

# Ex-soldier jailed for IRA attack on German base

From Roger Boyes  
in Berlin

A VETERAN of the Falklands conflict was jailed by a German court for 6½ years yesterday after being found guilty of taking part in a bungled Provisional IRA mortar attack on a British Army barracks.

Michael Dickson, 39, shook his head in disbelief when an interpreter translated the prison sentence.

Barbara Klawitter, his defence lawyer, had argued throughout the seven-week trial in Celle that the 1998 Good Friday agreement made

the trial irrelevant; the British authorities, she said, were not interested in Dickson. "He is now the only Irish freedom fighter left in jail," she said.

Judge Wolfgang Siolek ruled, however, that a serious offence had been committed on German soil and there was enough evidence to show that the intention was murder. "The attack could have caused many deaths," he said.

The mortar bomb attack took place on June 28, 1996, when three missiles were fired directly at Quebec Barracks in Osnabrück.

Since the offence was committed before the Good Friday

agreement, Dickson could choose to serve his sentence in Northern Ireland. To do that he would have to admit to committing the offence and to membership of the Provisional IRA. In that event, he could be eligible for release after about two years.

Dickson, a former Royal Engineers sapper who had grown up on British Army bases in Germany, was a member of a five-strong gang of IRA men. The German authorities still have an arrest warrant out against two other suspected members of the gang: Roisin McAliskey, the daughter of the civil rights

campaigner Bernadette McAliskey, and James Corry. Both are thought to be living in Ireland. German police have still not established the identity of the other two members of the gang.

They had rented a holiday home in northern Germany and collected the materials needed for the attack on the barracks. Dickson helped to adapt a Ford Transit van as a launch platform for the mortars and drove it into position on the wooded perimeter of the camp.

The aim, Judge Siolek found, may have been concentrate more on establishing a

Provisional IRA presence on the European mainland than on massive killing. Even so, the improvised mortars contained more than 80kg (175lb) of explosive. Two fell short of the perimeter fence and failed to detonate.

The third flew into the compound and exploded a few yards away from the petrol station. If it had hit the pumps, the explosion would have been fatal: the soldiers' mess was near by. About 150 soldiers were in the barracks at the time.

"Through his involvement, the accused made himself guilty of an undetermined

number of counts of attempted murder," the judge said.

Dickson, who was born in Greenock, Scotland, told the court at the outset of the trial that he had no experience in explosives. In the Army he had learnt to build walls and bridges and, later, gained a heavy vehicles driving licence.

He served mainly in Germany, six months in the Falklands, but never in Northern Ireland. After leaving the Army he worked as a delivery driver, as an airport security officer and in a pub in Ireland.

He refused to make any detailed statement — though he denied IRA membership

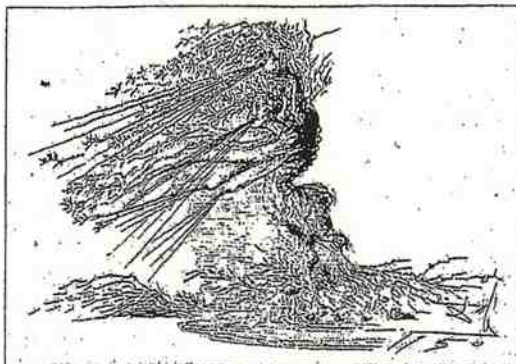
from the outset — and neither the prosecutor nor the judge shed much light on his motivation. For much of the trial Dickson looked ostentatiously bored and wore an "anti-fascism" T-shirt.

He was arrested in December last year at Prague airport on the basis of the German warrant, and he was extradited shortly afterwards.

Frau Klawitter said last night that she would not seek an appeal but made clear that Dickson was counting on an amnesty. Other members of the Provisional IRA have, in similar cases, been released after two years, she said.



Dickson grew up on British Army bases in Germany



Tancar Pagina, left, a Dali portrayal of the wind, and the castle near his birthplace where it is hoped that an organ powered by the wind will be played

## Wind harnessed to give the sound of music to Dali's surreal vision

By Paul Simons

A WIND-POWERED organ inspired by Salvador Dali is due to blow a surreal tune over the hills of Catalonia next year, celebrating the centenary of the artist's birth.

"This will be the first ever surrealist organ," said Sandra Martorell, spokeswoman for the Elmillon (£700,000) project, which is being planned for the 10th-century castle at Quermanco, on a windy hilltop at Vilajuiga, near Dali's birthplace at Figueras.

Dali was deeply affected by

Spain for up to three weeks at a time. Many people complain of headaches from the bone-dry and cold wind, and it has supposedly driven some mad.

Dali's paternal grandfather committed suicide, which he attributed to the effects of the wind," Ian Gibson, author of *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dali*, said.

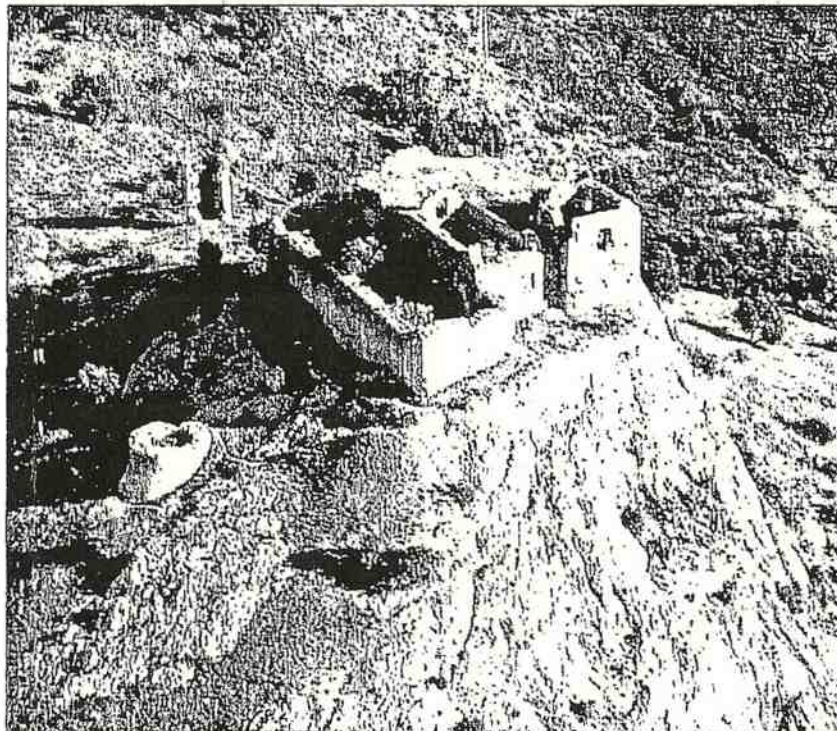
"Each winter Dali would leave his home in Port Lligat, northeast Spain, for New York, possibly to escape the wind."

But the wind also inspired the artist. "When the Tramontana, which Dali tried to capture

in his paintings," he added.

Dali's interest in the wind's musical properties may have been prompted by a mad cobbler in the village of Ordas, who was also a frustrated musician. When the Tramontana blew, he would climb on to a hill and conduct the wind with a great flourish.

In interviews, Dali expressed a great wish to build an organ powered by the Tramontana at the castle in Quermanco so that the music would be heard over all the region.



organ, but negotiations with the owner broke down when he offered to pay with some of his paintings as well as money," Señora Martorell said. The owner apparently bitterly regretted the decision later in

preneurs is determined to build the wind-powered organ, which is being designed by engineers at the Ramon Llull University in Barcelona, together with an organ maker.

It will feature about 300

into the instrument is still being worked out. A back-up air pump will be fitted in case the Tramontana fails to perform.

The instrument will be played using a console, but exactly what it will sound like is

normal organ. "It will be disharmonious and surreal, like nothing else that exists," he said, adding that to some extent its sound would depend on the wind speed.

The project's organisers

## Woman sailor is strangled on her warship

From Roger Boyes  
in Berlin

THE murder of a young woman sailor aboard a minesweeper has raised concerns about mixing male and female recruits in the German armed services.

All 33 crew of the *Mühlhausen* are being regarded as potential suspects in the killing of the 19-year-old petty officer, whose identity has not been released. She was found strangled in her cabin in the early hours of last Thursday.

Detectives have taken saliva samples from the sailors to make DNA tests and the vessel has been put under quarantine in a German military port. Thirty frogmen — the equivalent of the British Special Boat Squadron — are also being interrogated. Police are working on the assumption that the motive for the murder was jealousy or a sexual dispute.

Since women were admitted to the German armed services in January 2001, after an anguished debate, there have been only fairly low-key cases of sexual harassment or insulting behaviour but no serious incidents.

On the night of the murder the petty officer left the vessel, which was moored in Eckern-