

INLA's would-be bombers go to prison: Duncan Campbell on the co-operation between police and secu...

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Informers' role emerges in spotlight on counter-terrorism • 25 and 23 years for men who 'besmirched fair name of Ireland'

INLA's would-be bombers go to prison

Duncan Campbell on the co-operation between police and security services to thwart plans for a terror campaign

THE role of MI5 informers in undercover work was spotlighted yesterday by the conviction of two men for plotting a bombing campaign in Britain and Northern Ireland. The security services saw the verdict as vindication of their activities, while lawyers for the convicted men accused them of being *agents provocateurs* and "manufacturing crime."

Martin McMonagle, aged 31, from Limerick in the Irish Republic, and Liam Heffernan, aged 31, from Belfast, both members of the Irish National Liberation Army, denied but were convicted at the Old Bailey of conspiracy to cause explosions, conspiracy to steal explosives and possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life.

Mr McMonagle was jailed for 25 years on the first offence, 11 years on the second and six years on the third. Mr Heffernan was sentenced to 23, 10 and six years respectively. Each man's sentences were concurrent.

The trial judge, Mr Justice Sachs, told them: "You have besmirched the fair name of Ireland, where good people are working towards peace in stark contrast to your activities. Your chilling intention was to maim, kill and destroy."

The two men raised their arms in clenched-fist salutes and shouted "Up the INLA, up the Irish people, *tiocfaidh ar la* [our day will come]," as they were taken down to the cells. Mr McMonagle told the judge: "Up yours, too."

The jury of six men and five women — one man had been discharged after his criminal record came to light — took barely an hour to return their verdicts.

Detective Superintendent Peter Hinde of Avon and Somerset police said after the verdict that the arrests were a "good example of co-operation between the police and the security service".

The two men were arrested in February at Westbury quarry in the Mendip Hills in Somerset where they had gone with the intention of stealing explosives.

The police had put dummy explosives in the store and had more than 30 armed men lying in wait. But Mr McMonagle

trod on a camouflaged officer who overpowered him. Mr Heffernan was held without a struggle.

A third man, Anthony Gorman, who is also wanted in connection with the shooting in April last year of recruiting sergeant Michael Newman in Derby, fled and escaped in the mist.

The INLA active service unit had been penetrated by undercover informer Patrick Daly, who was assisting the men in securing a safe house in Bristol where the security services set up a hidden tape-recorder.

Among the named targets of the unit were the three Democratic Unionist MPs, the Rev Ian Paisley, Peter Robinson and the Rev Robert McCrea. Labour MP Kevin McNamara was also mentioned.

Neither of the convicted men — both of whom are married with two children — gave evidence.

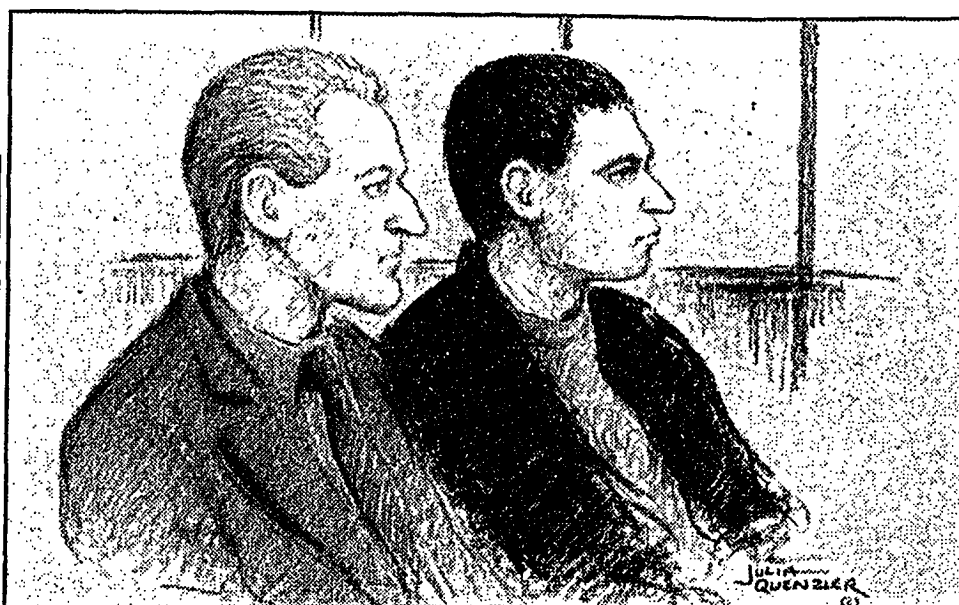
Mr McMonagle has been involved in the republican movement since his teens and in 1980 was given an 18-month sentence suspended for two years in Belfast for membership of a banned republican youth group. In May 1981 he was jailed in Dublin for falsely imprisoning two people and possession of a gun and ammunition. In November 1988 he was served with an exclusion order, renewed in November 1991.

In mitigation, his counsel, Rock Tansey, QC, said that Mr Daly had been the prime mover.

Mr Heffernan was also a member of *Red Action*, the anti-fascist group which takes on far-right groups at demonstrations and elsewhere. He was also known for anti-racist work in east London. He grew up in Manchester and his English accent was seen as a useful cover for the INLA mainland operation. He had moved to Belfast with his Irish wife.

His counsel, Helena Kennedy QC, said he had merely acted as a "gofer." She said that the public would be disturbed by Mr Daly's role. "The state should never be involved in the manufacture of crime to secure convictions."

Solicitor Robert Lizar, speaking for both men, said that they believed the whole operation had been for the purpose of an "MI5 coup."



Martin McMonagle and Liam Heffernan in the dock; Peter Robinson; and police searching the quarry



DRAWING: JULIA QUENZLER



'Republican' who passed on secrets may get £40,000 bonus for convictions as well as £400,000 to help him come in from the cold

Duncan Campbell and Richard Norton-Taylor

PATRICK Daly, now 44, has been working as an informer for almost half his life. Initially he was paid by the Special Branch in quite small sums, mainly expenses, a tenner here and there, a couple of bottles of Scotch. Gradually the rewards increased and became more regular. By 1988, he was being paid £100 a month.

A year later, MI5 took Mr Daly over. In May 1969, according to a pre-trial witness statement of one of his MI5 controllers, he was concerned about the "lack of activity and lull that was appearing in the groups of interest to us".

MI5 warned that the kind of work INLA was asking him to do could "put us in a dilemma because if it was not dealt with correctly and some attacks resulted, we could become involved in a case of conspiracy".

His real pay-off came with the arrest of Mr McMonagle and Mr Heffernan when it was clear that he would have to break cover and give evidence if they were to be convicted.

His "resettlement" agreement totalled £400,000, which was to cover him embarking on a new and secret life far from the parts of Ireland or the West Country where his bulk — 6ft 5in and 17 stone — and distinctive Irish/West Country accent would make him easily recognisable.

MI5 officers told Mr Daly that he could get £40,000 as a bonus "if good custodial sentences were handed out". Mr Daly said in a pre-trial statement that he

understood "if the case was successful and lengthy sentences were given, this sum might be increased".

Originally from Limerick in the Irish Republic, he moved to Bristol in 1974, living in a house with many expatriate Irishmen — including active republicans.

He first came to the attention of the security services in 1974 when he was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. There was insufficient evidence for a prosecution but he was threatened with an exclusion order. It was then that he was "turned" and started working for the Special Branch.

By all accounts he was a convincing agent. He attended Troops Out marches and happily carried banners. He spoke at meetings against the PTA and wrote supportive letters to republican prisoners in jail. He set up a branch of the Irish in Britain Representation Group and acted as its secretary. His main activity was within the Irish Republican Socialist Party which was at its strongest during that period.

Known as "the big fella", he worked as a car dealer before becoming a driving instructor, a business he was running with his wife, Maria, outside Galway at the time of his last operation. Mr Daly was involved in another plot in 1986. He befriended Peter Jordan, jailed for 14 years for conspiring to plant a bomb at the home of a former SAS colonel.

Mr Daly demonstrated his credibility as an undercover informer when he campaigned for Mr Jordan's release after the trial. Mr Daly used the code name Romeo.