

# The Truth On The Rocks

**THE MEDIA RESEARCH GROUP** at Glasgow University has conducted a major survey of the media's handling of the killings in Gibraltar of the three IRA members on March 6 last year up to but not including the coverage of the inquest in September. It represents a serious indictment of the British media's handling of the affair and particularly that of The Sunday Times.

We publish here in full the Glasgow University Media Research Unit survey and on page 27 we publish a profile of the journalist at the centre of most of the controversy concerning the coverage of the Gibraltar killings, the editor of The Sunday Times, Andrew Neil.

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## Spot the Difference

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*"They were challenged by, it appears, plain clothed Policemen... Then the shoot-out happened."* (BBC 1 2100 6.3.88)

*"A fierce gun battle broke out."* (ITN 2115 6.3.88)

*"A 500lb car bomb close to the governor's residence."* (ITN 1230 7.3.88)

*"Army explosives experts used a robot to defuse the bomb."* (ITN 1230 7.3.88)

*"A 500lb bomb was later defused."* (The Guardian 7.3.88)

*"One of them was a woman and they were both armed."* (Today 7.3.88)

*"They were armed."* (The Sun 7.3.88)

**T**hat these are different statements is clear. What may not be obvious is the similarities between them. The common thread running through these reports, about the shooting dead of three IRA members in Gibraltar, in March 1988 is that they are all false.

The IRA unit, Mairead Farrell, Dan McCann and Sean Savage were shot not by 'police' but by the SAS. A 500lb car bomb had not been found, nor had this non-existent bomb been defused by 'explosives experts' or even by 'robots'. There was no 'shoot-out' or 'fierce gun battle', because, in fact, Farrell, McCann and Savage were not armed.

This is how the authorities commented on the events: Sunday 6th March, 4.45pm — Defence Ministry confirms "a suspected bomb found in Gibraltar and three suspects shot by civilian police." 9pm — ministry says "security forces were involved in the shootings and that military personnel dealt with a suspect bomb."

Monday 7th March, 9am — "ministry continues to say 'a suspect bomb has been dealt with.'" 3.30pm — Geoffrey Howe says no bomb found and that the three

IRA members were unarmed. 4pm — "The Governor of Gibraltar continues to tell reporters a bomb has been defused."

## 'Bomb Gang'?

On Monday the 7th of March all eleven British national daily newspapers reported the story that a bomb had been found. Many gave detailed information about the size (mostly 500lbs), purpose and type of the bomb as well as how it was defused. The *Daily Mail* suggested that the bomb might have a "video timing device". While *Today* and the *Independent* mentioned "remote control". The *Daily Mirror* told us that "a controlled explosion failed to set off the bomb" whilst the *Daily Mail* added "RAF disposal men defused it later".

With all this emphasis on the supposed bomb some might have been surprised to find that there was no bomb. But, on the same day as the British press and TV were reporting the 'bomb', the *Gibraltar Chronicle* disclosed that "At 10pm last night officials confirmed" that the suspect car had been "towed away and there has been no confirmation of the story that it held 500lbs of explosives" (7.3.88 also quoted in What the Papers Say C4 12.3.88).



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## 'Shoot-Out'?

The BBC, ITN and the *Independent* all talked of a "Shoot out" (BBC 2100, ITN 2115 6.3.88, *Independent* 7.3.88). *Today*, the *Sun* and the *Scottish Daily Record* reported variously "as shooting broke out", "they were armed" and "a gun battle". Yet by 11.45pm on Sunday night the IRA had issued statement, which was carried in some papers, claiming "contrary to British reports none of the volunteers were armed when they were shot so there could not have been a gun battle." (*Glasgow Herald, Scotsman and Irish Times* 7.3.88). The Ministry of Defence in London was also sounding a cautionary note commenting "there were no reports of guns being found on the bodies" (*Irish Press, Irish Times* 7.3.88).

The *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Telegraph* had an eye witness account of the shootings repeated later in the morning by ITN. The *Mirror* disclosed that "policemen jumped out of a car and shot to kill without warning at the head and chests of the suspected terrorists". But some papers had difficulty fitting this comment into their preferred angle. The *Sun* who cheered on the "heroes of the SAS" reported part of the eyewitness account omitting the words 'without warning'. Instead they found another 'eyewitness'. "A teenage boy who saw the shootings said 'the gang were ordered to surrender. They were armed.'" *Today* also quoted this witness. But, in a bid to fit the two contradictory accounts into the story, they reported the first witness as saying the police shot to kill "after challenging" the suspects.

*Today* then found another eyewitness who they named as "Felipe Alvares". They reported that the was "just yards away" from Farrell and McCann and said that the SAS man "shouted something but I am not sure what it was". He continued "there was a third person also shot. He was lying some way off and I could see the blood from where I was." (8.3.88) This is strange since all other accounts of the death of Savage, to whom he refers, claim that he was killed "round a corner beside a large Oak tree" (This Week ITV 28.4.88) was presumably out of sight.

It is curious that the 'teenage boy' quoted by the *Sun* and *Today* on the 7th March who was not named, and the witness quoted by *Today* on the 8th, have not subsequently come forward to give more information to the press or television. Their accounts contrast with those of the witnesses quoted in the *Independent* neither of whom could "remember any challenge" (8.3.88). Both of these, Josie Celecia and Stephen Bullock, subsequently featured in many TV and newspaper reports.

In its news summaries the morning after the shootings the BBC did not report the eyewitness account which alleged that the IRA members were shot "without warning". Instead they reported that they were "challenged". (BBC 0900, 1000 and 1100 7.3.88 and that a "man in plain clothes had followed them down the street before shooting them several times with a pistol" (BBC 1200 & 1300 7.3.88)

At half past three on the Monday afternoon Geoffrey Howe made his statement in the House of Commons in which he admitted that there was no bomb and that Farrell, McCann and Savage had been unarmed. But the BBC had difficulty in reporting that there was, in fact, no bomb and they continued to refer to it. The newscaster commented that the IRA "had planted what was thought to be a car bomb" (BBC 1554 7.3.88)

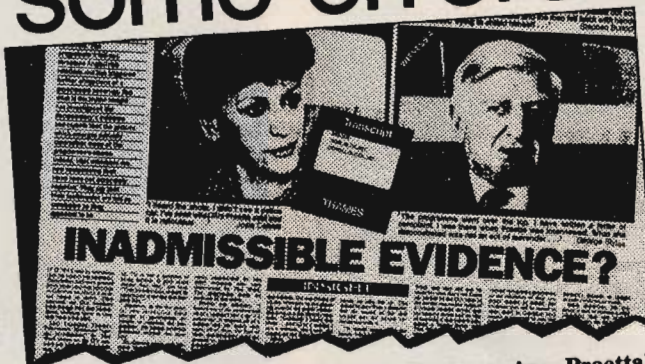
Some papers carried a report that the bomb was made with Spanish Goma 2 explosives. The location of Gibraltar at the Southern tip of Spain also lead some

# Scoops, revelations — and some errors

● The Sunday Times led the shootings coverage, but it did make mistakes

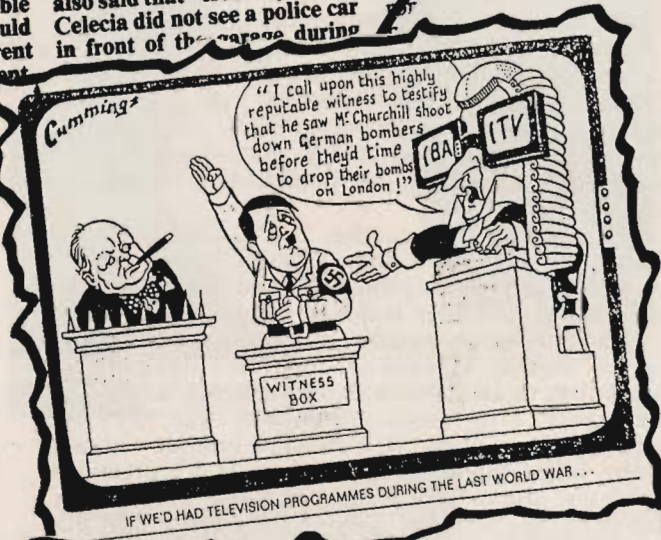
THE Sunday Times coverage of the Gibraltar killings involved some 15 reporters and executives. The coverage in the 10 months since adds up to 16,000 words.

Week after week The Sunday Times led the way in piecing together the events of the shootings, in revealing previously unknown details of the IRA, the intelligence operation and the SAS. Among the paper's scoops were the naming of the fourth member of the IRA team, and revealing the existence of a new, long-range detonating device in IRA



first glance certainly seemed to conflict. But The Sunday Times accepts it was possible that these witnesses could have been describing different aspects of the same incident. On the other hand, the action that Bullock could have heard a warning shot and could

car. In countering Proetta's evidence, The Sunday Times also said that "crucially" Josie Celecia did not see a police car in front of the garage during



IF WE'D HAD TELEVISION PROGRAMMES DURING THE LAST WORLD WAR...

journalists (the *Times*, *Today*, the BBC 7.3.88. The *Daily Express* and *Sun* 8.3.88) to discuss the involvement of the Basque separatists ETA. One journalist commented "Judging by the explosives used to make the 500lb car bomb it's fair to assume that the IRA gang had the help of the Basque terrorist group ETA". (BBC 1000 & 1100 7.3.88) The problem with this was that, since no bomb had been found, the story on the origin of the explosives were necessarily false. The *Guardian* had also disclosed that "Spanish police said there was no evidence of a link with ETA" (7.3.88).

## The 'Fourth Members'

On Tuesday 8th March, the day after Geoffrey Howes announcement in the Commons, the tabloids focussed attention on the '4th Bomber'. In articles headed 'Hunt for IRA Evelyn' (*Daily Mirror*), Evelyn Glenholmes was named as being hunted by police "throughout Europe" (*Daily Mirror*) over her alleged involvement in the 'Gibraltar Bomb Plot'.

Glenholmes has been Fleet Street's 'most wanted terrorist' for several years. She was first named by Scotland Yard in 1984, appearing in the papers as the "Terror Blonde in jeans" (*Daily Mail* 13.11.84) and the "Blonde Bomber". (*The Standard* 12.11.84). She has been mentioned periodically ever since, featuring, for example, as the "Angel of Death" in the *Star* of 11th January 1988.

After an unsuccessful extradition attempt in Dublin in 1986 the papers obtained several photographs of 'Evil Evelyn' which, according to Liz Curtis "replaced the very dissimilar 'artist's impression', released by the Police two years earlier" (*Magill* June 1988). These photographs

# TART OF GIB

The Sun discovers shock truth about IRA deaths witness Carmen... she's an ex-prostitute, runs an escort agency, and is married to a sleazy drug peddler



Carmen Proetta... police say she is a former vice girl who was "very good at her job"

have featured in several front page stories since, and resurfaced on 8th March 1988. Their significance was illustrated when *Irish Press* columnist John McEntee reported witnessing the "creation of a little bit of history" in Gibraltar's Holiday Inn, "The invention of Evelyn Glenholmes as the missing fourth IRA member in Gibraltar." McEntee asked a "a colourful colleague if he believed the theory of the fourth man. 'Oh, it's a woman and we are saying it's Evelyn Glenholmes', this craggy veteran explained. Why on earth I wondered aloud was he saying it was Glenholmes. 'Because' he replied, 'We have a nice picture of her and she won't sue'" (16.3.88).

On March 10th the next candidate for membership of the Gibraltar 'Bomb Gang' appeared, without apology for previous mistakes. Most of the papers reported Spanish police as naming the fourth member as a 'Mary Parkin'. "The fourth IRA terrorist behind the planned Gibraltar bomb massacre was a woman calling herself Mary Parkin, it was revealed last night." (*Sun*) However in the *Times* of the same day "Spanish police seemed convinced yesterday that no terrorists were involved in the planned attack." Over the next few months there were to be at least three more people named in connection with the Gibraltar operation.

On the 21st June the *Daily Telegraph* named an Owen Coogan as the IRA's "Chief of Overseas Operations". "Anti-terrorist Branch detectives are convinced... (that)... Coogan was responsible for setting up the planned IRA attack in Gibraltar... as well as every other major IRA outrage on the Continent in the past few years".

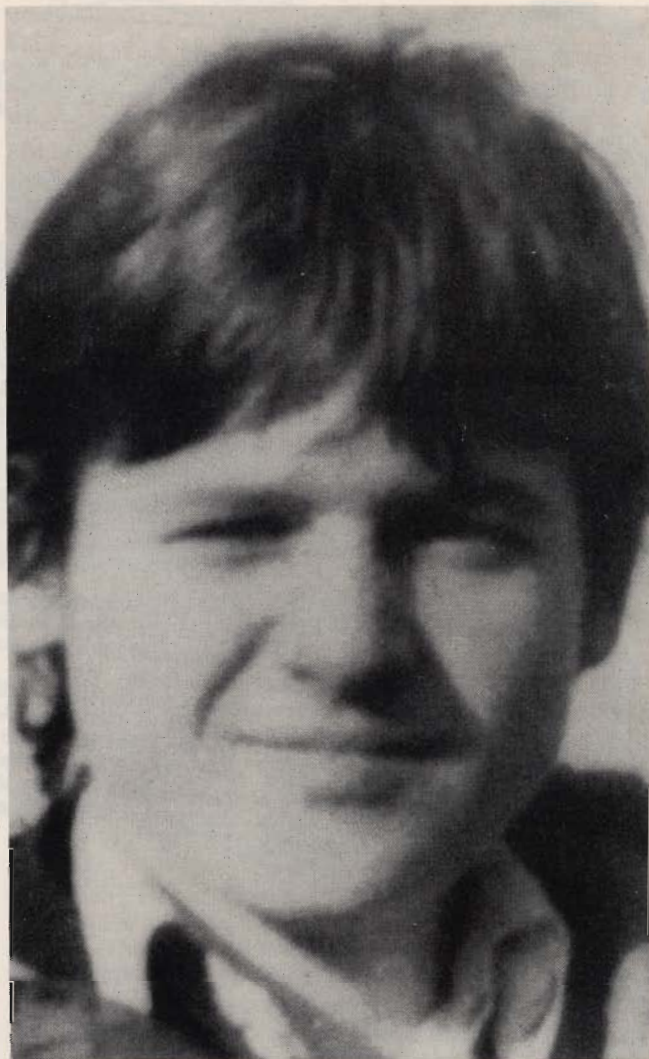
The *Times* located another 'fourth member' on July 6th. On this occasion it named Patrick Ryan, "a former Irish priest held in Belgium" who had been "linked last night to the Gibraltar bombing attempt".

Another 'fourth member' was named in mid August as Peter Rooney. ITN did not quote the Gibraltar, Spanish, British or Irish police as the authority behind these allegations. They quoted themselves. The newscaster spoke of Rooney as "a man ITN believes Gibraltar Police would like to question about IRA's attempt to bomb the colony" (ITN 2200 15.8.88). The following day in its "the *Sun* says" column aptly titled "Just Blarney" the *Sun* claimed "Peter Rooney is suspected of being the fourth member of the terrorist gang that plotted the massacre in Gibraltar" (16.8.88).

## Death on the Rock

The most glaring examples of distortion in the coverage of the shootings, centred on the reputation of the key eyewitness in Thames television's documentary 'Death on the Rock'. On the 28th of April Geoffrey Howe asked Lord Thomson of the IBA to postpone the programme "until after the inquest in Gibraltar." (*Evening Times* 28.4.88) The IBA refused. The programme was accused, by Tom King and much of the press, of conducting a 'trial by television' and prompted Mrs Thatcher to comment that "trial by TV or guilt by association is the day that freedom dies." The programme makers thought that they were wrongly accused. David Elstein Director of Programmes at Thames TV argued that much of the programme was taken up with:

"outlining quite clearly the terrible effects that the planned explosion would have had. We revealed that while the IRA's political wing was claiming the Enniskillen bombing as a tragic accident, the IRA was



already planning Gibraltar.

The programme... also filmed one of the personal tragedies resulting from Enniskillen, that of the much-loved headmaster of the local high school, Ronnie Hill, who lives on in a deep coma that may sadly prove irreversible. We then painted in the violent background of the individual terrorists." (*Sunday Times* 8.5.88)

Geoffrey Howe also tried to stop the BBC broadcasting a programme on the shootings made by BBC Northern Ireland's Spotlight team. According to the *Independent*, Geoffrey Howe phoned Marmaduke Hussey to "seek reassurances that the (eyewitness) interviews would not be broadcast." (5.5.88) The programme was broadcast that night.

The outcry over 'trial by television' led the *New Statesman* to comment that "The government has behaved in ways that prejudice the outcome of the inquest far more thoroughly than the inquiries of any television journalist." (6.5.88)

The eyewitness testimonies in the programme 'Death on the Rock' and the subsequent Spotlight programme, made by BBC Northern Ireland, were:

- 1) that the SAS gave no warning to Farrell, McCann and Savage. 2) Farrell and McCann made no threatening movements as Geoffrey Howe had alleged. 3) That Farrell and McCann had their hands up in surrender, when they were shot. 4) That Savage was shot



in the back and 5) that all three were finished off on the ground.

Additionally Thames presented technical evidence from Lt Col George Styles a former British Army bomb disposal expert who had served in Ireland. Styles disclosed that any bomb disposal expert would have "quickly seen that (the car) carried no significant weight of explosives".

Some people had talked of the supposed bomb being set off by remote control. But according to 'Death on the Rock' "not mentioned was the fact that the car was almost a mile and a half from the point where the terrorists died, with buildings and the city wall in between". Styles thought that this would make it "very unlikely indeed" that the bomb could have been set off by remote control. The programme also revealed that "according to the Gibraltar police who were involved, the area of the Renault car was only cleared at 4pm after the three terrorists had been killed and at least two hours after the car was parked."

Just over 24 hours after the programme was broadcast the campaign against the eyewitness, Carmen Proetta, had begun. The headlines included: "The truth about SAS ambush 'witness'" (*Daily Mail*), "Shame of the SAS smear girl" (*the Star*), "Trial by TV Carmen is Escort Girl boss" (*Daily Express*) and the, by now infamous, headline from the *Sun*, "The Tart of Gib." (30.4.88)

The *Sun* alleged that Proetta "used to be a prostitute". The *Daily Mail* claimed that she is "a director of a Spanish escort agency" and "her fellow directors are wanted in Britain for alleged conspiracy and credit card frauds". The *Daily Express*, *Daily Record*, *Sun*, *Star* and the *Sunday Times* also carried these allegations. The *Sun* claimed that "police say both Carmen and her husband, 47, have criminal records on Gibraltar". The *Daily Express*, *the Daily Mail* and the *Sun* alleged that her and her husband were 'anti-British'. The *Star* went so far as to claim that Carmen Proetta "campaigns for Spanish rule in Gibraltar". And the *Daily Telegraph* alleged that "several residents of the colony, who would not be named, had claimed she was one of only 44 Gibraltarians to vote to end British Rule in the 1967 referendum". This was repeated by *Today* (30.4.88) and the *Sunday Telegraph* (1.5.88)

Michael Fielder, the journalist who wrote the story in the *Sun*, told the Dublin-based *Magill* that:

"dozens of people including a senior police officer" told him Carmen Proetta was a prostitute.

In fact, the only 'senior police officer' quoted in the *Sun* article, Chief Inspector Glen Viagas, has told *Magill* he was misquoted in the article. 'I speak to many journalists from many newspapers' he said. 'I am the police press officer. I do not remember what I say to each of them, but you can take it that the story is inaccurate.' (June 1988)

As for Proetta being an "Escort girl boss" as the *Express* claimed. The *Observer* revealed that Proetta: "used her qualification as a Spanish resident to help two non-Spaniards set up a firm called Eve International, whose purpose is stated on company documents to be 'providing escorts and tourists promotion services.' She renounced her shares and involvement in a legal document dated 14 March 1985."

When it comes to the allegations about the Proettas alleged criminal records *Magill* revealed:

"the 'senior police officer' named in the *Sun* as having confirmed that the Proettas have criminal records in Gibraltar has denied to *Magill* that he said any such thing to the *Sun*. He would never divulge information about police dealings with any individual to a newspaper, regardless of the circumstances, he says"

The allegation that several Gibraltarians had claimed that Proetta had voted against the British link is denied by Carmen Proetta. "She says she dislikes politics and has never voted in her life." (*Magill*) The *Daily Telegraph* appeared to have forgotten that voting is by secret ballot.

The origin of the smear was according to the *Observer* a freelance journalist called Nigel Bowden who supplied Fleet Street with the story about Eve International. "He was astonished, however, by the gravity of the extra information added by the *Sun*." (*Observer* 8.5.88)

If this is an example of a smear mainly created by the press itself it also seems that some 'official sources' were not above commenting on this witness. On May the 29th the *Mail on Sunday* quoting "government sources" reported that Carmen Proetta would refuse to give evidence at the inquest. On this, Proetta commented that the report "looked like another attempt to smear her by implying that she was hesitant about her evidence." (*Independent* 30.5.88) She would, she said, be at the inquest.

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## Insight?

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On the 1st and 8th of May the *Sunday Times* published detailed allegations that the programme 'Death on the Rock' had distorted and omitted evidence which was inconvenient. They claimed that key witnesses shown in it were complaining that "their views were not accurately reported" and that Thames's evidence was "crumbling fast" (1.5.88).

The *Sunday Times* Insight Team reported a "crucial statement" made by the English Lawyer Stephen Bullock before he was interviewed for the programme "when his memory was much fresher". He had told them "categorically" that the police car he saw had:

" 'five uniformed officer in it', not plainclothes SAS men. It had pulled up alongside him, perhaps 100 yards away from the garage, as two SAS men travelling on foot had raced along the pavement to the garage. The volley of shots, he said, rang out as the police car turned on its siren and raced towards the petrol station.

So Proetta's evidence that the SAS men got out of the car outside the garage and shot the terrorists is contradicted by Bullock.

Insight was also given Bullock's account about the terrorists raising their hands.... He said McCann's arms were 'outstretched trying to shield himself' and not, as Proetta claims, in surrender.' " (1.5.880)

One problem for this account is that Bullock and Proetta "were talking of two different police cars". (*Observer* 8.5.88) Another is that Bullock was more than

a hundred yards away from the scene and simply "didn't know" whether McCann was surrendering or defending himself. He told Ed Moloney of the Dublin-based *Sunday Tribune* "I emphatically deny that's what I said. I told the *Sunday Times* I just didn't know" (*Sunday Tribune* 15.5.88)

Insight had reported Josie Celecia as saying that Proetta's account was "ridiculous" and accused the television programme of missing out this inconvenient testimony. But the *Sunday Tribune* reported Celecia as being "quite distressed" by the *Sunday Times* report. She told them "I totally reject suggestions... that I described the evidence of Carmen Proetta as ridiculous" (15.5.88)

Insight also consulted Lt Col. George Styles the former bomb disposal expert who had acted as a consultant for 'Death on the Rock'. He was reported to be an "angry" man who was writing "a letter of complaint to Thames Television" with "a copy... to the Prime minister" (1.5.88) complaining that two of his views had been missed from the programme. Styles 'complaints' centred on two points. Firstly, his disagreement with Carmen Proetta which was over whether Farrell and McCann had raised their hands in surrender or had done so because of the impact of the bullets. Secondly "his view that a red Fiesta van parked by the IRA team at the border was within range of a remote control device and the security forces had no way of knowing if that vehicle contained a bomb" (*Sunday Times* 1.5.88)

But, in fact, Styles's disagreement with Proetta was in the programme and the only people he was 'angry' with were the Insight team. David Elstein, Director of Programmes at Thames TV, writing in the *Sunday Times* argued that all their charges were "without foundation". He commented:

"the reference to the possibility of a second bomb relates to Styles's view that perhaps there could of been a bomb in the car that the terrorists had left over the border in Spain to use for their getaway.

Neither Sir Geoffrey Howe's statement in the House of Commons nor any on-or-off-the-record statement from the government or defence sources or the Spanish police ever referred to this possibility. Accordingly we did not include this section or Styles's interview" (8.5.88).

The week after the Insight report of the first of May, the *Observer* reported that Styles had a "long telephone conversation" with Chris Oxley the Producer of 'Death on the Rock'. He told Oxley "you don't have to apologise to me" and that "the thing which had made him most cross, he said, was the way the press had gone for Carmen Proetta 'because, you know, what she said was true' " (8.5.88)

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## Technicalities

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According to the *Sunday Times* the remote control device for the bomb that the security forces suspected to be in Gibraltar operated on the VHF two metre band. This was a technical innovation which would enable the IRA to "operate over greater distances." (8.5.88) But according to Ed Moloney:

"this line of reasoning is flawed. The ability of radio waves to travel long distances and to pass through obstacles like steel framed buildings and walls — as would certainly be the case in Gibraltar — is determined by the frequency that is used....

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lowest on the scale before Very High Frequency (VHF) and Ultra High Frequency (UHF) and is the best of the three at penetrating solid obstacles and travelling long distances. If the *Sunday Times* is to be believed and the IRA has switched from HF to VHF transmitters, then far from enhancing the chances of exploding a bomb in Gibraltar from Spain, it had reduced them" (*Sunday Tribune* 15.5.88)

## Trial of Television

Some newspapers also attempted to discredit the programme makers. The *Daily Mail*, for example, alleged that Robert Bolton, the producer, had in the past "co-operated with the terrorists" (29.4.88), and "had secret dealings with Irish Republican terrorist groups and offered them a platform" (30.4.88). Bolton sued for libel and in an out-of-court settlement the *Mail* "unreservedly" apologised. "We accept that such suggestions are not true, that Mr Bolton does not sympathise with or condone terrorism in any form nor has Mr Bolton offered terrorists a platform for their views" (*Daily Mail* 6.8.88).

## Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Print No Evil

The Media coverage of the Gibraltar killings prompted Enoch Powell former Unionist MP for South Down to ask "where have all the journalists gone?" In an article headed "The questions our muzzled press should be asking on Gibraltar," he commented that "in almost any major event or item of news there is a question or a point of view which ought to be voiced. however awkward it may be and however much out of line with the general gush of public sentiment and prejudice." (*Independent* 1.4.88) But, he commented, after Gibraltar:

"a massive self-congratulation intoned by the Foreign Secretary, engulfed the Media: it echoed back and forth in Parliament and the papers.

Maybe what happened in Gibraltar was perfectly lawful and defensible.... Maybe; but there is another possibility. The possibility that it was deliberate, cold-blooded, premeditated murder."

It is clear that, as well as repeating official misinformation and adding their own distortions, much of the British media had ignored or played down inconvenient issues which some might regard as significant.

For example, the payment, by the Gibraltar police, of £10,000 to Douglas Celecia for the photographs he took after the shootings was reported in only two out of eleven British national daily papers. References to the holidaymaker, Vic Adams, who was hit by a ricochet during the SAS shooting, and subsequently paid an 'undisclosed' sum in compensation, have also been hard to find, as has the limits of the inquest and its delay.

Some journalists asked whether an inquest was the right forum to establish the facts about the shootings. The Legal Correspondent of the *Independent* disclosed that the role of the inquest was simply "to ascertain who the deceased was and how, when and where the deceased died. It will not determine why death occurred. The coroner's verdict is not binding on anyone and not admissible as evidence in any subsequent court proceedings." (14.5.88)

Initially, according to the *Irish Times* the inquest was set to begin "two weeks" after the shootings (9.3.88). Then it was to be in May, then at the end of June. But at 11am on May 23rd Bernard Ingham, press secretary

at 10 Downing Street announced that the inquest had been postponed. At 3pm in Gibraltar (2pm in Britain) Felix Pizzarello denied that the decision had been made. Ingham appeared at 4pm and said the position was not clear. He referred inquiries to the Gibraltar coroner who, at around the same time, was confirming the decision to postpone! Labour MP Kevin McNamara commented "I'm surprised the government did not announce the verdict as well" (*Daily Telegraph* 24.5.88).

But what of the Gibraltar arts festival, the official reason for the postponement of the inquest? The *Daily Telegraph* reported that the festival "was in full swing yesterday, but it was difficult to spot the difference." An estimated 200 people had attended events which included a baby competition, rowing race, flower arranging and painting exhibition. "No one in Gibraltar is convinced that the police force of 240 was not adequate to watch over both the inquest and the festival" reported the *Telegraph* (28.6.88). This view, that the festival was not a security problem, had been endorsed on the 10th June when a journalist noted "There has not been a single arrest in the festivals four year history" (*Daily Telegraph* 10.6.88).

## Conclusion

The handling of the affair led some journalists to question the government's role. For example Keith Waterhouse columnist on the *Daily Mail* has written:

"There is mounting concern among people in high places at what they are calling 'trial by Government'... Among recent examples... are: The Foreign Secretary's interpretation of the Gibraltar terrorist shootings which the media are expected to accept as gospel even though the inquest is yet to be held... and the condemnation out of hand by the Home Secretary and other government figures of TV films they had not even seen." (*Daily Mail* 9.5.88)

This however has been a minority view. It is clear what kind of reporting Paul Johnson and others had in mind when they condemned 'Death on the Rock'. Johnson, writing in the *Daily Mail* complained that investigative journalism was "the fearless expose of wrong doing, especially by those in authority, whatever the consequences to society." (30.4.88) The crux of his concern was that this type of reporting might hurt "British interests." This notion, that reporting should be measured in 'interests' rather than in terms of accuracy is precisely the criterion that Norman Tebbit used to criticise the BBC over its coverage of the bombing of Libya. He complained that showing footage of dead Libyan children would operate "in Libya's interests". Such critics are concerned with whose 'interests' are served regardless of what may actually have happened.

It is interesting to note that a Gallup opinion poll in the *Daily Telegraph* (12.5.88), taken the week after 'Death on the Rock' was broadcast, found, that 61% of those who had "read, seen or heard anything about the shootings of the three IRA terrorists in Gibraltar" thought that the shootings were justified. Colin Wallace a former Captain in the British Army who worked in 'Psychological Operations' in Ireland in the 1970s has described the potential of misinformation to influence public opinion

"The important thing is to get saturation coverage for your story as soon after the controversial event as possible. Once the papers have printed it the damage is done. Even when the facts come out the original image is the one that sticks" (quoted in 'What the Paper Say' Channel Four 11.3.88).