



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2019/101/2216

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Embassy Translation

A bomb for dinner

For the first time terrorists of the Irish Republican Army will be indicted in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Colonel Mark Coe, 43, died in front of his house in Bielefeld, he was killed by three shots into his chest and his shoulder.

Military policeman Stewart Leach, 22, stopped his official car at a traffic light in Munich when the round from a submachine gun seriously injured him.

Corporal Steven Sims, 24, was jogging in a forest in Osnabrück when he was hit by five bullets. Sims also survived.

The terrorists of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) who moved through Westphalia ten years ago as death squads chose their victims in the fanatic fratricidal war specifically. "None of the attacks" declared the IRA after the shots at Sims, "is aimed at Germans".

The promise "given to the German people" (IRA text) has long been broken. The attacks are still aimed at members and facilities of the British Rhine Army but the fighters from Belfast and Londonderry throw their bombs and shoot on German territory so ruthlessly that they also endanger the lives of Federal citizens.

The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution meanwhile classifies the IRA in Germany as an "active dangerous terrorist organisation", the Office of the Attorney of the Federal Supreme Court in Karlsruhe sees "an essential threat to internal security" in the IRA actions.

The latest attack took place just a month ago. On 2 July a command killed Corporal Steven Smith, 31, in Hanover in front of his house with a bomb hidden beneath his car. His wife and his

four small children were injured; the debris of the bomb flew over a hundred metres, only by chance no other people were injured.

For the first time two Irish men will be put on trial before a German court for such acts of violence. The Attorney of the Federal Supreme Court Kurt Rebmann accuses the IRA activists Terence G. McGeough, 30, and Gerard T. Hanratty, 30, in a 154-page indictment of attempted murder, crimes with explosives and offences against the control law for war materials.

McGeough who broke off his vocational training and went underground is thought to be jointly responsible for the attack on the British headquarters at Mönchengladbach where 36 people were injured in March 1987. A further attack, the bomb explosion in front of the dormitory wing of the Duisburg Glamorgan Barracks in July 1988 is charged to both McGeough and Hanratty, a trained carpenter. The trial will take place in the late autumn before a criminal panel set up for that particular purpose at the Düsseldorf Supreme Court.

For many years the IRA, which also calls itself PIRA (Provisional Irish Republican Army), has been fighting a fierce civil war in Northern Ireland against Protestants, the police and soldiers which claimed more than 2700 deaths since 1969. The IRA is recruited from extremist Catholics from Northern Ireland who want to enforce a Socialist Republic in a united Ireland freed from London. The police counted 32000 gunfights and almost 8800 bomb explosions.

According to experts the hard core of the activists consists of 300 to 500 men and women who can all handle weapons and explosives. They are supported by ca. 2000 members who do not throw bombs and shoot, but who make hiding places available, work as messengers, and transport weapons and equipment. The numbers of sympathisers reach some hundredthousands.

The war funds are always well stocked. Irish emigrants who gained prosperity in the USA are said to have made large donations. Dictators like Libya's Revolution Leader Muamar el-Gaddafi supplied the IRA with (Russian) weapons and (Czech) explosives. When these sources stopped the IRA fighters turned to the extortion of protection money.

Since 1972, from the time of London taking over direct governmental power in Northern Ireland, the IRA commands carry out attacks also on the other side of the borders. A favourite target is the British Army of the Rhine with its 55000 members, stationed in the area between Rhine and Elbe since the days of the legendary field marshal Montgomery - the largest army of the Crown outside Great Britain. Its expenses of approximately 3 billion pounds per year constitute one of the highest items in the British budgets.

German investigators think they know why the IRA mainly attacks the Rhine Army: On the one hand the military personnel for the Northern Ireland civil war front are recruited often from the units stationed in Germany; on the other hand terrorist acts of the IRA committed outside Northern Ireland receive more attention in England. Furthermore the IRA terrorists escape thus the search pressure at home.

Because of the many terrorist attacks in the North-West of Germany the IRA is said to have close connections to the Red Army Faction (RAF). The RAF has so far never denied this, for good reasons : it wants to keep up the fiction of a terrorist International.

But the IRA corrected these rumours. Gerry Adams, head of the official political wing Sinn Fein called such reports "pure rubbish". Nine years ago an anonymous leader declared in a *Spiegel* interview: "We are a liberation army which is supported solely by the suppressed people of Ireland. On principle we have nothing to do with such movements which pursue other aims."

When the RAF command which on 1 February 1985 killed the Munich head of MTU Ernst Zimmermann called itself after the Irish extremist Patrick O'Hara, the Nationalists from the IRA complained: according to intelligence circles they rejected "the desecration of the name". The activists differ from most other terrorist groups also for other reasons. With Sinn Fein they have their own legal party which in elections gains a large vote from Catholics. Gerry Adams represents the constituency of Belfast West in the London House of Commons.

Furthermore the membership structure is unique: hardly any intellectuals or students, neither anarchists nor Marxists, but mainly working-class sons who are bound together by the same fate - they are out of work.

The IRA is divided into a Command "South (responsible for logistics) and a Command "North (responsible for attacks). The execution of the terrorist actions is delegated to groups of three to six people who operate independently of each other.

These fighting units call themselves "Active Service Units" (ASU). Their members do not normally give up their civilian existence.

According to findings of the Office of the Attorney of the Federal Supreme Court McGeough, a member of an ASU, bought a Volvo in The Hague which was then prepared as a bomb-car. The perpetrators put several containers with high explosives into the boot of the car, two little kitchen clocks were used to delay ignition.

On the evening of 23 March the Volvo was driven to the unguarded "E-Mass" of the Mönchengladbach Rhine Army, where at 20 hrs. Bundeswehr soldiers had started a farewell party for two officers. The celebration was announced on the blackboard as "Northag Dinner" - because of this name the terrorists obviously

believed that this was a function for high-ranking NATO officers.

When Major-General Hans Hoster got up to give a speech for the two officers the bomb exploded. Parked cars were torn apart, walls collapsed and doors burst - the damage was more than two million DM. The Office of the Attorney of the Federal Supreme Court said that if the blast had expanded more strongly on the ground, "many people would certainly have been killed" by the collapse of the building.

The IRA people escaped unidentified, as also happened after the attack in Duisburg 15 months later. In the night of 13 July 1988 two bombs, connected with a cord, exploded there in front of the quarters of the 35th Squadron - ten soldiers were injured, the damage was estimated by the police at DM 1.5 million.

When the car with the perpetrators, a BMW with Dutch numberplates, came across a policeman who happened to be there, the driver accelerated and sped through the centre of Duisburg. A police superintendent took up the pursuit of the car and was attacked with rounds from two Russian machine guns when he got close. He had to give up.

McGeough and Hanratty were arrested on 30 August last year by a customs official when they wanted to cross the green border near the village of Waldfeucht to cross into Holland with a hired Peugeot. A complete weapons arsenal was found in the car: two AK-47 guns with seven full magazines and three revolvers.

A bucket in which some of the weapons were found showed traces of mud - a sign for the police that the IRA activists just like the RAF terrorists use earth depots as hiding places. Officers of the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation are now looking for those in the Bergische Land, after other IRA people had lived there for weeks under false names.

The two defendants McGeough and Hanratty have so far not said

anything to these charges. An indication of their membership of the IRA was found in the IRA bulletin "An Phoblacht". In the edition for last Christmas both were greeted as "POW in Germany".