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*Glenroe
Newsflash:*

**MACGIOLLA
GUERRILLA**

*The Worker's
Party at War*

SOMETHING'S STIRRING! *(and it's not
the Tea...)*

MACGIOLLA'S GUERRILLAS

TOMAS MacGiolla took his organisation through some extraordinary changes in the quarter of a century that he was President. Elected President of Sinn Fein without opposition in 1962, he recently announced his imminent departure from the Presidency of the Workers' Party.

He presided over a party which had changed its name and its policies on a number of occasions, and has given the party a clean image in the South at any rate. His party came through the sixties with its sister, the IRA, and emerged into the eighties to take seats in Leinster House. It is arguable that it was time for Tomas MacGiolla to go, that he could bring the party no further, and that it was time for a younger man to take over. The party has always maintained that the Official IRA went out of existence in 1972, after a ceasefire was called.

MacGiolla was born in Nenagh in 1924 and worked for the ESB between 1948 and 1977. During the IRA Border Campaign of 1956-62 he was interned for twenty-one months. Publicly there was very little known of his military involvement during this period, if any. It was he who led the party to the breakthrough it achieved by getting TDs elected in the November 1982 election. But the party has failed to capitalise on its initial successes, and remains with only four TDs in Leinster House.

Prionsias De Rossa, hotly tipped as the next WP leader, was born in 1940 and joined the junior wing of the IRA when he was twelve. In 1957, he joined Sinn Fein and worked to get Tom Mitchell elected to parliament. Mitchell was a prisoner in Crumlin Road jail in Belfast at the time. De Rossa spent twenty months interned in Mountjoy and Crumlin Road. He is respected within the party, but he has gone on record with views which might be taken to be at odds with others within his organisation. For example, Belfast Workers' Party councillor, Seamus Lynch, last week called for full support for the RUC. Another Workers' Party spokesperson in Belfast, Mary McMahon, has consistently called for full support and cooperation with the RUC by nationalists. But the current positions of both McMahon and Lynch contrast sharply with what De Rossa has said. In an interview with *Graltan* magazine in October 1983, he said, 'We have policy, developed as far back as 1975, of demanding the de-militarisation of the RUC.

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, THE LEADERSHIP OF THE OFFICIAL REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT (NOW THE WORKERS' PARTY) STATED THAT THEIR ARMED WING, THE OFFICIAL IRA, WENT OUT OF EXISTENCE. TODAY, THE OFFICIAL IRA IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING MAINLY IN BELFAST AND NEWRY. IN THE DAYS WHEN BOTH ORGANISATIONS WERE OPERATING IN AN OVERT WAY, THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY AND THE ARMY OVERLAPPED TO A CERTAIN DEGREE. TOMAS MACGIOLLA, THE MAN WHO LED THE OFFICIAL PARTY FOR THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED THE POSITION THAT THE ARMY WENT OUT OF EXISTENCE IN 1972. BUT THE OFFICIAL IRA STILL MARCH ON, NOT AN ARMY FIGHTING THE BRITISH, BUT AS A FUND-COLLECTING AGENCY. DEREK DUNNE TRACES THE ROOTS OF THE OFFICIAL IRA AND THE WORKERS' PARTY.

So we, in fact, give only qualified support to the RUC, with demands that it be reformed, de-militarised and have a complaints procedure etc'. This *volte face*, while it may appear insignificant on the surface, goes to the heart of the contradictions within the Workers' Party.

THE Workers' Party have a tightly structured centralist organisation, with more or less the same people running the show for the past twenty-five years. One of the most influential of these has been Sean Garland, current general secretary. In April of this year, he wrote a fifteen page letter to the editor of *International Affairs*, a Moscow-based publication, in response to an article about the North which had appeared in the paper. In his letter, Mr Garland stated that in 1969 'The Provisionals began what has continued to this day, a vicious campaign of sectarian assassination'. Throughout the letter, there was barely a mention of the Official IRA — the army traditionally aligned to Official Sinn Fein, and what is now the Workers' Party. In a comment on Bloody Sunday in 1972, Mr Garland stated that the occasion 'provided the Provisionals and their allies with material to attempt to justify their own terrorist activities'. There was no mention of the Aldershot bombing, which was carried out by the Official IRA at the time. At Aldershot, which was the Official IRA response to Bloody Sunday, five cleaning women, a gardener and a priest were killed by a 280 pound bomb at the Parachute Regiment Headquarters. Neither did Mr Garland tell *International Affairs* of the fact that the Official IRA shot dead unionist politician Senator Jack Barnhill, or that they attempted to assassinate John Taylor, another unionist politician. Neither did he mention that the Official IRA killed dozens of British soldiers.

He went on to say that 'The enemy today is Anglo American imperialism... we must all the time be conscious of this fact'. He makes no mention of the fact that the Workers' Party support what could be termed the bastion of 'Anglo American imperialism — multinational investment. Neither did he mention that WP are now effectively pro-EEC. Sean Garland is indicative of the Workers' Party today. He epitomises the contradictions and the changes that have manifested themselves.

It could be considered a source of wonderment how a party that has changed so much could still be led by the same people. What is now the Workers' Party has gone from a position of traditional militant republicanism to espousing an ideology which is ostensibly hard left. They also claim to have severed all links with their military tendency. However, the Official IRA is still active, mainly in Belfast.

Sean Garland's involvement goes back more than thirty years. Towards the end of 1955, when he was in the IRA, he was involved in an aborted attempt to free Cathal Goulding, a senior member of the organisation, from a British jail, using a hired DC3 aeroplane. He also joined the British Army to gather intelligence for an IRA raid on Gough Barracks, and in 1956, took part in the raid on Brookborough Barracks. During that raid, two IRA men, Sean South and Fergal O'Hanlon, were killed. Garland was hit in the leg. When he returned South, he was arrested and given six months in jail for refusing to answer questions.

Garland was a part of the re-think that went on within the republican movement from 1960 onwards. So also was Goulding, a Marxist computer scientist called Roy Johnston, Tomas MacGiolla and others.

Goulding had been elected onto the Army Council — the supreme body of the IRA — in the forties and had spent eight years in British jails for his part in the raid on Felsted Barracks when the IRA tried to steal weapons. As a result of his imprisonment, he missed the Border Campaign. In 1962, he was at an extraordinary Army Convention — the meeting of volunteers — at which the dropping of abstentionism was brought up. The dropping of abstentionism would allow Sinn Fein elected representatives to take their seats in Leinster House, Stormont and Westminster. Goulding was later to say of this proposal: 'We wanted to clear the ground (in the North) for political action. In other words to gain freedom for political manoeuvrability. The first thing we needed was civil rights'. He was the acknowledged Chief of Staff of the IRA.

Roy Johnston returned to Ireland in 1963 and involved himself with the Wolfe Tone Society. He became education officer for the movement, as well as its political commissar. Johnston, Goulding and MacGiolla developed their own version of Marxism, peculiar to the Irish situation. They had few links with international groups, and they began to develop the perspective — in the light of the failed military campaign — which the Workers' Party espouses today. That perspective still has very few international connections, and embodies a form of Marxism which is unique to the Irish situation.

The nucleus of the movement, which included the three men, took a decision to effectively drop the physical force emphasis which had existed within the IRA and Sinn Fein. It was Johnston who argued that if links were sufficiently forged between the people and the movement, it would be possible for their representatives to enter 'illegal' places such as Leinster House, without being corrupted. Sinn Fein involved itself with agitations, housing rights and fish-ins. It moved away from the simplistic view that the border could be removed exclusively through violence. But as it did so, the older and more militarily-minded among its members moved away from the movement. Johnston was in favour of launching a civil rights movement in the North, and wanted the IRA to control it. The socialist strategy adopted by Johnston called for an expansion of the base of the party into



Kellie Strom

urban areas through involvement in agitations. In time, that traditional rural base would be eroded completely. The party moved from a position of being on the side of 'small farmers' to one where they were against all farmers. Apparently this change was adopted because they wished to capitalise on the rural/urban divide and show up the differences between the two. In that they were largely successful, and the party prepared in those heady days for the inevitable socialist triumph that appeared to be just ahead. They had also taken up the Stages Theory.

The Stages Theory, while not a new concept by any means, was adopted specially for the Irish situation. It held that agitation around the civil rights issue in the North would be a means to allow democratic capitalism to be established. The working class, North and South, would come together. The final stage held that the government would act repressively towards this class and then a co-ordinated militant action would overthrow capitalism on the whole island. The theory was a breakthrough for a movement which has for so long stagnated and was a specific tactical blueprint for action.

The civil rights movement started. It was not controlled by Sinn Fein, although there were Sinn Fein members in it. The loyalists attacked nationalist areas in August 1969. Johnston's script had nothing in it about armed defence of the population. His theory has assumed that people could exercise basic democratic rights, which were presumed to exist under Stage One. The theory fell to pieces as the IRA scrambled to get guns to defend the people. The old militarists returned and made much play about the fact that there was no guns to defend anybody. The Dublin government became involved in funding defence committees. There was a split within Sinn Fein and the IRA. The Provos and the Officials were born, in 1969. Two armies emerged which were to develop in radically different ways.

BETWEEN 1969 and 1974, the political and military control of the Official IRA was vested in more or less the same people. That situation continued for a number of years into the seventies.

Tomas MacGiolla was chairman of the Army Council, the Army Executive (the body responsible for the day-to-day running of the Official IRA and membership of which largely overlapped with the Army Council) and the Army Convention, the assembly of volunteers. (This last did not meet between 1969 and 1972).

Sean Garland was also on the Army Council by virtue of the fact that he was Adjutant General of the IRA, Michael Ryan because he was Director of Intelligence, Seamus Costello because he was Director of Operations. Other members were Derry Dineen, Quartermaster General and Sean Kenny, International Affairs. Malachy McGurrian was OC of the North and was also on the Army Council. Eamonn Smullen also attended following his return from Britain in 1973.

While it is publicly known that Cathal Goulding was on the Army Council and Executive by virtue of the fact that he was Chief of Staff, the other leading members of what is now the Workers' Party were less than forthcoming about the part they played. In public, none have ever admitted being on the Army Council, the supreme decision-making body of the movement. Neither have any stated publicly when, if at all, they relinquished their posts.

Eamon Smullen was another very influential figure in the movement. He had spent



Cathal Goulding



Eamon Smullen

time in Portlaoise during the Emergency. He had been aligned with the Communist Party in Britain and was active in the trade union movement. He was convicted in Britain of conspiring to buy arms and returned to Ireland in 1973.

It was Smullen who developed the 'infiltrationist' tactics of the party. The objective was to saturate various areas such as the media and unions with members and supporters. In this they have been largely successful.

The Army Council of the Official IRA was elected from the Army Convention, and the Council in turn appointed the Executive. The Army Council were party to and conscious of all policy decisions taken. OCs from all command areas attended meetings from time to time — Belfast, County Derry, Derry City, Newry South Armagh, Donegal, Dublin, Waterford, Cork, Limerick.

Between 1969 and mid-1972, when the Official IRA called its ceasefire, they actively engaged the British Army. This is today presented by members of the Workers' Party as some kind of aberration.

BY 1972, the Official IRA had about 150 active members in the city. They were arranged into companies and battalions and had an assortment of old weapons — MIs, Winchester, M3 Grease guns, Garrand rifles and some 303s. They were all bolt action weapons. On at least three separate occasions, MacGiolla made his way to Derry to talk with the Official IRA Command Staff there. One occasion was when IRA man Joe McCann was killed in action. The Command meeting was called to discuss what retaliation should take place as a result of the killing. But by the time MacGiolla arrived in Derry, the Official IRA had already shot dead two British soldiers. The Derry Command also consulted with other members of the party in those days, such as Garland, Andy Smith and Lar Malone.

Another occasion when Tomas MacGiolla went to Derry was following the killing of Senator Jack Barnhill on 12 December 1971. It was claimed that he had been killed in a struggle when the Official IRA were about to burn down his house. (Roy Johnston resigned from the movement over this). MacGiolla initially condemned the action, unaware that his own organisation had carried it out.

The third occasion when Tomas MacGiolla consulted with the Derry Command staff was in 1972, following the killing of Ranger Best in the city. Best was a local man who had joined the British army and was home on leave. There was a standing Official IRA order which stated that all soldiers were to be killed, in or out of uniform. This followed Bloody Sunday. Aldershot had also followed Bloody Sunday, but Aldershot had been planned for a year ahead, and a decision had already been taken prior to Bloody Sunday to prepare Britain for war on home ground.

Malachy McGurrian, OC of the North, was fully aware that Best had been 'arrested' by the Official IRA. Following the killing, he oversaw the press release which talked about the 'slobbering moderates' who condemned the action. (Incidentally, Malachy McGurrian was one of the people Tomas MacGiolla complimented on taking the movement along a more peaceful line after 1962).

Sean Garland ordered an inquiry into the shooting of Best and Dublin wished to take disciplinary action against those involved, including shooting the Derry OC. The Army Executive discussed the matter, and the motion to shoot the OC was defeated by just one vote — that of Seamus Costello's. Costello stated that the day the Official IRA shot one of its own for killing a British soldier, that would be the day he would leave the organisation.

The Stalinist Dublin leadership used the Ranger Best killing to call a ceasefire, but allowed members to use weapons for defence and retaliation. The defence and retaliation clause was effectively a sop to the younger members in Belfast who would have joined the Provos if there was no military activity within the Official IRA. Cathal Goulding was quoted as saying around this time — when the Official IRA was supposed to have gone out of existence — 'I'm a physical force revolutionary. I'm not naive enough to think that we don't have to use guns. An armed proletariat is the only assurance that they can have the rule of the proletariat'.

In the nine months preceding the ceasefire, the Derry Official IRA killed twenty-one British soldiers. At that time, Free Derry was in existence, and the Officials operated in conjunction with Saor Eire and the Provos. Dublin, from where all the supplies came, started to scale down the war before the ceasefire was called. They sent up wrong ammunition in order to slow down activity. Dublin, even prior to the ceasefire, were clearly worried about the direction their Derry comrades were taking.

Derry had its own paper, *The Starry Plough*, which was selling almost as many copies as the Official publication, *The United Irishman*. (Incidentally, Eamonn McCann contributed to both publications at this time, and for six months in 1972, wrote all the editorials for the *UI*). The Derry Command were placed under the watchful eye of McGurrian for a period. Eventually in 1974, when Seamus Costello split with the Officials and started up the Irish Republican Socialist Party and the Irish National Liberation Army, most of Derry went with him. Following that split, three Official IRA assassins took over a house in Rathlin Gardens in the city, but later aborted their mission to assassinate the three Derry INLA men. The three assassins defected shortly afterwards.

Before the split with the Official IRA, the Derry Command had been preparing. They had carried out robberies to fund weaponry, and didn't pass the money on to Dublin. If the split had not occurred, they would have set up their own private army. Derry was unique in that it was totally politicised, but not in the way Dublin liked.

Throughout the early seventies, Garland was always considered a hard man by Derry. Mick Ryan was his sidekick. Goulding was not taken seriously and MacGiolla was considered a bit of a father figure. Belfast, meanwhile, was having its own problems, and Dublin's decision to scale down the war was not welcomed.

LIAM McMillan was the OC in Belfast. He was one of the 180 or so people who had emerged from internment in Crumlin Road in 1962 to a shattered movement. He took over Belfast two years later, and built up the number of activists to 120 in a five-year period. He was quite ruthless, as evidenced in an interview he gave in 1972 in which he responded to a question about whether or not the Official IRA should have wiped out the Provos at birth. 'Well, this was discussed at one stage. But the attitude of the movement was that if we did have an all out go at the Provos that the British Army would only be standing on the sidelines rubbing their hands, and we would have been doing their job for them'.

McMillan was trusted militarily and politically by the Dublin leadership. The rank and file in Belfast resented the direction taken by Dublin. The Official IRA was structured in units, with up to forty people in each. They ran training camps in Donegal and Louth and their weapons were mainly old bolt-action rifles. In September 1972, four months after the ceasefire was called, Patricia McKay was killed when a bomb she was carrying went off. The ceasefire had been called without any consultation with the membership. Twenty-three out of twenty-four Belfast units voted to overturn the ceasefire, but McMillan refused to convey the decision to Dublin on the basis that it was not unanimous. A loose, fast and liberal interpretation was put on the defence and retaliation clause. People like Gerry Steenson, who appeared on fourteen IRA court martials for breaking the ceasefire, gradually became a law unto themselves. Major criticism of the people in Dublin — MacGiolla, Goulding, Garland — began to emerge and Seamus Costello became the focus for this. Costello argued for a return to the armed struggle, and for placing the national question firmly on the agenda. He was ousted from the IRA.

Official Sinn Fein was by now calling for a democratisation of the North and disagreed with the abolition of Stormont. Dessie O'Hagan, MacGiolla, Garland and Goulding were publicly arguing that the armed struggle was sectarian and that class unity had to be built in advance of a British withdrawal. Seamus Lynch, now a WP councillor in Belfast, sided with the Dublin leadership, as did his brother Martin. The Greater West Belfast Community Association was set up and the Official IRA and the UDA held structured talks under its umbrella as the Dublin leadership attempted to stamp out the military activity which was now beyond their control, and outside their ideology. Dissidents were ousted. Rules and regulations were introduced which mitigated against their enemies within the movement. One standing order stated that all members of the Official IRA had to be members of their local Cumann. Suspension from one automatically meant expulsion from the other. Dissidents



found themselves suspended for minor breaches of discipline.

At the Official Sinn Fein Ard Fheis in Liberty Hall in 1973, Costello circulated a list of twelve people he believed could rescue the movement from the direction it had taken. Dessie O'Hagan also circulated an alternative to that list but it was Costello alone who was charged. Witnesses who were to give evidence on Costello's behalf found themselves under suspension.

Costello knew that the break was coming and had postponed carrying out certain fundraising operations. He also had people who remained inside the Official IRA and who were in key positions within the Intelligence Department. The Official IRA Intelligence Department supplied names of people likely to defect in the event of a split, and the Officials ended up staking out some of their men and arming some of the opposition. In November 1974, the Officials started to beat up potential defectors. Kevin Rafferty and Vincent Fagan were beaten in Belfast.

That same year, Belfast had held a convention to find out if the Officials should contest elections. The vote went against the motion — sixty-six to sixty-four. The leadership demanded and got three recounts. In the following two weeks, whole cumanns found themselves suspended from membership. Another convention was called and the original decision was recinded. The leadership had demanded the second convention 'due to groundswell of opinion among the ranks.'

Half of Belfast went with the INLA. A feud followed which left five dead and more than forty injured. Sean Garland was among those who were shot. Liam McMillan stated at a Belfast Command meeting that he 'would smash the IRSP within a fortnight.' As truce talks were under way, Gerry Steenson, still a teenager, shot McMillan dead. The feud ended a few days later following the intervention of an intermediary. (An order went out that Costello was to be shot in retaliation, and he was killed by Dublin Official IRA commander Jim Flynn in 1977. Flynn was killed by the INLA in 1982).

Prior to the split, Garland had proposed that there be one structure for the army and the party. It was generally held that Goulding was the mind behind the decision to wind down the military end of things. The party had come to firmly believe that in order for their revised Stages Theory to work, another stage would have to be inserted. Now the script read that the Catholic and Protestant working class would have to be united before anything else could happen. What key personnel within Official Sinn Fein and the Official IRA said around this time about armed resistance is worthy of note. For example, in 1970, Cathal Goulding, then acknowledged Chief of Staff of the Official IRA, said 'I believe the job of pushing the British troops out of Ireland will eventually have to be done by ourselves', and that 'we do advocate physical force against the establishment', and that 'the people are only safe when they have an armed force to resist a dictatorship by the right.' A private statement by the Official movement, issued in one of its internal documents in the mid-seventies, and entitled 'Differences', makes interesting reading. 'It is said that we (Official Sinn Fein) have 'gone political' and that we have rejected or begun to reject any form of military action. Whenever necessary, and in keeping with our policy, units have engaged in military action ... Our main force consists of a few small units, underarmed, ill equipped, and with God knows what degree and training and organisation.'

The above is typical of the approach of the Officials to politics. While seeking to promote the party as one which has renounced violence and the gun, (at this stage the Official IRA was supposed to be three years gone), in private, there was in existence a clandestine army.

DURING the mid seventies, the Officials underwent a major change. There was first of all their famous conference and various papers were delivered and discussed. The Research Department outlined that they were in favour of multi-national investment, rather than align the party with what they saw as being SDLP/Provo small-scale business, with the Unionists in control at the top.

By the mid seventies, the SDLP had consolidated its middle class Catholic vote and the Provos had taken the military road. The Unionists were equally entrenched, and the Officials, in order to survive had to carve out a new ideological niche for themselves. Since they had already renounced armed struggle as a means of attaining power their policies and direction had to be discernibly different from anything else on the political scene in order to attract support. Hence the evolution of tortured and changed positions on a range of issues from the EEC to the RUC to multi-national investment.

At the same Mornington conference, there was another paper delivered by J. Garland during which the following question was posed: 'The question for the leadership (of the Official movement), as put by a foreign observer, was: "How can a revolutionary group shift priorities when it is dominated by a secret army organised for military purposes, led largely by men sympathetic first and foremost to military action, staffed by volunteers who joined not another party but an army, and hampered by deeply orthodox traditional civilian organisation suspicious to politics?"' That question encompassed the central question relating to the Official movement, and one which has never been completely and satisfactorily resolved.

Another aspect of the Official movement that was always uppermost in the minds of the leadership was discipline. This also came up at the Mornington conference and it was pointed out that failure to comply with a 'direction' from the Ard Comhairle was no different from opting out of the organisation altogether. As Tomas MacGiolla succinctly put it 'The need for a tight organisational structure and disciplined membership is paramount'.

By the mid seventies also, Derry had ceased to be a base of substantial support for the Officials. Belfast, Dublin and Newry became the power centres. Gradually, all orders came from Dublin. In 1977 and 1978, the Official IRA was still actively recruiting in Newry. There were also a large back-up of people who were no longer militarily involved. They were brought out for a day a year to fire weapons, to keep their hand in and to keep their support. There were about 100 active members and they continued to carry out attacks on the British Army, though never claiming these on behalf of the Official IRA.

IN 1977, there was a major increase in militarisation within the Official IRA in Newry. The Provos called the Officials 'Rustyguns' on account of their ancient weapons. They got Kalashnikov AK47s in that year and had enough weapons to arm all their members and lots to spare. Long-term dumps were established, using large concrete pipes buried deep in the ground. Ten, twenty and thirty weapons were buried in grease, ready to be brought out in the event of a doomsday situation developing. One such doomsday scenario might have involved a shoot-out with either the Provos or INLA. (In 1975, the Provos had made an all-out attack on dozens of Officials on the same day).

The Official IRA and Sinn Fein always considered itself a cut above the rest. They were politically motivated, as distinct from the Provos who were only interested in carrying out military campaigns.

There were many people involved with Official Sinn Fein who had no knowledge of the Official IRA. The Officials pursued a policy of the ballot box in one hand and the gun in the back pocket. Their vote held up across the North right up to the end of the seventies, because they were still seen as being republican in some sense. But after the Hunger Strikes, their vote collapsed. By that time also, the Provos has shown that you could be quite open about the gun and still hold support. If you were keeping it hidden, it showed that you thought that there was something wrong with having it in the first place. In the late seventies, about eighteen people from Newry — all Official IRA — went to jail for fund raising activities. There followed a period of reflection in the Officials.

In the late seventies also, four people were sent down for doing a robbery and the word went out that they had done it for themselves. These men were released within the last couple of years and immediately initiated a procedure which resulted in the deposing of the leadership of the Officials in Newry just over a year ago. The old leadership had degenerated, and much of their activities involved salting away the money for personal use.

THE Official IRA today is a different organisation from that of the early seventies, or even the early eighties. The people now involved have made a career out of being 'professional soldiers', and using the gun. But now they do



Sean Garland



Seamus Lynch

not point the guns at the British Army or the RUC. The guns are pointed in the direction of people who they wish to intimidate or threaten.

During the Hunger Strikes of 1980 and 1981, the Workers' Party came out against the strikers. In the late seventies, Tomas MacGiolla had stated that his movement had 'no prisoners'. The change in the Officials had less people serving time. But when political status was first abolished in 1976, *The Plough* in Newry stated: 'Merlyn Rees wants to have political trials but no political prisoners and with all the grace and arrogance of a seasoned dictator, that is what he has decreed... The ending of political prisoner status is another pillar of the repressive state which has been built up against the working class people of the Six Counties during the past five years... It is not until these basic, democratic demands are conceded by the British that we can talk about the ending of political prisoner status'. The basic demands referred to the release of all political prisoners.

The Official IRA carried out numerous robberies throughout the late seventies and early eighties.

- April 1977 — £229,997 taken in a robbery from a Securior van in the Glens of Antrim.
- November 1978 — £150,000 taken from the CIE office at Inchicore in Dublin.
- May 1980 — £60,000 in jewellery taken from Dundalk jewellers.
- November 1983 — £250,000 in cash and cheques taken from a Securior van in Newry.

Dublin Official IRA commander Jim Flynn was shot dead by the INLA who said that it was he who killed Seamus Costello in 1977. Following the death of Flynn, the organisation in Dublin drifted apart. The Official IRA are still active in Dublin, but not to the same extent.

In 1983, the gardai discovered plates at the Workers' Party Headquarters at Gardiner Place in Dublin which could have been used to print Irish Life Chequebooks and car tax books. The garda raid at Gardiner Place was to the ground floor, a space occupied by Repsol Ltd., a printing company. The directors of

Repsol are Tomas MacGiolla, Sean Garland, Cathal Goulding, Michael Ryan and Patrick Yeates. All are or have been closely associated with the Official Republican movement.

The raid at Gardiner Place followed another garda raid at a warehouse in Ringsend where £1.7 million in forged fivers were found. The gardai wished to interview Brian Lynch, a Repsol employee, in relation to the find, but he was unavailable. (He was spotted recently at the Munster Hurling final in Thurles). However, there was never any explanation as to how Irish Life and car tax plates came to be in Gardiner Place.

BUT if the Official IRA had moved away from military activity aimed at the British by the early eighties, there were still plenty of signs that the organisation was alive and keeping well.

In December 1985, for instance, five men including one Anthony McDonagh, pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to defraud the Inland Revenue in the North. McDonagh was described in court as the Official IRA commander in the city. The scam involved securing tax-exemption certs with the intention of making deductions from employees on building sites. It was not the intention of those operating the fraud to pay the money over and the company involved, Broadmine Ltd, would have been folded before the time came to settle with the Revenue people.

There is plenty of evidence available to the public that the Official IRA are still in existence. Embarrassingly, Official IRA people are still making appearances in Court on charges, almost exclusively relating to money gathering activities.

In 1985, Peter Halpenny and Billy Holden hi-jacked a taxi and kidnapped the driver in an attempted £10,000 robbery at the Larne ferry. Both were Official IRA men and were members of Official drinking clubs in Belfast.

In December 1985, Newry businessman Brendan McNamee wrote to Tomas MacGiolla and Prionsias De Rossa at Leinster House. Mr McNamee had a story to tell about money that was loaned.

In 1984, Mr McNamee loaned £6,000 to the Workers' Party in Newry, through an intermediary. He said that he believed it was a loan to the party in Dublin. A named intermediary cashed two cheques. However, no money was ever received on foot of the cheques. On 3 May 1984, three men robbed Mr McNamee's office of £5,000. McNamee met with the intermediary and another man in Newry. (McNamee had been warned that he was to be robbed). According to Mr McNamee the two men suggested to him that if he named the person who warned him about the robbery, they would repay the money. In December 1985, an employee of Mr McNamee's was approached by a person purporting to act on behalf of the Workers' Party and gave him a few days to pay over £10,000. The employee was told that the two men purporting to represent the WP had been sent from Dublin and that if he didn't come across with the money he would be shot in the head. McNamee in his letter threatened that if the money was not repaid within seven days, he would call a news conference to publicise the entire affair.

McNamee also informed De Rossa and MacGiolla that he had sworn affidavits stating the facts, and if anything 'untoward' happened to anybody in the business, arrangements had been made to forward them to the police and the media.

One of the names on the cheques, John Hobden, is the same name as that of a member of the Workers' Party in Newry. The

other name, 'John Gartland', is an alias.

The Newry account became very important to the Party in recent times. It was used to take the monies owed from their American enterprises. These enterprises are based in California. The party own several pubs, The Starry Plough in Berkley, The Star and the Plough in San Francisco and the Poet and the Patriot in Los Angeles. These investments are a good source of income for the party and a good bet against inflation. Mr McNamee never called his news conference.

Two weeks ago, members of the Workers' Party video-taped workers arriving on a building site in Short Strand. The workers asked what was happening and they were told that the building of the social club was an historic occasion in the locality and that the tape was being made for Short Strand archives. Some of the men who were videoed were afterwards approached by different people and asked to hand over some money, and they were led to believe that if they refused, the tape would be forwarded to the social security people. Some of the men were apparently drawing social security at the same time.

The Workers' Party have extensive interests in the North. They have the Trevor Hill drinking club in Newry, run by members. In Belfast, they have clubs in Twinbrook, Turf Lodge, Short Strand, Markets, Crypus Street and North Queen Street. They also have a bar in Bawnmore.

The Official IRA in Belfast still have a good supply of weapons. They are heavily involved in racketeering, intimidation, extortion and blackmail. Two years ago, Karen Walsh attended a disco in Glinchin. Workers' Party election workers came in and started to pin badges on people. Karen Walsh made it clear that she didn't want anything to do with them. When she emerged from the disco there were men waiting in the bushes outside. She was pistol-whipped and a breeze-block was thrown on her legs. Her screams brought local residents out. They fled, and returned later. They knocked at a few doors but left when they were confronted by residents. A car belonging to John Lowry, a Workers' Party spokesman in Belfast, remained at the scene. Local kids took election material from the car and burnt it, and also did some damage to the car. A few days later, Jamsie McMullin was shot and kneecapped by people claiming to represent the Official IRA. Following this, John Lowry said that the Workers' Party was not involved with the shooting and that any information should be passed on to the RUC.

Many members of the Workers' Party in the North have legally held handguns. Some have .38 Smith and Wesson Specials. The Official IRA have structured meetings with loyalist



For example, in 1980 Josie McKee was shot dead by the UVF. He was an Official IRA man who had involved himself with the theft of a load of washing machines from the Docks. The UVF were in on the job, but McKee held onto some of the money himself. They shot him dead at this place of work, and there followed a hurried meeting between the Official IRA and the UVF. Workers' Party representatives went on television and radio and pointed out that the killing was sectarian and that anybody with any information should pass it on to the RUC. Every Christmas, Official IRA collections for 'Republican Prisoners' are made in West Belfast. Shops are approached. One chemists shop on the Falls Road which declined to contribute had return visits from the collectors. (The Official IRA have by now only a few prisoners left in jail).

THE inherent contradictions within the Workers' Party itself are also mirrored in the lifestyles of some of its members. For example, Seamus Lynch, the Belfast MP councillor, lives in the well-off Antrim Road area and has been known to take elocution lessons. Lynch, a one time Belfast docker and internee, is frequently seen on television. Following a 'Today Tonight' programme outlining some of the excesses of the Official IRA in Belfast, he was asked for his reaction and he claimed that the programme was 'politically motivated'. Some people in the South, especially younger voters who had some leanings towards the Workers' Party, were less than impressed with his performance.

With the passing of Tomas MacGiolla from the leadership, the Workers' Party is in a way signalling a change of direction. The leadership of the Workers' Party claims that the Official IRA went out of existence after 1972. Yet, the fact remains that in the eighties there are people appearing in court claiming to be members of this non-existent organisation.


The question is not really whether or not the Official IRA exists. The question is what they are now doing with their guns. It would appear from their behaviour in Newry and Belfast that they have sunk to an all-time low and have degenerated, just as their INLA counterparts have degenerated, into self-motivated thugs.

Both the Official IRA and INLA are two parts of the same monster that came out of the split with the Provos in 1969/70. The Official IRA are not armed to support their politics. The question posed at Mornington in relation to militarists turning towards politics has never really been fully resolved.

organisations, and co-operated and continue to co-operate in operating the building site racket whereby watchmen are loyal to them. During the general election earlier this year, a youth in West Belfast moved posters down a lampost in order to put up the tricolour. He was accused by Workers' Party people of tearing down their posters. Two weeks ago, he was outside an off-licence with friends when three men who represented themselves as members of the Official IRA broke a cider bottle and pushed it into his head.

Up to two years ago, two members of the Workers' Party in Belfast ran all the building site rackets. They were taking up to £30 per week off each worker. But somebody did their sums and discovered that there was £50,000 short and the two were elbowed aside.

There are also regular meetings between the RUC and the Official IRA, or what remains of it. They would have no more than thirty or forty members, who go back a long way and can be trusted politically and militarily. And there is an extraordinary degree of co-operation with the UDA/UVF, the Protestant paramilitary force.



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