

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2014/32/13
Creation Date(s):	13 May 1983
Extent and medium:	10 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



PA

cc. Remot Breger A-1 Section

Mr. Sammon

AMBASSADE D'IRLANDE

M A D R I DI.C. 5/14
3/83

Mr. Gunning
Copy of article as discussed
this morning by phone - Pages
7 & 8 are of interest
DB 20/5-

The Secretary,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
DUBLIN

13th May 1983

For attention Information SectionINTERVIEW WITH INLA

1. The Spanish weekly magazine, "Interviu," has a second article, in its current issue, on the INLA. This article/interview is, like the previous one (see our 2/83 of 25/4/83), billed as a "world exclusive". It is, however, in newspaper parlance not as "big" as the previous story. A translation of the article/interview is attached.

2. The interview is self explanatory and very chilling indeed. You will note in particular INLA claims of contact with ETA and their political front organization, Herri Batasuna, a party which is represented in the Spanish Cortes (though it does not attend) and in the Basque Parliament and local government structure. Herri Batasuna's vote is as high as 20% in some cities in the Basque Country.

Pádraic Collins

Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

c.c. Mr. J. Harmon, Embassy London.

We interviewed the high command of the INLA, the most secret and extremist armed group of Northern Ireland.

"WE HAVE CONTACTS WITH ETA"

The meeting was carried out in the purest detective film style. Observing precaution and care they presented us before the INLA, the hard Irish nationalists, responsible for most of the attacks against the Police and against the British Army in Ulster. Our interview with these radicals was carried out in a clandestine atmosphere.

The instructions we received had been very clear. "You have to be in the pub at 5 o'clock on the dot. Sit at a table in the back, next to the video game. Somebody will come to fetch you." At that time of the afternoon, in the republican pub situated half way down Falls Road, in the heart of the most populous Catholic suburb of Belfast, there were very few clients. Two or three people at the far end of the big hall were passing the time playing billiards and drinking pints of Guinness. We sat and waited. At the agreed time somebody came up to our table and said we could go with him. The car ride was quite short. "Park here. Wait inside the car. You will be told where to go in a moment." A few minutes later another person came up to the car and asked us to follow him. A few minutes later we were before one of the nine members of the GHQ of the INLA, the most secret and radical armed group of Northern Ireland. The nationalist organisation which since the death of Bobby Sands has taken responsibility for most of the attacks against RUC patrols and the British Army in Ulster.

- The INLA is, in fact, one of the most active armed organisations of Northern Ireland at present. But the INLA is not a new group. The origins of its foundation go back to 1969, when, after the decision to reorganise its structure, the famous division takes place within the IRA producing the "provisionals" and the "officials". The provisional IRA - PIRA - rapidly became a traditional nationalist group with a right-wing political practice. And the official IRA opted for putting into practice a policy which would allow them to carry out the classist struggle with the armed struggle. In that sense, in 1972 the "officials" launched a large-scale political and military offensive, but they had little success. As and from then, and without warning for most of the

militants, the command of the group began to opt for a gradual withdrawal from the armed struggle until, on the 29th May of that same year, it decreed a definitive cease-fire. This produced a serious internal struggle which ended up with the expulsion of a number of people which the command qualified as "Stalinists". This nucleus, headed by Seamus Costello, a legendary character within the republican movement who had been a high commander within the "official" IRA, formed the INLA in the year 1974, a revolutionary socialist group which considers the armed struggle only as the first step for the establishment of a socialist republic in Ireland. The secrecy in which we are obliged to move impedes us revealing the names of all the founders, but among them were Seamus Grew and Ronnie Buntiney, both later assassinated like Costello himself.

-Does the INLA consider itself the legitimate heir of the "official" IRA?

-No. The members of the INLA consider themselves only as the heirs of the Popular Army tradition of James Conolly in the 1913-16 period. Within the republican nationalist movement there are people whose only objective is that the British should physically leave Northern Ireland, but in substance they want to retain the institutions and economic structures created up until now. This, we think, will only mean changing owners, but not modifying the economic and social conditions of this country. In that sense, the INLA is within the tradition of the republican socialists. In Ireland, revolutionary republican socialism precedes Marxism in time. Here there is a revolutionary tradition centuries old. That is why we consider ourselves a Marxist organisation which believes that Marx's theory provides the base for the satisfactory conclusion of liberation struggles.

-And which are your political and military objectives at present?

-The maximum objective of the INLA is to achieve the creation of a democratic socialist united State with 32 counties, that is, a united Ireland. We are opposed to a partition of the country or any attempt to impose a federal solution, although the latter has even been discussed by sections of the IRA and its political branch, Sinn Fein. In the military field, the INLA supports the right of the Irish to use arms in the defence of their country and endeavours to end with success the national liberation struggle in Ireland. We believe that only when this national liberation struggle is over, we will be able to

confront the classist struggle which will allow us to reach a socialist State in Ireland.

The attacks

-There are two incidents which have given the INLA international fame as an armed organisation. One was the attack in 1979 against Airey Neave, the spokesman of the Conservative Party who was considered as the true political teacher of Margaret Thatcher...

-The high command of the INLA decided to execute Neave in 1979 because he had been named as the next Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and throughout his campaign he had asked for greater repression against republican militants, including having them hanged. Also, with this attack, the INLA tried to demonstrate its capacity of attack within England itself, in the very heart of British imperialism: inside Westminster Parliament. The military operation itself was prepared over two months and was carried out by a commando - or active service unit, as we tend to call it - of three people whose base is still in England. At the end of March 1979, our volunteers outwitted the security measures of the House of Commons, reached the garage used by its members and placed a bomb under Neave's car. It was a type of bomb which had been used in two attacks against a prison official and a member of the UDR a few weeks before and had proved efficient. It was made up of two kilograms of TNT inside a box with a mercury mechanism in such a way that, when the car went up a slope, the mercury would move inside a tube, activate the mechanism and detonate the bomb. The result was that when Neave's car went up the ramp of the garage to go out onto the street, the bomb went off and finished with him. Nearly four years later, the British police had been unable to arrest any of the participants in the operation. Scotland Yard has tried to make it known that the attack was the work of an isolated INLA element who travelled to London especially for the job and later left the country quickly, but the fact is that it was all carried out by an operative commando of our organisation which was based in London and which, since then, has carried out three attacks in that same city.

-...And the other was the placing of a bomb in the Ballykelly discotheque which caused 17 deaths and more than 60 injured.

-The attack against the "Dropin Well Bar in Ballykelly", which we called "Operation disco", was prepared over a year and a half. It all began

because in that area a number of children had died due to the rubber bullets used by the antidisturbance forces and a number of republican militants/^{had}been arrested due to informers. Then we carried out various intelligence reports by means of which we were perfectly aware that the majority of the people who went to that discotheque were British soldiers and some civilians who collaborated with them giving them information. Later, and over a number of months, the high command of the INLA sent various/^{warning}communiqués to the papers saying that we were prepared to kill any civilian who collaborated with the British troops. We warned that no civilian should go to that discotheque and that anyone who did would be considered an Army informer. Nobody took any notice. Then the INLA decided to carry out the operation. For some time, two people - one of our intelligence officers and an explosives expert - frequented the discotheque. They studied the place carefully and drew up plans in order to know where to place the explosives so that the whole place would come down. Then they built the bomb, which consisted only of 8 pounds of/^{commercial}gellignite, an explosive which can be used in small compact parcels and which is safe to transport. It was taken into the discotheque by a girl in her handbag. She placed it right next to a pillar because we knew that in this way the whole ceiling would cave in. Official figures after the explosion were 17 dead and 60 injured, but we had expected more victims, especially civilians, although most of the soldiers had grave injuries, they had to have arms or legs amputated, they were blinded... Injuries which will not allow them to go back to active service. After the attack, the Church and other organisations hit the roof over the massacre, but nobody referred to the warnings which had been given previously to the collaborators of the occupying troops. Everybody acted in a hypocritical way. "Operation Disco", like all other attacks, had two aspects: a political and military one. The political aspect was centred on the double warning which it represented for collaborators and for the foreign troops. And the military aspect because it was an attempt in the midst of an important garrison. Ballykelly, since the time of the second world war, has been a prestigious military centre situated in the heart of a zone controlled by soldiers in Ireland and with all kinds of security measures. Both objectives were amply achieved. So much so, that after the attack the British were obliged to bring Margaret Thatcher over on a visit to lift up the morale of the troops... And since then the soldiers do not have permission to go outside the barracks and mix with the civilian population. Ballykelly has been a warning for the British soldiers that there is no safe place for them in the whole of Ireland to relax and have fun.

Next offensive

-Is it true that you have announced an offensive of sensational attacks "Ballykelly style" for the forthcoming months?

-Yes, the INLA has announced that it will continue to attack British imperialism wherever it may be. We will attack the Army, the Police or the Security Forces which operate in Ireland as well as the representatives of British power such as politicians, judges and the officials who oppress the Irish. Experience has taught us that British public opinion is indifferent to what happens here, and that periodically killing one or two soldiers does not produce repercussions any more. However, when many die at the same time, when there is a big butchery like the bomb in Ballykelly, the news goes all over the world, on the front pages of the papers, and the apathetic British establishment really begins to worry. We will continue with our policy of Ballykelly type attacks. The only reason why there have been no more attacks of this kind is because, since then, the British soldiers have not gone out of their garisons and the publicans won't serve them beer.

-Is there any possibility of a fusion between the INLA and the IRA?

-The INLA considers the provisional IRA members as comrades in the struggle against the British in Ireland. However, we have a number of differences with them, above all because they are not revolutionary socialists. The IRA maintains an armed struggle to eliminate the physical presence of the British, ignoring their capitalist and imperialist nature. We would like to form an alliance with some of the more radical sectors of the provisional IRA, but for the moment this does not seem probable.

-But does military cooperation exist between you and them?

-There is a limited cooperation, because we are talking about two political armies operating in the same geographical area and at the same time. Therefore, a certain level of contact is necessary to assure that there is no conflict of interests and that the actions of one group do not put the people of another in danger. This is a type of cooperation that we would like to increase in the future.

-The IRA has traditionally received support from the Irish community in the United States. Is it the same with you?

-No, because we think there is an inherent danger in establishing relations with the reactionary elements of the Irish -community in the United States. It is true that the second and third generation of American Irish descendents give money and help to buy arms to struggle against the British in Ireland, but the following day they are also capable of taking part in Ku-Klux-Klan demonstrations or other actions aimed at oppressing the blacks, chicanos or any type of emigrants in the United States. The INLA does not need this type of support. We search to establish revolutionary links with groups from the Middle East, Nicaragua, the Basque Country, Guatemala... or any other anti-imperialist organisation.

The Basque Country

-What type of contacts have you had with the groups from the Basque Country?

-We have held meetings and had conversations with ETA-militar and Herri Batasuna. A few months ago, one of our representatives had various conversations in Pamplona and Bayona with them. It was a limited contact which we hope to increase in the future. In any case, it forms part of the INLA policy not to make known the subjects discussed or the level of cooperation, because it could have repercussions against both organisations and be used by the States in both countries to suppress this type of contacts.

-And with European organizations such as the Baader Meinhoff or the Red Brigades?

-Yes, we have some contacts with comrades in Italy and Germany who have expressed their support for the struggle of the Irish people for national liberation. In the same way, we support these genuinely anti-imperialist groups who struggle to the end against capitalism.

-Where do you get the arms you use?

-Mainly from the non-aligned countries. We have also received some lots from America. The typical INLA weapon is the Soviet attack rifle AK-47, or Kalashnikov. The AK-47 and the five-point star are our symbol. We also use M-16 American rifles - the traditional IRA weapon - Chinese SKS and Russian RPG-7 granade-launchers.

-Is it true that for your attacks you only use commercial explosives, unlike the IRA who tend to make their own?

-Yes, we use commercial explosives because they are easier to handle and because generally they are six times stronger than others. IRA experts normally use the mixture known as CO-OP MIX. They began to use it some years ago when they launched a campaign to destroy big buildings and there wasn't sufficient commercial explosive available. But the CO-OP MIX has a number of problems. Sometimes only a third of it explodes or it goes off before time. The IRA has lost lots of volunteers because of this. We prefer to use small quantities of commercial explosives which, placed in the adequate spot, produce the desired effect. In the attack we carried out in September 1982 against the British Petroleum Plant in Londonderry - known internally as "Operation BP Storage" - we used only two bombs, three pounds each in weight, but we placed them so exactly that they caused damages to the value of 500 million pesetas. We carried out this operation for two basic reasons: because BP is a ^{symbolic} multinational and because that day the plant was being visited by the Duchess of Gloucester. Two of our volunteers, dressed in overalls, cut the outside wire fencing, penetrated inside and placed the bombs. It was a pity that next to the plant there was ^{an important} military depot and the tanks in line in the yard stopped the shock wave and reduced the effect of the bombs. It was a miracle we didn't knock off the Duchess.

-How are your relations with the USSR and the Eastern countries?

-We have no relations with the USSR nor any other Eastern country. When we talk about establishing in Ireland a unitary socialist State of 32 counties, we are often asked which will be our model, but we answer that there is no model, although we have some things in common with certain countries due to their geographic and ideological characteristics. The INLA wants to maintain contact at any level with all the anti-imperialist groups of the world. We extraordinarily respect the Cuban revolution in an island which is only 90 miles from the biggest imperialist country in the world. And we also have very good relations with the Palestinians.

In Palestine

-Do some of your members follow special training courses together with provisional IRA members in the Palestinian guerrilla camps?

-Yes, we can confirm that some members of the INLA have received training in Palestinian camps situated in the Middle East and also some of the weapons obtained in the past have been supplied by the Palestinians to our group.

-But do you also have secret training camps in Ireland?

-The majority of the INLA militants are trained in Ireland. Our group wants to be selfsufficient in all aspects and we have our own ^{training} programme supervised by the corresponding department of the organisation. Once a militant is accepted in the INLA, the group is responsible for his training. In this way, all members receive a basic training and later they specialise in a particular field, such as, for example, the use of explosives, weapons, engineering, intelligence methods, etc. Each department within the INLA structure is responsible for the preparation of training camps for their specific area. They are always taught techniques of police interrogation in order to be able to come through one if they are arrested, use and knowledge of various weapons, political talks...

-The INLA has carried out various attacks against members of the protestant community, and even tried to shoot Reverend Paisley and his right arm Peter Robinson, although both have been considered as "untouchables" even by the IRA. Can you explain the motives?

-That is true. In the summer of 1981, the INLA tried to execute the well-known unionist leader Reverend Ian Paisley, but the shots fired did not penetrate his bullet-proof car. Protestant politicians such as Ian Paisley and Robinson have encouraged hatred between the two communities, organising bands of assassins made up of protestant unionists. For us, those people are nothing more than collaborators with British imperialism and, therefore, on numerous occasions we carried out attacks both against the paramilitary unionists as well as against the protestant politicians responsible for the execution of innocent nationalists. The INLA does not want to encourage a civil war, but will not tolerate the continuing existence of the unionist genocide of the catholic population. For this reason we have shot at and executed some members of Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party. In August 1982 we carried out an attack against Billy Dickson, an Alderman who asked the police to shoot to kill and whose opinion was that republican activists should be hung. We also executed Billy "Buckil" McCullough, responsible for the "murder squadron" of the UDA

and who operated under the name of "Captain Black". In March 1981 we seriously injured Sammy Millar, UDA Alderman in Belfast who used his post in the City Hall to organize sectarian attacks... All INLA attacks against protestant leaders have been to make it clear that in Ireland they cannot carry out sectarian actions with impunity.

Xavier Vinader/Enrique Yeves

Jaume Franco (photos)

(Special envoys to Ulster)