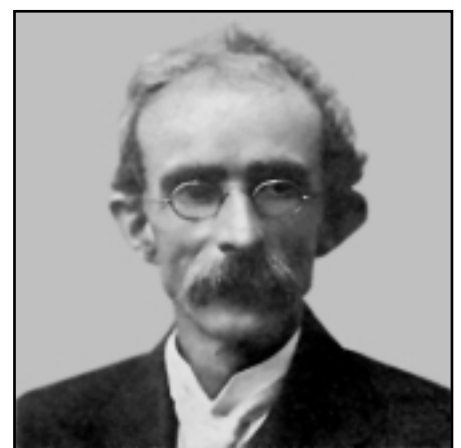


FORUM MAGAZINE

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Special Feature: MI 5, Sinn Fein/IRA and the intelligence war
End US flights through Shannon * Bobby Sands controversy
The IMC report * Anthony McKiernan: unjust execution?
 Hamas triumphant * Leonard Peltier: US miscarriage of justice
Flying Column * Political Prisoners

FORUM CONTENTS

Analysis:

End cooperation with US: Michael McKevitt argues US forces should be denied Irish landing and refuelling facilities: **page 3**

Special feature:

Try separate the wood from the trees: Paul Maguire on MI5, Sinn Féin/IRA and the intelligence war: **page 4-5**

International:

Hamas triumphant: Karen Gold analyses Hamas' victory in the recent Palestinian election: **page 6**

When the US government took AIM: Paul Doyle on an infamous US miscarriage of justice: **page 7**

Editorial:

Agreement remains deadlocked: The fallout from the recent IMC report: **page 9**

Open Forum:

Another unjust execution?: Maria McCann on the controversial role of MI5 agent Freddie Scappaticci in the execution of IRA volunteer Anthony McKiernan: **page 8**

Flying Column:

Flying Column: Reflections on current affairs: **page 10**

Political Prisoners:

Political prisoners: Letter from republican prisoner spokesperson and Aiden Hulme update: **page 11**

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Sands book controversy

John Hanley

A new biography of Bobby Sands, entitled *Nothing But An Unfinished Song: Bobby Sands, The Irish Hunger Striker Who Ignited A Generation*, has recently gone on sale on www.amazon.com. However, the book's Irish release has been delayed until March 1, to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the commencement of the 1981 Hunger Strike.

The author of the biography, Denis O'Hearn, has lived in West Belfast and has participated in several economic and social regenerative community projects over the past thirty years. O'Hearn is also currently Professor of Social and Economic Change in Queen's University Belfast.

Daily Ireland promoted the new biography in an unattributed article in late December [30-12-05, p3]. According to the anonymous author: "Using meticulous research carried out over many years, original interviews and published material, author Denis O'Hearn paints a picture of an IRA volunteer who was both enigmatic and charismatic".

In the *Daily Ireland* article O'Hearn and his publisher Nation Books thanked former H-Block prison officers, former IRA prisoners, priests and politicians, and Marcella Sands, the sister of Bobby Sands, for contributing and helping with the book.

O'Hearn told his *Daily Ireland* interviewer: "To the Sands family I send deepest regrets. None of us can begin to know the deep hurt you have experienced. I hope you find peace and that in some way it will help for Bobby's story to be finally told".

However, within days Marcella Sands wrote and sent the following letter to *Forum Magazine* and a number of national newspapers. In her letter she contradicts O'Hearn's assertion that she had cooperated with the book.

Marcella Sands began: "In response to an article headlined 'New Book is First Study of Bobby Sands', which appeared in a recent edition of the *Andersonstown News*, and an article entitled 'Academic chronicles life of hunger striker', which appeared in a recent edition of *Daily Ireland*, I wish to put the record straight".

She continued: "According to the article, the author of the book, Denis O'Hearn, 'thanks the hunger striker's sister Marcella for her help with the book.' This suggests that I had 'helped' or participated in some way in the compilation of this book and, therefore, endorsed it. This is misleading and untrue. I wish to state categorically that neither I, nor any of my family, helped Mr O'Hearn with his book in any way, nor does my family endorse the book. Indeed, the opposite would

be the case as his book contains numerous factual inaccuracies".

This author has not read *Nothing But An Unfinished Song*. But judging from the final sentence of her letter, it is obvious that Marcella Sands has. And after reading the book, Bobby Sands' sister concluded that the book contains "numerous factual inaccuracies". Ms Sands' negative verdict has dealt the book's credibility a

serious blow, just three months before it is due to be released in Ireland.

But the most startling aspect of the book's initial promotion is the blatantly false claim by the author that he had secured the cooperation and assistance of the hunger striker's sister when writing the book.

Denis O'Hearn is a prominent academic in Queen's University Belfast. As a distinguished professor nobody should be more aware of the professional importance of accurate scholarship and honest referencing.

So why did Denis O'Hearn claim that Marcella Sands assisted and helped with the production of the book when this was simply not the case? Surely this is not what *Daily Ireland* meant by "meticulous research"?

Furthermore, why did the author not have the common decency and good manners to approach the Sands' family before he used their name to commercially endorse his book?

Nothing But An Unfinished Song has had a controversial public introduction. It has been born of false and misleading claims, and according to Bobby Sands' sister, the biography contains "numerous factual inaccuracies". I don't believe this will be the last word in relation to this controversial book.



Nothing But An Unfinished Song

End cooperation with US

Michael McKevitt

On 20 March 2003, the coalition government secured the necessary parliamentary approval to allow US military forces utilise landing and refuelling facilities at Shannon Airport. During the debate Bertie Ahern argued that a refusal to allow US military and civilian aircraft avail of Shannon would be viewed as "a radical and far-reaching change in our foreign policy and in the long-standing national interpretation of what is and what is not participation in war." In actual fact the decision to permit US forces land and refuel at Shannon en route to Iraq represented a radical departure from previous government policy. For the past fifty years foreign military aircraft were denied overflight and landing facilities if they were armed, carrying armaments or aerial photographic equipment, engaged in intelligence gathering or part of a military exercise or operation.

On several occasions George W Bush has publicly thanked "the countries in the coalition who are giving crucial support, from the use of naval and air bases to help with intelligence and logistics to the deployment of combat units". The Irish government is clearly part of the "coalition of the willing". But is the government also complicit in "extraordinary renditions" - one of the most scandalous aspects of the Bush administration's "war on terror"?

Extraordinary rendition, the abduction of people and their transferral to countries where they are interrogated under torture, was devised by the Clinton administration during the initial stages of its intelligence war against militant Islam. Rendition is illegal under international law. According to the United Nations Convention Against Torture, "no state shall expel, return or extradite a person to another state where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subject to torture". It is also illegal under international law to assist extraordinary renditions. According to New York University's centre for human rights and global justice, "a state which aids or assists another state in the commission of an internationally wrongful act by the later is internationally responsible for doing so". So is the Irish government in breach of international law?

Anti-war activists and Amnesty

International have been monitoring the flight paths of CIA-owned planes. This scrutiny has highlighted the important role Shannon has played in the Bush administration's rendition programme. For example, on 16 February 2003, Abu Omar was abducted by 13 CIA operatives while walking along Milan's Via Guerzoni. The Islamic cleric was bundled into a Gulfstream IV jet [call sign N85VM] and flown to Egypt, where he was tortured during a prolonged interroga-



Shannon Airport

tion. Having departed Egypt, the CIA-owned plane landed and refuelled at Shannon at 0552 on 18 February, before returning to Dulles Airport in Washington.

Irish complicity in the CIA's rendition programme is not restricted to the Abu Omar abduction. For example, two Egyptians, Ahmed Agiza and Muhammad el-Zary, were abducted by the CIA in Sweden. The two men were flown to Cairo in a Gulfstream jet [call sign N379P]. While in Egyptian custody Agiza and el-Zary were subjected to electrical shocks under interrogation. Flight N379P has landed at Shannon on numerous occasions over the past four years. Initially, the government refused to confirm this fact. However, under persistent questioning by Finian McGrath TD and Senator David Norris, the government admitted the CIA-owned plane had landed in Shannon on more than a dozen occasions since 2001.

But have abducted prisoners been transported through Shannon? It is highly probable that they have. Senator Mary O'Rourke recently stated: "there have been incidents of which we would not be proud as a country." However, to date, no specific evidence has entered the public domain which confirms that abducted prisoners have landed at Shannon. Yet some questions remain unanswered. For example, Amnesty International consulted the US Federal Aviation Administration files and found that 50

CIA-owned planes recently landed in Shannon. However, the human rights organisation also discovered that only 35 take-offs were logged by the airport authority during the same period. Why the discrepancies? Have flights been kept secret? Were abducted Islamic prisoners on any of these flights?

Michael McDowell believes we should accept US assurances that no abducted prisoners have passed through Shannon. The UN does not concur and has stated that diplomatic assurances have no validity and provide no exemption from legal obligations under international law. The government has established a special Seanad select committee to investigate Irish involvement in renditions. *Village* recently published an extract from a memo prepared for the committee by the Department of Foreign Affairs International Security Policy Section, which states the Irish government "has not and will not permit any flight engaged in rendition to pass through Ireland". The information contained in this departmental document is totally untrue. The CIA plane involved in the Abu Omar rendition landed and refuelled in Shannon on the return leg of its journey. This was a specific instance of assistance. And it was not an isolated case.

The Irish Human Rights Commission and the Council of Europe has stated that the government has "a positive obligation" to inspect incoming US flights to ensure there is no breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. But is this sufficient? Obviously no abducted Islamic prisoner should enter Irish airspace. But surely the government must go further and terminate the current practice of logistically assisting extraordinary renditions?

The Irish government is complicit in the illegal Anglo-American occupation of Iraq, which has resulted in the deaths of over 100,000 Iraqi civilians. To make matters worse it is now facilitating an illegal CIA intelligence gathering operation that is founded on abduction and torture. It is time for the Irish government to fulfill its obligations under international law. And how is this best achieved? By immediately withdrawing Irish landing and refuelling facilities from all US military and intelligence aircraft and all chartered flights transporting US military and intelligence personnel.

Try separate the wood from the trees

MI5, Sinn Fein/IRA and the intelligence war

Paul Maguire

For three decades British intelligence pursued a dual strategy vis-à-vis the provisional movement. This parallel strategy had as its twin objectives a gradual diminution of the IRA's militarily capacity and a concurrent strengthening of the position of those within the provisional leadership who were pioneering a constitutional reformist agenda. Well placed MI5 agents within both the IRA and Sinn Fein were essential for the successful attainment of these twin objectives. The exposure of Denis Donaldson and Freddie Scapaticci as British agents illustrates the extent to which the higher echelons of both the political and military wings of the provisional movement had been infiltrated by MI5. These revelations also undermine - in very stark terms - the veracity of Gerry Adams' repeated assertion that the IRA is an undefeated army.

Paving the way

By the mid-1980s Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness were privately determined to guide the provisional movement down a purely constitutional path. The 1981 election of hunger-strikers and the 1983 election of Gerry Adams as MP for West Belfast highlighted a previously untapped reservoir of political support which whetted the appetite of those *Adamsistas* who wished to exchange armed struggle for the ballot box. By May 1987 Gerry Adams felt confident enough to secretly present Charles Haughey with a 15 page document outlining the terms for an IRA ceasefire and the creation of "a pan-nationalist front". Although the vast majority of IRA volunteers and a minority of the IRA Army Council were totally unaware of this development, it was clearly only a matter of "when" and not "if" an IRA ceasefire would transpire.

British intelligence was wholly cognisant of these internal shifts. However, the defeat of the IRA or the diminution of its capacity to wage war remained its primary objective. This would not only eradicate the explosion of bombs on the streets of London [a perennial concern of the successive British governments], but also strengthen the hand of those within the provisional movement who were promoting a new purely political

approach.

British intelligence recruited informants, imprisoned experienced IRA activists and ambushed and executed hardline active service units as part of its campaign to weaken the IRA. An iron fist was brought to bear on republican heartlands hostile to the new Adams-McGuinness strategy. For example, the hardline and vehemently anti-Adams IRA East Tyrone Brigade



McGuinness, Donaldson and Adams

was practically decimated by a combination of British intelligence gathering and the deployment of the SAS. By the early 1990s the IRA's armed campaign appeared increasingly unproductive and inefficient. The din of internal voices supporting the "peace strategy" grew louder. Who among Adams' hardline opponents could convincingly argue that armed struggle remained a viable means to deliver political progress, when all evidence suggested otherwise?

MI5 and the IRA

British intelligence was relentless and extremely successful in infiltrating the IRA. Freddie Scapaticci's recruitment as a British agent was a major MI5 coup and perhaps one of the single most important turning points in its intelligence war against the IRA. As head of security and intelligence Scapaticci had full access to every IRA department. No person was better placed to provide MI5 with a topographical survey of the IRA and a breakdown of its personnel. Furthermore, his involvement in numerous IRA internal inquiries would also have enabled him to identify individual personal weaknesses among various republican activists and provide MI5 with priceless information that could prove useful in turning other agents. But it would be extreme-

ly naive to think that Scapaticci is the only senior IRA member to turn informant. Indeed some have argued he may not even be the agent code-named 'Stakeknife', as MI5 never exposes an agent unless another is equally or better placed to provide similar high grade intelligence.

Although Freddie Scapaticci and Sean O'Callaghan [former Adjutant-General IRA Southern Command] are perhaps two of the best known IRA apostates, there have been other traitors of a similar or higher rank whose names have been withheld from both the IRA rank and file and the general public. In 1996 the IRA uncovered another MI5 agent within its higher echelons. John Carroll was a senior member of the IRA Southern Command and an elected Sinn Fein councillor in County Offaly when he was recruited by MI5. He was exposed as a British agent after an indepth IRA investigation into his suspicious travelling habits and his personal finances. However, Carroll was spared a summary execution because of the political damage it might cause Sinn Fein and the negative impact such a revelation might have on IRA volunteers at a sensitive time in the peace process. The entire sordid saga was kept well under wraps. It is believed that over the years Carroll possessed sensitive information concerning the IRA's "England campaign" and was responsible for numerous operations being compromised. However, the true extent of the damage he inflicted on the IRA will never be established.

What is indisputable is that MI5 was singularly successful in infiltrating the higher echelons of the IRA. The IRA's intelligence and security department was basically administered by British intelligence. The IRA Executive [one of the highest IRA decision making bodies], the Southern Command and the GHQ Department [the body responsible for the day to day running of the IRA] were also compromised.

By the early 1990s the lines separating sections of the IRA hierarchy and British intelligence were most definitely blurred. Indeed it sends a shiver down one's spine when one considers the odds stacked against IRA volunteers in the field. The bleakness of this scenario is further compounded when one takes into account the fact that a majority of the IRA leadership

was, for close on two decades, only too prepared to accept far less than what its volunteers were fighting, dying and being sent to prison for. However, the fact remains that by 1994 the IRA was thoroughly infiltrated and rendered militarily impotent. One aspect of MI5's dual-strategy was for the most part completed.

MI5 and Sinn Fein

While weakening or defeating the IRA remained its primary objective, MI5 did not ignore or dismiss developments within Sinn Fein. MI5 monitored all internal political discussions and even contributed to those debates through well-placed agents and thereby influenced the political trajectory of the movement. It is a well documented fact that the Adams-McGuinness leadership is surrounded by a 'revolutionary think-tank' comprised of current or former IRA volunteers and veteran Sinn Fein members. If it had been previously suggested that some of these prominent republicans were British agents, Sinn Fein spin doctors would have treated the accusation with contempt. But not any more. The image of a smug Denis Donaldson flanked on the steps of Stormont by Adams and McGuinness, while both party leaders hailed his virtue and innocence, rests absurdly alongside the spectacle of the Sinn Fein president, only seventy-two hours later, informing a party press conference that their head of administration in Stormont was expelled for unsuspected treason stretching over a 20 year period.

Donaldson shed crocodile tears for the "suffering and pain" his actions have caused over a twenty year period. As is the case with Scapaticci, O'Callaghan and Carroll, we will never know how many people he dispatched to an early grave or consigned to a grey prison cell. Sinn Fein attempted to diminish Donaldson's importance in the public mind. But what cannot be denied is that Donaldson was part of the Adams-McGuinness "think tank" and that he was a stalwart defender not only of that leadership but also the peace process - a position entirely consistent with his secret life as a MI5 operative. Donaldson also participated in all major strategic debates within the provisionals over the previous two decades. He reorganised the Sinn Fein US support network, where he

replaced traditional republicans with loyal *Adamsistas*. Donaldson was also a key aid during the negotiations that led to the Belfast Agreement. What an invaluable asset he must have been for his MI5 handlers? We know Sinn Fein was operating a spy-ring at Stormont, as thousands of documents were uncovered. But was this a subterfuge? Was Donaldson's "handlers" feeding bogus intelligence to the Sinn Fein leadership, thus swaying opinion and influencing sensitive political decisions? Obviously British intelligence was well aware of the party's negotiat-



Thames House - MI5 Headquarters, London

ing bottom line long before negotiations commenced.

But just as Scapaticci was not the only senior MI5 informant within the IRA, it is naive to imagine that Donaldson is the only senior British agent within Sinn Fein. Speculation concerning key MI5 agents at the heart of the Adams-McGuinness leadership has reached fever pitch over recent weeks. Recently the PSNI Special Branch has attempted to exacerbate these rumours by visiting numerous prominent Belfast provisionals in the company of a flotilla of landrovers and furniture removal vans. Such is the level of internal paranoia, key Sinn Fein apparatchiks, such as Jim Gibney, have publicly urged party members "to remain calm and to hold their heads high". Gerry Adams has stated that he believes further prominent provisionals may be exposed as MI5 agents at a future date. Upon what information is this opinion based? Has the Sinn Fein president any evidence of MI5 agents among his party leadership, which he has been reluctant to disclose lest it lower party morale?

Only a fool could believe that the Sinn Fein leadership has not been heavily infiltrated by MI5. In fact, since the early 1990s, a section of the IRA has held a longstanding suspicion regarding the bona fides of some prominent Sinn Fein members. In

1994 the spotlight of distrust fell upon the prominent Sinn Fein negotiator, Mitchell McLaughlin, after the IRA received reports that McLaughlin was engaged in unauthorised and protracted contact with a senior British civil servant in Whitehall. At a sensitive time in the peace process, the IRA leadership chose not to abduct McLaughlin in order to avoid adverse media publicity and lower party morale. Instead he was invited to attend a meeting with several IRA members on the grounds that they wished to interview him about certain matters in Derry. The IRA investigators detained and interrogated McLaughlin for a significant period of time. However, the IRA leadership was later informed that the outcome of the internal investigation was "inconclusive".

Unlikely partners?

The Sinn Fein leadership may denounce the Scapaticcis and Donaldsons of this world. But

I would argue that they lack the moral authority to do so. Where lies the difference between a republican turned British agent and a republican turned Minister of the Crown? Both are employed by, and receive payment from, the British state. Both function to preserve and administer British rule in Ireland. Both are morally and politically repugnant, albeit to varying degrees.

In the final analysis few can deny that the outcome of the Adams-McGuinness "peace strategy" mirrored MI5's longstanding objectives towards the IRA. MI5 and the Adams-McGuinness leadership gradually sought a termination of the armed campaign in favour of an exclusively democratic approach. MI5 guarded British sovereignty over the North and upheld the continued existence of the northern state within the "United Kingdom" - a constitutional reality which the Sinn Fein/IRA leadership has now embraced. So just as it is reasonable to ask where lies the dividing line between certain senior members of the Provisional IRA and British intelligence, is it not just as reasonable to ask where lies the dividing line between the Adams-McGuinness "peace strategy" and British intelligence's favoured solution for militant Irish republicanism? If you have the stomach, just you try and separate the wood from the trees.

Hamas triumphant

Karen Gold

Three months before he was assassinated by an Israeli F-16 fired air-to-ground missile, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin predicted that Hamas was set to overtake Fatah as the dominant force in Palestinian politics. At the time many thought the forecast slightly optimistic. However, the recent election results saw this prophecy realised, as Hamas trounced Fatah by winning 80 out of 132 seats in a ballot which boasted an impressive 78% voter turnout. To the profound discomfort of the American-Israeli lobby, Hamas now possesses unsailable legitimacy as the democratically elected representatives of the long-suffering Palestinian people.

Formed during the 1987 Intifada, Hamas first shot to international prominence in 1992 when the Israeli government deported 460 of its members to the 'Marj-al-Zahar' or the 'Field of Flowers' on slopes of southern Lebanon. This vindictive, draconian act spectacularly backfired. The expelled militants gained international sympathy, forged a close relationship with the Lebanese Hizballah and gained valuable political and military expertise which would stand them in good stead. Commenting on this period, before his assassination by an Israeli F-16 missile in the Gaza Strip, Abdul-Aziz Rantissi told Robert Fisk: "It was a stage that changed the Palestinian struggle. It changed the history of Hamas for ever. Before that it was a local movement. After our exile on the hillsides of Lebanon it became an international organisation known all over the world. We received the benefits of Israel's mistakes".

Hamas benefitted from Israeli mistakes then and it continues to benefit from Israel's mistakes to this day. Their recent election victory created a political tremor throughout the Middle-East. Tel Aviv and Washington were clearly taken aback by the outcome. But should we really be surprised by the result? Fatah promised Palestinians that the Oslo Agreement would deliver statehood, infrastructural development and long-awaited social and economic progress.

However, time illustrated the hollowness of these promises. Assassinations, brutal Israeli military incursions, mass arrests, the destruction of homes and property, curfews, forced deportations, permanent military checkpoints, economic strangulation: these have been the constant features of Palestinian life since Oslo.

And to add insult to injury, Israeli



Members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade demand the resignation of the Fatah Central Committee

colonisation of Palestinian land has accelerated under Oslo, in flagrant violation of countless UN resolutions and Article 49 of the Geneva Convention which states: "the occupying power shall not deport or transfer part of its civilian population into the territory it occupies". Tragically, history illustrates Israel's absolute contempt for international law. The fifteen years following the 1967 War witnessed 21,000 Israeli Jews colonise parts of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. By 1990 this figure had increased to 76,000. However, by 2000, seven years after Oslo, the number of Israeli colonisers in the occupied territories stood at 383,000. In 2004 the infamous Sharon "Security Wall" expropriated further land, as if Palestinians required further proof of the fraudulent nature of the so-called peace process.

The inevitable Israeli withdrawal from Gaza could not detract from the relentless land-grab in East Jerusalem and the West Bank nor could it disguise the fact that Oslo represented - not peace - but the latest phase in Palestinian dispossession. Add wide-

spread corruption and nepotism into the equation and the reasons behind Fatah's demise are not that difficult to discern. The Fatah old guard is at present thoroughly discredited. Marwan Barghouti, the only force within Fatah who retains a shred of political credibility with the radical youth and the only person capable of reversing Fatah's fortunes, is currently detained in an Israeli prison serving five life sentences. The future looks bleak for Fatah.

In contrast Hamas has earned widespread respect for its organisational genius that has given rise to a network of mosques, kindergartens, welfare organisations, health clinics and schools, which have undoubtedly ameliorated the plight of many Palestinians. Furthermore in local areas already under its control, such as Qalqilya, the Islamic organisation exhibited financial probity and administrative competence. But one of the most important factors in Hamas' recent success has been its consistent opposition to the Oslo Agreement - an analysis that has gained credibility over time with many Palestinians - and its willingness to militarily confront Israeli aggression.

Hamas has been told by Israel, Russia, the US, the EU and the UN that it must disarm, renounce armed struggle, and recognise Israel's right to exist in order to continue to receive essential international financial aid. These demands will not be met because they represent an attempt to secure political concessions by blackmail. Indeed it seems highly probable that this American-Israeli dominated bloc will withhold financial aid in an attempt to discredit Hamas and penalise the Palestinian people for voting en masse for a militant, anti-Zionist, armed Islamic organisation.

And while Hamas is placed under consistent political pressure to acquiesce, Israel's violations of more than 70 UN resolutions will pass unpunished, and its ongoing campaign of assassination and its relentless colonisation of the occupied territories will continue to be financed by Washington. Such are the double standards at the heart of Middle Eastern politics.

When the US government took AIM

Paul Doyle

By the time FBI agents Jack Coler and Ron Williams were killed in a shoot-out on the Pine Ridge Indian Reserve, it had the worst per-capita murder rate in the US. Tensions had been high. A conflict between the reserve's traditionalist "full-blood" Native Americans and the US government-backed "mixed-blood" tribal leadership had been steadily worsening.

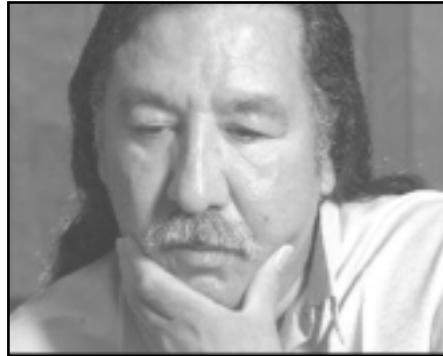
When the already appalling conditions on the Indian reserves further deteriorated in the early 1970s, many Native Americans across the US began espousing the idea that they should revert to a traditional way of life. The idea caught on and the American Indian Movement [AIM] was formed to spearhead the thrust towards sobriety and traditional values. In 1972 AIM members, many of whom were from Pine Ridge, occupied and held the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington DC to draw attention to the plight of Native Americans. The following year they occupied and held "Wounded Knee" South Dakota, site of the 1890 massacre of 300 Indians by the infamous US Seventh Cavalry.

The moves embarrassed the "progressive" Indian leaderships of the reservations and their supporters in the US government. Consequently, around 500 AIM members and supporters were scooped-up by police and put on trial on various trumped-up charges, though most were acquitted, as juries were cognisant of the political nature of the trials.

For the Pine Ridge AIM supporters the cold reality of the state's response quickly became obvious. The Pine Ridge Oglala tribal council under Richard Wilson had been attempting to quell the emergent traditionalists with intermittent intimidation and even murder. But after the occupations in Washington and Wounded Knee things got even more serious. The government dispatched FBI agents to the reserve to arm and train Wilson's militia in counter-insurgency operations. The militia, known as the Guardians of the Oglala Nation (Goons), upped its campaign in what became known as the "reign of terror". Shootings, beatings and intimidation were deployed with stunning savagery. Whole families

of AIM supporters were gunned-down. In the three years up to the deaths of the FBI agents there were 60 unsolved murders on Pine Ridge. The intent of the US government and their proxies was blatant - they were going to use all means available to finish the traditionalist's movement.

It was during the reign of terror



Leonard Peltier

that the persecuted Pine Ridge traditionalists asked the AIM to protect them from the vicious pogroms being meted out to them by Wilson and his "Goons". Leonard Peltier was among those who came to their aid. On 26 June 1975 FBI agents Coler and Williams sped towards the Jumping Bull ranch on the Pine Ridge reserve in two un-marked cars. Fearing they were under attack and as gunfire erupted around them, Peltier and the other AIM supporters grabbed their weapons and opened fire. When the shooting abated Peltier and the others approached the cars the agents had been firing from behind. Both agents were dead.

The FBI and the "Goons" descended on the ranch. In the ensuing gunfight AIM member Joe Stuntz was shot dead, but the remaining residents managed to escape before the ranch could be surrounded. AIM members Dino Butler, Leonard Peltier and Bob Robideau were singled-out as being responsible for the agents' deaths. Butler and Robideau were apprehended and charged with murdering the agents, while Leonard Peltier managed to escape as far Canada before being arrested shortly afterwards. While Peltier fought extradition, Butler and Robideau were tried and acquitted to the dismay of the authorities. With Butler and Robideau free, they concentrated their efforts on Peltier.

The FBI secured an affidavit from

an individual called Myrtle Poor Bear. Despite having never met Peltier, she was terrorised by the FBI into claiming to have witnessed him shooting the agents. Although she later retracted her statement and admitted that she had acted under duress, her word proved enough for the Canadian Court. Peltier was extradited to face one of the most prejudiced trials in recent US history.

The first signs that Peltier's trial wouldn't be a fair one came when the case was withdrawn from the judge who had over-seen the acquittal of Robideau and Butler. The purpose of the move became clear when the trial opened. The presiding judge began to constantly rule in favor of the prosecution. The defense was barred from detailing the actions of Richard Wilson and the 'Goon' death-squads. This meant the jury was left largely unaware of the context in which the shootings took place. Myrtle Poor Bear was refused the right to tell the court about how the FBI had forced her into testifying against Peltier. The prosecution said they had recovered a weapon that linked Peltier to the fatal shots via a shell casing found at the scene, but that it was too badly damaged to properly test. It later emerged that ballistics tests were carried out and that they proved the gun the FBI linked to Peltier was not the murder weapon.

In an effort to make the jury believe that the AIM was a threat to their safety US Marshals had thrown a ring of steel around the court for the duration of the trial. Despite the existence of evidence pointing to other suspects and the prosecution's failure to find anyone who could identify him as having pulled the trigger, Peltier was found guilty and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences. A "Free Peltier" campaign has emerged, but he remains behind bars. He is now in his 60s, and his health is beginning to fail him. The US prosecutor has since admitted, "we can't prove who shot those agents", but there is still no sign that the US government will concede a re-trial. But despite his circumstances, Peltier remains resolute. He is fully confident that eventually, one of the most blatant miscarriages of justice in US history will be overturned - and he will once again walk free.

Another unjust execution?

Maria McCann

IRA volunteer Anthony McKiernan was shot dead in very controversial circumstances by the Provisional IRA on 18th January 1988. Subsequent to his execution the organisation released a statement claiming that McKiernan was working as a police informant.

It has now emerged that the British intelligence agent and IRA informer, Freddie Scappaticci [Stake-knife], was due to meet with Anthony McKiernan a few hours before he was actually executed. It is well known that as head of IRA intelligence and security Scappaticci oversaw most of the interrogations and court martials of suspected informers. The latest revelation that McKiernan met with Scappaticci hours before his death has sent shockwaves through the republican community and has angered Anthony McKiernan's family, former comrades and friends.

Those who knew Anthony were not convinced that he was an informer. His comrades pointed to his longstanding commitment and dedication to the freedom struggle and were highly suspicious of the allegations made against him after his death. Now 18 years on the circumstances surrounding his death seem even more dubious. Answers are urgently required.

Within the past few weeks Ms. Sharon Murtagh, the daughter of Mr McKiernan, has challenged the PIRA to provide proof that her father was an informer. Some hope was given to the family four years ago when they were visited by members of the PIRA and promised an investigation into the circumstances surrounding their father's death.

The family are totally disgusted that this promise did not materialise and they have heard nothing since. For numerous reasons any promises made to the McKiernan family should be honoured forthwith. It now seems that British state agents colluded in and had prior knowledge of Mr McKiernan's imminent death. The question on many people's lips are: was Anthony McKiernan innocent of the charges levelled against him and was he ultimately set-up and executed on the word of

a British intelligence agent inside the IRA to deflect attention away from an actual informant? Or was he executed simply because of his engineering experience and the lethal threat this posed to member of the British occupying forces?

The provisionals should provide clarification into the allegations made against Mr McKiernan. The allegations made, and the evidence that was gathered - whether genuine or not - should be made available to the family. The McKiernan family must be made aware of the exact case against Anthony. The provisional movement cannot now say that they have full

most dangerous periods in recent history. During Anthony's time on the run the PIRA leadership in Belfast collapsed due to the imprisonment of experienced volunteers.

When the call was made to those on the run to return home to fill the leadership vacuum and provide much needed experienced and maturity, Anthony McKiernan didn't need much persuasion to play his part. He returned home and continued the struggle in his native Belfast until he was captured by the British army and imprisoned in Long Kesh.

The provisional leadership in Belfast have a moral responsibility to the McKiernan family and to Anthony McKiernan's former comrades to investigate the sinister circumstances surrounding this particular case. The family say that they were told by the PIRA that no tape recording of his confession was available, as tape recordings weren't used by the PIRA at that time.

The New Republican Forum has been reliably informed that this information is incorrect, as tape recordings of confessions during PIRA internal investigations and court-martials were regularly used throughout that period.

At the inquest into Anthony McKiernan's death, it was reported that his body contained a massive amount of alcohol in its blood stream at the time of his death. In fact the quantity of alcohol was held to be enough to kill him. This in itself casts doubt on the reliability of any alleged confession that Anthony McKiernan may have made. Understandably the McKiernan family want to clear Anthony McKiernan's name. They are demanding to see the evidential proof that their loved one was an informer. His comrades and friends want to verify the case against him and the wider republican family need to have proof that this was not another case of an unjust execution involving a MI5 mole inside the PIRA.

Anthony McKiernan was another victim of the British murder machine in Ireland and a genuine inquiry into his death needs to be carried out with immediate effect.

Disagree with something you've read?

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your views on issues of national or
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webmaster@newrepublicanforum.ie

confidence in any of the information supplied by Scappaticci against any individual. Indeed a shadow hangs over any court martial and execution that Scappaticci was involved in while he was working as a MI5 agent and also as head of IRA intelligence and security.

The involvement of a British agent-IRA informant in the events surrounding this man's death casts a dark shadow over everything in this controversial and disturbing case.

In the early 1970's Anthony McKiernan was well known to republicans in the North Louth/South Armagh area. Like many young IRA volunteers during that dark period Anthony went on the run and lived in the border area for a few years. During his stay along the border he continued his role as an active IRA volunteer. Those who knew him at that time describe him as a fearless and committed IRA activist. Throughout his period on active service in the border area he participated in many major IRA actions against the British army. As an active IRA volunteer he never shirked his responsibilities in the struggle during one of the

Agreement remains deadlocked

The hastened publication of the recent report of the International Monitoring Commission was specifically requested by both the London and Dublin governments in the hope that it might add some much-needed impetus to the latest round of all-party talks.

However, this strategy backfired in no uncertain terms, and far from paving the way for constructive negotiations that might result in a reconvened Stormont Executive, the IMC report has provided a skeptical DUP with arguable reasons as to why it should not share power with the provisional movement in the foreseeable future.

The IMC believes the provisional movement is not recruiting, training or targeting and is strategically intent on moving away from armed struggle into purely constitutional politics. However, the report also concluded that the provisionals are continually gathering intelligence on establishment politicians north and south, and other republican organisations who remain opposed to the Belfast Agreement.

Controversially, the IMC report also claimed that the PIRA had not decommissioned all of its weapons, retains a stockpile of short arms and ammunition, possesses bank accounts full of laundered money, warehouses full of smuggled cigarettes and petrol tanks full of illegal diesel. How the words of the IMC report must have been music to the DUP's rejectionist ears?

For Adams and McGuinness the IMC report represented both a patronising pat on the back and a simultaneous slap in the face. A hell of a lot done, more to do - was the message from the British government-appointed commission to the eternally compliant provisional leadership.

Few informed observers will be surprised by the suggestion that the provisionals have retained a variety of small arms. How else would it police the nationalist community and contain the threat of republican opposition to the Belfast Agreement? Although they will never publicly admit it, both London and Dublin expected the provisionals to withhold a small amount of weaponry. Of primary importance for both Blair and Ahern is the fact that the provisional movement's war against the British state in Ireland has been brought to a permanent end. Internal policing of the nationalist community and the odd execution of a "dissident republican" is something both governments can live with, in spite of their public utterances to the contrary.

The IMC report provoked a predictable chorus of "we

told you so" from the DUP. The hard-line unionists rejected previous assertions by the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning that the PIRA had destroyed its entire arsenal. Ian Paisley has consistently argued that the entire IICD process was not fully transparent and was open to abuse. The DUP now claim their long-standing disbelief in the provisional's declaration of complete disarmament has been totally vindicated.

An ebullient Nigel Dodds asked how the DUP could be expected to share power with Sinn Féin, while its armed wing retained short arms and ammunition and was engaged

it wholesale criminality. Michael McDowell, with one eye on southern elections, reiterated these comments, and went one step further by asking why the PIRA continued to exist eight years after it had endorsed the Belfast Agreement.

In an attempt to quell the flames of political controversy General John de Chastelain of the IICD entered the political fray and insisted that the IICD stood by its previous assessment that the PIRA had destroyed its entire arsenal.

The DUP dismissed the de Chastelain's suggestion that the provos would be incapable of firing a twenty-one gun salute should Queen Elizabeth ever arrive over to welcome Martin McGuinness and Bairbre de Brun back into Stormont as British ministers, and instead chose to concentrate on the juicy political morsels provided by the IMC.

Both governments and Sinn Féin have consistently stated that the Stormont Executive must be up and running in 2006. However, the recent IMC report has rendered this political objective totally unattainable. The DUP is more than content with direct rule and is in no hurry to see Sinn Féin in possession of ministerial portfolios in a power sharing executive.

Politics can be a disgusting or indeed an amusing spectacle. It all depends on your political perspective. For example, who could have predicted that a one-time former head of the British Anti-Terrorist Branch would travel to Belfast to admonish the provisional movement for failing to destroy its entire arsenal? And that Martin McGuinness would dismiss these findings using expletives, before grovellingly reasserting that PIRA weaponry had been completely destroyed and that Sinn Féin is entitled to British ministerial portfolios in a Stormont power-sharing executive? Fifteen years ago an author of spy thrillers would have discarded that particular plot as absurd and unbelievable.



General John de Chastelain: oversaw destruction of PIRA weapons

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

Fraggle Rock: MI6 in Moscow

The image of the "James Bond" type MI6 agent who saves the world and scoops the supermodel along the way was dealt a severe body blow last month when the Russian Intelligence Service [FSB] rumbled a clumsy British intelligence plot to garner sensitive military intelligence and arrested three MI6 operatives and a rogue Russian state employee in Moscow. The rogue employee, who worked at a leading state military enterprise, was spotted by the FSB downloading sensitive intelligence onto a data transmitter at his place of work. He was then followed and seen transferring the information onto a sophisticated mini-computer that was hidden inside a fake rock in one of Moscow's public parks by MI6. Basically, when the rogue employee came within 25 metres of the rock, his data transmitter, which resembled a TV remote control, synchronised with the mini-computer inside the "rock", enabling the valuable intelligence to be downloaded and ready for collection by MI6 operatives. After identifying and arresting the rogue employee, FSB set up an observation post adjacent to the "rock" and waited for the MI6 operatives to come and download the information. Russian television recently screened some of the surveillance footage, which has proved highly embarrassing to MI6. One MI6 operative was filmed pretending to urinate against a tree while pointing his TV-type data transmitter at the "rock". Another MI6 operative was seen pacing in circles around the "rock" for 20 minutes before finally approaching it, prodding it with his foot, and picking it up to see if it was the correct one. Minutes later a third MI6 operative arrived with a rucksack, picked the "rock" up and placed it in the bag before he was arrested by the FSB. When asked by a journalist why he had not expelled the three MI6 operatives, Vladimir Putin stated that he feared they would be replaced by individuals who possessed common sense and basic competence.



What's in a word?

When recently questioned by Michael D Higgins in Leinster House as to whether CIA rendition flights containing abducted Islamic prisoners had landed at Shannon Airport, Bertie Ahern informed the Galway TD that: "The US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, has given explicit assurances that Ireland is not being used to fly prisoners to Guatemala or anywhere else". Now either Condoleezza Rice was trying to pull a quick one or Bertie Ahern mistook Guatemala for Guantanamo Bay. Flying Column feels compelled to point out the slight difference between the two. So here we go. Now pay attention Mr Ahern. Guatemala: located in Central America. Area: 108,889 sq km. Capital: Guatemala City. Population: approximately 10 million. Guantanamo Bay: US-run internment camp in Cuba. Illegal under international law. A place where Islamic prisoners are detained indefinitely without trial, and subject to various forms of torture including beatings, sensory deprivation and forced-feeding. These subtle distinctions make all the difference.

Back with vengeance!

Remember Pat Robertson, the pro-Bush TV Christian evangelist who publicly called for the assassination of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez? Well he's made the headlines again. This time he offered the world his unique insight into the medical condition of Ariel Sharon. In early January Robertson explained to his viewers that the Israeli prime minister suffered a brain haemorrhage because God was angry at his acceptance of the need for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Robertson told the 863,000 daily audience of *The 700 Club*: "The prophet Joel makes it very clear that God has enmity against those who 'divide my land'. God considers this land to be his. You read the Bible and he says 'This is my land'. And for any prime minister of Israel who decides he is going to carve it up and give it away, God says: 'No this is mine'." The pro-Zionist crackpot then argued that Yitzhak Rabin was shot dead for making similar concessions to Palestinians: "He was tragically assassinated. It was a terrible thing that happened, but nevertheless he was dead". Robertson also cautioned George W Bush of the dangers of proceeding with the so-called "road-map for peace". Robertson warned: "If the United States takes a role in ripping half of Jerusalem away from Israel and giving it to a group of Palestinian terrorists, we are going to see the wrath of God fall on this nation that will make tornadoes look like a Sunday school picnic". Meanwhile in an attempt to deflect attention away from the controversy George W Bush described Ariel Sharon as "a man of peace". A man of peace? The butcher of Qibya, the architect of the invasion of Lebanon, the man who oversaw the slaughter of Sabra and Chatilla, the driving force behind Israel's illegal West Bank land-grab, the politician responsible for igniting the Second Intifada, the builder of Israel's infamous security wall. A man of peace? I don't think even Mr. Sharon would believe that.

Sour grapes

County Derry Sinn Fein councillor Billy Leonard recently took the hump and decided to launch judicial review proceedings because DUP mayor Timothy Hearn didn't invite him to Coleraine council's Christmas party. The former RUC man turned Sinn Fein councilor also accused SDLP councilor John Dallat of "raising a toast to the Queen" at the Christmas function. Flying Column thinks Mr Leonard may be skating on thin ice on this one. After all he was a member of a British government-created unionist paramilitary force which murdered numerous nationalists, colluded with pro-British death squads, raided and vandalised thousands of homes, fired thousands of plastic bullets and ran informers. Mr Dallat, denying the allegation that he raised a toast to the Queen, declared: "It's a bit rich coming from someone who served five years as a police officer into adulthood and not just as a teenager as he would have us believe". Yes, the old adage about throwing stones and glasshouses springs to mind.

Political Prisoners

A defamatory article

A chara,

On January 22nd Richard Sullivan wrote a series of utterly dishonest, scurrilous and libelous articles in *The Sunday World* concerning Michael McKevitt. And while these fallacious articles have been published in print, I have no intention of demeaning myself by reiterating their wholly unfounded and disgraceful contents. However, as the republican spokesperson for prisoners on the E2-landing in Portlaoise Prison, where Michael McKevitt is detained, I feel compelled to publicly state that the abovementioned articles are completely false and totally without foundation. Prison management has informed me that Richard Sullivan did not contact either Portlaoise Prison or the Irish Prison Service in order to confirm the veracity of his defamatory claims before publishing his outrageous articles. In my capacity as republican spokesperson I have informed Portlaoise Prison and the Irish Prison Service that there is now an onus on them to publicly state the truth and rebut the allegations of this gutter journalist. If Richard Sullivan possessed a shred of professional integrity he would have contacted the relevant prison authority to ascertain the truth of his claim prior to publication. However, obviously he chose to submit a slanderous and malicious fabrication rather than have the article pulled because of something as inconvenient as the truth. Did Richard Sullivan - for one moment - consider the effects such a disgraceful series of articles might have upon a prisoner's unsuspecting family? Obviously not. Unfortunately this is what passes for journalistic ethics at *The Sunday World*, where paper never refuses ink and truth never obstructs an opportunity to slander and defame an Irish republican.

Is mise le meas,
Declan Carroll,
Republican spokesperson,
E2 - Portlaoise Prison.

Aiden Hulme update

The ill-treatment of Irish Republican prisoner Aiden Hulme has rapidly deteriorated over the last number of weeks. The New Republican Forum has been informed that Aiden can no longer physically leave his cell in Full Sutton Prison due to his severely injured leg which to date has not received the medical attention it requires. It is now the case that fellow republican prisoners are carrying food to him on a daily basis in "their pockets" because the prison authorities refuse to let food trays be brought in to cells. Along with the refusal to allow an independent doctor to see Aiden, this latest development seems to be a further instance of ongoing neglect and a blatant disregard for the health and well-being of this young Irish republican prisoner. There is no doubt, the malicious intransigence of the British Home Office is the sole cause of Aiden's ongoing medical deterioration.

Michael Holden of the Irish Political Status Committee, who is at the forefront in highlighting Aiden's plight, informs us that all republican prisoners in Full Sutton are currently being confined to their cells 23 hours a day. He says "this is probably because we have been drawing attention to Aiden's and the rest of the lads' plight recently, and also due to the fact that Aiden's legal team is taking the Home Office to court over the coming weeks due to the medical neglect Aiden has suffered".

However, as Aiden's condition continues to deteriorate by the day, the New Republican Forum is seeking his urgent and immediate repatriation back to Ireland, where he can receive the proper medical attention that he requires in the company of friends and family.

The following IRA prisoners are affiliated to the New Republican Forum:

Portlaoise Prison, Ireland

Tony Hyland
25 years

Michael McKevitt
20 years

Alan Patterson
9 years

Ken Patterson
7 years

Declan Carroll
7 years

Richard Whyte
5 years

Christy Dineen
5 years

Sean Moloney
4.5 years

James Bullman
4 years

Jeff Lee
4 years

Whitemoor Prison, England

Michael McDonald
28 years

Declan Rafferty
28 years

Full Sutton Prison, England

Fintan O'Farrell
28 years

James McCormack
18 years

Noel Maguire,
18 years

Long Lartin Prison, England

Aiden Hulme
16 years

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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