The leadership of Óglaigh na hÉireann has formally ordered an end to the armed campaign. This will take effect from 4pm this afternoon. All IRA units have been ordered to dump arms.
The IRA is fully committed to the goals of Irish unity and independence.
While the Dublin leadership were push- ing ahead with plans to drop the abstention- ism (from membership of the Dail) oth- er northern IRA members were seeking arms and ways to protect northern Catholics.

The IRA split into what became known as the Official IRA and, at first, the Provision- als.

As British troops rolled in to Belfast dur- ing 1969 and 1970, it was soon obvious they were not there to protect Catholics. A resurgent IRA however, was involved in defending nationalist areas at Clonard, Ardoyne and Short Strand in June 1970 and young people began to flock to its ranks.

After the defence of these areas, one Lower Falls resident and former RAF sery- iceman was mowed down by a British soldier around the Lower Falls and started shooting or proof of having committed a crime. Only nationalists were interned. Recruits to the IRA increased dramatically. The IRA raids were further boosted fol- lowing the murder of 14 civilians in Derry by British soldiers after a civil rights march protecting against internment.

Within weeks of Bloody Sunday the united government at Stormont collapsed and the north was directly ruled by the British government. IRA attacks peaked in 1972 with over 100 British soldiers killed. In June 1972 it announced a truce and republican leaders, including Gerry Adams and Martin McGuine- ness, met representatives of the British government at a secret meeting.

Less than a fortnight later, a British Army operation codenamed “Motorman” saw hundreds of troops invade the re-go nationalist areas of Belfast and Derry. The army set up surveillance posts and the IRA was forced further underground.

More than 1,000 republicans were jailed and the IRA’s military campaign with the British developed into a stalemate. As British attempts to set up a power sharing administration involving unionists, the Alliance party and the SDLP collapsed in the face of the Loyalist Workers Strike of 1974, the IRA entered once again into talks with representatives of the British govern- ment late that year. They entered into critical talks with the British over the withdrawal of troops from the north. The negotiations collapsed and, too did the ceasefire in 1975.

The British introduced its new three-track strategy of Criminalisation, Ulsteriza- tion and Normalisation in an attempt to de- feat the IRA. This saw prisoners being tortured in Castlereagh and Gough Barracks, tried be- fore one-jury Diplock courts, and denied po- litical status in northern prisons. The local- ly-recruited RUC and UDR were pushed in- to the front line of the fight against the IRA and a huge propaganda effort was launched to deny the existence of political conflict.

The IRA responded to this by restructur- ing its organisation making it more difficult to infiltrate.

After British Secretary of State Roy Ma- son had claimed the British were squeezing the IRA like a “tube of toothpaste” it re- sponded with a new wave of attacks in late 1978 and throughout 1979. The IRA killed Lord Louis Mountbatten, a cousin of the Queen, who had a holiday home in Co Sligo in 1979. He died instantly when a 50 pound radio-controlled bomb ex- ploded on his fishing boat.

The same day the IRA struck at the heart of the British establishment again when it detonated a radio-signalled bomb on the Warrenpoint Road, Co Down killing six British soldiers.

A further 12 soldiers were killed minutes later when a second bomb exploded.

The new conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher was determined to break the IRA by criminalising the prison- ers refused political status and on the blan- ket protest in the new H-Blocks in Long Kesh.

For four years around 300 IRA and IN- LA prisoners refused to wear prison issue uniforms or clean their cells.

Realists’ groups and the newly organ- ised Sinn Féin campaigned for the prison- ers on the outside. Street protests and marches were arranged, senior Catholic clergymen ap- pealed to the British government to restore political status without success. As prison officers stepped up the beatings of prison- ers the IRA made them a target and assassi- nated several officers. But the British would not move.

Eventually, the prisoners went on hunger strike, and when the first of the hunger strikers, Bobby Sands, died on May 5 1981, support for the IRA sky-rocketed and Sinn Féin’s profile was hugely advanced. Bobby Sands was elected to Westmin- ster during his hunger strike and hunger striker Kieran Doherty was elected as TD for Cavan/monaghan while another prison- er Paddy Agnew was elected TD for Louth.

Ten men died on the hunger strike but the political landscape changed forever as a result.

Sinn Féin embarked on an electoral strat- egy in 1982 winning five seats in Assembly elections. The Republican Movement was now operating a twin-track strategy of armed struggle by the IRA and a strategy to build political strength by Sinn Féin.

The IRA’s campaign continued in the North, but the battle had become a deadly war of attrition. It suffered its heaviest losses in one incident at Loughgall in Co Tyr- one in 1987 when eight members of the East Tyrone Brigade were killed in an am-

It continued to inflict casualties on the British army, RUC and UDR, with some spectacular results, but the campaign seemed doomed.

Towards the end of the 1980s the IRA tried to up the ante by launching a sus- tained English and European bombing cam- paign while the campaign in the north was maintained.

Meanwhile the Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams began an engagement with SDLP leader John Hume, and he mapped out a route to peace in a publication called Path- way to Peace, at time when the conflict was still at its height.

The Sinn Féin leadership expanded on this strategy in the early ‘90s in a docu- ment called Towards a Lasting Peace which signposted many of the changes in republi- can thinking about how to bring the con- flict to a conclusion.

The IRA also engaged in a series of se- cret meetings with a British government representative over a three-year period up to 1993.

By then Gerry Adams and John Hume had sent a joint document to the British and Irish governments which set out the nationalist position and which suggested that a peaceful resolution to the conflict could be found.

The nationalistic leaders had the private support of Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds for this initiative, which paved the way for the IRA’s cessation of military operations in 1994, which began the slow process of ne- gotiation which led to yesterday’s historic statement.

and to building the Republic outlined in the 1916 Proclamation IRA Statement
A nationalist rally reaches the City Hall in Belfast in 1995. PHOTO: MAL McCANN

Nationalist protesters turn their backs on the Apprentice Boys as they walk on the Derry walls in 1996. PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY

Bogside Residents protest against the Apprentice Boys’ march in 1997. PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY

A Civil Rights commemoration march taking place in Derry in 1993 crosses Craigavon Bridge. PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY
We all know, there were queues to join the IRA after that day. - Kelly
...seize this opportunity and make Irish freedom a reality - Gerry Adams
TERRY ENRIGHT: 
Ordinary people fighting injustice

A ll politics is local. Terry Enright is proof of that. He is not an MLA, TD or councillor, yet he is one of the people that has spearheaded community activism in the North.

The devastating murder of his son Terry Jnr by loyalist gunmen in 1998 failed to deter that activism, instead strengthening his resolve to achieve his goals through grassroots community work.

In the context of yesterday’s historic statement from the IRA, Mr Enright has said there is an immediate need for republicans to create a holistic grass-roots movement that would seek the equality and human rights not yet delivered by the Good Friday Agreement.

A chat with Mr Enright in his west Belfast home opens up a treasure chest of anecdotes about his work in a plethora of community groups.

A former Long Kesh internee, Mr Enright was one of the first community activists to devise and take part in practical cross-community projects in Belfast.

“Nationalists and republicans have been very content to let Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness argue out issues at the level that they are arguing them out,” said Mr Enright.

“However, I believe that a movement similar to the civil rights movement is needed. We need community groups to complement everything that they are doing at that level.”

“What we need is a groundswell of people saying that not much changed for them since the Good Friday Agreement.”

Mr Enright said he believed people on the ground in nationalist areas across the North were still subjected to inequality.

“There is still so much to be done in terms of the Good Friday Agreement. Perhaps the biggest example of that is the fact that, to all intents and purposes, institutionalised sectarianism is still a major part of the state,” he said.

“There has been a steady programme to undermine Sinn Féin. On one hand, they have been given acceptability, yet in the background there have been people in the civil service constructively working against those gains that have been made in terms of equality.

“There is now a situation whereby basic issues such as civil rights and people’s right to have a job have been totally undermined.”

Mr Enright also drew attention to the distribution of Invest Northern Ireland funds.

He highlighted the lack of sanctions set up to combat breaches of fair employment legislation as one of the issues that have to be addressed.

The Upper Springfield Development Trust, the trade union Union, the National Trust, the Belfast Hills Partnership, the Black Mountain Environmental Group, the Equality Coalition and the Human Rights Consortium are just some of the groups for which Mr Enright works tirelessly.

“For many years, I have been involved in trying to save the Belfast hills. That is just another example of ordinary people trying to fight against injustice, corruption and the ability of the state to do what they want,” he said.

“Whether it’s immersing himself in the battle to save the Belfast hills or working to get a better deal for the people of north and west Belfast, Mr Enright said community activism was an essential part of the way forward for nationalism.”

In the context of the IRA statement, he said: “There is now a situation whereby basic issues such as civil rights and people’s right to have a job have been totally undermined.”

Mr Enright maintained that the IRA statement would not necessarily mean an immediate move by the Democratic Unionist Party back to the negotiating table “so people need to act now themselves at local level to make things better.”

He said there was still a place for former IRA volunteers in the broader political struggle.

“It is okay for Sinn Féin to have a strategy of how they are going to deal with future political gains,” he said.

“However, those people who now find themselves with little or nothing to do should realise that there are lots of roles for them.

“You don’t have to be a politician. There are lots of other things you can get involved in and you don’t have to be contented with just breathing water.”

“In community activism, everything you do is political.”

While community workers may not be members of Sinn Féin or the SDLP, they are all working to try and change people’s lives.”

Drawing parallels with the civil rights struggle in the North in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mr Enright said: “Just as the civil rights movement played an important role for people, there is now a similar role now for people to work around issues of equality and human rights.

“I hope that people will come more politicised and carry forward this strategy.”

Mr Enright’s son Terry Jnr was shot dead by Loyalist Volunteer Force gunmen as he worked as a doorman at a Belfast nightclub on January 11, 1998. Terry Jnr was also a well-respected community worker.

In his memory, the Enright family set up the Terry Enright Foundation, an organisation promoting cross-community youth work.

Terry Enright Sr said: “I believe that Terry’s killing made us stronger. The personal loss was very difficult for all the family but I believe that it strengthened our resolve, made us much stronger and more determined.”

The younger Terry played for the local Gort na Mona GAA, Athletic Club, which later named its new pitch after him.

His father has carried on his memory through community activism.

As the republican struggle moves into a new phase, Mr Enright said such activism was the way forward for nationalists across the North.

“In community activism, everything you do is political”

-Terry Enright
A child plays by a burnt out van on the Falls Road in 1981.

PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

The aftermath of the release of Private Lee Clegg in 1995 saw street violence.

PHOTO: MAL McCANN

RUC men and British soldiers block the sidestreets into Belfast city centre to prevent nationalists from marching to the City Hall.

PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

Mary Nelis addresses a rally in Belfast in the early 80s and (facing page) Mary in more recent times

PHOTOS: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE/MAL McCANN

Mary Nelis addresses a rally in Belfast in the early 80s and (facing page) Mary in more recent times

PHOTOS: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE/MAL McCANN
I t became an iconic image of the prison protests of the late 1970s. Three women, barefoot and clad only in grey blankets, stood outside Derry’s St Eugene’s Cathedral on a freezing cold December day. They bore placards with the simple inscription—“Do you care?”

One of the three women was then a 40-year-old Mary Nelis, a Derry-based former assembly member for Sinn Féin, looking back on her life within the republican community.

Mary Nelis, a Derry-based former assembly member for Sinn Féin, looks back on her life within the republican community.

Friday July 29 2005 Daily Ireland

One of the three women, known as the blanket protest, Nelis, a Creggan mother of nine and now aged 69, had been a community activist—a troubleshooter for those who found themselves unable to deal with the paper of everyday life or society. Active in tenants’ associations and an energetic servant of the community, Mary Nelis would have the very fabric of her beliefs first tested and then destroyed.

The arrest of her then 18-year-old son Donncha in 1976 was the point that would change Nelis’ life forever.

In recent years, she distinguished herself as an outspoken Sinn Féin assembly member and a staunch defender of women’s rights. During the course of the Troubles, Nelis’ place in society would be undermined. She confesses that, at some points of her life during the last 30 years, she thought she had lost her sanity.

The arrest of her then 18-year-old son Donncha in 1976 was the point that would change Nelis’ life forever.

In 1976 and 1977, Nelis travelled around Europe to negotiate for her son where he had got the gun with which he had been arrested.

“Something instinctive told me right then, right at that moment, that there was something wrong. That one incident changed my whole life. That was the beginning of my understanding of the system,” she says.

Mary Nelis says that, while her son Donncha was in the H-blocks, she had “no notion” of what Sinn Féin meant or who was involved in the movement.

She had been active in inquiring about young men on the behalf of their mothers. She would have been a familiar face at the British army base at Bligh’s Lane in Creggan.

As a mother, she cared only about the plight of her teenage son in prison.

“He was trying to prepare me for whatever. That was around the time that they did not recognise the courts. He told me in no uncertain terms that he would not recognise the court.

“He was to be sentenced to 16 years and he was clear in his own mind that he would serve them.

“I remember visiting him and they had shaved his head and he looked terrible. I nearly had a nervous breakdown. It was a horror story,” she says.

Prisoners refusing to wear the prison uniform were refused visits. For the mothers on the outside, there was a heartbreaking feeling of powerlessness.

“They trusted us like dirt,” Mary Nelis remembers. On the outside, Nelis suddenly found herself isolated. Lifelong friends passed her on the street. Her belief system as a Catholic was upended.

She would not speak to the bishop of Derry, Edward Daly, for 25 years. No one feels isolated. I have not one single regret. I feel good to be alive.”

“Sure, we have our disputes and fallouts just like any other family. But the republican family remains the finest and most sensitive family. No one feels isolated. I have not one single regret. I feel good to be alive.”

“When people describe the republican movement as a family, that is accurate. There is a sense of comradeship, support. Sure, we have our disputes and fallouts just like any other family. But the republican family remains the finest and most sensitive family. No one feels isolated. I have not one single regret. I feel good to be alive.”

At 11.17am on Tuesday, May 5, 1981, after 65 days on hungerstrike, Bobby Sands MP died in the H-block prison hospital at Long Kesh.

“I cried like a waterfall.” Mary Nelis recalls. “I cried like he was my own son.”

She quickly joined Sinn Féin. “There was a huge rush of people who had become politicised. Everybody was joining Sinn Féin. The hungerstrike was the catalyst for us all. It was a logical progression. We always knew that the problems of this island would have to be solved politically.”

“Young people made choices, very deliberate ones, especially after Bloody Sunday. They were realists.

“They knew exactly what was in front of them because the regime was so harsh.”

“The IRA is advancing the progress of peace. You cannot measure things in terms of what you’ve got. Globally, things have changed.”

“When people describe the republican movement as a family, that is accurate. There is a sense of comradeship, support. Sure, we have our disputes and fallouts just like any other family.”

“But the republican family remains the finest and most sensitive family. No one feels isolated. I have not one single regret. I feel good to be alive.”

Nelis says she believes that proactive intervention by the Catholic church, business professionals and the government in Dublin could have prevented “at least half” of the deaths that occurred during the course of the Troubles.

“It wouldn’t have happened had they challenged the political and social establishment.”

She says.

“...that was the beginning of my understanding of the system” - Nelis
Bobby Storey takes part in a protest on the Cliftonville Road in 1997
PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY

A protest on the Andersonstown Road in 1996 calling for the RUC to disband
PHOTO: MAL McCANN

Nationalists were barred from entering Lurgan town centre in 1996
PHOTO: MAL McCANN

The RUC move in to clear the way for Orangemen to march down the Garvaghy Road in 1997
PHOTO: MAL McCANN

A large parade supporting the blanket men and women on the Falls road in 1980
PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS ARCHIVE
Times are moving on

“People want to find out the truth about unsolved cases - Daniel Lundy”
A support rally for the women prisoners in Armagh Jail in 1981.


A Saoirse protest calling for the release of republican prisoners in 1997.

Sinn Féin youth take their protest to south Armagh spyposts in 1997.

A sign highlighting the dangers of British army spyposts in south Armagh.
BY EAMONN HOUSTON

Terry Crossan to this day remembers the townland of Aughnaskea in Co Tyrone. It was the home of Martin Hurson, a young man he was to befriend and remember.

Crossan had never been to Aughnaskea, but its name is embedded in his head. Martin Hurson was the sixth of ten men to die on hunger strike in Long Kesh prison in 1981. Crossan breaks into a fond smile when he recalls the camaraderie he enjoyed with the young countryman.

Crossan joined the Provisional IRA in the weeks that followed Bloody Sunday. By his own admission, he had no notion, nor care for politics.

Now at the age of 50, Crossan is fully supportive of the republican movement’s momentum towards a new chapter. For Crossan, the war is not yet over, but simply entering a new and more hopeful phase.

Crossan was arrested with Sinn Féin chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness, in the latter’s sister’s home in 1976. The pair had been childhood friends. To this day they enjoy fishing trips as a hobby.

Crossan would spend six years in the cages of Long Kesh for ‘conspiracy to cause explosions in the United Kingdom’.

Crossan was arrested with Sinn Féin proprietor – adorned with images of Derry dur- ing the early days of the Troubles. ‘When my parents found out that I was involved, they blamed poor Barney McFad- den [a veteran Derry republican] – who of course was totally innocent - but still he got the blame.’

For Crossan, the prison years formed an important part of his development, as a person, and a politically aware republican.

‘While difficult times for my wife and family, prison had no lasting negative ef- fect on me personally. For me it was a place to learn tolerance and respect. I also learned my native language which I now speak on a daily basis.

‘I met many good friends from all over the country, on the more famous names, but also sad ones - especially the death of Martin Hurson on the 1981 hungerstrike.’

Crossan describes his motivation to join the Provisional IRA as a response to a series of events.

‘I suppose it was more of a reactionary thing than something that was motivated by any sort of political ideology. I had come through the Civil Rights period and witnessed the burning of my grandmother’s home in William Street by the RUC and B-Specials. I also remember the attack on Sammy Devenny – a neighbour of ours - by the same people.’

On April 19, 1969, the Devnny family were assaulted by the RUC in their William Street home. Three months later, Sammy Devenny died as a result of the brutal beating.

Within weeks, the resulting tension would help spark the Battle of the Bogside.

Crossan says: ‘There were no republican links in my family. My grandmother was a Church of Ireland stock and for a time did housekeeping at the old Lecyk Road barracks.

‘During the early 1960s, policemen on duty would have called to my granny’s house for a cuppa and there was no sense of animosity towards them. The events of Duke Street and Burtinestill would change all that.’

On October 5, 1968, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association had intended to march from Duke Street in Derry’s Waterside to Derry city centre. As the march assembled the Royal Ulster Constabulary lashed demonstrators in the glare of the world’s media. Events at Duke Street force- fully hit home with nationalist youth.

As would events at the close of a People’s Democracy march from Belfast to Derry in January 1969. The marchers would endure a sustained and brutal attack from loyalists at Burtinestill bridge, while the RUC looked on. Some of the marchers were reportedly tossed into the nearby River Foyle.

Crossan recalls: ‘I remember the early days of the Troubles and the emergence of the Provisional IRA and the ‘stickies’ [a man of his great stories].’

Today Crossan finds himself able to ac- cept the current process - but in pragmat- ical terms. ‘It is very clear to me that the rep- ublican movement has evolved to become a powerful political force on the island. We are very much admired by other revolution- ary groups worldwide. Armed force is a means to an end and, personally, I feel that the armed struggle was one facet of a wider struggle that continues. I see great challenges ahead and I feel that the lead- ership of the movement has done great work in maintaining unity while at the same time preparing for great change.’

‘But for Crossan, the family he knows as the ‘republican family’ will always remain intact as well his memories of Martin Hur-
PERCUSSION: A girl bangs a bin lid on the ground outside Woodburn barracks in west Belfast in 1997.

PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY

SHOW TRIALS: Protesters call for an end to show trials at a demonstration on north Belfast’s Crumlin Road outside the crown court in 1985.

PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

CYCLIST: Campaigning in west Belfast for Sinn Féin’s Danny Morrison in 1983.

PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

BARRACKS: A demonstration against the RUC at Rosemount barracks in Derry in 1995.

PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY
Milestone can transform lives

The year 1995 was a great year for me. I turned 16, got up close and personal with a ‘laydee’ for the first time, and enjoyed a full year of relative peace. I remember sitting in the Waterworks Park in north Belfast with a group of teenage friends, drinking cheap cider and waxing lyrical about how good things were.

Living all my life less than 100 yards from the city’s Oldpark Road interface, I was not so much touched as punched by the Troubles.

Thankfully, I never lost a family member but an uncle was shot, friends were murdered and blown up and a number of relatives did some serious jail time.

Because of this, I initially treated the 1994 ceasefires with scepticism. However, I quickly came to realise that the times were indeed changing and, by the summer of 1995, Belfast was a much better place.

My biggest wish is that, following yesterday’s IRA statement, kids turning 16 in 2005 can harbour the same feelings of hope I did turning 16 a decade ago. To be able to stand on the corner of the Oldpark Road in 1995 or in a bar or a bookie’s and not worry about being shot was amazing.

Before the ceasefires, when I called into my local — aptly nicknamed the Suicide because of its peace-line location — to watch Celtic, I would stand behind a concrete pillar.

I was always paranoid about gunmen but, in 1995, I felt I didn’t have to hide behind posts any more. It was these small things that were the most noticeable and ultimately life-changing.

In the same way that the ceasefires transformed my teenage years, confirmation the IRA is to go away will alter the lives of thousands of kids throughout the North.

Sure, there will still be sectarian violence, rioting at contentious parades and people getting kickings because of their religion or the soccer team they support.

But not having the IRA around sets the North on the road to normality.

It also effectively destroys the Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Volunteer Force as paramilitary forces. What reason do they have to exist now? There is no one left to fight. Hopefully this statement also means that a measure of the political pressure applied to the IRA in recent years will now be applied to those currently shooting and bombing on the North’s streets.

Later on today, I’m going to call into the Suicide and, with it being builders’ pay day, the majority of my mates, who are scaffolders and brickies, will be in.

We’re all the same age, we all come from the same backgrounds, we were all in our teens in 1995, and we’ll all agree that July 28, 2005 is a historic day. To tell the truth, it’s a milestone because none of us has known life minus the Provos.

Writing this, I’m experiencing the same emotions I did after the 1994 ceasefires — uncertainty, doubt and a hint of scepticism. But if 1995 is anything to go by, I’m quietly confident that these feelings will have been replaced by a newfound optimism come next year.

I just hope every 16-year-old across the North feels the same.

“Newfound optimism will replace hint of scepticism” — Ciarán Barnes