

McGlinchey, Dominic

by Anne Dolan

McGlinchey, Dominic (1954–94), republican paramilitary, was born in 1954, at Bellaghy, Co. Derry. Educated locally, he became involved in the civil rights movement in 1969 and, following a brief apprenticeship at his father's garage, was interned without trial in August 1971. Embittered by imprisonment, he joined the Provisional IRA in south Derry on his release in 1972. Arrested a year later for arms offences, he was one of the first to be tried before the Diplock courts. After an eighteen-month sentence he returned to the south Derry IRA unit and formed close links with Francis Hughes (qv) and Ian Milne. Together they gained an unprecedented reputation for brutal and sporadic attacks, and provoked the RUC into taking the unusual step of issuing 'wanted' posters accusing them of a spate of bombings and shootings. Such was their vehemence and indiscipline that the IRA leadership reputedly exiled the three to the USA. There they allegedly robbed one of the IRA's largest American benefactors and were forced to return to Northern Ireland.

Following a hijacking incident with a garda car McGlinchey was arrested in Monaghan in 1977 and served four and a half years for producing a revolver while resisting arrest. During this sentence in Portlaoise prison he switched his allegiances to the INLA. Factionalism within the prison, his own indiscipline, his criticism of the conservatism of the IRA leadership, and his growing political radicalism, which had developed in prison under the tutelage of Gerry McKeever, were said to have contributed to his defection.

On his release in 1982 the state immediately sought his extradition to Northern Ireland for the murder of a 77-year-old postmistress, Hester McMullen, in Toomebridge, Co. Antrim. He jumped bail before his appeal was held in the supreme court. While on the run he acted as director of INLA operations and was quickly promoted by virtue of his ferocity to chief of staff. He took pride in the fact that by the end of 1982 the INLA had, for the first time, out-killed the Provisional IRA. Conscripted partly to quell feuds within the INLA, McGlinchey unleashed a reign of personal terror over the undisciplined organisation; opponents and suspected informers were ruthlessly purged. Associated by journalists with every operation his minions undertook, he was immortalised by the media as Ireland's most wanted man and accorded the sobriquet 'Mad Dog'. He was said to have been a target of the RUC's shoot-to-kill policy later uncovered by the Stalker inquiry. In an extraordinary interview with Vincent Browne in November 1983 he professed to have killed more than thirty people and admitted to his involvement in more than 200 terrorist operations. These included the bombing of the Droppin Well bar at Ballykelly, Co. Derry, which left seventeen dead in December 1982. He also admitted to supplying a weapon used in the attack on the Pentecostal meeting hall in Darkley, south

Armagh, but expressed his abhorrence at the murder of three Sunday worshippers (November 1983). He showed no remorse for any of his actions.

Following several picaresque escapes from the attentions of the gardaí in December 1983, McGlinchey was captured on St Patrick's day 1984 during a shoot-out with the army and gardaí at Rathlaheen, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare. This precipitated the controversial question of his extradition to Northern Ireland. He conducted his own unsuccessful appeal and became the first republican in the history of the state to be extradited to Northern Ireland. In December 1984 he was given a life sentence for the murder of Hester McMullen, but he won an appeal in October 1985 at Belfast appeal court. Immediately re-extradited to the south, he was sentenced to ten years by the special criminal court in February 1986 for arms offences relating to his arrest in Clare.

While on remand he was released on parole in December 1985 to attend the funeral of his fifteen-month-old daughter, Máire, who had died of meningitis. Máire was one of three children he had with his wife, Mary, daughter of Patrick McNeill of Toomebridge, Co. Antrim, whom he had married on 5 July 1975; the others were sons, Dominic and Declan. Mary McGlinchey actively assisted her husband (the RUC sought to question her in relation to up to twenty killings), and as she was not in prison she became an obvious target for their enemies. She was shot dead in front of their sons in their home in Dundalk, Co. Louth, on 1 February 1987 as part of an ongoing feud over money within the INLA. On this occasion McGlinchey was not released for the funeral as it was held in Northern Ireland.

After seven years as a reputedly model prisoner in Portlaoise, he was released in March 1993. Within three months an unsuccessful attempt was made on his life at Newtowndarver, near Dundalk. He survived a bullet to the neck which he believed was discharged by a loyalist gunman, hired by a vengeful south Armagh republican family. Although there were some suggestions that he was trying to assemble a new republican unit and returning to the racketeering he had engaged in throughout the 1980s, he strongly denied it. He was, however, listed among the suspects for armed robberies in Co. Louth and Co. Tipperary in January 1994. During his imprisonment he was said to have become an expert in constitutional law and worked closely with Bernadette McAliskey on the formulation of a constitutional framework for the republican movement. He maintained his hardline stance, condemning the Hume–Adams initiative and the Downing Street declaration (December 1993) as acts of betrayal. While accompanied by his teenage son, he was shot dead 10 February 1994 on the street in Drogheda, Co. Louth, by three of his many enemies. At his funeral McAliskey called him 'the finest republican of them all'.

Sunday Tribune, 27 Nov. 1983; *Times*, 3 Dec. 1985, 2–4 Feb. 1987; *Irish Press*, 2 Feb. 1987; *Ir. Times*, 2 Feb. 1987, 11 Feb. 1994; *The Independent*, 12 Feb. 1994; *Independent on Sunday*, 13 Feb. 1994; *Sunday Press*, 13 Feb. 1994; Jack Holland and Henry McDonald, *INLA deadly divisions* (1994), 141, 210–30; Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (1995), 513, 534; Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: the Irish state and its enemies since 1922* (1999), 318, 327; *Lost lives*

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