

Fourthwrite

For a democratic socialist Irish republic

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Editorial

No never no more

The Provos are no more. Each and every step has been taken to ensure that the organisation no longer has an armed and offensive capacity. Over several years it has promised to abide by cease-fires, commit itself to exclusively peaceful and democratic means and now, in an unprecedented step for Irish republicans, surrendered its arsenal. Only those with an agenda such as the DUP could even begin to pretend that the events verified by General John de Chastelain in September 2005 signals anything other than the definitive end of a once powerful insurrectionary army.

There are those who will view this finale as a betrayal without stopping to examine the underlying reasons for why it proved so simple to do in the long run. Everyone is entitled to an opinion but ignoring crucial factors is usually counterproductive. Decommissioning was possible because most republicans - and especially the northerners - just did not want a return to war. That was and is the key factor that all members and supporters of the Sinn Fein party agree on and republican opponents of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness simply play to the pair's strongest hand when they attack their anti-war policies.

James Connolly once wrote scathingly of what he described as the 'physical force party'. He said that its adherents were not at all sure about which political, social and economic policies they wished to promote but agreed unanimously that the use of physical force was the only way to achieve these ends. Strangely, modern Sinn Fein demonstrates a twist to this position as they also flounder over policy but unanimously reject the armed option.

The Provos may offer a host of reasons for dissolving but in reality, all that needs saying is that at the end of the day nobody wanted to continue the fight. That, when sensible people think about it, is a perfectly good reason. One difficulty though is that at no stage in this long and complex process, did the Provos actually offer us a true and accurate assessment of what they planned to do and why it was being done.

Many of the decisions they have taken are perfectly rational and justifiable. The war was heading towards petering out in a self-destructive defeat and ending it was a wise step. Breaking thereafter with armed insurrection was, at the very least, a logical step for a movement anxious to progress in parliamentary politics.

A major difficulty though, is that it is next to impossible to believe anything the movement tells us. It is not that the movement has performed an extraordinary series of U-turns since it abandoned abstentionism in 1986. Fundamental changes have often to be made but why should every significant one be denied until it becomes a *fait accompli*. It is pointless listing the number of about-turns but they were numerous.

This magazine does not engage in 'I told you so' silliness. One question that should be asked though is; In light of Sinn Fein credibility problems, can we believe it when it says that it will remain committed in a meaningful way to achieving a 32 County democratic and socialist Irish republic?

Robbing with a fountain pen

Woody Guthrie famously sang that there are some who rob you with a revolver and some with a fountain pen. Reading the latest report from the controller general in the Republic, it is obvious that Woody could write the same words today. Privatised tollgates that are making enormous profits for the companies granted the franchise and computer systems for voting that don't work are only two of the obvious rip-offs. The biggest discrepancy of all, however, centred around the huge payment by the Department of Justice to a farmer in North County Dublin for a site on which to build a new prison. Michael McDowell is the minister responsible and is a member of the PDs, a party that delights in claiming to be the party of financial rectitude etc. It just goes to show what power does.

Assessment

The Provo's last general

The Provisional IRA completed its long surrender on Monday with the public announcement by a British Government appointed commission that they have de-commissioned their arsenal of weapons. The day was a long time coming and was no surprise to those of us who have watched the Provisional Movement, both army and political wings, move from revolutionary politics and armed struggle to constitutional nationalism.

It was however a sad day for those of us who respect and remember all the friends and comrades who begged, borrowed and stole to get those weapons and those who hid them, moved them and used them in the name of the Irish Republic. The armed struggle was possible and was sustained because of popular, widespread support for the principle of a socialist, democratic Republic and what that could deliver for the ordinary people who were involved. Yes, people had very different reasons for getting involved and their vision of what they believed the Republic would deliver often differed widely but they were united in a belief that to fight, kill and die for the Republic was necessary and was the right thing to do. Not since the War of Independence had it been possible to sustain and wage a successful armed struggle because there had never been enough popular support for a war against British Rule in Ireland. The 1970's changed that.

However, the waging of an armed struggle with the reality of the pain and grief that it causes for all involved can only ever be a tactic in the overall political strategy of Republicanism or indeed any revolutionary movement. The elevation of the armed struggle to an end in itself that occurred within the Provisional movement from the mid 1970's onwards meant that the eventual surrender of arms and all Republican political ideals was inevitable. The closing down of argument and debate about the tactic of armed struggle also meant the closing down of debate about the overall trajectory of the Provisional movement and its political beliefs and ideals. Therefore, the argument since the 1980's has been about how to manage the armed struggle and still gain mass electoral support rather than whether the political ideal of a socialist, democratic Republic would ever be achievable without revolutionary action.

The Provisional movement opted for mass constitutional electoral support and to work within the state for a united Ireland like many of their predecessors and abandoned the Republic. The main feelings we are left with are sorrow for the death of a mass popular movement for revolutionary change and trepidation at the long road ahead in attempting to build a new revolutionary movement with popular support. The good thing is the Provisional Movement, both army and political wing, are finally off the stage as a movement with Republican beliefs and principles – it is over for them and we must deal with them as any other state sponsored “political party”. No nostalgia, no comradely nods and winks and no more credence to be given to their analysis than any other contemporary party. The job of Republicans now is to continue to analyse and debate the relevance of Republican politics in the 21st Century and on that basis to build a new revolutionary social movement. We must not make the mistakes of the past but must encourage open and heated debate on all the issues of the day and use a Republican analysis to decide how to resolve those issues.

We can remember our friends and comrades and their families, especially the women who faced the reality of their beliefs in the hardship and pain of their everyday lives and who never faltered. The most significant memorial for all of us will be the message that the belief in the Republic is not dead and that there are those who will continue to hold that belief and who will work for the formation of that Socialist, Democratic Republic.

Setting the Provos in context

By Tommy McKearney

As the Provos passed tamely into history last month, there was a remarkably thin analysis of the reasons for their prolonged existence. Most commentators opted instead, to list their many atrocities and review P. O'Neill's era from the standpoint of moral theologians. Tony Blair's ability to divorce cause and outcome apparently has an echo in Ireland when learned commentators discuss aspects of the northern conflict.

At the core of the issue lies the question of what constituted an appropriate response to a flagrant denial of democratic rights. The northern state created in 1920 was a corrupt and anti-democratic entity. Its rulers resisted every attempt at reform by peaceful means and employed lethal, repressive force to do so. The essential dynamic that propelled the Provo campaign was not an irredentist, nationalistic passion for Irish unity. What sustained the lengthy IRA offensive was its members and supporters experience of the Stormont regime and subsequently, the inability of London to establish an adequate, acceptable replacement.

Breaking out of this quagmire of reaction, and ending partition and the union were not two mutually exclusive concepts. Nor did simultaneously holding the two ideas contradict traditional republicanism. Improving governance has been at the heart of Irish republicanism for generations and the battle to end London's influence was seen by the Provos more as a means of regime change than answering a mythical call from Roisin Dubh.

Sunningdale, with its promise of a new era through power-sharing came along and for a brief few months it was indeed possible to claim that the Provos had outlived their time. The inescapable fact, though, is that it wasn't the Provos who demolished Brian Faulkner's parliament in 1974. That initiative was wrecked by the Ulster Workers Council strike, supported by Ian Paisley and a majority of the unionist electorate refusing to accept nationalist participation in Northern Ireland's administration. Ominously too, from a nationalist perspective, the UWC strike met ineffective resistance from Britain's Labour government or its army. Hardly a finger was lifted to stop a unionist coup by the very powers that had shown no lack of enthusiasm when dealing with trouble in nationalist areas across the 6-Counties.

When the republican base – never less than 30% of the nationalist population and probably greater if friendly neutrality is considered, as the Vietnamese General Nguyen Giap always advised – surveyed the post-UWC scene, there was little to persuade them to dissolve. An undeniable improvement in the allocation of public sector housing, coupled with the start of a process to weed out discrimination in employment (that thirty years later would not have eradicated all discrepancies) had begun. Good but hardly enough to compensate for the absence of any meaningful say in the management of public affairs in a society that resented their very presence.

Rejected by unionism and meeting with indifference from London, the Provo's might have looked south for comfort. It would have been a long and fruitless wait if they had. At the onset of the northern troubles in 1969, Dublin made it clear that it would even imprison cabinet ministers rather than allow the most basic means of self-defence go northwards. There then followed special legislation to ensure that nobody else in the Republic would break the embargo while censorship was applied ruthlessly to make certain that the Provos were seen as the only real problem "up there in the north".

It was 1985 and the Anglo-Irish Agreement, before any significant effort was made to resist unionist efforts at stifling a political project designed to address the "nationalist nightmare". That agreement, incidentally, might have had a bigger impact on the Provo base if the taoiseach of the day hadn't said so often that it had been designed to undermine Sinn Fein. Significantly, though, it persuaded Gerry Adams to explore the possibility of ending the armed campaign. Was the IRA response, though, disproportionate to the injury suffered? The question has no easy answer since there is no moral scale to measure the amount of injustice necessary to justify a community's resort to arms. A community isolated from its neighbours to the south, unwanted by its neighbours in the north, deprived of any influence over its day-to-day affairs and all of this maintained by military might. Given these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that it felt entitled to use force.

That this campaign sometimes descended into terror was equally predictable. Terror, of the non-state variety, is generally the act of weak and desperate people. This does not justify its use but does beg a question that remains pertinent today – what drives a community to that extreme? The problem with an insurrection – and how else can it be described when

entire districts were in armed revolt against a government – is that it does not easily respond to fine-tuning or the received wisdom of others. The conditions that created a nightmare for northern nationalists generated passions and bloody-mindedness that took time to exhaust.

Viewing the Provos as a community in revolt rather than a hermetically sealed, secret society of gunmen and bombers is crucial to understanding the phenomena that has just ended. Understandably, some commentators condemn that community for resorting to arms and the manner in which it did. It is also reasonable to ask that they place those actions in context and even answer the Provo question, why British democracy proved itself so inadequate that a substantial number of those it governed conducted a prolonged and destructive campaign of violence.

The Political Police

By Anthony McIntyre

Walking down the Lower Falls's Albert Street en route to a relative's funeral a matter of days ago, a PSNI land rover passed alongside me cruising city ward. Even if the colour has changed from grey to white the distinctive whirr emitted by its engine has remained the same, letting you know it is in the vicinity before it comes into view. Before turning into McDonnell Street I paused to watch the vehicle as it stopped, the occupants disembark, spread out and begin to run. It is a familiar manoeuvre. The cops seek to surround the house they intend to call at in a bid to ensure nobody hotfoots it out the back or via other possible exit routes. In all probability it amounted to nothing more than chasing some sixteen year old for joy riding.

The British conservative philosopher, Roger Scruton has argued that 'law is constrained at every point by reality.' We may wonder then what strange reality was at play in interpreting the needs of the law in West Belfast. At a time when loyalists openly strut the streets of the North plying their murderous hate trade, the enforcers of the law were scrambling through Albert Street most definitely not in pursuit of loyalist petrol bombers. Catholic residents of Ahoghill are living in fear of their lives, Thomas Devlin is murdered on a mission to buy sweets, Protestant men are being gunned down in the street by the ceasefire UVF, chapels are under siege. The Albert Street sprint was so out of character with the PSNI sedentary stance in Garnerville last month when their eagerness to uphold the law being broken under their noses was insufficient to persuade them to dismount from their jeeps.

The UVF and UDA, in a rare display of unity, gathered to expel the families of a common opponent from their homes. Doubtless, included in the ranks of the mob were some who probably have been up to their necks in recent murders. Evening all – steady as she goes boys. Even those who are prepared to endorse the PSNI will find it hard to point to a comparable scene like played out in a nationalist community.

Since it was caught flatfooted by the Northern Bank robbery, the PSNI has faced a mounting credibility problem. It has been lambasted over its inability to curb the upsurge in armed attacks on cash security vans, and has taken flak for its violence on the streets of Derry in May. It caused controversy when one of its patrols knocked down and killed West Belfast man Jim McMenamin in June. Its less than robust response to the loyalist feud, and its failure to protect one section of the community from the type of attacks that have been carried out by hate mongers in Ahoghill, have raised the old spectre of a partisan police force. Deputy Chief Constable Paul Leighton's initial observations that sectarianism was not a factor in some of the attacks by Antrim bigots left observers exasperated.

While many nationalists would accept that the knife killers of Robert McCartney and those of Thomas Devlin inhabit the same moral universe, they must think they stand pretty much alone on the issue. The outcry over the Devlin murder has at no point approached the volume generated by the McCartney killing. There has been nothing like the same political and media attention and few expect the Devlin family to be guests at the White House. Many must hold genuine fears that the chances of the PSNI pursuing the killers of Thomas Devlin with maximum resolve must be slim.

These shortcomings are not the result of the PSNI being little other than a renamed RUC bringing with it all the sectarian baggage of yesteryear. All but the most traditional of republicans accept that the PSNI, while unquestionably a British police force, is a considerable improvement on the last British police force that London constructed for its difficult to manage offshore citizens. The malaise that afflicts the PSNI is more structural than attitudinal. Having picked up the 'primacy of the police' baton, it can do little else but slot into the traditional role of a British police force in the North of Ireland. It is the cutting edge of British state political strategy, and must police the peace process, every bit as much as the RUC policed the war. The imperatives and constraints of that process govern policing every bit as much as they do other areas of policy. Fudge, deceit, double standards and ambiguity prevail. The central policy question for the British is not 'what is just?' but 'who can we least risk upsetting?'

It doesn't matter in the slightest what the attitudes of individual PSNI members happen to be. It is not attitude but government policy that keeps them in their jeeps while murderous gangsters strut through Garnerville. A genuine policing approach would not

manifest itself in such a fashion. As ever, policing and the rule of law have been subverted in order that they may dovetail with the self serving political rule of the British state.

"What did our Danny die for?"

by Padraig Donohoe

After the ending of any conflict, be it the ending of the Anglo-Saxon War in 1921 or be it the present conflict people will ultimately ask the question - "what did 'our Danny' die for? The question is easier to ask than it is to obtain an answer; what 'Danny' died for. It's times like these that make people reflect and more so the people who have lost those close to them. Speaking as someone who has not had the misfortune of losing someone close to me in the struggle, it is also a time of reflection. One thought that constantly comes to mind is where do we go now?

It is easy to say that at certain junctures in Irish history we have had low times for republicanism and have come through it. But that may not always be the case and I would argue this is going to be the hardest time in Irish history for revolutionary republicanism to prosper into any kind of effective force in the Irish political scene. Drastic and ill-thought words perhaps but if you examine Irish history many will see the validity in that statement.

At all times in Irish history when republicanism burst into open revolt the conditions were there for conflict. High unemployment, the threat of conscription from Lloyd George and severe oppression from British forces on the ground were all factors in many signing up at various times to make a strike against Britain; can anyone say any of these factors exist in modern Ireland today?

To start with, the 26 Counties now has the lowest unemployment in the EU and is alleged by the Economist newspaper to have the highest standard of living in the world. Can anyone see the south rising up in like it did in the period 1918-1921? The people then had the imminent threat of conscription from Lloyd George to fight 'England's war' and the door to escape rampant poverty at the time was shut in their faces with immigration to the US and Britain banned while Britain was at war. Did people have anything to lose at the time? The difference between those times and today is black and white. People have too much of the good life to worry about the 'Black North' and even those who reject the Agreement know it and openly admit it. So it is left to the people of the 'good auld north' to carry the torch of revolutionary republicanism just as they did all those years. I'm afraid the situation, with close inspection, is just as bleak. Prior to the '69 progams there was very little history of revolutionary republicanism in the north. It is a myth peddled by many in the north that the Free Staters 'sold them out'. A harsh statement and one made by people ignorant to republicanism history in their region. Before the dramatic rise of Sinn Féin in 1918, John Redmonds IPP (Irish Parliamentary Party) dominated the political scene within Irish nationalism. This is a party that espoused Home Rule, a devolved Irish parliament with no legislative powers and Ireland still an integral part of the 'United Kingdom'.

When Britain gave the call for Irishmen to be conscripted to fight 'England's war', John Redmond was London's strongest ally in Ireland. When Britain suggested "temporary partition" (whatever that meant) for the 6 counties the IPP supported it, even their northern members - this was the dominant force in the 6 counties within the Nationalist community - republicanism was virtually non-existent.

The rise of Sinn Féin was on the cards in 1917 when they defeated the IPP in by-elections in the south, but in by-elections in the same period in the north proved difficult. They didn't come close to defeating the IPP, in fact they couldn't even put up local candidates in the northern areas because they had none! Republicanism was dead. Even with the anger that followed the executions of the 1916 Rising leaders, the north remained quiet. So the impression given by many today that the willing northerners fought while the Free Staters 'sold out' is totally false.

Everybody sold out, the northerners sold themselves out. The border campaign was a failure with no meaningful support coming from Nationalists, even with the Unionist misrule that existed against them at the time. It took a savage and direct attack on them to awaken them from their slumber and as one Belfast IRA commander once commented "they weren't fighting for Ireland, they were fighting for their streets". Now that a form of civil rights has been granted to Nationalists they have again accepted constitutional nationalism.

So with the conditions that exist today in Ireland, north and south, I say again now, more than any time in Irish history, republicanism will find it harder than ever to get out of the

slump. What is the alternative people ask? I doubt even God knows that. But at what time has republicans ever had the luxury of clear alternatives to choose from? Republicanism is a bit like walking in the dark; you walk about with your hands and arms out in hope of not getting knocked down and finding the light switch that brings salvation and right now that light switch seems distant.

What did 'Danny' die for? Actually, I'm not sure I can answer that.....

The “dis-loyal” working class

by Siobhan Ni Dhuibhir

I started this article before the events of the last week in Belfast where we saw serious rioting in loyalist areas and even loyalist paramilitaries shooting at the police and army. However, the main questions I was trying to address are still as relevant after those events as they were before. What is it about Loyalism and Unionism that ensures that they see their cup always as half empty rather than half full? How will the Loyalist working class organise and politicise themselves when their old enemy is no more and the British state no longer needs their loyalty? What will it mean for them to be no more than an inner city working class in the 21st Century?

The disenfranchisement and disillusionment of the Loyalist and Unionist people has been growing for a number of years, indeed, you could say that since the Good Friday Agreement was signed, each move to implement it has been seen in a negative light. The political leaders of Loyalism and Unionism were continuously nay saying and doom mongering before the agreement was signed and have kept it up ever since. Even though at the time, the PUP leader, David Ervine, and the UDP, both gave their support because they said they believed the Union was safe, as echoed in the CLMC ceasefire statement, and the Ulster Unionist Party signed for the same reason. It is interesting to ask why it is that this quite correct reading of the GFA is no longer spoken about and the fact that Republicans have accepted partition and are participating in the British state is brushed aside as irrelevant. Are Loyalists and Unionists destined to always say no, feel ambushed, threatened and colluded against even when the reality is so very different?

History can teach us something about the “siege mentality” of Loyalist and Unionists, though sadly, it does seem that they are destined to repeat it again and again. The Protestant and Presbyterian, mainly Scottish settlers into Northern Ireland were working people in the main who were given land and work that was forcibly taken away from the native Irish. The settlers therefore, had to justify that fact in some way to themselves and to elevate themselves as human beings above the other human beings that they had displaced. The native Irish took on the persona of the downtrodden, anti-state and sometimes revolutionary while the Protestant settlers took on the role of second class, pro-state and sometimes henchmen – of course, they were both always slaves to capitalism who doesn't care about religion except where it is useful. And indeed, religion has proven to be very useful in Ireland as an outward manifestation of the roles that the allotted sides have played throughout history. Since the United Irishmen of the 1790's the Protestant and Presbyterian people have remained staunchly loyal to the state and to their own privileged position within it while always being fearful of the state abandoning them.

The reaction to any possibility of change to the status of Northern Ireland whether through violent rebellion or through legal, social change has led them to batten down the hatches, say no, never and to believe fully that they are doomed unless they get their own way. The politicians they elect are elected on this basis and anyone who attempts to point out that perhaps the doomsday scenario is just a bible story after all, is destined to not be elected for very long. Hence, all the political parties and indeed, politicians who identify themselves as Unionist or Loyalist are cut from similar cloth, they propagate fear and paranoia among their electorate and they constantly encourage sectarian analysis of every issue. I sadly have to include the PUP in this analysis even though I had some amount of respect for David Ervine and indeed, some of those in the UDP at the beginning. They tried to say they were socialist and that so long as Northern Ireland remained within the UK then they were happy to work for the betterment of all the working people in Northern Ireland. This is a problematic definition of socialism but leaving that aside, they haven't even been able to maintain a pro working class analysis of events since the GFA. They too have had to succumb to bigotry, sectarianism, poor mouth politics and the continuation of their armed paramilitary comrades.

The fact that the Shankill is now just like any other working class inner city in the UK or Ireland, (give or take a few hundred guns) is too difficult a proposition for even the so called working class parties to put forward. The fact that the education, health and welfare systems are under threat throughout the UK and that only working class unity can prevent this ongoing decline is not a policy that any political representative of Loyalism or Unionism can

admit even to themselves. They continue to present any change as an attack on them and their way of life, a terrible game of one-upmanship with horrible consequences for the lives of ordinary working class Protestants who continue to live in bad housing, with poor health and jobs and feeling threatened by all around. Sinn Fein have encouraged this view within Loyalism as they play up every wee change as a major victory in an attempt to quell any dissent in their own party and to ensure that no one reminds them that they were supposed to be fighting for a truly socialist, democratic state.

The only way to break the “Carnival of Reaction” so well foreseen by James Connolly prior to partition is to build a real progressive, socialist and pro humanity political alternative to all of the current sectarian parties. The British Government will be happy to throw a few million at loyalist areas if they can find someone to give it to but it will not make a whit of difference to the sectarian, siege mentality mindset of Loyalism and Unionism. The local assembly when up and running again will continue to implement anti working class and draconian policies as dictated by their masters in London and the sectarian division of Northern Ireland will become even more firmly entrenched.

The likelihood of violence breaking out again will be inevitable whether directed against the state or each other. The sad thing is that the violence and protests will not be progressive and for a positive future for all in this island but will be based on fear, hatred and bigotry on all sides. An alternative political analysis is needed which will attract support from people who believe in people, and that progress is dependent on working together and building a better society for all – that probably means overthrowing the capitalist state so here we go again, hopefully united this time.

Creating the News They Like

Fourthwrite organised a meeting at the 2005 Feile an Phobail in Belfast addressing the issue of how the state attempts to influence the media. The topic was discussed by; Sean Maguire of Daily Ireland, Myriam Ibrahim of Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPAC UK), Sharif Nashishibi of Arab Media Watch and film actor Atta Yaqub. *Fourthwrite* editor, Tommy McKearney chaired the event which first listened to the speakers talk about the issue and then answer questions from the audience. All guests spoke eloquently and knowledgeably and we carry excerpts from their speeches below.

Sean Maguire (*Daily Ireland*) spoke of a failure by the media during the recent conflict in Northern Ireland, their use of terminology such as ‘two warring tribes’ and who painted a distorted picture of the British role in Ireland.

He said that there has been a whole realm of State censorship in the Republic. We had a ban on republican spokespersons until 1993, on top of that “it was supported by journalists who refused to ask tough questions about collusion, plastic bullet deaths, shoot to kill policies and torture. Often these issues were left to exceptional journalists who, to their credit, worked hard to try to bring out some of the truth”.

“The media had failed to cover the conflict in any even-handed manner. There was a failure to examine the causes of the conflict, or by doing that or engaging in that process begin to tease out solutions to the conflict”.

He spoke of his work with Daily Ireland, saying that ‘we are trying to create a media prepared to ask tough and searching questions’.

Sharif Nashishibi..Arab Media Watch

In terms of government manipulation of the media, I think it is important to state from the outset that government cannot manipulate the media without the media’s acquiescence and that is either through direct collusion with the government or through lazy journalism. I speak here as journalist, so I am not a bitter outsider, I am a bitter insider.

Now, if we are talking about collusion with the government, one example in the British media is the Rupert Murdoch Empire. Tony Blair goes to great lengths to call it his empire because of its influence. So this is an example of direct collusion between media and government.

If you are talking about lazy journalism, this is really if you are reporting a claim without checking its veracity. This is lazy journalism and it is put to me sometimes that journalists don’t have time to check facts and figures and my answer to that is if you don’t have time to do that you are not a journalist. You are not doing your job. This is one of the tasks of journalism.

I think one of the most stark examples in recent times is the Iraq War, where the claim that Iraq had WMD’s was repeated ad nauseam so many times by the government it almost became the perceived truth. The media rarely ever thought to report Iraq’s denials of WMD because it was a given that they must have them.

To this day in certain media outlets in Britain you will still see the phrase ‘The failure to find Iraq’s WMDs’, the implication being that it has them, we just haven’t found them yet, which is incredible. Another example to do with the Iraq War, and I did my Masters in international terrorism, I studied embedded journalists being with the coalition forces in the ‘91 war. We studied feedback from journalists who were embedded with those troops, saying it was very hard to be objective when with those troops. They felt under pressure not to say anything that would upset the troops, that would put them in danger. They needed access to sources which meant they had to stay on site. So there was a real manipulation and acquiescence in that war.

We saw exactly the same thing in the recent war of two years ago, where there were embedded journalists. They were not journalists on the ground covering things independently. So, effectively what you had was one side of the story because it was too dangerous to go outside the forces. We see the same thing repeated this year. Yyou have reports of Iraq moving its WMD’s to Syria. The US claims that Syria is sending insurgents to Iraq to fight. Lots of claims and if you look at the reports you barely see Syrian denials. The US government is ratcheting up the same kind of claims and there is not enough checking as to

whether this is true. One other interesting point. In February when the Lebanese ex-Prime Minister was assassinated, the British media repeated the government stance ad nauseam that Syria must leave Lebanon. When Syria did leave Lebanon I looked at the tabloid coverage at the time (and the tabloid circulation in Britain is much greater than the broadsheet circulation) there are five major tabloids in Britain, ...guess how many reported Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon? – None. Which is shocking.

Another example in the sphere that I look at is the issue of Israel and Palestine. If you look at the terminology that the media uses it very much echoes the Israeli governments terminology. You see reference to disputed territories, rather than occupied territories. You see terms such as targeted killings, when in fact there are three times as many bystanders killed as the people that they are targeting.

You see the word settlement, which denotes a very passive existence on a land, when they are actually armed colonies. One particular term that has recently cropped up is the issue of security fence. You will never hear in the media the Palestinian term annexation wall or apartheid barrier. You will see the words security fence, which is a term used by the Israeli government. This from the outset implies justification for Israel's construction of this barrier. You will see in media reports that Palestinians say this wall is annexing their land, Israelis say it is for security. This is not the case. The wall is annexing Palestinian land and this is not even open to debate. The security aspect of the wall is very open to debate, because Israel has never provided a good reason why, if the wall is for security, it is not being built on its internationally recognized borders. This adds legitimacy to the Palestinian claim that this is just a land grab. Otherwise it would be on Israel's internationally recognized borders. I have outlined here three examples of the media's manipulation by the government, voluntary or subconsciously, and the reason I think this event is important is because that kind of lazy journalism and collusion with the government can have devastating consequences.

There was some media soul-searching after the Iraq War. About maybe that Iraq didn't have WMD an maybe we should have reported things better, but by then hundreds of thousands of people had been killed and injured. A country had been invaded and occupied...the country is in ruins.

It simply was not good enough for journalists to say after the event maybe we should have done a better job. The point of journalism is to inform the public and in democracies public opinion largely dictates government policy. If the public is misinformed, government policy will be misinformed. So the power of journalists in democracies is incredibly large and it is simply not an excuse for journalists to say that they don't have time or patience to check the facts. If they don't have time, they are simply a government mouthpiece . It is very difficult for the media to complain about governments manipulation, it must take part of the blame and make sure that it doesn't happen.

Myriam Ibrahim...MPAC

Interestingly, you might not necessarily know what Jihad means, beyond what the media tells us. Jihad actually means striving for justice, probably not what you believed when you first heard the term. What we try to do is deflect any negative presentations of Muslims in the media.

With current events, we obviously have a large battle on our hands with regard to events on 7/7. The government as you know, refused to acknowledge the role of its foreign policy in the events that occurred on 7/7. Islam was systematically blamed. In fact Blair made a statement saying specifically that this had nothing to do with foreign policy. We would be interested to hear what he has to say now, with Osama Bin Ladens' right hand man saying that it was completely related.

We completely relate to the points that Sean Maguire was making with regards to labelling by the government of specific events, such as 7/7. We work very closely with youth in the community, so we are aware of the resentment that exists within a lot of Muslim youth about foreign policy and about how the British government implements its vision of the world in Muslim countries. The original role of the media would be a role of accountability. We found it very difficult to find a media that would be willing to be critical of the establishment after the events of 7/7. So we put together a political plan against terrorism, which is on our website, if you are interested. It is basically talking about the fact that if you have a population of Muslims who are angered by the situation, by foreign policy, you have to provide them with a

means of airing their grievances. The best way is to engage them with the political system and to teach them about the political system.

One of the barriers we have often come up with is the fact that a lot of mosques in the UK are run by Imams who come from abroad, don't necessarily speak the language, don't necessarily know what it is like to be a Muslim growing up within the UK, probably don't know how the system works. You go to them distressed saying that the government is acting in this way and they just say 'pray', which you should do, but you also have to engage actively with the system.

On the subject of the media I would like to say that one of the points the government failed to address was that Muslim youth are connected to a different set of media, which means that our experience of the world is slightly different. The pain that was felt by the British people on 7th July and the subsequent pain is felt by many Muslims on a daily basis. The people who died, being British did not make any difference than being Iraqi or Palestinian, I think that is the point that the British government failed to acknowledge for Muslims, that blood is blood, killing innocent civilians, whether Iraqi or Palestinian or British is abhorrent.

The British government is the first to ask us, by our religion, to condemn the atrocities that were perpetrated in London but fully incapable of acknowledging the role of western governments in the killing of innocent civilians in Iraq and Palestine. Many of our points have been to try and make Mr Blair and his government acknowledge that State terrorism in the east is no more acceptable than fringe-group terrorism in the west. When we understand this issue, it will be a lot easier to understand how these events come about, once you engage with the community.

I was recently at a talk by Allistar Crook who you might know of, he is the former MI6 agent for the Middle East. He was chief negotiator with Hamas and Hisbola. Interestingly he was saying that one of the central themes that came up in his talks with Islamic groups was the theme of justice and double standards were the main issue of contention in their discussions.

They were actually willing to negotiate on the basis of this symmetrical principle of justice and it was very interesting to hear from an expert that there was some sort of negotiation possible with these people and that they were not outright nutters who bomb anyone who is not Muslim.

I think it is a real shame that the media have not been critical enough and bothered – it's intellectual laziness, that's all there is to it or sympathising with government policy and unwillingness to be critical of their stance. We feel that if the government was really interested in addressing those issues they would come forward to community leaders who are aware of the grievances of our community and not seek to speak to what we call institutional Muslims who don't necessarily know what young Muslims are feeling. When you take into account that the (7/7) bombers were all under 30, it is important you are getting that perspective. Particularly when you look out the real studies about suicide bombings such as the one I have read about at the University of Chicago, where 95% of suicide bombings are aimed at forcing occupying States to remove military forces from contested territories. I am sure Mr Blair could benefit from reading that study.

Atta Yaqub

If I can use the entertainment industry to make people understand Islam, also in a way that is not demeaning and does not victimise it to all the goings-on of this world today. I feel accountable to do that.

Being involved in the entertainment industry is not just about showing pleasure and good viewing, it is also about showing what goes on and can be used in a very powerful way, the way it has.

Agency in Malaysia finds Celtic Tiger

by Noel Murphy, National Secretary of the Independent Workers Union

The Agency in Malaysia was advertising for workers. This was the first time that Len (not his real name) had ever heard of Ireland and the adventurous young 20 year old decided to accept the challenge of work in a country far away of which he knew little. It was a prosperous European Country according to his research and the political unrest in the Northern part had now been stable for many years, at least that's what he was able to discover about the green island in the Atlantic which lay to the West of Britain.

Apart from his native Malay, his command of Chinese was fluent while his English and Spanish were passable. Therefore language was not a barrier when he arrived in Co Clare in 2002 to work in a general capacity in an hotel. His job was of a seasonable nature and as the season was closing, a work colleague advised him to try Cork City for work. For every ten C.V.s that you deliver, he was told, you should get one interview. The formula worked and a Cork City Cafe agreed to take him on and to apply for a new work permit on his behalf. It was understood that Len would pay the Euro 500 cost of the visa. He would work six days per week from between 49 and 53 hours, depending on how busy the cafe was on any given day. Occasionally he would work seven days in a week.

At first he shared a flat with a friend from Malaysia until he got his own flat. He paid a deposit of Euro 300, which was quite an amount when his take home pay amounted to Euro 280. However, he got over this financial hurdle easily enough as he ate nothing but rice for two weeks. He could manage his budget quite well, his rent was Euro 75 per week, his electricity was Euro 100 every 2 months and as long as he did not over spend on Malay food (which he could get in Cork - but it was expensive), he could survive and even save a little.

He liked working in a foreign country but it upset him when his boss Doreen (not her real name) shouted at him and kept telling him to hurry up and that he was too slow. He often carried crates of minerals from the basement to the second floor and this was quite exhausting work. He never realised that working in a Cafe could be so physical and that this work coupled with his modest diet would keep his light framed body in trim. He often worked ten continuous days without a day off. Lunch breaks were a hasty affair. You grabbed a sandwich and a cup of coffee and went back to the grindstone.

Len soon discovered that his limited lunch break allowed him enough time to go to McDonalds, in the same street to grab a coffee and a burger. He liked to get out even if it was only for twenty minutes. It was here that he met Francesca from Andalusia in Spain. Romance blossomed and Len and Francesca now spent whatever spare time they had together. Francesca never fancied the burger business but she eventually spotted a job advertised in a fashionable City Boutique. She thought that she would prefer this work and she was happy when she got her new job in a chain which was managed by a man from the Middle East.

Francesca had made a bad move. There was to be no glamour in the Boutique job. Bullying was commonplace and perceived dissension was punished (although it was never called punishment) by having to spend the day packing and unpacking the latest fashions in the stuffy and unventilated stock room. Francesca felt very uncomfortable in this new job, especially on the evenings when the boss was around. She tried to be agreeable in order to avoid any unpleasantness and in so doing, she agreed to work on Public Holidays when all the main fashion shops were open. Francesca, felt that she should be entitled to a premium payment for working on Public Holidays. She asked the Security worker, if this were the case and he advised her to contact the Independent Workers Union. Francesca called to the I.W.U. office where she met Noel Murphy. He advised her that there was money owing to her from her present job, not just for working on Public Holidays, but also for overtime payments and Sunday work. However, if she did not want to rock the boat just yet, she was told that she could claim her money through the Payment of Wages Act when she left the job. In due course Francesca changed jobs and the process of claiming monies owed was initiated.

After a number of months, a Rights Commissioner of the Labour Relations Commission heard Francesca's case and an award of Euro 650 was made. As a result of this success, Francesca persuaded Len to call to the union office. When Len called the full extent of his exploitation became apparent. For two years he had worked excessive hours and was

under paid the very modest catering industry rates. It was discovered that his boss told him that he was only entitled to two weeks holidays each year and that he could not leave the job unless he decided to go back to Malaysia. When he asked for time for the Chinese New Year, a celebration the equivalent of Christmas in our part of the world, this was refused. When he asked for time off, to see the St Patrick's day parade, an event he had never experienced before, he was told that only Irish people could get a day off on that day.

Although, Len was being bullied, being underpaid and overworked, he was acutely aware that the loss of his job, could mean the end of his work visa and deportation. He therefore had to find a new employer to apply for a new work permit on his behalf. If he was to risk dismissal by raising the issues of his working hours and his wages, by himself or through the IWU, the loss of a work permit and his subsequent status as an illegal was very worrying. He did not wish to be separated from Francesca. He could not find a new employer, who would not ask too many questions about his present employer. He therefore had to find a new solution to his problem. He was able to get a work permit in Spain. Len and Francesca have both left for Spain and Len's claims against his former employer are being handled by the IWU.

The young couple were very happy with the help that they got from the Trade Union. The little good luck charm and the little Buda Statue that they gave to the office staff before they left now join countless other pieces of bric-a-brac in the IWU headquarters. Their stay in Ireland which lasted all of three years was by means an experience of the mythic Cead Mile Failte. They did however feel the bite of the Celtic Tiger's sharp teeth. Without doubt there are hundreds if not thousands of similar cases to that of Len and Francesca all over Ireland. The Trade Union movement must find them, in order to end the exploitation and save the tarnished image of our Nation.

More public enemies required

by Tommy McKearney

Driving out of Dublin recently, my eye was drawn to paper sellers holding up the Evening Herald with its lurid headline “Public Enemy No 1”. Traffic conditions in the capital left me unable to take my eyes off the road long enough to determine who this danger to Irish society might be, although the face did seem familiar. Drawing closer to Ardee, and the signposts pointing to Dundalk, the bogeyman’s identity dawned on me. It was former train driver and now AT&GWU official, Brendan Ogle.

Having only met him a few times didn’t leave me in a position to guarantee his character but he certainly appeared to be a decent, even ordinary, sort of family man. The last time we spoke was at a fringe meeting during the recent ICTU conference in Belfast and he was showing no signs of abnormal behaviour then. Ogle had come along to support an event providing diverse groups with an opportunity to air their views before a section of the trade union movement. The platform party included speakers from different republican and loyalist ex-prisoner organisations.

What on earth might he have done to find himself described as the principal threat to the people of the Republic? We have drug barons, disgraced policemen, corrupt elected representatives among a list of other miscreants at large in the Republic. So why had the Independent group’s evening paper decided to elevate a trade unionist to the position of “Public Enemy 1”?

As it turned out, Brendan Ogle’s ‘crime’ was not something proscribed by law but instead to have had the temerity to challenge the currently ubiquitous practice of contracting out work in order to reduce wages. In this particular case, the AT&GWU official was at odds with the state owned Electricity Supply Board, where cost cutting has resulted in almost 1,700 external contractors being engaged alongside 2,200 people directly employed by the company.

If anyone needs to know where this trend eventually leads, look at the present situation in Irish Ferries. There, the shipping company has decided to lay off 543 members of its Irish staff and find replacements from countries not bound by the Republic’s minimum wage regulation. Crews on Irish Ferries will now be working for as little as €3:50 per hour.

If combating a practice, described by ICTU as ‘social dumping,’ has turned Brendan Ogle in Public Enemy No 1, then we clearly need more enemies like him.

Devil Worship in Belfast

by Pauline Hadaway

An important Human Rights case resulting from a yearlong dispute between Belfast City Council and the free sheet arts and cultural review, *The Vacuum*, is currently before the courts in Belfast. Last year, Belfast City Council arts sub committee passed a vote of censure against *The Vacuum*, following a complaint from a single member of the public concerning 'God' and 'Satan' themed issues published in June 2004. The basis of the complaint was that the issues contained material, which was offensive to Christians.

According to PUP councillor Hugh Smyth, articles published in the newspaper, including a 'discussion of exorcism', a 'description of devil proverbs' and an article entitled 'I peed in church', were blasphemous and promoted devil worship. Speaking on BBC Radio last September, Smyth claimed that the newspaper had held two 'important evangelists in Belfast' up to ridicule, made irreverent remarks about 'old people and people with disabilities' and printed illustrations which were 'very offensive', including one showing 'Christ with another man lying on top of him, lying the opposite way'. Although these and other allegations were to prove unsustainable, the censure motion was passed by a coalition of nationalist, Unionist and Alliance councillors on the basis that the publishers, council-funded arts group Factotum, had distributed material that was 'offensive, in bad taste and contains foul language'.

The only political party to vote against the motion was Sinn Fein, arguing that 'the council has no right to interfere with the end products of arts organisations we fund'. Nonetheless, the sub committee voted 24-12 to withhold an agreed funding allocation of £3,300, requiring Factotum to first make an apology to members of the council and the citizens of Belfast. The committee also signalled that it reserved the right to restrict access to future funding opportunities 'if the arts or heritage activity causes gratuitous offense to individuals, groups or communities or contains material that is sexually explicit or racist'. The discussion took place amidst an ongoing national debate around the limits of artistic freedom, following the closure of *Behzti* (Dishonour) a play at the Birmingham Rep, after violent protests by the Sikh community,

In the wake of Tony Blair's apology for Ireland's Potato Famine, Gerry Adams expression of regret over the loss of civilian life in the Troubles and Loyalist paramilitaries' on going remorse for all the people they just seem to keep on killing, Factotum responded satirically by issuing an invitation to individuals, institutions and political parties across Belfast to join it in a day of mass public contrition, where apology could be made for all offense ever given. Belfast's Sorry Day, celebrated in the run up to Christmas 2004, included bottom spanking, a double decker Sorry bus, a Sorry Santa and foot washing in the Cornmarket. Reactions among Belfast's Christmas shoppers - ranging from disinterest to amused bewilderment - appeared to indicate that even in this most God-fearing of cities, insulting Christians is a far less risky business than offending Sikhs in godless Birmingham.

The paper's editor, Richard West has subsequently challenged City Council in the High Court, on the grounds that its actions represent a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, (in particular article 9 on freedom of thought, conscience and religion and article 10 on freedom of expression). The case is being heard amidst national debate over the threat to free speech raised by new legislation banning incitement to religious hatred. With a long tradition of 'kick the Pope'-style bigotry, Northern Ireland introduced legislation banning incitement to religious hatred way back in 1970. In spite of countless provocations, including a city councillor who

modestly proposed that Catholic children in Belfast would be better housed in incinerators than schools, fewer than a handful of successful prosecutions have ever been brought. If successful, the Vacuum case could become the first ever in which a local authority will have been held to be in breach of an individual or organisation right to freedom of expression as protected under the legislation.

With public policy orientated towards building and sustaining 'good relations', it is not surprising that Belfast City Council should wish to censure arts organisations that do not toe the line. In June 2002, DUP councillor Nelson McCausland, then chair of the arts subcommittee, listed 'the promotion of cultural diversity' and 'further exploration of positive images of Belfast' as two key benefits of localised cultural activity. In guidelines published in 2004, the council promised to 'extend and enrich participation in the arts' by supporting organisations with 'a track record of demonstrating respect, tolerance and/or undertaking activities which are neither threatening or offensive'.

In the subsidised sector, where the space between artistic freedom and public policy has always been contested, artists generally accept the requirement to demonstrate the external benefits of their work, over and above the principle of 'art for art's sake'. But increasingly, artists' pragmatic approach to policy guidelines has grown into an enthusiasm for partnership with policymakers. In Belfast, artists have lobbied long and hard to promote their status as political movers and shakers, bringers of peace, prosperity and progress.

In many respects, the dispute between Factotum and Belfast City Council is less about blasphemy, pornography or artists kicking against conformity, and more about what happens when cosy political and cultural partnerships break down. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the dispute is the sheer inoffensiveness of the contested material, particularly in a cultural context of mainstream TV shows where 'ordinary couples' have sex on camera, or even compared to the average content of teenage lifestyle magazines and tabloid newspapers.

The problem lies with cultural policies that reflect an entirely instrumental view of the arts. Where there is an expectation that arts and cultural activity will always produce specified social benefits, and where artists, arts institutions and policymakers talk the same language, being even slightly 'off message' can be enough to get you into hot water.

You failed to deliver a 'positive image of the city'? You published material that an individual or community found offensive? These are narrow boundaries but unfortunately in a prevailing culture of complaint and claims making, the ground is further narrowing, as definitions of what is offensive are stretched to include hurt feelings, being upset, or just feeling uncomfortable.

How do policymakers suppose that they can encourage greater participation in public life by restricting thought and speech within the boundaries of inoffensiveness? And how do we propose to cultivate a spirit of solidarity and tolerance across Belfast's lines of difference, by restricting the expression of one community on the basis that another community might claim hurt feelings?

In stark contrast to Belfast City Council's attitude towards The Vacuum, its publishers, Factotum, were selected to represent Northern Ireland at the Venice Biennale this summer, as part of a delegation of artists. They have also been nominated for the prestigious Paul Hamlyn Award and received commissions to produce new publications in London and Dublin. Whatever the quality of Factotum's disputed artwork, the case shows that artists need to renegotiate relationships with policymakers, standing up for their own interests and recognising the creative value of dissent. Complaints about political interference carry little weight if artists and arts organisations are not prepared to affirm the intrinsic value of their work, one of its principal virtues being a capacity to make people feel uncomfortable.

Finally, the national tour of Jerry Springer the Opera is scheduled from February next year in the face of continued opposition from the Christian campaign

group, Christian Voice, who claimed that the show 'mocked God', portrayed Jesus Christ as a homosexual and 'lowered the moral tone of the nation'. A record number of 45,000 people contacted the BBC about the show, mainly to complain about swearing and anti religious themes when it was screened on BBC TV last year. So far there is no indication that the Grand Opera House in Belfast is among the small number of provincial theatres brave enough to stage the show. If we can't get to see it in Belfast, do you think we should complain to our local councillors?

Collins's War

By Margaret McKearney

Michael Collins holds an enduring fascination for the Irish. Even diehard republicans concede that, in spite of his flaws, Mick was a legend. Dying early in 1922 prevented his memory being disfigured by Civil War atrocities or something worse. His major achievement was not, though as it is sometimes claimed, the foundation of the 26 County State. He was killed before its establishment could even be assured and his role in the Treaty was important rather than pivotal.

Collins' unique accomplishment was to smash British Intelligence in Ireland and to incapacitate the indigenously recruited police forces. As a consequence, the IRA had time to develop its rural capacity while eradicating Britain's civil administration in most parts of Ireland meaning that the Crown's writ failed to run outside of Unionist N.E. Ulster.

By mid 1921, the British government faced the option of negotiating with the Irish or impose its will from without. In reality, an empire that had emerged victorious from World War I could certainly have subdued Ireland. The question though was at what cost?

The world of the early 1920's had changed since Britain suppressed the Indian uprising. A world war fought ostensibly to "make small nations free" made it politically difficult both at home and abroad to justify drowning Irish demands in bloodshed. The U.S.A. used this factor as it strove to assert its new post war influence. Washington's foreign policy was to retain the Anglo Saxon Empire but with reduced might. Ireland served as an opportunity to undermine London's position without risking regions further afield.

Moreover, the post war wave of revolutions that had swept across Europe, also had an impact throughout the rest of the world. Britain had to calculate the risks inherent in granting independence to a colony against the dangers involved in finding herself over extended on a multi-front struggle.

Had these factors not converged in favour of those fighting for Irish independence, it is possible that Britain might have opted for a war of annihilation. Since this was not the case, it is fair to say that the battle waged by Collins and his squad on British Intelligence and the crown's loyal police forces had a decisive impact on the outcome of what became known as the Black & Tan War.

Collins did not have had a refined theory of the state but the former civil servant knew instinctively the working of its engine. Clearer than most, Collins knew that governing without consent required governing by policing. It followed therefore that to make Ireland ungovernable from London it was essential to destroy the inseparably connected networks of police and intelligence.

Britain effectively ruled Ireland through the locally recruited police forces and thus its nerve centre had to be eliminated if independence was to be obtained. Michael Collins's most valuable informant, Ned Broy of the Dublin Metropolitan Police's G Division (effectively the Special Branch), had told the Big Fellow how, within two months of undergoing police training, young men from ordinary Irish homes would become staunchly loyal to the Crown. Both agreed that armed force alone would undermine the type of stranglehold exercised by the RIC and DMP over Irish society.

It is this story that T. Ryle Dwyer sets out to tell in his book "The squad and the intelligence war" (published by Mercier Press).

This book is worth reading in spite of several serious flaws that spoil what would otherwise have been an excellent work. The author fails, not in recounting facts, which he does well, but in his interpretation of the rationale underpinning

Collins's campaign. Ryle Dwyer has little understanding of the dynamic of insurrection or indeed the deciding factors that influenced the Black & Tan War.

As with many contemporary Irish writers/journalists, he gets hopelessly confused when dealing with the issue of armed force. In his opening sentence he claims that Michael Collins is, "...often cited as the originator of modern urban terrorism". T. Ryle Dwyer doesn't state this as his personal opinion but including it is significant. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth unless terrorism is defined as any use of armed force against an installed regime. Terrorism is designed to cause terror and it matters little who uses it. Collins may have terrorised British intelligence but his war was surgical in its implementation, directed purely against specified targets and with the clear objective of negating enemy capacity.

This misunderstanding of what Michael Collins was about runs throughout the book. T. Ryle Dwyer claims that Michael Collins used his counter intelligence strikes to provoke the British into overreacting and thus drive the population into the arms of republicans. With a resounding general election victory in 1918 and nationalist Ireland grateful to Sinn Fein for preventing conscription – how could anyone seriously suggest Collins needed something as unpredictable as urban guerrilla war to win more support?

Another example of the author's dubious assumptions is when he attempts to explain the confidence some policemen had in Mick Collins. He blandly writes that members of "G" Division felt safe with him because he was the leader of a secret organisation. If anybody knew the dangers of trusting any member of a secret outlawed organisation, it was professional policemen who spent much of their working lives recruiting informers in just such organisations. Collins's agents had many reasons for trusting him but this was not one of them.

Perhaps the most awesome piece of confusion found in the book, however, is where the author uses the term "security forces" (without inverted commas) to describe out of control Black and Tans in Tralee? Nevertheless, this remains a useful book.

T. Ryle Dwyer's book excels in his detailed accounts of the individual actions taken by the Squad as it went about its work. The author uses the Squad's personal accounts recorded by the Bureau of Military History Society. Although many may find the details of the events quite shocking, these accounts remind us of the reality of armed conflict. Students of the period will find it interesting to have the locations used by the British Intelligence and their nemesis in the IRA.

In another sense, some aspects of the book have contemporary relevance and make for fascinating reading. The author devotes considerable attention to shades of opinion within Britain's Cabinet as how best to deal with the Irish insurrection. Both sides of the debate agreed that reprisals were necessary to curb the IRA. What they disagreed on was whether these actions should be carried out officially and acknowledged by the government or whether to allow the Crown forces to act without orders.

The latter view prevailed although it still caused Britain much embarrassment and criticism as the Black and Tan rampage inflicted huge damage on the empire's reputation. It took London some time before it was able to perfect the strategy of the pseudo-gangs used so often in Northern Ireland in the past 35 years.

The book concludes ominously with a reminder of the risks inherent in creating small and elite military teams. Mick Collins, as IRA Director Intelligence gave orders and the Squad carried out his instructions without question. Regrettably, many of them were as willing to turn against republicans as they were to fight imperialism. Veterans of the Squad ran the brutal campaign against the IRA in Kerry during the civil war, while some of them gave their support to O'Duffy's Blueshirts in the 1930's.

For all one's reservations, this book contains much valuable material and reminds us of a key aspect in the struggle for independence. It should not, though,

be read as an adventure story. There are lessons and grim truths contained in this book and they are well worth seeking out.

Pushed out

By Mags Glennon

"We have not lost, to refuse to fight would be to lose, to fight is to win. We have kept faith with the past, and handed on a tradition to the future"

(Padraig Pearse - and the concluding words of 'Pushers Out')

For two decades Dublin's working class communities, in the face of official neglect, fought to overcome an epidemic of heroin abuse that engulfed them. Led, variously, by the Concerned Parents Against Drugs (CPAD) and the Coalition of Communities Against Drugs (COCAD) organisations, the campaign captured headlines as a result of the policy of directly confronting drug pushers. At the same time pressure was continually applied to the government and statutory agencies for concerted action to address the drug crisis.

While successful in mobilising communities and impacting on the heroin problem the campaign was marked by continuous conflict with the authorities, dogged by criticisms of vigilantism and of being a front for the IRA, as well as politically inspired campaigns of vilification and outrageous Garda harassment and assaults on activists.

Pushers Out, which fully addresses those charges, is a detailed account of the development of the heroin problem in Dublin and the response of the affected communities. It is the engrossing story of the anti-drugs movement as seen through the eyes of one of its most prominent campaigners. The memoir provides, for the first time, the inside story of a campaign described (by the 'Irish Times') as 'undoubtedly one of the most significant social movements to emerge from Dublin's working class communities.'

The author, André Lyder, was a member and chief spokesperson for COCAD and in 1997 he was appointed Chair of the Dublin Drugs Task Force.

As Independent TD and long time anti-drugs campaigner Tony Gregory said at the book launch "André has conveyed in a very real sense what the campaign against drugs in the 1990s was all about. He has articulated the perspective of the local people who rose up against the pushers. I feel it would be very instructive for what I call the 'social worker' types who have come into jobs in the aftermath of the anti-drugs campaign to read André's book almost as a text book as it provides as objective an account as you will get on the anti-drugs movement".

The currently topical issue of the Garda corruption has a direct echo in the treatment of activists accused in relation to the death of drug pusher Josie Dwyer in Dublin in 1996. Some of the Gardai named in the McBrearty case in Donegal for involvement in producing fake 'confessions' from suspects were also involved in questioning and production of a dubious confession from one of the anti-drugs activists charged and later convicted in the Dwyer case.

Historian Dr Brian Hanley, who also spoke at the launch, questioned the motives of the establishment in its analysis of the anti-drugs campaign. "What is significant about the anti-drug movement of the 1980s and 90s is the lack of attention historians and academics have given to that movement. It has not been chronicled or examined by historians of modern Irish politics, in fact it has been written off. Like many media commentators, historians like to stick to safe territory. In some cases it is easier to write about almost anything else but a grassroots movement of working class people. What I do think is unique about the anti-drugs movement is the universal hostility of the Irish establishment to it, that I think has much of its roots in class prejudice. A prejudice that informs academic and historical, as well as media commentary. Within academia there is a facade of great sympathy for the problems of working class

areas, but that sympathy exists as long as working class people are seen as 'victims'; the victims of drug abuse, victims of pushers. But when working class people rise up against that there is great fear and also great hatred. That is one of the reasons why the anti-drugs movement was seen through hostile eyes. I think André's book will become an important part of peoples' history on the subject of drugs and of working class history in Dublin in the 1980s and 90s, the story of a vibrant uprising against official neglect and contempt."

The achievement of the campaigns was not that they sent drug abuse into reverse, but that they stopped it increasing. Reversing it requires detoxification, a drugs strategy that gets people off methadone. The problem is that once the Health Board gets heroin addicts on methadone, they consider the problem 'solved'. This policy ignores that fact that methadone is much more addictive than heroin, but reduces the crime rate and corrals the problem back into working class areas. But undoubtedly there are people alive now who wouldn't have been but for the anti-drugs campaigns.

Pushers Out is a worthwhile read for anyone involved in Republican or community politics, inside or outside of Dublin. The recent jailing of 5 small Mayo farmers in the campaign against the Shell gas pipeline shows how artificial the 'urban/rural' divide really is when a determined local community stands up for their survival and the lives of their children, and how quickly you will end up in the 'Joy with no release date if certain toes are stepped on.

Availability

'Pushers Out' is not in the main book shops but can be found in Dublin in Connolly Books, Books Upstairs, Greenes and the Sinn Féin bookshop. It can also be purchased on-line at www.trafford.com/

West Armagh Festival debate

Local community activists in Armagh City, Gareth Mackle and Sean McGerrigan organised a debate during the local festival in July. Although this was the first time that the committee had organised a political discussion at the event, they showed no lack of ambition or confidence in their ability to run what had the potential for being a controversial affair. The topic selected for debate was the future prospects for political development in the North and representatives from, Sinn Fein (David Hyland, MLA), PUP (deputy chairperson David Rose), a former loyalist politician turned journalist (David Adams) and *Fourthwrite's* editor (Tommy McKearney). The debate was chaired by well-known academic, Richard Jay.

In spite of the very different opinions aired by the speakers, the discussion was the essence of civility and good manners. Richard Jay has undoubtedly experienced more difficulty controlling his students on occasions than he had in the Trian Centre in Armagh.

Civility apart, the speakers argued their points of view energetically and the editor of this magazine found himself at odds on several occasions with other members of the panel as he questioned the viability of the Good Friday Agreement. After the guest speakers had made their opening remarks the floor was opened to the audience and a lively debate followed with the question being asked whether class division had any significant impact on the northern Irish conflict. This particular question produced a lively round of replies.

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