

THE INLA DEATH WISH



1 Death In The Rossnaree Hotel

WHEN the two assassins came through the door, Hugh Torney was on his feet almost immediately. He started to run but managed to avoid getting hit by either of the two guns which were by now blazing away. Peter Stewart never managed to get out of the chair and remained seated after he was shot. By now Torney was clear away, but did sustain a wound to the hand. Thomas Power was on his feet and grabbed a stool to defend himself. John O'Reilly was also up and running. O'Reilly was a priority target. Power was gunned down and O'Reilly ran through the doorway. He was already wounded. The two assassins followed O'Reilly outside, caught up with him and shot him through the head. Thomas Power died later in hospital. Torney and Stewart survived. The INLA had half succeeded in doing what they set out to do. In December, they had sentenced Torney and O'Reilly to death. They had not intended to kill Thomas Power.

The INLA say that they watched the four men for more than a week before they killed anybody. When they went into the Rossnaree Hotel, two miles from Drogheda, they weren't sure if O'Reilly was armed, or if he was wearing a bullet-proof vest. A week earlier, the INLA feared that O'Reilly and his faction were about to attack some INLA people in Limerick. But because of the death of another man with paramilitary connections, there was a heavy garda presence in the town and this pre-empted any move by O'Reilly. They finally caught up with O'Reilly in the Rossnaree Hotel. Two Browning nine millimetre pistols were used. O'Reilly had been a volunteer in the Markets area of Belfast and was twenty-six years old. Power was thirty-three. Both men had been named in the Harry Kirkpatrick INLA informer trial. The INLA Army Council had sentenced O'Reilly and Torney to death last December, and the stated aim was to wind up the INLA and call off any operations that were planned. O'Reilly resisted the move. O'Reilly and his small

In an interview authorised by the INLA Army Council, that organisation outlines its reasons for the killing of Thomas Power and John O'Reilly in the Rossnaree Hotel near Dundalk last month. The INLA is locked into the bloodiest feud in its thirteen year history. Four people have already been killed. Unless mediation is effective, more will die. The birth, life, and now death of the INLA has been steeped in feuding and blood.

BY
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faction were not to be allowed to continue. In the words of one senior member of the INLA Army Council, the killings in Drogheda were 'the maximum use of ruthless force to deter these people'. The INLA were of the view that O'Reilly was involved mainly in criminal activities which had little to do with either a republican or socialist struggle.

To most observers, the killings in the Rossnaree made little sense. Then followed the killing of Mary McGlinchey, apparently carried out by a person with an old score to settle. The in-fighting was used as a cover for the killing. And on 5 February, Tony McCluskey was shot dead on the border by the O'Reilly faction. His death was in retaliation for the killing of O'Reilly and Power. Apparently he had no involvement with the INLA for quite some time. He was considered a soft target. The death of the INLA looks set to be as bitter and as bloody as its birth and history.

2 Costello And The Broad Front

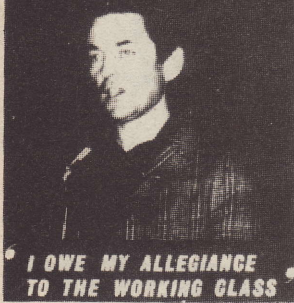
SEAMUS Costello was of the physical force tradition. He was born in 1939, and when Cathal Goulding was arrested for an arms raid in England in 1953, he became interested in politics. A year or so later, he joined Sinn Fein and the IRA. The IRA Border Campaign of 1956-62 was an ill thought out, botched affair. The IRA strategy was to shoot and blast the border away with little analysis of what they were doing. The campaign received very little popular support when it started, and when internment was introduced North and South, the move ensured the failure of the campaign. Costello commanded a unit in South Derry and the most notable action they carried out was the burning down of Magherafelt Courthouse. Six RUC and nine IRA men died in that campaign.

In the early sixties, Sinn Fein and the IRA began to analyse what had gone wrong, guided by the Marxist computer scientist Roy Johnson. The movement took

STARRY PLOUGH

SPECIAL
ISSUE

Seamus Costello: revolutionary.
Assassinated, Dublin, Oct. 5th 1977.



'Starry Plough' cover following the death of Seamus Costello in 1977.

Seamus Costello was operations officer for the Official IRA. He planned and executed various fundraising robberies. He possessed a fair amount of charisma, but was ruthless. He also possessed a political clarity which many of those around him lacked.

The Official IRA came back for Seamus Costello on 5 October 1977. He was sitting in a car near Dublin's North Strand when he was killed by shotgun blasts. Following his death the Army was thrown into panic...

a dive to the left and got involved in issues which involved agitations, such as housing, fishing rights, architecture preservation and so on. Many of the physical force republicans were disgusted and drifted away. The guns of the IRA gathered dust as the politics developed in the most significant way since the Republican Congress of the thirties.

In the late sixties, Sinn Fein dropped its abstentionist policy and decided to take seats in Leinster House if and when elected. Sinn Fein had also been involved in starting the civil rights campaign in the North, but was not in control of the movement. When the Loyalist attacks on Catholics came in 1969, there were few weapons with which to defend the Catholics. Moreover, there was not a will within the Sinn Fein leadership to do so. This resulted in the Belfast Brigade of the IRA breaking with Dublin. Effectively, the Provisional IRA was born. Later, the split was formalised when there was a walk-out from the Ard Fheis. Seamus Costello stayed with what became known as the Official IRA. He was known to be in favour of wiping out the Provos at that stage, as they could become a threat to the Officials. The re-vamped Provos brought back many of the physical force men that had drifted away.

The Officials kept their operations to a minimum, and the Provos developed a commercial bombing campaign. In 1972, the Officials called a ceasefire after they killed Ranger Best in Derry. Best was a local who was home on holidays and the bad feeling that was generated by his killing led to the ceasefire. The Officials continued to do operations. But between 1972 and 1974, there were Official IRA men carrying out actions under threat of court martial. They still held onto their weapons.

Costello was operations officer for the Officials. He planned and executed various fund-raising robberies. He possessed a fair amount of charisma, but was ruthless. He also possessed a political clarity which many of those around him lacked. The Official IRA line was that Northerners were to be supplied with weapons and explosives. The Dublin leadership were less than dutiful in fulfilling this brief. By 1974, it was increasingly clear that Costello was heading for a split with the Official IRA because he supported the Northern line. This is evidenced by the fact that he had planned robberies but didn't carry them out, knowing full well that the proceeds would go to an organisation of which he would no longer be a member within a short time. He was drummed out of the Official IRA and immediately set up the Irish Republican Socialist Party and the People's Liberation Army, later to become the Irish National Liberation Army. Many of those who joined just wanted to get on with the job of shooting British soldiers. They would have been unacceptable to the Provos for various reasons. The IRSP and PLA/INLA was a vehicle on which many individuals saw a way of moving forward, rather than a coherent political movement. They were both formed on 8 December 1974 at the Spa Hotel in Lucan. Costello envisaged a broad left front which was never to materialise. But before they were even formed, the shooting had started.

3 An Army On The Run

COSTELLO had made many journeys to Belfast prior to setting up the IRSP and its armed wing. In August 1974, he met with many Official IRA men, including Ronnie Bunting, to assess where the strengths of a new army might lie. He had been given a breakdown of who might go with him in the event of a split. The Officials started to beat people up to stop them going over to the other side. By 8 December, two potential defectors had been shot.

Billy McMillan was Officer in Command of the Belfast Brigade of the Officials. At a meeting shortly after the setting up of the IRSP, he said that they were 'nothing but a bunch of ultra leftists' and that they 'would fizzle out within a fortnight'.

The IRSP had been set up with the following aim:

'End Imperialist Rule in Ireland and Establish a Thirty-Two County Democratic Socialist Republic, with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange'. Bernadette McAlliskey was one of the founder members, but left within a year when a row developed over control of the armed wing. Having had the experience of the Officials, Costello refused to allow the army to come under the control of the political wing.

Billy McMillan had among his staff people who were on Costello's side. At one meeting he said: 'We'll smash these people within a fortnight. We're not going to let these people go like 1969'. The feud lasted five months.

INLA volunteer Hugh Ferguson was the first to die on 20 February. Five days later, the PLA killed Sean Fox, the Official IRA Quartermaster in Belfast. INLA man Danny Loughran was killed on 6 April and Official IRA man Paul Crawford was killed in reprisal seven days later. There were attempts at mediation which collapsed when the INLA shot dead McMillan on Monday, 28 April. He was buried on Wednesday and the feud was over by Thursday. The INLA had killed two top Officials in Belfast. The Officials agreed to a truce, but some people said that they would come back for Seamus Costello at a later date. Forty people had been wounded and five had died.

While the INLA was on the run for those first six months, there had been no opportunity to develop policies. The gun gained dominance. They still had few enough weapons – the feud had been fought on the INLA side with shotguns. Also in this period, they admitted anybody and everybody into membership, erroneously believing that there was strength in numbers. What emerged therefore at the end of the feud was an organisation which was qualitatively different to the one that had started out.

Militarily, the INLA was strongest in Belfast where it could claim the allegiance of about 200. Derry and Armagh city were also strong. South Derry had quite a few supporters of the INLA. Later, other areas of strength would include Dundalk, Dublin and Limerick. One of the main reasons that Dundalk and Limerick would come to support the INLA was that many Northerners were settled in those towns and some maintained paramilitary connections. Ideologically, the organisation was strongest in Dublin, but right from the start the emphasis had been on survival, not on developing policies.

The INLA were by now capable of carrying out operations on a massive scale, but were seriously hampered by lack of resources. There was a shortage of weapons and explosives – the Officials had managed to hold onto most of their equipment. In 1976, the IRSP received a blow when up to forty members were arrested in connection with the Sallins mail train robbery. The gardai believed that Costello was in the business of robbing trains.

In 1977, the INLA shot dead two soldiers in Belfast. There were also shootings of prison officers in South Derry. This was as political status was coming to an end. Basically, there were three Brigades of the INLA in the North. When intelligence came in about other potential actions, men were sent down from Belfast to carry them out. Later, the INLA was ruled by a seven-man Army Council, with the possibility of co-opting others onto it. Immediately under the Council was General Headquarters Staff. Under GHQ was various Departments, followed by Brigades and cells. The feud, and composition of the INLA, had ensured that militarily they were on the ball, but politically the new movement was going nowhere.

4 Further Disunity

THE Official IRA came back for Seamus Costello on 5 October 1977. He was sitting in a car near Dublin's North Strand when he was killed by shotgun blasts. (Years later, the INLA shot dead Jim Flynn, claiming that he had killed Costello.) Costello was the one

person in whom central control of the Army had been vested. Following his death, the Army was thrown into panic and a temporary caretaker situation pertained. Security forces in the South were worried because, with Costello gone, there was nobody to keep the lid on things, and there was a possibility that the worst elements might come to the surface. Within a short time, another, Dublin-based Chief of Staff came to power. But rows had by now begun to develop within the Army. The rows were not about ideology, but about the other stuff – guns and explosives. There simply wasn't enough of them to sustain the campaign that the INLA wanted to engage in. Many within the Army were still interested in competing with the Provos on an operational and numerical level, something that was just not possible given the nature and size of the organisation. Factions began to emerge, and a new leadership of the Army developed on an *ad hoc* basis. In 1977 and 1978, the INLA managed to open up new supply routes and armed themselves with Kalashnikov AK 47s mainly. Around this time, some weapons intended for the INLA were seized on the Turkish border. The next Chief of Staff inherited the hostility of the Northern membership because of the failure to deliver resources. This hostility was augmented by the fact that he was on the run. Throughout 1977-79, there was considerable confusion and disunity with various people emerging as Chief of Staff, only to be deposed by a vote of no-confidence when no weapons would appear. Politics took a back seat in the scramble for weapons and control.

In 1978, the INLA took half a million pounds during the Brinks Mat robbery at Barna Gap in Limerick. Prominent members like Noel Little, Miriam Daly and Ronnie Bunting were assassinated by Loyalists. Throughout 1978 and 1979, the Army was fairly active in Armagh City. But there were many in the ranks who had little or no political inclinations. The INLA ranks had been swelled by Provos who left during the mid-seventies ceasefire. There were up to one hundred INLA members in jail.

In 1979, the INLA killed Airey Neave in London. One reason why they could carry out such an operation at the House of Commons was that the INLA were less well known than the Provos. The operation also suggested that the organisation was stronger than it actually was. In 1980, there were still personality differences within the movement, but when the first hunger strike came along that year, they were deferred. On 10 December 1980, a UDR man was shot dead by the INLA in Albert Street in Belfast. That killing was to mark one of the most intense periods of military activity the INLA had seen. And at one time, they were carrying out more actions than the Provos.

5 The Hunger Strikes

THE first hunger strike ended just before Christmas 1980 when it appeared that the five demands – effectively political status – had been conceded. The second hunger strike started in 1981. The men were determined that there would be no surrender until the end. Dramatically and horrifically, ten men (including three INLA men) died, one by one. The groundswell of support was enormous, both North and South. In the North, people queued up to join the Provos and the INLA. The INLA became militarily efficient in a limited sphere, mainly where they were strong – Belfast, Derry, Armagh. The Provos, on the other hand, refused to accept new recruits into membership. Support for the hunger strikers was channelled into support groups. But the INLA accepted many new people, and attracted even more as a result of carrying out more actions. The result was that many people were taken in and armed.

But there was still problems between Dublin and Belfast. There was simply not enough supplies to keep going at the level the people in Belfast wanted to. Around this time, the Belfast leadership was deposed at gunpoint; guns were borrowed from wherever they could be got and plans were drawn up for countless



INLA volunteers in training in the North in the late seventies.

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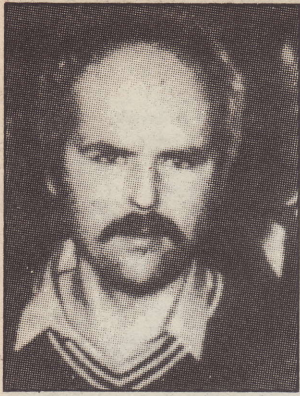
operations, including the detonation of a bomb along the route of the Royal Wedding. Following the deposition of the Belfast leadership, relations with Dublin broke down completely. The Northern Command were on their own.

The significance of having so many new members was made apparent in the early part of 1982 when the supergrass informers emerged. One person was picked up and started to name people and they in turn were taken in and started to name others. The informers hit the INLA far harder than the IRA because of the number of new, and sometimes relatively inexperienced recruits they had taken in. Also, some of the recruits would be less than desirable in terms of their personalities. John Grimley implicated twenty-two people; Sean Mallon just three; Jackie Goodman named thirty-six; Robert McAllister, thirteen. Harry Kirkpatrick named everyone, including his own sister, to a total of more than eighty. But the Crown proceeded against just thirty-three.

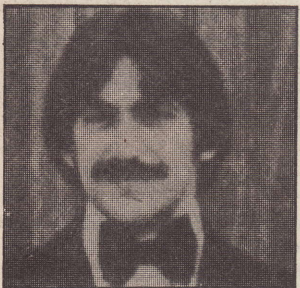
6 Kirkpatrick

KIRKPATRICK was pretty indicative of the sort of people who had been recruited and the way they were recruited. Kirkpatrick had been with the Officials but had gone with Costello and the INLA. In 1975, he got nine years for robbing a bank with his friend Gerard Barkley. He was released in October 1980 and went to see INLA Brigade Quartermaster in Belfast, Jackie Goodman, about getting The Start again. He eventually was made Assistant Operations Officer and for sixteen months he was involved in killings, conspiracies, explosions, shootings and so on. He was implicated twice by other informers, but was released. Gerard Barkley was asked to go to Dundalk to collect weapons for some operations in the North. He was shot in the head. Kirkpatrick started to talk. He named everybody and the entire Brigade Staff in Belfast were arrested in one fell swoop. Many in Armagh and other areas were also taken in. Kirkpatrick got life for various murders. He sent twenty-six men down for a couple of thousand years. They were released last December when the convictions were quashed.

Last December, the INLA Army Council took a decision to wind up the INLA for good. But in the previous three years or so there had been other developments which had split the movement into various factions. In Derry for example, it was claimed that INLA people were engaged in robberies for personal gain. In the wake of the Kirkpatrick arrests, the INLA was left pretty much leaderless, and some of their



McGlinchey was very much influenced by his wife Mary. While he did have strong political views which changed from time to time, he was very much a man of action . . . When he was finally captured, whatever unity remained within the INLA began to fragment. His personal courage and personality had held the movement together.



Superglass Harry Kirkpatrick: informed on everybody.

'The decision was taken last December to wind up the organisation. It was the result of debate, analysis and negotiation. We started it and we have to finish it . . . What we are saying is that the political analysis and decision to dissolve the INLA, because of its corrupt and degenerate nature, will not simply go away'.

actions damaged the organisation enormously. Those activities ceased after the Provos issued a warning that they would do something about it unless it stopped.

7 McGlinchey

THERE were also operations carried out of a much more serious nature. Towards the end of 1982, for example, a soldier was killed in Divis Flats, which had always been a stronghold of the INLA. In killing the soldier, two children were also blown up, which caused much resentment and bitterness in Divis. The operations officer in that area had been given six detailed operations which were never done. Instead, a five pound bomb was detonated as a soldier walked on a balcony, but there was no 'clear line of sight' on the target and the two children were never spotted. The Ballykelly Droppin' Well bombing was also carried out around this time, in which off duty soldiers and civilians died. Dominic McGlinchey was released from jail in early 1982. Previously he had been in the Provos and had been very active in South Derry. He had various disagreements with the Provos and joined the INLA as a volunteer. Within a couple of months, he was operations officer, and was later made Chief of Staff. McGlinchey had been ten years on the run and in and out of jail. Now he was forced to go on the run once again. Early in 1982, a working arrangement between Dublin and Belfast was worked out which meant that there was a truce, at least for a period. With McGlinchey on the run, communication between the various officers in the INLA began to deteriorate. People could say that they had been ordered to do a particular action and there was no way of checking it out. Between 1981 and the present, there have been about six Chiefs of Staff of the INLA.

But things began to go badly wrong. Towards the end of 1982 there were two sectarian killings in East Belfast carried out by a person who had access to INLA weapons. One was of a twenty-two year old schoolteacher and the other was a sixty-nine year old Protestant pensioner. Then a volunteer got weapons to go and carry out an operation North of Armagh, but went to Darkley Gospel Hall instead and shot dead three people who were praying. During this period, when McGlinchey was on the run, various groups started to stake out claims for themselves. In the media, McGlinchey was blamed for almost everything that happened in this period. He was finally captured following a shoot-out in Clare on 17 March 1984, and extradited to the North.

McGlinchey was very much influenced by his wife Mary. And while he did have strong political views which changed from time to time, he was much more a man of action. In an interview with Vincent Browne of the *Sunday Tribune* towards the end of 1983, he mirrored in his language Tom Barry's 'Guerrilla Days in Ireland'. When he was finally captured, whatever unity remained within the INLA began to fragment. His personal courage and personality had held the movement together. The co-existence between Dublin and Belfast grew to an uneasy close and various factions emerged, all looking for control.

8 The INLA Fragmented

FIRST of all there was the mainstream INLA based in Belfast. John O'Reilly, who was killed in Drogheda, had been Chief of Staff, but was ousted when other leading members were released from jail. O'Reilly continued to gather supporters around to attempt to take back control of the INLA. There was another grouping based in Dublin, which was centred on a couple of individuals who had been close to Seamus Costello. Then there was a grouping in jail held there on the word of Harry Kirkpatrick.

From inside the jail, contacts were established with a view to winding up the entire organisation. The mainstream INLA, the Dublin group, and the jail group came together. This was greatly facilitated by the re-

lease of the Kirkpatrick people just before Christmas. However, it was clear that there would be no easy solutions.

In July 1985, Seamus Ruddy was killed in Paris. The INLA say that this killing was carried out by O'Reilly in order to discover the routes of arms. Ruddy was tortured before he was killed. It's also claimed that O'Reilly was responsible for the attempt on the life of Gerry Roche in Limerick later the same year. O'Reilly was arrested and held in Portlaoise on foot of an extradition warrant but the attempted extradition failed and he was released. The INLA say that O'Reilly and the faction led by him were involved in extortion and intimidation. In any event, the three groupings came together, ostensibly to wind up the organisation. Another grouping, seemingly some sort of maverick organisation calling itself the Irish People Liberation Army has come into being and has been involved in several attacks over the past few months. Late last year, O'Reilly's group put on an impressive display of arms on the border. They undoubtedly have major firepower, but the combined three groupings are numerically superior. It has been said that the O'Reilly-led faction has no more than ten hard liners in Belfast, with other pockets of support in Dundalk and elsewhere. In the longer term, it may well be that the INLA will be wound up, and this may be the object of the current round of killings, but the general perception is that it is a power struggle for control of weapons and territory. There is every likelihood that there will be more killings, and that the current hostilities will be used as a cover for other people with old scores to settle.

9 The INLA Interviewed

WHEN asked how the decision to wind-up came about, the spokesman said 'Last summer, people were contacted with a view to winding it up and to have a formal assessment of people's positions and to find out their commitment to see this thing through. The decision was taken last December to wind up the organisation. It was the result of debate, analysis and negotiation. We started it [the INLA] and we have to finish it.'

It was put to the spokesperson that it would appear extremely unlikely that many INLA members, who had been engaged in actions - some for seventeen years - would easily dump arms and walk away. What was going to happen to the weapons and the men?

'We have substantial amounts of weapons. And any decision taken in relation to logistics or resources or prisoners will be taken after the order to dissolve has been fully enforced. Those people who are committed to revolutionary socialism in Ireland will find ways and means whereby they can contribute to the struggle. No plans currently exist for any new movement because the comrades now involved in dissolving the INLA are not anxious to be involved in what could be called a Failure Mark Three. Republicanism in Ireland is adequately served by Sinn Fein and the IRA. If you're talking about revolutionary socialism or communism, you're talking about a further development. A new organisation at this point is premature.'

It has been claimed that O'Reilly and the other three were in the Rosnaree Hotel near Drogheda on a peace mission. What do the INLA have to say about the accusation that the men were lured to their deaths?

'If the public examine contradictory statements coming from the remnants of a criminal band led by O'Reilly, they will see that at one point these people claim O'Reilly was lured to his death, and then later that Tony McCluskey passed on detailed information about the whereabouts of O'Reilly. These two positions are mutually exclusive. They are so contradictory as to be ludicrous. Each of the four were under observation for a week prior to the attack because our intelligence revealed that they had planned to move against republican socialists in Limerick a week earlier. The Army Council decision was to kill Torney and O'Reilly. It was not the intention to kill Thomas Power.'



INLA volunteers in training in the North in the late seventies.

But if the intention was not to kill Thomas Power, and the INLA clearly failed in that, does it not show that the INLA is not capable of striking in a very specific way so as to minimise the danger to people who are not involved?

'His death resulted from his sudden manoeuvres in an operational situation. The volunteer concerned, thinking he was about to be attacked, fired on Power in an attempt to incapacitate him. Power was not the same type of person as O'Reilly and the criticism that the Army Council would have of Power was that he lent credence and credibility to this criminal gang by his presence. O'Reilly sought to manipulate Power's credibility in any conflict. If Torney and these people around him desist now, no further action will be taken against them. If he continues to bear arms against the Army Council, he will be pursued, whether it takes six months or six years.'

But is there not a possibility that many people are going to get killed before this thing is all over? Is there not a strong possibility that outsiders are also going to get killed? What about retaliatory killings?

'We have conducted our intelligence on the O'Reilly gang and we are satisfied that their capacity and will to resist over any period of time is limited. It is significant that both garda and RUC security forces have recently voiced the same opinion. It doesn't stop if they hit one of us. The Army Council is not naive or arrogant enough to believe that this gang could not kill one of our members. What we are saying is that the political analysis and decision to dissolve the INLA, because of its corrupt and degenerate nature, will not simply go away. The decision to dissolve is not the mere whim of any individual, or group of individuals. It is the product of long and considered debate covering twelve years of practice inside an organisation that lost its way and is now degenerate.'

Does the INLA accept that the current round of

In the longer term, it may well be that the INLA will be wound up, and this may be the object of the current round of killings, but the general perception is that it is a power struggle for control of weapons and territory. There is every likelihood that there will be further killings and that the current hostilities will be used as a cover for people with old scores to settle.

hostilities is very damaging, and that in fact, the shooting could go on for a long time?

'The INLA would accept that the long inter-factional activity does have a negative effect on the community in the short term. However, we realise that the only positive contribution to be made now by the INLA is to disband. This cannot be done any other way while a small group of criminals retain arms in an attempt to dent the legitimate decision of the leadership to dissolve the organisation.'

Have the INLA any involvement with the recent organisation that has sprung up — the Irish People's Liberation Army — which has claimed several actions in the past few months? Are those involved former members of the INLA?

'The INLA Army Council are not involved in, and have no knowledge of, the IPLA. That organisation has issued its own statements confirming that they are in no way involved in the INLA. They exist in a parallel dimension to the INLA and have no influence on our decision to dissolve.'

Was the INLA in any way involved with the murder of Mary McGlinchey? 'The INLA Army Council reiterate the fact that we were in no way involved in the murder of Mary McGlinchey. We condemn the action and we regard any attack on any female relative of any activist as the lowest form of political and moral cowardice. The INLA Army Council extend their sympathy and condolences to Dominic McGlinchey and his family circle.'

The spokesman said that Tony McCluskey was 'a former republican activist and was not formally associated with the INLA.'

How long does the INLA think the shooting will go on for?

'It's difficult to put a time-scale on it. At present, we are aware of the whereabouts of various individuals and we are monitoring the situation. At the same time, we are also extending diplomatic overtures to any of the people currently associated with the criminal gang formally led by O'Reilly through established intermediaries.'

If it is now recognised that the INLA is a redundant force, why was the decision not taken to wind-up at an earlier stage?

'For a number of years, the revolutionary elements within the INLA attempted to correct the path on which the organisation found itself. As a result of the thorough-going analysis of the organisation's potential, people decided that they had no other option but to dissolve the organisation and disband.'

What was the attitude of the INLA to the declaration by the IRSP over two years ago that it was a Marxist-Leninist party?

'In October 1984, all the INLA in the jails were stood down. But the structures inside the jails continued. It was an attempt to graft on "Marxist Leninist" to the party. The reason was that the original republican ground had been taken over by Sinn Fein following the European and General elections. The party felt safe in some obscure position on the left. In 1983 there weren't sixteen Marxists in the party, and the following year the party declared itself "Marxist Leninist".'

The IRSP too has seemingly disappeared. Its paper, *The Starry Plough*, hasn't appeared for some time, and their Belfast centres have effectively closed. What may emerge from the current situation is anybody's guess. One thing is clear — the INLA are quite determined to kill off the organisation. But before that finally comes to pass, there may be some horrific and ferocious blood letting. According to the spokesman for the INLA Army Council, the two killings in the Rossmaree Hotel represented 'the maximum use of ruthless force to deter these people.'

The INLA has always shown itself capable of using maximum and ruthless force. And while those within the INLA can see clearly what they are doing, and why, to most observers the death throes of the organisation look insane. The INLA, baptised in blood letting, looks set to die in a similar fashion.