

The Belfast Telegraph
 ESTD 1870
 Established 1870
 The Belfast Telegraph, 124-144 Royal Avenue
 Belfast BT1 1EB, Northern Ireland
 Tel: (028) 9026 4000 Fax: (028) 9055 4518
 E-mail: editor@belfasttelegraph.co.uk
 Editor: Edmund Curran

VIEWPOINT

Unionist support for Accord at lowest level

POLL RESULTS: Survey statistics highlight loss of faith in process

For all the parties and governments trying to restore devolution within the next few weeks, the results of today's exclusive opinion poll make depressing reading. While there is still a majority for the Good Friday Agreement, by 62-38, Protestant support has fallen to its lowest ebb, from 53pc four years ago to 36pc today.

Since one of the main aims was to reconcile the unionist and nationalist communities, it could be concluded that after a five-year trial, the Agreement has failed. If a referendum was held today, it would still pass, but such a comprehensive rejection by unionists would mean that the institutions would be unworkable.

The decline in Protestant support — from 55pc in May 2000, when the IRA agreed to "completely and verifiably put arms beyond use" — to the present 36pc reflects growing disillusionment with the political process. Yet even now, 60pc of Protestants said they wanted the Agreement to work, although this figure has dropped from 89pc in 1999.

So much for the old republican argument that unionists cannot accept change and will always reject the equality agenda. Only 37pc of Protestants want the Agreement to fail, and three out of five would give it their support if it could be fully implemented.

The contrast between the Protestant and the Catholic view is sharpest in their assessment of the Agreement's achievements. A majority of Protestants is dissatisfied with

virtually every aspect, except the present status of Northern Ireland. Catholics, on the other hand, express general satisfaction, except for progress on decommissioning, the stability of the institutions, implementation of the Agreement and demilitarisation. For the first time both communities put decommissioning of paramilitary weapons at the top of their "to do" list, something republicans cannot ignore. At the same time, Catholic dissatisfaction with police reform has dropped from 61 to 44pc.

As the pro-Agreement parties and the two governments consider how devolution can be restored in time for the May 1 election, they should be aware that trust in each other is in "free fall". Among Protestants, it has dropped from an average 37pc in 1999 to 17pc, and among Catholics from 48pc to 34pc. All of the parties are suffering, on both sides of the political fence. The UUP has the highest rating among Protestants, but it has fallen from 60 to 33pc in four years, while trust in the British government is down from 48 to 27pc.

For the present negotiations to achieve results, there would need to be a dramatic improvement in cross-community trust, now at its lowest level. The UUP and SDLP still lead the field, narrowly, but the figures show a large floating vote and the centre ground is collapsing. Tony Blair will clearly have his work cut out, when he returns on March 3.

Anti-war protesters should consider the wider picture



Steven King
 Later this month I hope to be at the launch of a branch of the Free Tibet Society in Northern Ireland. With the best will in the world I will be amazed if more than ten or 20 show up. The Chinese Government's oppression of that land, its culture and its unique brand of Buddhism seems a remote concern to most people. Fair enough, and I am quite sure what a few people in Belfast think causes the powers that be in Beijing not a moment's loss of sleep. But it worth noting just one thing: China does pretty much

what it likes in Tibet without consulting anyone, the United Nations least of all. Likewise, it will be news to most people that France, that force for peace and moral persuasion of Saddam, for some reason has thousands of troops deployed in the Ivory Coast, a small, poor ex-colony in West Africa. To the east, Russia has literally hundreds of thousands of soldiers attempting to crush Chechnya in a costly exercise with very real overtones of the Vietnam War. Did France consult the UN before plunging (back) into

Black Africa? Will President Putin have any truck with Kofi Annan's views on Chechnya? Not a bit of it: France is a proud sovereign nation with its own foreign policy, waxes Chirac. Mind your own business, growls Putin. I could go on. What little Belgium is doing in Africa these days is anyone's guess. When Syria is going to end its involvement in Lebanon, the same. I doubt either issue has been discussed at a single Sinn Fein branch meeting. But Syria's utterly predictable views on American (and British) foreign policy are vital, according to the self-styled peace movement. There must, absolutely must, be a second UN resolution before Saddam's non-compliance with the weapons inspection programme earns

serious consequences. Syria, you see — a bizarre, repressive hereditary dictatorship — has a seat on the UN Security Council. Its views are as important as those of the US and Britain to the keyfeyh-toting marchers on Saturday. Syria, thankfully, has no veto on the Security Council; China, Russia and France, of course, do. When two dozen people write to me to organise a rally at City Hall to protest French imperialism in West Africa, Russia's blitzkrieg in Chechnya and China's rape of Tibet I will think about donning a donkey jacket and my walking boots and joining CND. Until then, I will cheerfully ignore France's hypocrisy, Russia's murmurs and the Chinese whispers and carry on shopping. Anyone for a Big Mac?

WriteBack

Sending a message of support to Saddam

IT was very encouraging to see so many people willing to march and voice differing opinions with regards to the Iraq crisis and when questioned unable to give any satisfactory explanation for their opinions. I observed the march, but did not take part, which does not in anyway mean I agree with war. The cry of "No to Tony, No to George," can be interpreted as "It's all right, Saddam. we will protect you and your regime while you continue, to imprison, torture, mutilate, murder your own people and systematically cleanse the Kurdish people, and also continue to produce weapons of mass destruction, chemicals, and gasses, which have already been used against the Kurds and Iraqi peoples." Another reason the marchers gave was that thousands of Iraqis would die. Are they so blind and



Anti-war protesters at their Belfast rally.

ignorant not to realise that millions have already died and will continue to do so while we parade up and down waving banners and feel we have done our duty so we can feel good. The marchers reminded me of people who give crumbs to the hungry beggar and, if he

dies, console themselves with the thought that at least they did what they could. There was no mention of those from both sides of the Atlantic who are prepared to be injured and killed to allow us the freedom to march. How must they be feeling to know we don't give them the

support they are entitled to while they wage war on global terrorism in our name? For world security and peace, everyone must wake up to Saddam and allow their government to do what needs to be done. **IVAN AXTELL, Belfast 7.**

Don't forget about the home-grown terrorists

I WAS interested to see the large crowds at Belfast City Hall protesting against the expected war in the Middle East. It was good to see so many people taking a stand for peace.

Coincidentally, this gathering took place almost 25 years to that awful night in 1978, when a Provisional IRA blast incendiary device incinerated 12 innocent souls, seven of them women. Their only crime was to attend an Irish Collie Club dinner in the La Mon House Hotel.

There are few people old enough who will ever forget their revulsion at pictures of unrecognisable charred human remains.

The people who did this to their fellow human beings were never brought to book and are probably still walking the streets.

I trust that all those who attended the City Hall rally will devote as much attention to peace in this country as they do to stopping war in the Gulf. They ought never to forget the crimes against humanity and crimes against peace visited upon us by our own home-grown terrorists. **WILLIAM BRADY, Belfast 13.**

Stick to the facts on political points

MANY of those who seek to make political points tend, through ignorance or prejudice, to state facts incorrectly or are selective in their presentation. L. Reid (Writeback, February 13) is no exception when he attacks Steven King and Israel. His statement that "two thirds of Arab Palestine was given to the Jews" is incorrect in several aspects and is selective. The facts are that by a Resolution passed by a majority of two thirds of the United Nations on November 29, 1947, the British Mandated Territory of Palestine was divided between a Jewish and an Arab State, with slightly more than a half to the Arab State. Prior to it being a British mandate, Palestine had been for many centuries under the rule of the Turkish Empire. Of course, it has been an independent Jewish State until conquered by the Romans. As soon as the British left,

following and in violation of the 1947 Resolution, the fledgling State of Israel was invaded by the professional armies of five Arab States — Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq and Lebanon — with the intention of driving the Jews into the sea. The Jewish population of Israel at that time was 650,000. Somehow, Israel survived. In that War of Independence 6,000 Jews were killed, including many civilians and Holocaust survivors. Many Arabs also died. By the armistice of 1949 the boundaries of Israel were agreed by the Arab countries. It is a tiny country comprising less than one tenth of the lands of the Middle East. The remainder of Palestine, which would have formed the eighteenth Arab State, was divided between Egypt and Jordan. Thus the establishment of a Palestinian Arab State was frustrated by the Arab countries. Mr Reid also states "Israel still holds the Arab lands it

invaded in 1967". Again he is incorrect on at least two counts. In the 1967 war Egypt, Jordan and Syria again attempted to destroy Israel but this time the Israelis not only repelled the Arab forces but drove them back into their own territories and succeeded in capturing the most holy of Jewish places, the surviving wall of the Temple in Jerusalem, which under Jordanian rule, they had been forbidden to visit. When Israel offered to return territory to the Arab countries on condition they recognised the State of Israel, they refused with the words: "No peace with Israel, No recognition of Israel". In 1973 three Arab countries again invaded on Yom Kippur, the most holy day in the Jewish calendar. This time, by reason of the element of surprise they almost succeeded but somehow the Israelis rallied and Israel survived. Mr Reid is wrong when he

states "Israel still holds the Arab lands". In fact, in 1979 when Egypt made peace with and recognised Israel, the Israelis returned to Egypt the whole of the Sinai Peninsula and removed from that area the Israeli farmers and settlers. Israel has also made peace with Jordan. The State of Israel wants peace and needs peace. The keynote of its policy has been Land for Peace. However, its negotiations and offers have been frustrated by refusal and the continual targeting and murder of its citizens, men, women and children, which has not stopped since the 1920s long before the State of Israel was established. Yes, the Palestinian Arabs are suffering and have suffered but the greater blame must lie with those leaders who still seek the destruction of Israel, with the terrorist organisations and with the countries which fund them. **FAIR PLAY, Hollywood, Co Down.**

Operation code-name

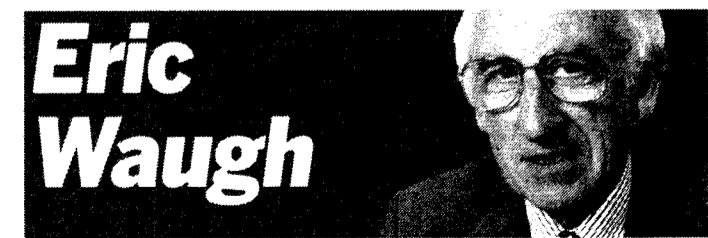
THE impending invasion of Iraq does not yet have a sexy code-name like Desert Storm. A catchy title is a vital part of any modern military adventure.

The Americans could choose a code-name that reflects the Bush approach to global diplomacy, such as Operation Gunslinger or Operation Yee Ha!

The British will also need a title. Operation Restore Imperial Pretensions or Operation Recover Global Status spring to mind. And one with a positive theme could go down a bomb, such as Operation Lower Petrol Prices.

But in my opinion there can only be one candidate — Operation Crusade! **JIM NISBET, Letterkenny, Co Donegal.**

Will protesters tell the truth in US?



Eric Waugh
 DISSENTING from American foreign policy on a single, important issue is one thing. Rabid, open-ended anti-Americanism is another. But this last is what we were treated to in one or two of the splenetic speeches at last weekend's big street demonstration in Belfast. Whether or not to go to war on Saddam was used to fan the embers of a much older quarrel indeed; and that is the one initiated by a section of the Irish on this side of the Atlantic against the superpower on the other. In Ireland, north and south, this represents an anomaly of

Will its members convey a message which includes the vulgar abuse so loudly applauded by their massed citizenry in front of the City Hall on Saturday? Or will they excuse themselves, stressing that "Of course we were not there". If so, they had better make their dissociation public before they go, if they wish to hold on to any credibility. When the first American troops crossed the Atlantic in the Second World War, they were sent here. Churchill's advisers feared hostility among the straitened populace in England if such large numbers of well-paid and well-found GIs were to arrive there at once. Yet when the first detachments disembarked in Belfast in January, 1942, and marched off to their billets, they were pelted with rocks by republican youths. These dissidents had been fed tales by their elders that the troops had come to invade neutral Eire, which of course they would have done in the event of a German landing.

But all knew that, by 1942, that was improbable. In reality, the Americans were here to prepare for the invasion of Europe.

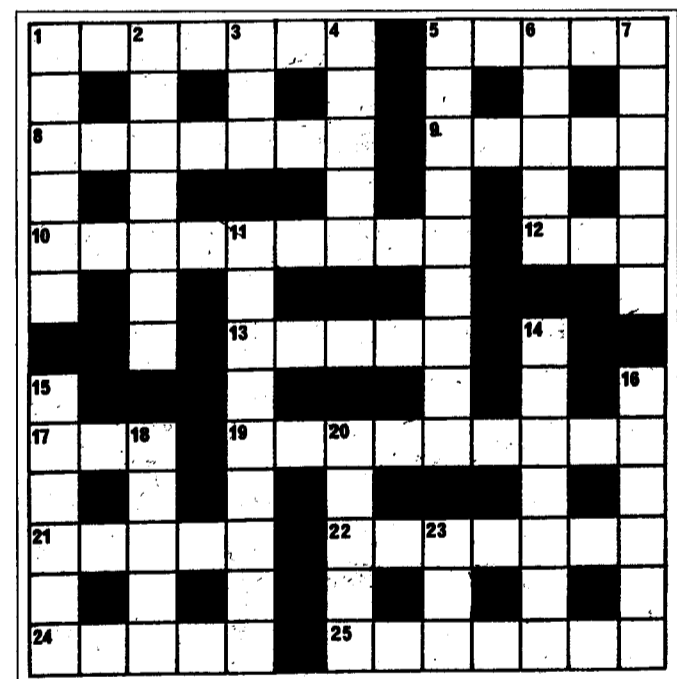
Within days, though, a sentry on lone vigil by night outside a US Army camp in Co Down was stabbed in the back by an assailant. He was never caught.

Three months later, a bus driver, a local Orangeman who allegedly had failed to give way, was shot dead at Ballykelly, Co. Derry, by the trigger-happy American sergeant in a scout car, warned about the IRA and escorting a convoy of top brass which included General George Marshall, the US Army Chief of Staff, not to mention President Roosevelt's two top aides, Harry Hopkins and Averell Harriman.

Even so, the Yanks, as they were universally known, soon found that, although they might find a welcome among many nationalists, unionist areas were safer.

Two generations later, this intricate skein of history, contains clues to current

TODAY'S CROSSWORD



No 9875

CRYPTIC CLUES

- Across**
 1 Rheims thief gave sailor his wad back (7)
 5 Cleopatra's first couple had her snake to hold tight to (5)
 8 The light-chamber Newton first learnt about (7)
 9 It is mentioned as being famous (5)
 10 Trent pine may be used, if suitable (9)
 12 Depression of the Old King didn't end (3)
 13 Sort of cacti that can be hired in India (5)
 17 White vestment that is a pound in weight (3)
 19 Grieving for the mental trouble gin brought about (9)
 21 It isn't true a self-adjustment is required (5)
 22 Raise the status of guard with physical education (7)
 24 Respond to some future activity (5)
 25 Explicitly state that the train is fast (7)
Down
 1 Bird is about to cut an old banger (6)
 2 Check with the tower for take-off instructions (7)
 3 It is expected to sound like moisture deposited overnight (3)
 4 Show one's pain at finding bit of cork in one's claret (5)
 5 Force one to study a bit of melody (9)
 6 From Athens, room on top (5)
 7 Use a bike, one is told, to sell door-to-door (6)
 11 The thinking principle let client out of it (9)
 14 A soldier who keeps himself to himself (7)
 15 The foreman may put a social blunder right (6)
 16 Way of leaving, for example, the gown toppers (6)
 18 A slice of cake turned up in

- wood one could model (5)
 20 Think about nothing but computer 2 (5)
 23 Space filled by family doctor who has a heart (3)
QUICK CLUES
Across
 1 Bird of the crow family (7)
 5 A brooch, fastening (5)
 8 Structure housing a light (7)
 9 Made a memo (5)
 10 To the point (9)
 12 Region between two anticyclones (3)
 13 (India): hired (5)
 17 Long, white vestment (3)
 19 Mourning, grieving (9)
 21 Bogus (5)
 22 Raise in status, quality (7)
 24 Respond to a stimulus (5)
 25 Put into words (7)
Down
 1 An old banger (car) (6)
 2 Govern, regulate (7)
 3 Owing (3)
 4 Start from pain (5)
 5 Urge with irresistible power (9)
 6 Room beneath the roof (5)
 7 Go around selling house-to-house (6)
 11 Power of the mind (9)
 14 Not public (7)
 15 Leader, foreman of gang (6)
 16 Means of leaving (6)
 18 Light wood for model-making (5)
 20 Small rodent (5)
 23 A space between (3)
Answers to No 9874
Across: 1 Sting 4 Forearm 8 Adieu 9 Liberal 10 Put 11 Blockhead 12 Rack 13 Ecu 18 Classroom 20 Mat 21 Inflect 22 Crime 23 Ellipse 24 Slept
Down: 1 Sharp practice 2 Idiotic 3 Grubby 4 Fellow 5 Rebuke 6 Agree 7 Meladjustment 14 Compile 15 Astleep 16 Bottle 17 Smacks 19 Awful