

THE IRA: FINANCE AND WEAPONS

Fund-raising

All factions of the "Republican Movement" need a constant flow of funds. The Provisional IRA alone requires between £3 and £4 million a year to finance their campaign of terrorism in Northern Ireland, Britain and elsewhere in Europe, to foster their links with revolutionary terrorist groups, to procure arms and explosives, and to sustain their propaganda campaign. Fund-raising in the Irish Republic, the United Kingdom and overseas is often claimed to be conducted for the relief of the families of the IRA prisoners (although the needs of those in Northern Ireland are largely met by existing social security arrangements).

The major source of IRA funds from abroad is thought to be from the United States where the Irish Northern Aid Committee (known as NORaid), founded in 1970 by Michael Flannery and two other IRA veterans of the 1919-21 period admits to having raised \$3 million since its inception. Although however there are about 20 million US citizens of Irish descent, only a minority directly supports the Provisional IRA, raising funds directly and indirectly, at dances, dinners, house parties, film shows, lectures, through the sale of souvenirs and by collections in bars and clubs.

In April 1981, a United States court found that NORaid had violated the provisions of the Foreign Agents Registration Act by failing to identify as a foreign principal "the Irish Republican Army, Provisional Wing"; in November 1982, during a case brought by the US Authorities against Flannery and four co-defendants relating to shipment of arms to the IRA, Flannery admitted in open court that he had been involved for many years in the financing of arms deals for the IRA: in the issue of 10 February 1983, An Phoblacht/Republican News, the main publication of Provisional Sinn Féin (the political wing of the

Provisional IRA) referred to "Michael Flannery, an admitted arms supplier to the IRA".

In Britain, both the official and Provisional wings of the IRA (and the Irish National Liberation Army) are proscribed and it is a criminal offence to belong to either or to support them in any way. But regular illegal collections are made among a small minority of those of Irish origin settled in Britain, as they are from a minority in Australia, New Zealand and among sympathisers in Western Europe. There have also been persistent rumours of Libyan funding of Provisional IRA activities although this has been denied by the Libyan Government.

The IRA and the INLA are also proscribed in the Republic of Ireland and fund-raising in support of their activities, from whatever source has been condemned by successive Dublin Governments:

• In June 1978, the leader of the Fine Gael Party and present Irish Prime Minister, Dr Garret FitzGerald told the Foreign Policy Association in New York: "... the entire spectrum of political opinion in the Republic, and the leadership of the SDLP in Northern Ireland, are united in asking Irish-Americans who would like to help those of us in Ireland who support Irish unity by agreement, to reject NORAID and the Irish National Caucus".

• In June 1980, the leader of the opposition Fianna Fail Party, Mr Haughey, said in Court: "... there is clear and conclusive evidence that NORAID has provided support for the campaign of violence and, indeed, direct assistance in its pursuit it stands condemned and I appeal to all in America who have the interests of Ireland at heart, not to give this body any support, financial or moral".

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welfare channels

The main Provisional welfare organisation, the Dublin-based An Cumann Cabhrach, which was founded in 1953 and took over the work of the 1920s' Prisoners' Dependants' Fund, held its first annual meeting in May/June 1975. Joe Cahill told the meeting that "all the [IRA] prisoners ... look to An Cumann Cabhrach to give them the assurance and the confidence to continue their work for what they are striving to achieve" (An Phoblacht, 13 June 1975). Other speakers included Sean Keenan, a former Provisional IRA leader in Londonderry, and Leo Martin, recently released from Portlaoise prison. At the Provisional Sinn Fein annual convention in October 1975, Tess Kearney, the Secretary of An Cumann Cabhrach, claimed that her organisation was paying out £500,000 a year to the families of about 1,000 detainees and prisoners in Northern Ireland, England and the Irish Republic (although in the figure had dropped to for nearly prisoners).

In Northern Ireland, these funds are channelled through the Green Cross committee in Belfast and similar organisations elsewhere. American donors are led to believe that their contributions play a major role in supporting prisoners' dependants, but Green Cross, a registered charity, in fact collects most of its funds locally. Its then Chairman, James McCashin, told an American newspaper in 1975 that:

"... this year [1975] ... the Green Cross in Belfast received about \$40,000 [\$20,000] from Dublin, while itself collecting about \$200,000 [£100,000] by canvassing at pubs, shops, street-corners and homes Last year [1974] the group said it distributed about \$400,000 [£20,000] to families. Dublin sent less than \$60,000 [£30,000] for relief in Belfast, which has the bulk of prisoners' dependants ..." (New York Times, 16 December 1975).

In 1976, there was a deficit and disbursements were reduced. In November 1977, a Green Cross representative told the Irish Press that "Green Cross caters for 8 Republicans from Belfast, Co Down and Armagh City and that their 'bill' each week ran to £4,200 ... over £20,000 a year ... The main part of the £4,200 is paid to the families of those serving sentences ... £5 for a single or £6 for a married man or woman" (Irish Press, 3 November 1977).

The Official IRA welfare organisation, Cabhair, provides funds for legal costs as well as for prisoners' dependants. (Unlike Provisionals, members of the Official IRA do not refuse to plead when brought before the courts).

Commercial activities

Cash is also raised by the sale of books, pamphlets and records through Sinn Fein. Christmas cards, harps, crosses, leather goods and other items made by convicted IRA prisoners in the Republic and in Northern Ireland often sell at relatively high prices. In May 1975, the "Distressed Families Relief Fund" (Dublin) raised £500 by the sale of such items to aid the victim of a Belfast shooting. A harp, made by prisoners in Portlaoise, fetched £2,200 (Irish Press, 12 May 1975). In Northern Ireland, wooden harps, Celtic crosses and imitation guns made in the Maze Prison were sold for £4,000 and the money used by Seamus Loughran, then a leading figure in the Belfast Provisional Sinn Fein, to form the Andersonstown Cooperative Ltd. This firm soon controlled several shops, a building enterprise and a public house; after Loughran's resignation from Sinn Fein in March 1976 however, it was disowned by the Provisionals as a "pro-capitalist organisation".

In 1974, the Falls Taxi Association (FTA) was formed by Belfast Catholic taxi drivers who had moved in to supply transport when riots and disturbances severely curtailed Citybus services to and from the area where 200,000 Catholics lived. According to the Irish Times, Dublin, of 1 June 1978: "Of the £3 each Falls driver contributes weekly to the FTA, £1.25 goes to Green

ross". Citybus has lost over buses (bombed and burnt by the Provisional IRA) at a cost of £ million - most of them in areas where the taxis operate.

Criminal activities

Provisional IRA funds are partly derived from criminal activities such as armed robbery, blackmail, extortion, protection rackets and fraud on both sides of the border: IRA members have also turned to crime for personal gain. Between 1971 and 1982 over £7 million was stolen in armed robberies in Northern Ireland, the largest proportion being taken by the Provisonals. In the Irish Republic, it is estimated that the Provisional IRA takes some 50 per cent ~~of~~ £400,000 of the cash stolen each year. These robberies have resulted in a number of deaths, including three members of the Garda since 1980. Some of the Provisional IRA's most senior men have been linked with armed robberies. Seamus Twomey, for example, reputed to be a member of the Provisional IRA Army Council, was in possession of £1,500 stolen in a raid in Co Kerry when he was arrested in the Irish Republic in September 1973 (Irish Times, 9 October 1973). Brendan Hughes, a former head of the Provisional IRA Brigade in Belfast, was convicted in Belfast in December 1974 of handling part of £80,000 stolen from a factory in Craigavon (Belfast Telegraph, 12 December 1974).

Protection rackets grew mainly out of collections on behalf of the dependants of internees. According to Vincent McClosky, a member of the SDLP, "... businessmen began to be approached Quite soon this became a question of protection money. If people refused to hand over substantial sums, their staff were threatened and their premises damaged. The amount of money which was pouring into these organisations was so vast that rival factions within these organisations fought and killed to get their share of the loot" (Irish News, Belfast, 30 June 1975).

The cost of "protection" is said to vary from £400 a week for some Northern Irish hotels to £1 a day for taxis operating in some areas of Belfast.

In 1972, Allied Irish Banks paid out £5,000 to save the life of one of its staff who was "under sentence of death" for thwarting an IRA bank raid.

The IRA has attempted to get cash from the National Giro system by passing counterfeit cheques payable to fictitious persons for riot damage. The plan was uncovered in 1971 and one member of the teams involved received a suspended prison sentence in 1975 (Belfast Telegraph, 23 May 1975).

Some of those who have received government compensation for bomb damage have been subjected to IRA threats. Austin Currie, another leading SDLP member, quoted the case of three people in the Dungannon area who had been told by the Provisionals: "You have received so much in compensation, we want £5,000 from you before this weekend", (Irish Times, 5 December 1975).

A Catholic Priest, Father Aquinas, has spoken about his nine years at the Church of the Holy Cross in the Ardoyne district of Belfast, when he frequently spoke out against the terrorists and on one occasion attacked the IRA from his pulpit. Father Aquinas, who was physically attacked and once told to leave Belfast within 48 hours or die, said:

"What I saw was a group of sheer gangsters, murders, described often by the media as Mafia, who are simply using the situation for their own benefit, are not in any way defenders of the people, or not seemingly fighting for any particular cause but their own and are intimidating their own people, not merely attacking the soldiers of the people on the other side, or the Police ... for example ... one particular case was a doctor who was signing sick certificates for some members of the IRA as is normally done and he told two of them that he couldn't sign any longer, and later that day the Commander of that particular area came and said - 'you've got a wife and three children, all of you will be dead if you refuse to sign one certificate' (BBC Television, "Nationwide", 17 November 1976).

By 1978, after brothels and massage parlours had multiplied tenfold since 1969, the paramilitary groups saw their potential as sources of revenue. The Provisional IRA had begun to use the earnings from some establishments to buy arms and explosives. Terrorists were also said to be involved in some of the illegal drinking clubs (shebeens) set up in Northern Ireland as a result of the temporary closing of public houses because of the bombing.

In September 1982, the Royal Ulster Constabulary set up a special squad aimed at breaking "Mafia-style gansterism" and paramilitary terrorism in Northern Ireland. Announcing the measure the Chief Constable, Sir John Hermon, said:

"I am talking about the extortion of money from business and industry, tax exemption certificate evasion in respect of building site workers, businesses which act as fronts for terrorist organisations, protection rackets, illegal collections and all such forms of illegality.

"What we are faced with here is Mafia-life gangsterism of the very worst kind and all the viciousness that goes with it. Money is a crucial factor in the continuance of terrorism.

"Serious crimes are committed to raise that money but what concerns us even more is the use to which that money is put. Quite simply it finances murder and destruction.

"Every pound in the coffers of the paramilitary organisations is a nail in the coffin of an innocent victim of their murder gangs.

"The money they steal or extort is blood money because it finishes up in blood. It buys guns, it buys bombs, it keeps in comfortable power the

Godfathers who organise and direct death and destruction.

"The corruption involved has inevitably also produced the criminal fraternity who are living well on the proceeds of their thuggery and intimidation which is dressed up in the clothes of a spurious terrorist cause".

'Punishment' shootings

In the past 12 years about 1,000 people have been injured including youths of 14 and 15 years old, and one person killed, by so-called punishment shootings. The victims are usually shot in the back of the leg, sometimes destroying the knee-cap; sometimes through the elbow. A further 145 people, mostly women, have been tarred and feathered. The Provision IRA claim that people are shot in response to demands from the community for protection from anti-social activities such as robberies, break-ins, intimidation and extortion (An Phoblacht/Republican News, 25 February 1982).

Father Dennis Faul, Roman Catholic Chaplain at the Maze Prison, near Belfast, has said about "punishment" shootings:

"This is a situation full of irony. While the paramilitaries themselves are robbing banks, post offices and cars from the public in order to carry out their activities, they arrogate to themselves, quite unjustly, a mandate from the community" The Irish Press, 22 March 1982.

Funds diverted

In early 1973 there was a major upheaval in the Provisional IRA in Belfast after at least £15,000 - about one third of the proceeds of armed robberies during the previous 18 months - had been diverted for the personal use of seven Provisionals, including a former battalion commander. At about the same time £17,000 was alleged to have been misappropriated from the Andersonstown branch of the Prisoners' Dependents' Fund.

Eddie Gallagher, a former Provisional who was convicted for his part in the kidnapping of the Dutch industrialist, Dr Herrema, in the Irish Republic in October 1975, was placed on the "IRA death list" for retaining £90,000 out of £280,000 which he had obtained in bank raids "for the cause" (Evening Standard, London, 27 October 1975). In June 1974, the Official IRA admitted killing one of its members, Paul Tinnelly, whose "criminal activities were designed ... for his own personal profit" (Irish Times, 1 June 1974). In May 1978, Danny McErlean (26), married with a small son, was found tied and shot in the head in South Armagh; according to the Irish News, on 5 June, "a Provisional IRA statement claimed that they had shot McErlean because he had taken and used their weapons for 'unofficial operations'".

Arms

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The Provisional IRA's armoury originally consisted mainly of old weapons, including some acquired in raids on police and army depots. Provisional sympathisers first attempted to import arms for use in Northern Ireland early in 1970. Captain James Kelly, an Irish Army intelligence officer, and John Kelly, a "Defence Committee" (IRA) leader in Belfast, contacted arms dealers in Vienna and Frankfurt with a view to importing arms to Dublin. The attempts were unsuccessful; both men were later acquitted in a Dublin arms conspiracy trial in October 1970. But in evidence to an official committee investigating the disposal of £100,000 provided by the Irish Government for the relief of distress in the north in 1969, Capt Kelly stated that £32,500 had been spent in an attempt to acquire arms in Germany, £849 on a trip to the United States "for general assistance and arms", and £1,600 for an abortive arms purchase in Britain.

After 1970, the United States emerged as the most important single source of supply. Weapons of American origin now account for the most important section of the Provisional IRA's modern armoury, although the proportion of US

arms over arms of East European origin has probably in recent years declined.

They include the M1 carbine, the Garand armour-piercing rifle and the Armalite high velocity self-loading rifle, which first appeared in Northern Ireland in 1972. The M60 machine gun was first used in Northern Ireland early in 1978.

Successes against arms trafficking

Between 1970 and 1974, there was only limited success in detecting the illegal arms traffic from the USA. The first major success came when four men were sentenced to six years' jail in Baltimore in July 1974, after the interception in the US of 70 rifles destined for Northern Ireland. The same group had previously smuggled out an additional 88 rifles and, at the time of arrest, were reported to have placed a standing order for 100 rifles a month. Six hand guns and 10,600 rounds of ammunition were also mentioned in the indictment.

In the same month, Canadian police seized a quantity of arms - including 15 Belgian self-loading rifles, 10 sten guns and 8,000 rounds of ammunition - from a car attempting to cross the border into the US and, as a result of a series of related arms raids in Toronto and other Canadian cities, four men, all of whom admitted conspiracy to export arms to Ireland, were given jail sentences of up to two years in June 1975. In June 1976, two men involved in a large-scale arms smuggling operation in Philadelphia were convicted for conspiring to export arms illegally.

Although current estimates are that most of the effective weapons used by the Provisional IRA originate in the United States, the American authorities have had considerable success in restricting the traffic of weapons and ammunition. Recent successes have included:

- May 1981. The US Customs Service and special agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms examined a crate found at the Aer Lingus cargo terminal at JFK airport in New York. The crate, an item of

catering equipment, was found to contain 8 semi-automatic rifles and 120 rounds of ammunition.

- June 1981. A significant arms haul was made in New York. The weapons found included a 20 mm cannon with shells, a flamethrower, 21 shoulder and handguns (together with 12,500 rounds of ammunition) and booby trap components. It was in connexion with the seizure of this cache that Michael Flannery, a Director of NORAIID, was arrested.
- June 1982. The FBI announced that it had broken up a million-dollar arms operation by the Provisional IRA in New York. At a Press conference, officials said that two men, Gabriel Megahey and Andrew Duggan, had been charged with conspiracy to purchase and export weapons and munitions including five Sam missiles (at a cost of \$10,000 each), and AK15, M14 and M18 rifles. The missiles were to be used against British helicopters in Northern Ireland. The FBI said that Megahey had told an undercover FBI agent that he was the Provisional IRA's leader in the United States and that his organisation had \$1 million to spend on the purchase of weapons. At the time of his arrest Megahey, an Irish citizen, was in the United States illegally and was subject to a deportation order. Duggan, a US citizen, is a member of NORAIID.

The FBI also arrested two Irish American brothers, Eamon and Colm Meehan, and charged them with illegally shipping arms and ammunition to the Republic of Ireland in a container marked as containing roller skates and blankets. The brothers and an accomplice, Patrick McParland, were seen to collect boxes of weapons from a number of addresses in New York. Most of the weapons were seized before shipment, but a small quantity got through and were delivered to a John Maloney in Limerick on 18 June. Maloney was among a number of people arrested by the Irish police on that day.

In announcing the weapons haul, a senior FBI official said:

"There is a common conception, an erroneous conception, especially in New York, that the IRA is some type of Barry FitzGerald leprechaun. I submit that these are not the tools of a leprechaun. These are the tools of a terrorist and anyone who contributes to that cause [the IRA] is killing people just as surely as if they pull the trigger".

• July 1982. Two men were arrested after purchasing 20 M-16 automatic weapons from an undercover FBI agent in New York. Michael Murphy identified himself as a member of the IRA and his accomplice, Vincent Joner, was said to be a member of the INLA. Both men originate from County Armagh, Northern Ireland, and now live in New York City.

Ballistic and other evidence has shown that weapons of American origin have been used in some of the worst terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland. However after the success of the US Government in restricting such traffic the Provisional IRA sought alternative sources for its small arms. Limited supplies of Simonov SKS Carbines, all of Chinese manufacture and originally supplied to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), began to arrive in Northern Ireland.

Three major attempts to import arms from non-American sources have failed.

A consignment of 104 weapons and ammunition from the Omnipol arms factory in Czechoslovakia was intercepted at Amsterdam's Schipol Airport in October 1971, part of a deal initiated by the Provisional leader David O'Connell. On 28 March 1973, an arms consignment from Libya, including 250 Soviet-made automatic rifles, was found on board the ship Claudia, intercepted by the Irish Navy off the Irish coast; Joe Cahill, who was among the six Irishmen arrested on the Claudia, was later jailed for three years. In November 1977, a large consignment of arms supplied by the PLO in the Lebanon and worth approximately £250,000, was discovered on board ship in Antwerp bound for Dublin; it included

29 Kalashnikov rifles, 29 sub-machine guns, 29 machine-pistols, two Bren guns, with two spare barrels, seven rocket launchers, 56 rockets, 108 grenades, 428 lbs of TNT, nearly 400 lbs of plastic explosives, 5,600 rounds of rifle ammunition and a similar amount for the pistols, together with nearly 80 lbs of sub-machine gun ammunition, magazines, cartridges and pouches. The organiser of the shipment, Seamus McCollum, a long-standing member of the Provisional IRA, was sentenced in July 1978 to ten years' imprisonment.

The Official IRA has also made several efforts to replenish its arsenal. In February 1970, Gerry Doherty, a member of the Officials' political organisation in Britain, served 20 months for his part in a conspiracy to smuggle arms and ammunition worth £200,000 from Britain to the Republic. In November 1974, John Murphy was jailed for 18 months in Dublin for illegal importation of arms. The IRSP is also reported to have been seeking arms and in February 1979 two of its members were arrested in Greece with a car full of arms, explosives and ammunition which was said to have come from the Lebanon and to be destined for Northern Ireland.

In the period 1971 to 1982, 8,711 weapons and 1,078,349 rounds of ammunition were recovered from Republican and "Loyalist" paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. Numerous weapons have also been recovered from the IRA in the Irish Republic.

Rocket launchers and mortars

The RPG-7 rocket launcher, a Soviet-designed weapon made in Bulgaria, was first used by the Provisional IRA in November 1972. Supplies may have originated in an undetected arms deal negotiated in the Near or Middle East before the Claudia affair.

The Provisional IRA also experiments with home-made mortars although accidents originally limited their use. In March 1976, 14 mortars were used in an attack on Aldergrove Airport, Belfast, and attacks continue on army installations.

Explosives

At the beginning of its bombing campaign in Northern Ireland, the Provisional IRA relied on commercial explosives tolen from quarries and elsewhere in the Irish Republic. An IRA manual on bomb-making was discovered by security forces in Belfast in January 1972, at a time when IRA explosives experts were in a position to "manufacture unlimited quantities of explosive mix" out of ingredients derived mainly from agricultural fertiliser (Memoirs of a Revolutionary, Sean MacStiofain, 1975). Mainly as a result of this discovery the amount of explosives used more than quadrupled between 1971-72. Commercial explosive is still used in small quantities, mainly as a "booster" with other substances, but probably accounts for less than a tenth of all explosive used.

Nearly 104 tons of explosives were used by the IRA and "Loyalist" paramilitary groups from the beginning of 1971 to the end of 1982, and a further 65 tons were removed from devices before they exploded. More than 73 tons were recovered by security forces. Individual devices range from under 10 lbs to over 1,500 lbs. In June 1982 the Provisional IRA admitted placing a massive 1550 lbs car bomb in Belfast which exploded while being examined by security forces. More than 300 homes and commercial premises were either destroyed or damaged.

Several Provisional IRA explosives experts, regarded as the movement's most valuable "heroes", have been sentenced to long prison terms and others have been among marching 100 people who have been killed while handling or planting explosives in Northern Ireland in the past twelve years. A man sentenced in Belfast in December 1974 to 20 years' imprisonment claimed to have made 150 to 200 bombs. Another, who received a similar sentence in October 1975, was said to have made timing devices for bombs which caused £500,000-worth of damage in and near Belfast.

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Major discoveries of Provisionals' bomb-factories were made by irish security forces in 1975 in Co Dublin (April), Co Cork (June) and Co Donegal (October). In January 1976, 2½ tons of explosives - enough to wreck 500 cars or to make up 40-60 large car bombs - was intercepted near Newry in transit from the South. A further cache of over two tons was reported in Co Meath a few days later, and one of about four tons - the largest such discovery in the Republic in recent years - was found in Co Offaly on 13 March. In January 1980 a bomb factory was discovered near the border at Dundalk, Co Louth.

The hoax tactic

The Provisional IRA makes considerable use of hoaxes and false alarms to waste the time and resources of the security forces. It thus inflicts costly inconvenience on the population at little or no cost to the organisation.