempt to preempt this debate. When asked by an ABC reporter, during his recent visit to Washington, whether the PIRA's thirty-year campaign had been worth it, Martin McGuinness replied: 'Yes, because the nationalist people are no longer second class citizens, we have secured equality'. One can already see the mainlines of the revisionist provisional narrative coming to the fore. The campaign will be portrayed as an armed civil rights campaign that successfully brought about equality and civil rights in the face of unionist opposition and British indifference, obscuring the fact that a national liberation struggle was jettisoned for political power and a concomitant equality agenda within a reformed British state in Ireland.

Although not a member of the provisional movement, Tommy McKearney [*Sunday Business Post* - 07-08-05] echoed these sentiments when he wrote: 'The essential dynamic that propelled the Provo campaign was not an irre-dentist, nationalistic passion for Irish unity. What sustained the lengthy IRA offensive was its members' and supporters experience of the Stormont regime'. If the attainment of outstanding civil rights and power sharing within a reformed six-county state was the original political objective, why did the Adams-McGuinness leadership reject the 1974 Sunningdale Agreement?

An armed struggle in pursuit of residual civil rights would have been morally unjustifiable, as a residual civil rights programme could have been procured by peaceful methods, without damaging Britain's political or strategic interests in Ireland, whereas the restoration of national sovereignty could not. But a struggle for national liberation, and not an armed civil rights campaign, was waged between 1970-94. Those who jettisoned that struggle may wish to pretend otherwise. But no amount of self-deluding propaganda can escape this fact. Of course, considering the cost of the struggle in terms of human life and the loss of liberty, many will attempt to rationalise the past in light of present exigencies. But this does not mean that we should remain silent in the face of such self-serving revisionism.



An armed struggle for equality?

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

## No sense of history

The Duke of Wellington once wrote: 'Wolfe Tone was a most extraordinary man and his history is the most curious history of those times. With a hundred guineas in his pocket, unknown and unrecommended, he went to Paris in order to overturn the British government in Ireland. He asked for a large force, Lord Edward Fitzgerald for a small one. They listened to Tone'. Indeed they did. The revolutionary French government three times sent expeditions to Ireland to assist the United Irishmen in their efforts to break the connection with Britain. In December 1796 a fleet of 45 vessels and 14,750 men set sail for Ireland, accompanied by Wolfe Tone and under the command of General Hoche. In August 1798 a French fleet under General Humbert landed in Ireland. And in September of that year a small expedition under Admiral Bompard set out for Ireland. The last expedition was intercepted by British war ships off Lough Swilly. Wolfe Tone was on board the *Hoche*. After a long naval battle, Tone was captured, sent to Dublin for trial and condemned to death. Mr Ahern and members of his cabinet commemorate Wolfe Tone each year at his Bodinstown graveside. How can they square this with their recent decision to allow two Irish ships to take part in the bicentenary celebration of the British naval victory over the French at Trafalgar, where Nelson defeated Villeneuve? No generous acknowledgement of French revolutionary solidarity. Instead a shoneen celebration of a British imperial victory. In short no sense of history.



## Some clarification?

Gerry Adams writes a regular weekly column for *Village* magazine. In an article entitled: 'Basques want peace, just like we do' [8-14 July: Issue 41] the New Sinn Féin president outlined his three essential principles of conflict resolution: dialogue, inclusivity and good faith. After reading the article Flying Column wondered whether the Adams-McGuinness leadership has been characterised to date by an adherence to dialogue, inclusivity, and good faith? We think not. For years the so-called 'peace-process' evolved - incognito - under the auspices of the Adams-McGuinness leadership. So much for inclusivity. When a process of internal dialogue eventually commenced it was - to put it mildly - futile. The provisional leadership assured PIRA volunteers it would not sign up to any agreement without a timetable for British withdrawal; that there would be no acceptance of the unionist veto; that there would be no return to Stormont; that there would be no decommissioning; and that the RUC would be disbanded. Perhaps Mr Adams should have clarified the article by stating that his three essential principles must operate *between* the main negotiating parties but not necessarily *within* them. But then why should one expect a modicum of honesty at this late stage?

## Conspicuous by his absence

Flying Column noted with interest that the New Sinn Féin

president did not write his usual weekly column in the July 15-21 issue of *Village*. Perhaps Mr Adams had more important things to write? The long-awaited PIRA hari-kari declaration heralds the consummation of Adams' longheld desire to "take the gun out of republican politics". If Adams has written such a statement with this intent, then his propensity for unashamed arrogance remains undiminished; as does his penchant for fiction.

## Friends in strange places?

After a three week run in London, Danny Morrison's latest play *The Wrong Man*, a stage adoption of a novel he wrote in the H-Blocks, had its Irish premiere at the West Belfast Festival. In a recent *Irish News* interview Morrison stated: 'It's about people and their humanity and I think that that

explains why it got such rave reviews from Michael Portillo and *The Daily Telegraph*...I was pleased with the reviews it got because Michael Portillo is no fan of mine - he was part of Thatcher's cabinet'. Well Danny, perhaps he is more of a fan than you would imagine. Yes, Michael Portillo was a staunch supporter of Thatcher's attempt to normalise, ulsterise and criminalise the conflict in the six-counties. But have you not been a longstanding supporter - both inside and outside of the provisional movement - of the Adams-McGuinness project? This project has culminated in the PIRA accepting British rule in Ireland and decommissioning its weapons at the behest of London: a fact which has in effect criminalised the republican struggle, brought about a process of ulsterisation and achieved levels of normalisation which Mrs Thatcher could only have dreamed of. Flying Column suggests that Michael Portillo and Danny Morrison have more in common than both imagine.

## Power Crazy

The burden of responsibility affects different people in different ways. It brought out a steely resolve in Patrick Pearse; a lifelong revolutionary élan in Fidel Castro; insatiable greed in Charles Haughey. Power can even activate a previously dormant insanity. Take Reg Empey as an example. In one of his first press releases since becoming UUP leader, Empey called for 'a global solution' to the problem of Orange parades in contentious areas such as Ardoyne. A global solution no less. It would seem the prevailing opinion in Glengall Street is that nationalist North Belfast has joined West Yorkshire, North Korea, Iran and Syria in what is an 'axis of evil' and that it is only a matter of time before the nationalist denizens attain weapons of mass destruction. 'We believe that instability has been created each summer and we demand a global settlement', the press release continued. Flying Column believes Empey is in the process of dispatching a UUP delegation to New York to press for the imposition of sanctions on North Belfast along with an arms embargo as a prerequisite to an all out military offensive. Many expected Empey to attempt to out flank the DUP at every given opportunity. But this is taking the biscuit.

# Political Prisoners

## 1981 revisited?

By Elaine Power

As we approach the 25th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strikes, Tyrone priest Monsignor Denis Faul has warned of history repeating itself if the problems that face republican prisoners in Maghaberry Prison are not addressed. Monsignor Faul is expected to raise concerns about the inhuman treatment which prisoners and their visitors have to endure on a daily basis with the six-county Prison Ombudsman.

At present a critical report is being compiled about the segregation regime inside Maghaberry Prison following a number of complaints from various republican prisoner groups.

Monsignor Faul believes that prisoners who demand separation are being punished in practice by excessive detention, a lack of association, and a denial of recreation and education facilities. This consists of prisoners being locked up for as much as 22 hours per day, being forced to endure on-going strip searches and being forced to eat meals in cells beside toilets.

One of the most contentious issues is the use of a prison sniffer dog, which checks visitors on entry to the prison. According to Faul: 'Whenever the dog sits down at somebody's feet, the whole group is expelled and this is an abuse of their civil liberties and there is no tradition of drug use within republicanism anyway'.

This treatment is inhuman and only applies to prisoners who demand segregation. This treatment does not apply to the rest of the prison population. The Belfast Agreement integrated prisons in Northern Ireland, ending the previous situation where republicans and loyalists had separate blocks. However, a republican 'dirty protest' and a series of clashes between political prisoners led to the Steele Report two years ago, which recommended that loyalists and republicans be given separate landings.

Faul is meeting the north's Prison Ombudsman next week, and has

already written to him in relation to his concerns about the current situation in Maghaberry. Faul has accused the prison administration inside Maghaberry of attempting to overturn the Steele recommendations.

It seems that the British Government and its puppet administrators who enforce state policy have learned little from the past, particularly when dealing with contentious issues such as the denial of human and civil liberties to political prisoners and their families. Families and supporters of the prisoners say that unless the situation is addressed, an escalating prison protest is inevitable.



From left, Michael McDonald, Declan Rafferty and Fintan O'Farrell.

## The Slovakia Three

By Elaine Power

Three Irish republicans, jailed after being illegally caught in a sting operation in which MI5 officers posed as Iraqi intelligence agents and arms dealers, failed to have their convictions overturned but had their 30-year jail sentences reduced by two-years.

The Court of Appeal in London reduced the sentences of Fintan O'Farrell, Declan Rafferty and Michael McDonald. Defence counsel for the three, Julian Knowles QC, claimed that, in July 2001, Slovak security forces arrested the three men, who MI5 claimed were attempting to buy and import arms, after an elaborate sting.

After a long legal wrangle the men were finally extradited back to England, where they had pleaded guilty to conspiring to cause explosions and other charges. The three Louth men were later sentenced to 30 years.

Julian Knowles QC claimed the

British Government had bypassed 'fundamental legal principles' to win the extradition before the 2002 trial. He told the Appeal Court that the men had been brought to trial in circumstances, which 'offended' basic human rights and claimed the case showed that 'even in times of terrorism' the rule of law should not be suspended. He went on to add that while held in Slovakia the three were denied full access to lawyers and denied the opportunity to properly defend the extradition request.

The sole ground of the three men's appeal against conviction was a submission that the Crown Court trial judge was wrong not to accede to the defence's argument that proceedings against the three should be stayed as an abuse of process because they had been unlawfully extradited from Slovakia.

Lord Justice Hooper, rejecting the 'extradition ground', said that the trial judge Mr. Justice Astill was entitled to reach the conclusion which he did and therefore their application against conviction was dismissed.

Ben Emmerson QC, defending, went on to argue that the sentences imposed following a plea of guilty, were too long 'having regard to the scales of sentences passed in comparable cases and guidance given by the Court of Appeal'.

Announcing the Court of Appeal's decision on the question of appeal of sentence, Lord Justice Hooper said: 'We have concluded, not without some reluctance, that a reduction of one fifteenth was appropriate to reflect the plea [of guilty] and we therefore reduce the sentence from one of 30 years imprisonment to one of 28 years imprisonment'.

Now that they have no outstanding legal affairs in Britain, Fintan O'Farrell, Declan Rafferty and Michael McDonald have applied to be repatriated to Portlaoise prison in Ireland.

The repatriation process takes between 18 months and 2 years. The three men should be repatriated by no later than July 2007.

# 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 liaise 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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