

# BORDERLINE

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## WHO IS TO BLAME?

### WE SAY.....

It is no great surprise that the tragedies of recent months have prompted a sustained propaganda offensive, directed against the IRA. Indeed it is the nature of the society in which we live that such tragedies will be exploited to the full by a mass media which thrives on human suffering. The greater the tragedy the bigger the headline, and better still if there are gorey photographs or film to make the story more juicy.

Neither the media, nor the political establishment gave a damn about those who suffered in the Enniskillen bombing, nor do they care about any of the other victims of violent death. Their sole concern is to manipulate such incidents for their own ends. And so, for the past several months our television screens have repeatedly featured the aftermath of the Enniskillen bomb, the school bus at Lisnaskea and the devastation of Killeen.

The main objective of this propaganda offensive is to undermine the morale of those who support the Republican Movement. The concentration on selective civilian deaths and hints of internal division amongst republican leaders are all part of this process. Ultimately, the message being conveyed is that the IRA is primarily responsible for the conflict and deaths of the past 20 years.

It is then important that we remember who really is to blame. We should recall who imposed division between the people of this island and who has maintained that division for its own strategic self-interest. Blame for the tragedy that engulfs us all rests with successive British governments. Unlike their legislative and military inter-

ference ends, there can never be peace in Ireland. Only when Britain withdraws will the Irish people as a whole be able to establish a peaceful democracy.

The IRA is simply a response to British injustice. It is a volunteer army of ordinary Irishmen and women who have dared to challenge one of the world's most powerful and sophisticated armies. Where its enemies have limitless resources at their disposal, the IRA has had to rely on guerrilla tactics, hitting the enemy where and when it can.

It is the British government which deliberately placed the UDR and RUC in the frontline of its war against the IRA. It did so because it believes that locals are more expendable than regular British soldiers. Because of that cynical decision, armed soldiers by night work as farmers and schoolbus drivers by day, but they are always armed and they are always soldiers. That is why they are targeted by the IRA. The UDR and the RUC know this and so they use their families, their communities and even schoolchildren to shield them from attack, just as British army foot patrols give sweets to children in nationalist housing estates to ensure that they will stay close and give them protection.

Unlike conventional armies whose governments sanction the annihilation of civilian targets it is acknowledged, even by its enemies, that the

IRA takes special care to avoid civilian casualties. Indeed, it is their success in this regard which has made the tragedies of recent months stand out in stark contrast.

But war is a bloody and awful affair and, even where the greatest care is taken, there will be mistakes and civilians will die. The only people to gain from such deaths are the British and their allies, so it is ludicrous to suggest that they are part of any deliberate IRA strategy. When civilian deaths do occur as a result of IRA operations, none are more critical than republicans themselves. The IRA admits its mistakes and apologises for them, unlike the British who resort to cover-ups.

Because of its perseverance, the IRA has ensured that Britain cannot ignore its injustices in the North. Because of the IRA the Stormont regime collapsed. Because of the IRA British governments are constantly being forced to adopt new strategies, until only one strategy - withdrawal - remains. How long that takes depends on the ability of the nationalist people to withstand repression and propaganda. It depends on our religious and political leaders making a decision not to be used by Britain, as they have been since the Hillsborough Accord. And most of all it depends on the strength of our belief that only national freedom and unity can end the tragedy once and for all.

# IT CAN BE DONE

When I first met Seamus in County Monaghan in 1977 he looked so young that you wouldn't consider bringing him on active service. Indeed, a few years later he admitted faking his age to get into the IRA. By that stage we were well aware of the exceptional qualities which this young man possessed. From an early age he had resolved to dedicate his life to ending centuries of tyranny and injustice. He was a man of one allegiance only and was not troubled by any doubt as to the morality of the methods he chose to adopt.

In 1978, when he was 18 years old, Seamus left home to live a life on the run amongst his people and supporters in Monaghan and Fermanagh. He quickly gained an intimate knowledge of country roads, often going into an area for the first time and knowing its features from the prior study of a map. I often felt that he knew Fermanagh better than the Fermanagh people themselves. At meetings he was a man of few words; any he spoke meant intended actions.

Operating with various active service units, Seamus soon became a fearless soldier. Faced with a problem which others would fail to resolve, his famous words were 'It can be done'. This confidence and enthusiasm was an inspiration to his fellow Volunteers. After many successful operations, the name of Seamus McElwain was top of the enemy hate-list. British soldiers were known to have carried a photo of him on the butts of their rifles.

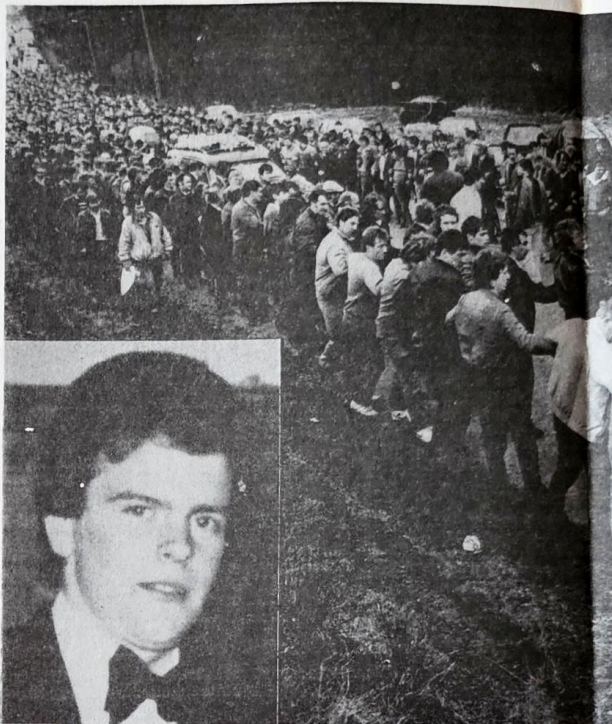
Only those closest to Seamus knew his personal characteristics. He seldom talked of ordinary life and was quite shy though highly intelligent. He had little problem refraining from social activities, such as dances, though he did enjoy a few drinks and a good party. He looked forward to an occasional cigar and as much chocolate as you could carry to him. Such

were the few luxuries in the life of a young man who could, if he had wished, have walked away from it all and made a comfortable career for himself.

His activities didn't go unnoticed by the State forces South of the border. They harassed him continuously on sight and arrested him several times. Following one such arrest in 1979, he was badly beaten by gardai in Clones Barracks. He spent a few weeks in Portlaoise Jail on a charge of IRA membership, but was released. He was captured again in 1981 while on active service with comrades in the Roslea area. When I heard the news that Saturday evening I thought that his role as a republican activist would be terminated for the duration of this struggle.

After about a year on remand in Crumlin Road Jail, Seamus was sentenced to a recommended 30 year term of imprisonment by Judge McDermott, the same tyrant who sentenced me nearly 6 years later. When news came over the airwaves late on Sunday afternoon, September 25th 1983, that an escape had occurred from Long Kesh, my hopes were that Seamus was amongst the escapees. He was, and within two weeks I was again to meet the man jailed for 30 years who had only stayed 30 months. During our reunion, he pulled out a map of Fermanagh and said:

## REMEMBERING SEAMUS



The funereal cortage of Seamus McElwain, as it approaches

Although it is now two years since his death on April 26th 1986, Seamus McElwain is a living part of the struggle for national liberation. Even before his death at the hands of SAS mercenaries near Roslea, he was a hate figure in the eyes of the British establishment. But who was this man from Knockacullion, near Scotstown, County Monaghan? How had he risen to such prominence at so early an age? Was he the 'mindless terrorist' depicted by the establishment media? In the following two articles, the life of Seamus McEl-

'Where do we start?' I found him to have the same personality as before but with more foresight and a broader vision of the struggle. He had used his period in prison to study and reflect on the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare. He saw the need to involve the people in the struggle and recognised that arms alone wouldn't bring victory.

Above all, Seamus saw that a strong organisation with a disciplined strategy would be needed. This st-

ategy would include raising the war to a new level. He recognised women as equals on active service, and put this belief into practice. He travelled widely, often walking ten or fifteen miles at night to meet comrades. At just 23 years of age, Seamus was a veteran of the struggle, totally respected by all those who kept and helped him on the run. In return he always valued their support and treated it with the utmost respect.

He was an impressive, dig-

## SEAMUS McELWAIN



roached Urbleshanney Chapel Inset - Seamus McElwain

wain is recalled by two of those closest to him. The first is written by Fermanagh man Sean Lynch who was with Seamus on the night he died and who, despite being critically wounded himself, escaped from the immediate scene of the SAS ambush and survived to relate that Seamus had been captured alive and had been tortured before being shot dead. Our second article is written by Brendan (Bik) McFarlane who recounts the role which Seamus played in the H-Block escape on September 25th 1983.

nified, sincere and understanding soldier, always showing great attention to young and inexperienced Volunteers, and ready to make allowances for difficult circumstances. On the other hand, he was intolerant of slackness or negligence.

Seamus McElwain was murdered by agents of British Imperialism, individuals whose minds didn't contain any thoughts for the oppressed, paid mercenaries who fight wars for the real terrorists

of this world - Thatcher, Reagan and Co. Seamus, in contrast, was an outstanding revolutionary who set the struggle above everything in life and finally above his own life. It was an honour to serve the same cause and to stand by his side to that fatal hour when he died. There is much more which can be said and written but the full story of IRA Volunteer Seamus McElwain will have to wait until the day of victory to be told.

Sean Lynch

## JUST ANOTHER OPERATION

I first met Seamus in the wake of the 1981 hunger-strike, at a time of continuing struggle to realise complete political segregation in the prison. Our successes in various fields of protest activity opened new avenues for republican prisoners - opportunities for education and politicisation were to the fore, as was the burning desire to demolish totally the H-Block's reputation as 'Europe's most secure prison'. It was this latter subject which occupied the thoughts of quite a few, amongst them Seamus.

He was to be at the core of such activity and was always ready to take on responsibility for the most difficult, and often most hazardous, tasks. Seamus had a shy demeanour, an unassuming character with a degree of politeness rarely found amongst tough, battle scarred, young republicans. Yet, despite his shyness, he had a hyper-active mind, continuously analysing, questioning and reasoning.

An in-depth analysis of our escape strategy by Seamus didn't simply stop at our breaking through the security perimeter; neither did it end at reaching a safe base. For Seamus this was simply the beginning of a process, in itself a major coup but, in the context of the wider struggle for freedom, just another operation which would help bring final victory that little bit closer.

Seamus played an important part in securing H-Block 7 on September 25th 1983, in terms of both the sound advice he had given in the weeks beforehand and in the active role he played on the day itself. But it was during the arduous and dangerous slog through the fields and rivers Southwards that he displayed the qualities which distinguish the exceptional from the average. His wealth of experience from operating in country lanes and hedgerows was to prove vital for the survival of the small unit of eight

Volunteers who took to the fields with him that Sunday night.

He was meticulous in studying our intended route, working with a small and none too detailed map, and displayed tremendous confidence as he led off at the head of our unit. During the following days he was a constant source of encouragement for men with weary limbs, urging them ever onwards. His rural knowledge at times seemed uncanny, but it is beyond question that it was his tact and experience which were the major factors in ensuring that his comrades reached safety. For this he quite deservedly earned the respect and total admiration of each one of us.

It's two years now since he fell and yet the sense of loss I feel is as great today as it was when I first heard the tragic news. Reflecting on his life I still feel immense sadness at losing a dear friend and a dedicated republican soldier. I believe that his value to the struggle for liberation was incalculable.

Seamus McElwain was, indeed, a talented young man with tremendous vision and understanding. Completely selfless, he threw himself, body and soul, into the struggle for his people's freedom. He fully realised the necessity for armed struggle against the occupying forces and made every possible effort

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## LISNASKEA BOMB

On Wednesday, June 29th, the IRA in South Fermanagh carried out a booby-trap bomb attack on UDR soldier Ernie Wilson. Tragically, however, the device, which was attached to a school bus driven by Wilson, failed to detonate as intended and a number of schoolchildren were injured. In a statement claiming responsibility for the attack the IRA said:

*'We regret the injuries caused to the schoolchildren on the bus. The target was the UDR driver. The tilt-switch device was planted in the engine compartment of the vehicle and set to go off as soon as the bus moved off.'*

A further statement from Fermanagh Sinn Fein also extended sympathy to the injured and to their families. The statement went on to call on the Western Education Board to cease employing bus drivers who are members of the UDR or RUC.

## Owen Carron Hearing

The extradition hearing against Owen Carron has been put back until October 6th. The former MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone is one of several Northern republicans awaiting extradition to British 'justice'. He is being detained in Portlaoise Jail along with H-Block escapee, Robert Russell who is due to be handed over to the RUC on August 27th unless the Fianna Fail government is persuaded to change its mind. An anti-extradition lobby within the Fianna Fail party has called on party members to contact them through the National anti-Extradition Committee, 29 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 (Tel. 366389) or to phone Nora Comiskey at (01) 202019.

Locally, a rally is to take place at Moybridge, on the Monaghan/Tyrone border this Saturday, August 6th at 2.30 pm. A major demonstration will be held in Monaghan town on August 13th.

## Release Call Rejected

A unanimous call by members of Clones Urban District Council for the release of

local prisoners from Portlaoise Jail, has been turned down by Fianna Fail Justice Minister, Gerry Collins.

The Clones prisoners were jailed more than 14 years ago for their alleged involvement in the killing of Senator Billy Fox. They have already served twice the average life sentence, which is seven years, and one of their number, Michael Kinsella, has been imprisoned in Dundrum Psychiatric Hospital since his health broke down several years ago.

It was against this background, and the release earlier this year of Private Ian Thain by the British government, that Clones UDC sent a delegation to Leinster House to urge the government to give the prisoners a release date.

The Minister's rejection of their appeal has angered councillors of all parties and a further application may be made. Councillor Fintan MacPhillips summed up the view of the meeting when he said that the prisoners are being held as political hostages.

## Reavey Appeal Fails

An appeal by Clones man Hugo Reavey against his exclusion from Britain has been rejected by the British Home Office. Mr Reavey was one of several people expelled from Britain in March after several days detention under the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act. Back in Dublin Hugo Reavey appealed the decision to exclude him at a hearing in the British Embassy. Since then he has been informed that his appeal was rejected, although no grounds were given.

Mr Reavey has dismissed the appeal proceedings as a 'sham exercise' adding that he has no confidence in British justice.

## British Soldier Shot

A British soldier was shot in an IRA sniper attack on Kilturk military checkpoint, between Newtownbutler and Clones, on Thursday May 19th. Despite extensive follow-up activity by Crown Forces in the area, there was no official acknowledgement that an attack had taken place until after an IRA statement was reported on radio next day. RUC failure to report the attack to the media, and their subsequent denial that a soldier had been hit, are seen as part of a cover-up of the incident.

## Scots Regiment

Within days of the Kilturk shooting, the Light Infantry Regiment which had been stationed in South Fermanagh, was withdrawn and replaced by a Scots Regiment. This has already been involved in several controversial incidents, including a serious assault on Roslea man, Con Quigley. Sinn Fein in Newtownbutler has also warned of increased harassment by the Scots soldiers and has urged people to report such incidents when they occur.

## UDR BIGOTRY

The bigotry of UDR soldiers in South Fermanagh has been demonstrated once again, this time by Dessie Humphries and his colleagues from Ballindarragh near Lisnaskea. While patrolling Lisnaskea on July 12th, Humphries' unit taunted Catholics with a childish verse which ran:

*'F... the Pope and Pat O'Hara,  
We're the boys from Ballindarragh.'  
Someday they're bound to grow up,  
but there again maybe they won't!*

## Extra Service Charges

Additional service charges have been imposed on people in rural areas of County Monaghan. Charges for sewage and waste disposal which were forced through Monaghan County Council by the Fianna Fail majority against the combined votes of all other councillors, have been received by householders in County Council controlled villages. Initially half yearly demands for £40 are due to be followed in September by a second demand for a further £40.

## Donagh Parade Verdict

At the end of a long and costly court battle, 43 Fermanagh nationalists were found guilty of taking part in an 'illegal' Easter parade in Donagh last year. A further nine people were acquitted of the charge which was brought under the Public Order legislation introduced early last year. All of the convicted were given a conditional discharge for a year. The trial cost £50,000 of taxpayers money to conduct.

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to raise the level of armed resistance to a point where the enemy would truly feel the pain. It was in pursuing this end that he was to meet a tragic and untimely death.

Although diminished by the death of one of Ireland's finest and most dedicated revolutionary soldiers, we take courage from his example and commitment. We must

strive earnestly to redouble our own efforts in challenging the tyranny of foreign domination and occupation. It is a hard road to freedom - Seamus passed along it and so must we

all. We remember him as a very dear friend, a true comrade and a true son of Ireland.

Bik