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Cory: collusion or confusion?

By Sean Moloney

The British and Irish governments have spent two months studying the report by retired Canadian High Court judge Peter Cory on eight killings which security forces on both sides of the border are suspected of assisting. Cory was appointed to conduct the investigation into collusion in May 2002 following commitments made by both governments during the Weston Park talks.

Judge Cory served as a bomber pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force from 1942 to 1945 and received his law degree from Osgoode Hall in 1950. In 1974 he was appointed to the Supreme Court of Ontario. In 1981 he was elevated to the Court of Appeal, before being appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1989.

Both the Irish and British governments had committed themselves to publishing their sections of the Cory Report simultaneously. But after Downing Street delayed twice the Irish government published alone on December 18th. Bertie Ahern ordered a public inquiry, as recommended by Judge Cory, into the deaths of two senior RUC officers shot by the IRA in 1987 as they crossed into the six counties after a meeting with senior Gardaí in Dundalk. They were the most senior RUC officers killed in the troubles, and the inquiry will consider whether the IRA was tipped off by a Garda mole on the officers' presence in the South.

But the unpublished British section of the report, which calls for separate public inquiries into security service involvement in four murders in the North, is potentially more damaging. Tony Blair has been accused of bad faith in delaying the publication of Cory's findings on some of the most controversial murders in Britain's 30-year 'Dirty War' in Ireland. One of these murders was that of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane, who was shot 14 times as he was having Sunday lunch with his wife and children at their home in 1989. Rosemary Nelson, another solicitor, was killed by a car bomb outside her home in 1999 after complaining on numerous occasions of death threats from the RUC. Robert Hamill, a young Catholic man, was kicked to death by a loyalist mob in Portadown two years earlier while RUC officers sat idly by in a land rover just a few meters away. The fourth murder was the INLA assassination of Billy Wright, founder of the sectarian paramilitary organization the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), who was shot dead inside Long Kesh Prison.

The Northern Ireland Office says it is considering the legal and national security implications of the report. No date has yet been set for publication. Human rights

groups have said that if the government is making changes to the report it is an unnecessary delay, as Judge Cory has made 'recommendations', not findings, and has worded his report very carefully. Judge Cory himself has said that 'Failure to publish the report in full would be a breach of the Weston Park Agreement of both governments in which the report was commissioned and could have unfortunate consequences for the peace process'.

The SDLP leader, Mark Durkan, publicly stated that after his meeting with Tony Blair that he was convinced that the Prime Minister wanted 'to buy the truth'. Paul O'Connor, project co-ordinator of the Pat Finucane Centre for Human Rights, said that Tony Blair's actions indicate that he has fallen into the trap of other Prime Ministers and he is afraid to face up to his own security forces. Jane Winter, director of British-Irish Rights Watch said, 'I don't think the British ever expected in their worst nightmares that Judge Cory would recommend four public inquiries. I think they are running around like headless chickens trying to do a damage limitations exercise'. She added that by delaying the publication of the Cory Report, Blair has once again made it look as if he has something to hide. Finally, Judge Cory himself states that without public scrutiny, doubts based solely on 'myth and suspicion' will linger long, fester and spread their malignant infection throughout the Republic and Northern Ireland, and therefore the public inquiries into these cases should proceed as soon as possible. Failure to hold such an inquiry, he said, might be thought to be a 'denial of the original agreement', which appears to have been an important and integral part of the Belfast Agreement. The publication by the Irish government of the reports into the deaths of the two senior RUC officers in the Republic will put further pressure on the British government to publish the reports on the other four killings that took place in the North. Although the British have hinted that they expect the reports to be published next year, Judge Cory is known to be very unhappy with the delay.

The British government, it seems clear, is dancing to the tune of the nameless, faceless seurocrats of MI5 and army intelligence. These saboteurs of truth were the men who sent the death squads to Ireland in the first place, and they have much to fear from an open investigation of their crimes. The question now is not whether collusion took place, but how high it went. Cory may yet succeed in shining a light into the dark recesses of the British establishment, but if the past is anything to go by, I wouldn't go holding my breath.

The 1973 state papers

By Brian Moore

'The past is a foreign country,' noted the poet L.P. Hartley; 'they do things differently there.' Just how differently is brought home to us each year by the annual release of previously classified documents under the thirty-year rule. The recently released state papers from 1973 provide a window onto an Ireland teetering, it would seem, on the brink of utter moral depravity. One respectable married couple wrote in desperation to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, to express their outrage at an 'insidious' new craze sweeping the country. 'We have nothing to gain,' they wail in a letter carefully preserved in the state archives, 'by making Ireland a nation where uncontrolled drugs and devices reduce people to below the level of animals.' One can only agree. But what wanton debauchery could possibly have provoked such ire? An epidemic of heroin abuse perhaps, with syringes replacing marbles as the accessory of choice throughout the nation's schoolyards? Actually,

no. The 'drugs and devices' threatening the nation's youth were, of course, contraceptives. Hard to credit now, but 1973 was a year in which the very idea of a woman taking the pill could provoke a level of moral indignation rivalled today only by the idea of the same woman smoking in a pub. (In 1973, smoking in pubs was of course compulsory.) The controversy had been rumbling on for some time, but 1973 was the year in which a young Mary Robinson introduced a bill in the senate to legalise the importation of contraceptives. Ms Mary Anne Lynch of London was not taken in by this dangerous subversive's propaganda, however. The only contraceptive device a decent Irish woman needs, she pointed out in a letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Garret FitzGerald, is 'a strong lock for her bedroom door.'

But the decline in sexual morality was not the only cause for indignation in 1973. At a time when half the country's local politicians were lobbying the government to build a nuclear power plant in their constituency, serious minds were turning to the question of women in the workplace. It was already clear to many that the lifting of the ban on married women working as public servants was a disaster for the country, and few were shy about making their opinions known. The Co Longford Committee of Agriculture sent a resolution of protest to the government, while Ms M Carroll of

Waterford wrote to the Taoiseach to express her disgust at married teachers and nurses stealing the jobs of the youth. It wouldn't be so bad if their wages were being spent wisely, she noted, but instead, 'The money those wives are earning is being spent on hotel life, dining and wining.' And contraceptive pills, no doubt. Disgraceful stuff, although it's reassuring to see that some things never change.

Politically, 1973 was dominated by two major events: the election of a Fine



Brian Faulkner and Liam Cosgrave, Sunningdale talks 1973

Gael/Labour coalition in the South (ending 16 years of Fianna Fail rule), and the talks leading up to the Sunningdale Agreement in the North. Fianna Fail's defeat in the March election was an auspicious omen for the British who, according to their own recently released state papers, regarded the Cosgrave coalition as 'the best Irish government [they] could hope to have.' In the North, meanwhile, a 'peace process' of sorts was underway. Elections for a new six county Assembly in June, which left unionism fragmented, led to the formation in November of a power-sharing executive headed by Brian Faulkner of the UUP and Gerry Fitt of the SDLP. A 'Council of Ireland' was added in December, but the whole Sunningdale edifice soon came tumbling down amid loyalist violence. Comparisons with the present situation have been made too often to repeat, though it is interesting to note that the SDLP's performance in the negotiations did not impress their adversaries. One British official recorded that the SDLP 'like to have their say before acquiescing - having their say is more important to them than extracting actual concessions'. Suddenly, the past doesn't seem so foreign after all.

Out on the streets, meanwhile, the IRA's campaign was losing its momentum. The success of Operation Motorman in July 1972, which saw the British Army retake the liberated areas of Belfast and Derry, had

severely limited the IRA's capacity to strike at the occupation forces. Loyalist violence, in contrast, had reached an unprecedented level, with an average of four sectarian murders per week in the early part of the year. A new Northern Ireland Advisory Commission, appointed by Secretary of State William Whitelaw, looked into the issue of RUC collusion. The claims were strongly denied by Assistant Chief Constable Bill Meharg who pointed out, in a letter to the commission, that the RUC had in fact arrested four members of the UVF for a sectarian murder. A commendable action, it must be said, although Meharg failed to point out that the men had been arrested in 1966! Whitelaw, at least, had no doubt who the bad guys were, telling a delegation from the Grand Orange Lodge that 'he had never equated the UDA with the IRA in the level of viciousness of their activities'. Most rational people would be inclined to agree, although not perhaps in the sense Whitelaw intended.

South of the border, the IRA was having a mixed year. The capture of the Claudia in March, with the loss of its cargo of Libyan arms, was a major blow to the campaign, but an audacious prison break in October, which saw three of the IRA's most senior members escape from Mountjoy Prison in a helicopter, did much to restore the army's prestige. Perhaps the most interesting revelation of the year, however, comes from a declassified British intelligence document entitled 'Prominent members of Provisional IRA Active Service Units operating in a cross-border role'. Following the loss of its urban strongholds in 1972, the IRA's focus of operations had shifted to the border region, with over 841 cross-border raids mounted between January 1972 and March 1973. The document lists the major figures and ASUs operating along the border and records that, following the success of Operation Motorman in Derry, the entire Derry IRA had decamped with their commander Martin McGuinness to Buncrana in Co Donegal, where they were living in caravans and holiday cottages and launching cross-border raids on the city. Thirty years on, the recent spate of holiday home building in Donegal by senior Provisionals takes on a whole new light, although the prospect of Provisional pensioners raiding Derry - unless for bargains in the January sales - is unlikely to instil fear into the hearts of many in the British establishment...

No need for a new alternative

By Tom Sullivan

In order to examine how republicans should react to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), some points must be made as to why it is unacceptable in the first place. The GFA is not a vehicle for republican ideals, so any participation in bodies born of it compromises republicanism. The Provisional IRA more or less dumped arms so that Sinn Fein members could gain access to a British market to haggle for conditions which nationalists are entitled to as of right. The very men who got Sinn Fein to the negotiating table have now been rendered useless. So many concessions have been made in their name by Sinn Fein, concessions that go against both the ethos and long acknowledged traditional values of republicanism, that they find themselves on the wrong side of an ideological Rubicon. Acceptance of the Mitchell principles, for example, is

just one of the many insurmountable obstacles that make it impossible for the Provisionals to ever resume a campaign with their integrity intact.

Sinn Fein would argue that republicanism does not have to be fought for with arms to remain republicanism. They may point to demographic suggestions that, with a Northern Ireland Assembly running well, nationalists will soon be in a position to outvote unionists and re-unite Ireland by political means. It is true that republicanism can be fought for in many ways, but it is a political ideology, and it is absurd for a movement to sacrifice its very principles to gain strategic advantage. If a party is established to struggle for a state built on a set of principles, how can the same party sacrifice those principles? It becomes a party with a self-defeating purpose. With regard to the point of demographic change, in the time it will take for nationalists to make up sufficient voting numbers, there is no guarantee that they will exercise such strength. Such momentum as the republican movement has enjoyed up to now will have been severely diminished by years of Sinn Fein becoming another Fianna Fail for the six counties. The electorate will have become apathetic, no longer radicalised by a struggle. Add to this the undeniable fact that as the global business community realises that the Provisionals are out of action, investment

will increase in Northern Ireland. It may become an economically viable, governable state, akin to Scotland and Wales; the only difference being the participation of a strong nationalist party.

The idea of an 'alternative' is born of Sinn Fein spindoctors. When questioned in the media about parties opposed to the Good Friday Agreement, Sinn Fein asks 'What's their alternative?' They accuse such parties of being politically bankrupt. Would it then be fair to say that Sinn Fein has been politically bankrupt during the years

When Pearse, Connolly and the other 1916 patriots planned the Rising, nationalists had a say in the British government. When the War of Independence was fought there was a nationalist majority in Ireland. Today, republicans seem to have fought a bitter war merely to achieve the same in the six counties. What appears to be a settlement of sorts now was a mere starting point for the men of 1916 and the War of Independence.

The degree to which Sinn Fein has abandoned its core principles in favour of its alternative goes beyond nationalism. For example the socialist aspect has been brushed aside in favour of a strategy of playing ball with Britain. It was Bairbre De Brun's decision to close the accident and emergency wing of Omagh hospital. This decision to deny to the people of Omagh's environs the right to emergency care, cost Sinn Fein a third seat and, no doubt, support in West Tyrone. I'm sure Sinn Fein will see this as

collateral damage. How do they see a decision to save the British government (a government that can afford to spend billions on a war in Iraq) some money at the potential cost of Irish lives?

OK, so many people do not approve of Sinn Fein's approach. Anyone can throw mud at them, in spite of their substantial success in the Assembly elections. My point is that republicans are not obliged to provide an alternative to the GFA because the GFA itself is an alternative to the Irish republican ideal. Where does republicanism go from here? Republicanism needs to overcome the crisis of losing activists, of whatever kind, through the dissension of Sinn Fein. Republicanism must be looked upon as a movement of continuous agitation and republicans must pursue the strategy that has maintained the movement for hundreds of years. For the Irish public, the idea of a permanent cessation of hostilities is an attractive one. They have shown their support for Sinn Fein at the polls as a result of Sinn Fein's participation in the peace process, but the mandate that Sinn Fein now enjoys is not from republicans. It is a peace vote for a peaceful conclusion. They are not the voters who voted for Sinn Fein when it stood for a united Ireland. They are voting for an alternative to a thirty-two county socialist democratic republic.

Is there an alternative to the Good Friday Agreement?

The New Republican Forum has asked a range of republican writers and activists to answer the question:

Is there an alternative to the Good Friday Agreement?

Their responses are printed in this and in the previous issue of Forum Magazine.

Tom Sullivan is a republican activist

between 1969 and the signing of the GFA? At any time during that period they could have negotiated the same deal, with the same consequences for republicanism. The spin factor in politics, as many people know, is hugely important. The problem that Sinn Fein has is that in order to survive in an environment of parties that abandoned ideology many years ago, they must do the same. Sinn Fein is putting the media-boot in first when they talk of an alternative. They enjoy the support of some media elements, now that they are bedfellows of the British and Irish Governments. This is evident from the fact that the very people who stick to the ideals of republicanism are termed 'dissidents' by the media. The fact is, it is Sinn Fein that has dissented from genuine republicanism. They challenge the 'dissidents' to provide an alternative, when in fact they have already chosen an alternative doctrine to republicanism. The strategy that brought the British to the negotiating table before will bring them to the table again. The strategy has been the same as it has been for hundreds of years. It is what made the history of Ireland different to that of Scotland and Wales. In recent times republicans have come close to negotiating a settlement but sold themselves short. It was not the strategy of constitutional politics that provided these opportunities.

First step of a long journey

By Sean Mulligan

My first reaction when asked to write about an alternative to the Agreement was to rehash all the points that most of us are already familiar with. All republicans opposed to this Agreement are well versed in its inadequacies. We know that its whole 'raison d'être' was to defeat our struggle for national independence, and that Sinn Féin's shameful role in legitimising partition has done untold damage to the republican cause. Likewise we can see the crisis this Agreement is in at present, and which will continue to undermine it in the future. We are all too aware also of our disunity in the face of this 'sell-out'. All genuine republicans are asking how do we deal with this situation and turn it around, so that we speak in a united voice of opposition to it and give leadership to those who still aspire to the re-unification of our country?

It is only natural that, given the number of different republican groups on the anti-agreement side, we would aspire to some sort of common position. After all, as republicans we all want the removal of the British, the ending of partition and the creation of a 32 county republic. Of course we also recognise that there are a number of differences between us as there have always been. Some people are prepared to accept a 32-county state, much like the present day 26 county one. Others, who would like to see a socialist republic, have a wide range of views on what that would entail. The various political strands of opinion have always posed a delicate balancing act among republicans, be it the pure nationalist one, opposed to the socialist.

Republicans, by their very nature, are serious political 'animals'. To risk one's life or liberty, as well as losing friends, jobs and even families, is not something done by the faint hearted. To think that men and women prepared to do this would not have strong opinions when it comes to what they are struggling for is to be unrealistic. Republicanism has often been compared to a religion, with republicans' devotion to their cause and their willingness to accept sacrifice, as being seen similar to a religious faith. We have also had the tendency to be evangelical, not alone with the people

in general, but with each other. Our version of 'republican scriptures' is the one true faith, and no matter what the consequences, we have been prepared to brand other republicans as 'heretics' when it suited us.

The whole history of our struggle is littered with this never-ending cycle of division. There is not the space here to list them all, but each phase of the struggle has had them. With defeats came the recriminations. These manifested themselves in the organisations as a whole, but particularly in the prisoners in the jails. After the defeat of

the heretics amongst us? Would some insist that we believe and take on board their opinion and theirs only? Many of the groups opposed to the Agreement contain strong personalities with strong opinions. Many have spent their whole lives arguing their corners against all comers and in defending their principles. For many it has meant isolation and setbacks, with friends no longer speaking to each other. While no one questions the motives of various individuals or groups, we must recognise that no matter how pure our principles are, we cannot achieve the aim of a united Ireland on our own. We cannot stand against the sell-out of the Good Friday Agreement and be successful, on an individual basis. We could be our own Zarathustras, living on our mountaintop, talking only to ourselves, and despising those who don't agree with us. But we must realise that if we do, we will not achieve our aims as republicans. Unfortunately for the

prophets of republicanism, there are not enough mountaintops to go around, so we will have to come up with something new.

What do we do then? If we are serious about achieving our aims as republicans we have to accept the reality of our position. Sitting on mountaintops allows many of us to have our heads in the clouds and restricts our field of vision. We have to begin with a fundamental change of heart. We have to acknowledge that while there has been divisions, splits and disagreements with each other, there is also common ground among genuine republicans. Many of us agree that there have been those who would bring our groups into disrepute and should be prevented from doing so in the future. What must be recognised is that we need each other if we are to build a revolutionary movement and win our struggle. We need to unite around a common purpose, based on what we have in common, and not the differences between us. We need to have a single voice raised against the Agreement, spelling out our analysis of it, so that the people understand why republicans find it totally unacceptable. This can only be achieved if we begin by changing our view of ourselves and the relationship we have with each other. It would only be a first step, but perhaps the most important one.

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Sean Mulligan is a republican prisoner in Portlaoise Gaol

1798, there were serious divisions in the United Irishmen, which reached a climax among the prisoners held in Fort George, Scotland, in 1802. Ernie O'Malley writing to Liam Lynch on the 10th February 1923 about the bad military situation in the country remarked that 'the spirit in some prisons is bad'. Brendan Behan writing about his time as a prisoner in the Curragh Camp in the 40's recalled the divisions and low morale among many at that time. Behan also remarked humorously but truthfully nevertheless, that at any meeting of Republicans the first item on the agenda is 'the split'. It would be wrong to paint a totally pessimistic view of our long struggle over the years. We all know the hard work, sacrifice and dedication that many put into it. But in the aftermath of our defeats and disasters, we have often truly been our own worst enemy.

So is it really realistic for us to say that we should unite against the Good Friday Agreement, given the division that there appears to be in our ranks? By saying that, are we just trying to appear willing to do something, knowing deep down that if there isn't a fundamental change of heart, nothing will come of it? If for example, we called a national conference to achieve common ground among the various groups, would it be used by some as an attempt to 'convert'

Does Britain have a strategic interest in Ireland?

Paul Maguire argues for the importance of geopolitical considerations in any analysis of the Irish peace process

The question of whether Britain has or has not a strategic interest in Ireland is not an academic question or one that is best left to political spin-doctors. It is far too important for that. The peace process has witnessed Sinn Féin accept British declarations of strategic neutrality with respect to Ireland. Thus, having abandoned orthodox republican analysis, which holds that the British occupation is the primary obstacle to Irish reunification and that the unionist veto is nothing more than an anti-democratic subterfuge through which Britain justifies her interference in Irish affairs, Sinn Féin now believes that unionism - and not the British State - is the major impediment to Irish unity. But are these British declarations of strategic neutrality genuine? If Britain is engaging in political duplicity and is concealing a strategic interest, and if these strategic concerns outweigh the political vicissitudes of unionism, then the Adams/McGuinness peace-strategy will undoubtedly lay shipwrecked upon the jagged rocks of British duplicity.

The unity of this article resides in the belief that Britain has a strategic interest in Ireland. Evidence will be produced to support this assertion, thus highlighting the poverty of Sinn Féin's analysis. However, before proceeding to discuss these points it is essential to chronicle the central importance which the debate surrounding British strategic interests assumed during the formative stages of the Irish peace process.

Sinn Féin agitprop would have us believe that 1990 was the year in which the Provisional leadership entered into indirect dialogue with the British government; and that these negotiations culminated in the 1994 PIRA cease-fire. However, recent research has revealed that in 1986, during Tom King's tenure as Northern Secretary, Gerry Adams opened an indirect channel to the British government via Fr Alec Reid. These communications continued under Peter Brooke's term of office [1989-92]. From the outset British strategic concerns were central to this ongoing dialogue [1].

In August 2000, as part of his research into *A Secret History of the IRA*, Ed Maloney interviewed Tom King, the former Northern Secretary. During the interview, King recalled an occasion in the spring of 1987, when Fr Alec Reid presented him with a republican questionnaire concerning British government policy on Ireland. King was aware that Gerry Adams was the author [2]. Within weeks Adams received his reply in an unsigned, undated, twelve paragraph and one thousand-word statement [3]. This response set the agenda for the entire peace process and created the template for the negotiations that subsequently led to the Belfast Agreement.

The first item on Adams's 1987 questionnaire asked: 'What is the nature of the British government's interest in Ireland?' The British government replied that it 'has no political, military, strategic, or economic interest in staying in Ireland' and that 'the political and security situation...is due to the historical, political, religious and cultural divisions which separate the people of the nationalist tradition from the people of the unionist tradition in Ireland. These divisions are at the root of the conflict there and not any self-interested dominion policies of the British government' [4].

Maloney concluded that British Intelligence wrote the reply, as King informed the author that he never actually saw the finished draft. Maloney commented: 'aspects of the diplomacy suggest that it embraced a strong 'need to know' element of the sort that usual-

ly indicates an intelligence role rather than the conventional duties of a mainstream government department' [5]. The lingering suspicion is that the document represented a British Intelligence 'sting' and that it was written with a view to strengthening the hand of those within the Provisional movement who wished to travel down the constitutional path.

In 1989 Peter Brooke replaced Tom King as Northern Secretary. Towards the end of his first year in office Brooke reinforced this perception when, from his Westminster constituency, he famously declared: 'the British government has no selfish, strategic or economic interests in Northern Ireland'. In an interview given to the Press Agency shortly after this speech, Brooke stated: 'There has to be a possibility that at some stage debate might start within the terrorist community. Now, if that were to occur, then you would move towards a point, if in fact the terrorists were to decide that the moment had come when they wished to withdraw from their activities, then I think the government would need to be imaginative in those circumstances as to how that process should be managed' [6].

During a June 2000 interview with Ed Maloney, Peter Brooke stated that: 'The 1989 interview was based on a mixture of what I had heard from John Hume, MI5, and military intelligence and finally what I had heard about [Fr] Reid. What Reid was saying to us was that there was an opportunity here to end it, and one of the aims of what I said in the interview was to communicate my attitude to Sinn Féin' [7]. Obviously, Hume and Reid believed that if the Northern Secretary publicly declared that the British State has 'no selfish, strategic or economic interests in Northern Ireland' then this would enhance the Adams/McGuinness peace strategy. This was precise approach that King and Brooke adopted between 1986-92.

But are these declarations of neutrality a genuine and accurate reflection of British strategic concerns? Does Britain actually have no strategic interests in Ireland? Or were these experienced politicians simply attempting to mislead the Provisional leadership? Let us ignore the keynote speeches of political spindoctors and the machinations of hawks within British Intelligence and focus our attention upon official documents and reports which outline British strategic objectives in Ireland.

In the aftermath of World War II British Foreign Office officials assessed the post-war strategic importance of Ireland. The Atlee government approved their findings which concluded that 'as a matter of first-class strategic importance Northern Ireland should continue to form part of His Majesty's dominions...it seems unlikely that Britain would ever be able to agree to Northern Ireland leaving His Majesty's jurisdiction...even if the people of Northern Ireland desired it' [8].

In 1951 a British Commonwealth Relations Office document, highlighting the vital strategic importance of Ireland, concluded: 'Historically, Ireland which has never been able to protect herself against invasion, has been, as she is today, a potential base of attack on the United Kingdom. It is more important that a part of the island, and that strategically well-placed, should, and of its own free will, wish to remain part of the United Kingdom and of the United Kingdom defence scheme' [9].

In 1982 Vice-Admiral Sir Ian Gough, the former Royal Navy

commander for NATO's North Atlantic area placed his strategic concerns on record. Gough stated that *'the sea above the continental shelf, and the airspace above it, constitute the North Western approaches to NATO in Western Europe. To the north and west, soviet forces would have to make the lengthy transit from the North Cape, and if their target was trans-Atlantic shipping, that transit would be increased by 500 miles or more if the shipping were to be brought in via the south of Ireland. Indeed, the strategic importance of Ireland [the island] in any scheme of protecting shipping in the approaches to the British Isles can hardly be exaggerated. The current unrest in Northern Ireland...therefore, has serious implications for allied strength and unity'* [10].

When confronted with these imperialist declarations, proponents of the view that Britain has no strategic interest in Ireland make two points. Firstly, they retort that the potential Soviet threat was greatly exaggerated and that the termination of the Cold War makes such declarations redundant. However, in 1997 an alternative post-Cold War perspective on British strategic interests was offered by GR Sloan, the Deputy Head of the Strategic Studies and International Affairs Department at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. Sloan argued that during the Cold War Ireland *'became strategically more important because of the perceived need for defence against the Soviet Union which now occupied half of Europe'* [11]. In support of this, Sloan cited the British government's 1949 Ireland Report which asserted that: *'So far as could be foreseen, it will never be to Great Britain's advantage that Northern Ireland should form part of a territory outside His Majesty's jurisdiction'* [12].

Sloan contends that the ending of the Cold War has not spelt the end of potential threats to British security. In fact the post-Cold War geo-political order has resulted in a potential increase in the strategic importance of Ireland: *'The collapse of the Soviet Union merely means the lack of only one ideological challenge to democratic capitalism. Outside the west religion still inspires universal claims and genocidal loyalties; the passing of the European wars of religion has not ended religious wars. Nationalism remains deep-rooted even in the placid and industrial societies of Western Europe. In societies born in poverty from the debris of empires great and small, the national cult retains all its primitive forms. The future is not an object of knowledge, but it has been shown that with respect to Ireland, geopolitical patterns of the past can have relevance for the future'* [13]. Ireland lies squarely within the British and American sphere of influence. Hence the strategic justification for partition. In its absence, a united Ireland could disengage from the NATO alliance. Therein resides the threat to British strategic objectives in the region.

Sloan argues that it is essential for the British government to continue to engage in what he describes as a *'unique geopolitical dualism'* which is *'premised on the assumption of being able to differentiate between a strategic policy which was enunciated for the purposes of political consumption in Northern Ireland, to send a signal to the Republican Movement'* and the necessity to consolidate British sovereignty in Northern Ireland and thereby ensure *'the continued membership of Northern Ireland in the NATO Alliance'* [14]. The Deputy Head of Strategic Studies at the Britannia Royal Naval College concludes: *'Given the current preferences of the British*

government with respect to Northern Ireland, this most recent geopolitical dualism looks likely to underpin British strategic policy for some time to come' [15].

During the formative stages of the peace process the Dublin government regularly pointed to Peter Brooke's 'neutrality' speech in their discussions with Sinn Féin, while the SDLP repeated it ad nauseam. However, what is perhaps most astonishing is *'the willingness of republicans and most of the left to believe British claims of a disinterested and neutral position in relation to the political framework in Ireland'* [16].

In 1992 Martin McGuinness stated: *'I don't buy a lot of the previous notions about British strategic interests. Personally I believe they're here because they wish to uphold the right and support the position of unionism within the six counties, rather than any strategic or economic interests'* [17].

This acceptance of British strategic neutrality is a profound error of judgement. Adams and McGuinness may point to Brooke's declaration in an attempt to reassure their supporters of Britain's neutrality with respect to future political arrangements on the island. But, as has been shown, these declarations are duplicitous and misleading: a fact which has profound and fatal implications for the potential of the Sinn Féin peace strategy to realise traditional republican objectives. One is left with the disturbing conclusion that the Provisional leadership has conveniently consumed what G.R. Sloan refers to as a *'unique geopolitical dualism,'* which in lay terms



Tom King - NI Secretary of State 1985-89

amounts to traditional British political duplicity.

Despite over fifteen years of repeated declarations to the contrary, Britain does have a strategic interest in Ireland. As Craig, McNulty and Flannigan point out are we to believe that Britain has spent stg23.5bn since 1979 to protect the 'democratic rights' of one million unionists as an act of goodwill? This scenario has no precedent in British imperial history. And are we asked to believe that Britain injects an annual subvention of stg4bn out of the goodness of its heart? That it has conducted a brutal and dirty war that has tarnished its international reputation out of some sense of loyalty to the unionist people and that these facts by themselves are a demonstration of its neutrality? As with many popular prejudices and positions adopted out of political convenience, rational and argument are often very little use in confronting it [18].

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The bin tax revisited

By Tom Sullivan

The momentum behind the anti-bin tax campaign comes mostly from socialists. A democratically elected socialist TD has been arrested as a result of the campaign, as have a number of other people, some previously politically unaware. These people have well-thought-out reasons for exposing themselves to the risk of incarceration. It is a socialist's duty to be pro-active in bettering our society. If one particular issue has been satisfied, another one must be found to enflame the passion of the public. These facts alone are reason enough for me to support the anti-bin tax protesters. Brian Moore, writing in this magazine ('No alternative to bin charges', Issue 9, Nov 2003), argued that a poll taken by the Marian Finucane show demonstrates the lack of support for the campaign. This, to me, is a strange gauge of support. Surely the amount of people who have as yet not paid the double tax would be more accurate. How many Finucane listeners, I wonder, ever worried enough about something to do more than take part in a radio phone poll? The show in question goes out to the whole of Ireland, most of which has to pay extra charges for refuse collection already. The people from the affected area, Dublin, would count as a small percentage of this poll. Socialist issues aside, the anti-bin tax lobby have a valid argument that stands up to objective scrutiny.

Sympathy for the bin tax issue is not what it might be. This is because people outside Dublin are already subject to this double taxation. It is not reasonable to expect people in one area to succumb to an injustice simply because others suffer the same injustice. It is true that, to most people, the sum involved is not huge, but the danger does not lie in the sum involved. The danger is the precedent that will be set if the anti-bin tax campaign fails. Brian Moore, in his article, argues that the protesters' position is fundamentally unsound. I would respectfully suggest that my colleague's appreciation of the protesters' argument is unsound. The article in question raised the urgent need of a solution to Ireland's waste management problems. I doubt that anyone would argue with this sentiment. The fact of the matter is that we are already paying for refuse collection.

That's what income tax is for! The reason we have a waste management problem in the first place is because of inadequate planning by successive governments. The government receives funds from the taxpayer to manage the country's infrastructure. Refuse collection is, and always has been, financed in this way. If the government needs extra funds it may redirect funds from elsewhere, or, indeed, increase taxes. This would not win many votes... The Chinese word for 'crisis' is the same as their word for 'opportunity'. The government has used this crisis as an opportunity to exact an extra taxation from the public.

'The Chinese word for 'crisis' is the same as their word for 'opportunity'. The government has used this crisis as an opportunity to exact an extra taxation from the public. They hope to solve a problem and manage to avoid unpopularity by not having to raise income tax'

They hope to solve a problem and manage to avoid unpopularity by not having to raise income tax. Please remember that it is easier for a council, corporation or private company to raise fees than it is for the government to raise income tax.

People became prisoners of conscience because they don't want to allow a dangerous precedent to be set. The danger the protesters have recognised is that if we pay for this service separately then the government may use councils etc. to charge for other services also paid for through income tax. The protesters may not have spent much time in prison but they may still have jeopardised their jobs, travel freedom etc., and I'm sure that some of them left frightened and worried children at home. If people were not so brainwashed and apathetic there would be feet pounding the street outside Leinster House.

There is a theory that if a household has to pay for refuse collection, the same household will become more conscientious about the amount of waste it produces. This is not strictly the case. On the road I grew up on in Dublin, every Tuesday morning a line of wheelie bins awaits collection. One may walk up and down this road and very few bins will be overflowing. So, the only

difference between the pre-bin tax scenario and now is the uniformity of the bins. The waste has not been reduced even though now the corporation requires an extra payment for collection of the same amount of waste. 'Producer pays' indeed.

Some people may be inclined to side with the bin tax advocates because of the environmentally sound green bins. The green bins - intended for recyclable waste - are collected free of charge in my hometown. If households are separating their recyclable and non-recyclable waste, then surely there is less waste going into the regular (landfill) wheelie bins. Therefore it follows that the householder is actually expected to pay more for less landfill-bound waste. I accept the point that the recycle bin service must be paid for, but the crisis is caused by the non-recyclable waste. It is this waste, or rather the question of what to do with it, that the government uses to justify the extra fee.

It is not enough to object to this unjust and devious 'solution' and not acknowledge that the problem remains. The problem demands imagination and discussion between concerned and expert parties. The onus is on the government to research the best possible answer to waste management. After all, if they had actually managed waste issues properly in the first place they would not have to rely on a crisis management solution now. Corporate society must also be made to play its part. A culture of habitual recycling must be established, perhaps by introducing a compulsory programme in schools and colleges whereby the students and staff play a direct role in the waste management of each particular institution. These solutions may not solve our short-term urgent waste management problem, but it was short-term answers that got us into this situation in the first place.

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FORUM MAGAZINE

Turning a blind eye

"They burst in the door. Knocked me off my feet...They said they had a warrant...One of them grabbed me by my arm, pulled it behind my back. Handcuffed me...Pulled me by the chain of the handcuffs into the living room. Proceeded to swing me around like a rag doll...He hit me in the chest with his knee...This caused me to be winded. I couldn't catch my breath...Another one punched me in the back of the head. At that stage I must have lost consciousness...I woke up in the back of a car. I could hardly breathe. I was shaking uncontrollably. My fingers had gone numb because the handcuffs were on so tight. I couldn't breathe because there was [one of them] sitting on top of me...They caught the chains and pulled me out of the car. I landed on the ground. I was on my back. One of them moved my head with his foot. Then he put his foot on my throat. 'Ah,' he said, joking to the others, 'I think he's still alive.'"

This mistreatment at the hands of a national police force did not occur in some far off dictatorship. It occurred in Ireland. They are the words of Meath man, Christian Coates, as recently told to RTE's Prime Time. Mr Coates sued the Gardai and received €29,000 in an out-of-court settlement.

Prime Time highlighted several other similar incidences of Garda brutality. Common to all these cases was that ordinary people lawfully going about their business were arrested and subjected to assault by Gardai. In some cases, compensation was later awarded. In all cases, including Mr Coates', no disciplinary action was taken against the Gardai involved.

This is not unusual. Professor Dermot Walsh, author of 'The Irish Police', points out that no individual Garda has ever been criminally convicted on the basis of a complaint made by a citizen, despite the fact that in the last six years the Gardai have had to pay out €7 million of taxpayers' money in compensation. Official figures show that the Gardai are currently facing almost 100 civil actions over assault, unlawful arrest and other breaches of citizens' rights.

There are twelve thousand Gardai in the Twenty-Six counties. Any reasonable person would accept that in any organisation of this size there will always be a 'few bad apples'. But what Prime Time highlighted, and what republicans have known for years, is that the problem of Garda brutality and corruption is not confined to a few errant individuals.

Perhaps this was inevitable. Since the foundation of the state, the Gardai have been used by the political elite as a weapon against republicans and other opponents. The quid pro quo for this was unswerving loyalty by politicians to the Force. In the 1970s, this meant a blind eye being turned to the Heavy Gang's practice of bru-

talising republicans (and others), fabricating evidence and committing perjury. Many of today's most senior Gardai owe their rank and careers to such activities. It is hardly surprising that they now turn a blind eye to similar practices carried out by the next generation of Gardai.

Two years ago, the Minister for Justice, Michael McDowell, promised that a Garda Ombudsman would be set up. Minister McDowell said that the Ombudsman would be 'fully independent' and 'fully resourced'.

But will it? The Ombudsman in the Six Counties has a staff of 125 and an annual budget of over €11 million. The Garda Complaints Board, which has to represent nearly three times the population of the North, has a staff of only 20 and a miserly budget of €1.2 million. Worse, the powers of the Southern Ombudsman will be nowhere near as effective as its Northern counterpart. For instance, in the North, the Ombudsman can turn up at any police station at any time and launch an investigation. In the South, the Ombudsman will have to give Gardai forty-eight hours notice. (Plenty of time for miscreant Gardai to destroy or tamper with evidence.) The Northern Ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan, stated that such constraints would be completely unacceptable to her.

Not all Gardai are bad. Obviously. But the Prime Time documentary, focusing on only a couple of Dublin Garda stations, showed that the problem is far from being insignificant. As well as tales of Gardai assaulting citizens in our capital city, in recent years we have had the shooting dead of several people in dubious circumstances, evidence of massive Garda corruption in Donegal, senior Gardai committing perjury in the trials of Colm Murphy and Paul Ward, and many other examples of serious wrongdoing. A former circuit court judge, Anthony Murphy, stated on Prime Time, that he suspected that on many occasions Gardai perjured themselves in his court. The evidence is clear: as an organisation An Garda Síochana is institutionally corrupt.

The Garda response to the Prime Time programme was predictably arrogant: They denied there was any breakdown in discipline and insisted that the correct way to deal with any Garda wrongdoing was through the existing internal discipline code. (The same code that in one recent year resulted in only two Gardai being disciplined out of two thousand complaints.) The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, also expressed his confidence in the existing Garda complaints procedure.

Justice is supposed to be blind. Our politicians are not. It's time the Gardai were made to obey the law.

New Website Launched

The newly launched New Republican Forum website provides access to a range of online services for Irish republicans, including a news service, the Irish Republican Information Bureau; online copies of Forum Magazine; information on Irish history, politics and political prisoners; along with photo galleries, book reviews and a prisoner craft shop.

www.newrepublicanforum.ie

Letters and articles can be sent to Forum Magazine at:

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

Biggles' revenge - rise of the sky marshals

By Richard Whyte

Pilot organisations throughout Europe have been expressing increasing concern about a new requirement by the U.S. government for armed guards to travel on some transatlantic flights. The Irish airline pilot association wanted assurances that the captain of an aircraft will remain in overall command of the flight. To date no decision has been taken on the issue in Ireland. Airlines across Europe and Africa have vowed to cancel flights rather than comply with US demands to carry armed marshals on some US bound flights.

So who are these armed air marshals? In fact they are not a new phenomenon. They have been on US commercial airlines for more than 40 years. The late President John F. Kennedy, who was concerned by the growing threat of hijacking, set up the sky marshal programme in 1961. President Richard Nixon boosted the numbers of marshals and in 1974 gave responsibility for the service to the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration). President Ronald Reagan then again increased the numbers after the hijacking of TWA flight 987 in June 1985.

In 1987 the US air sky marshal service had 400 marshals working on planes, with a brief to disarm potential armed hijackers. Prior to the September 11th 2001 attacks the number of marshals had declined to just 33. The American authorities will not confirm the actual amount of marshals operating now, but the figure is somewhere in the thousands. These marshals are not put on planes to react to specific threats, but placed entirely at random to act as a deterrent. In theory a passenger will never know if a marshal is on the flight or not.

Marshals take a seven-week course at a training academy in Artesia, New Mexico. A four-week course at a specialist air marshal-training centre in Atlantic City, New Jersey follows this. The typical day of an air marshal is spent 30,000 feet in the air protecting 200 passengers with no back up. If anything happens they have to respond, resolve the situation, make arrests and get the aircraft safely to the ground. They have to be constantly observant, looking for unusual activity while being careful not to be observed.

However other countries' schemes for air marshals appear to be heading for difficulties. Pilots are reluctant to have marshals on board because that would signify there was a threat to the passengers. Under a British

plan, some 24 air marshals would be deployed only on flights where there was significant intelligence of a potential threat. Pilot associations have argued that it would be of little consolation to know an armed guard was aboard when there were potential suicide bombers sitting alongside the marshals. The pilots say they would not fly if they found there was a threat to lives, pitching airlines into a clash with the Government over implementing the scheme.

The worldwide general public, too, is concerned with the idea of armed men pro-

theories why the flights were cancelled posits that the airline could have refused to allow an armed sky marshal onto their service.

The question concerning most people of course is: is it safe to fire a gun on a plane? The answer it seems is yes and no. Worries that sky marshals might bring down a commercial airline by blowing a hole in the fuselage are largely unwarranted. The marshals will be carrying side arms that will fire a "slow" bullet. The idea is that the bullet is not going fast enough to penetrate the skin of an aircraft but fast enough to pene-



trate human flesh. Firstly, the bullet has a smaller firing charge, so it leaves the barrel much more slowly than that of a regular bullet. Slow bullets also differ from those used by police and armies in that they are not encased in a copper sleeve - a 'full metal jacket' - which holds the bullet together, and they have hollow tips. This means slow bullets deform on impact, losing energy as they do so, making them more likely to get lodged in the target rather than penetrating it. That's the theory. Many people believe that if the fuselage of the aircraft is penetrated the plane will de-pressurise and peo-

ple will be sucked out through a 9mm hole. This is untrue. To cause any serious damage, the stray shot would have to take out the hydraulic system, making it next to impossible for the pilot to land safely. A one in a million shot. Basically, as long as the gun is not pointing at you when it goes off, you should be fine.

As a pilot myself I believe that the onus is on the pilot to maintain overall command. The pilot must be able to control the marshal with regards to deployment and use. Relinquishing command to the marshal could be detrimental to the safety of passengers, whether it is from a nervous marshal or an over-enthusiastic marshal. Remember the attacks on the twin towers in New York happened not because there were no marshals on the flight but because there was lax security on internal US flights. Many other questions arise from the use of marshals like: what if the potential hijacker is wearing body armour? what if he hasn't slow bullets in his gun? what are the contingencies for the hijacking of a freighter aircraft? The issue of sky marshals remains contentious across Europe. So far only Virgin Atlantic in the UK has agreed to let sky marshals on its planes. Whether or not the policy is a success remains to be seen.

Inside Guantanamo Bay

By Malcolm Kerins

It is now two years since the Guantánamo Bay prison camp opened. Its sole purpose is to hold people seized in the so-called 'war on terror', and who are defined by the Bush administration as enemy combatants rather than prisoners of war. Many of those held captive are believed to be innocent of any involvement in al-Qaeda or other like-minded organisations. They were simply unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. While disturbing images of Camp Delta's manacled detainees in their orange jumpsuits provoked international outrage, the real horror that the detainees face is not the physical hardship and torture, it is the threat of infinite confinement without trial or access to legal representation.

Getting out of this US military detention centre, situated on the coast of Cuba, is as great a mystery as the place itself. Escape would be a considerable task. A joint US military task force runs the detainee operation on the 117-sq-km prison base. There is stringent security with constant perimeter patrols by infantry squads in battle dress carrying full battle equipment. Visitors to the prison camp are thoroughly searched before they are allowed anywhere near the cellblocks.

Getting out legally isn't much easier. There are an estimated 660 detainees from 44 different countries held in the camp. The prisoners cannot challenge their arrests, talk to a lawyer, or even plead their cases in a court of law. This is because the US government denies that these prisoners have legal rights, which is of course a gross infringement of their human rights. The US government argues that it can act in this way because the prisoners are not US citizens, and the base, while under US control, is not on American soil. (Guantánamo Bay has been leased from Cuba since 1903 for 2,000 gold coins a year, \$4,085 in today's money). Therefore, these 660 detainees have no voice, and because the US has never explained case by case why these people are incarcerated, the outside world has only the accounts of their families and the very weak definition given by the US of 'enemy combatant' to understand why they are being held.

In desperation many prisoners have taken desperate measures. According to military officials, in the last 18 months there have been 32 suicide attempts. Reports from former detainees, those few

who have been lucky to be released, say that prisoners have made nooses out of clothes and bed sheets in an attempt to hang themselves from the cell bars. One former detainee told how a prisoner tried to slit his throat with a knife he had made from metal. Reports have shown that in the initial few weeks of Camp X-ray, which has now been renamed Camp Delta, the regime was even more brutal and harsher than it looked from the pictures broadcasted worldwide. The



new mental-health clinic on the base is usually close to full.

During this brutal early phase, there was very little tolerance for the practice of Islam. Prisoners were prohibited to speak to anyone; this included the calling of prayers or even praying. If someone dared to break these rules they would be gagged and beaten by the military prison guards. This situation gave prisoners no choice but to protest at their conditions. US officials at the camp have admitted hunger strikes did take place. In some cases prisoners were force-fed; however detainees have claimed that the staging of protests did achieve results. After a hunger strike of five days the no-talking rule was abolished, a loud speaker was put up in the camp to broadcast the call to prayer, more time than the original 10 minutes was given for meals, and Korans and other books were provided.

One problem that the US administration

finds with the Geneva Convention governing treatment of traditional prisoners of war is that it includes strict rules limiting interrogation. This does not suit their present purpose of extracting as much information as they can from prisoners in Guantánamo by any methods they choose; hence detainees are called 'enemy combatants,' which leaves them outside the protection of the Geneva Convention. Prisoners arrive in Guantánamo Bay fearful and with no idea as to how long they will be incarcerated for. The possibility of trial by a military tribunal and the procedures for doing so has not been properly tested yet. Every week close to half the detainees are brought in for interrogation sessions that may last up to 16 hours. One would not need to use much imagination to picture what brutality goes on behind closed doors.

All new inmates at Guantánamo start their stay in Camp Three, which is the highest security unit and is tighter than Two and One with Camp Four being the least restrictive. Cells are a mere 2m by 2.4m in size, with a squat-style toilet, a metal sink and a sleeping berth fixed to green steel-mesh walls. Only twice a week are detainees given 20 to 30 minutes to shower and exercise. Guards patrol the hall of each of the 48-cell units constantly so they can see each prisoner every 30 seconds. It has been claimed that wardens use drugs to control the inmates and give severe beatings as punishment for bad behavior; they can also be subjected to solitary confinement.

The Guantánamo Bay prisoners have no way of knowing what is happening in the outside world, or indeed what fate lies ahead for them. The only contact prisoners have, apart from the military guards and interrogators, is with officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross and with occasional visitors from the intelligence services and foreign ministries of their home countries. This is inhumane and unacceptable. All detainees should have access to a lawyer and to their families. Most importantly they should have access to some tribunal to learn the basis for them being kept in captivity. Pressure must be kept on the US government to give the captives of Guantánamo the basic human rights they and everyone else is entitled to under international law.

The New Republican Forum

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

The New Republican Forum:

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

Our aims are:

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

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