Note on the Second Issue

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The struggle for power in Northern Ireland was Britain’s civil war that lasted for a quarter of a century and dubbed “the long war”. From time to time it spilled over to England with increasing ferocity with bombings in London, Birmingham, and Manchester, and included a near successful attempt to wipe out the whole British cabinet in Brighton in 1984. The war is now over, but the pain remains. Much has been written on the war itself and the way it ended, but much less has been written on the uneasy aftermath. In this issue of the Peace and Conflict Review, Ryan Gawn helps to fill the gap. As Gawn argues, dealing with the past in the negotiations would have stymied the peace talks. Now, it seems as though the British government has been taking the lead, but the past weighs all too heavily on the present, and meaningful reconciliation remains elusive.

Also this issue, we take up the issue of women war fighters. The general view is that men are the ones who are violent, and that women do not usually serve in combat roles, remaining instead, as they do in patriarchal civil society, in supportive and subordinate roles. However, in many wartime conditions, women do become combatants, as they did in the resistance movements during WWII or as tank commanders in the Battle of Kursk, or in a variety of combat roles during national freedom movements. In many ways, therefore, we should not be surprised that women are just as capable of violence as men – but what lies behind their acceptance of death and willingness to killing others? In her carefully worked article, Katerina Standish addresses this question directly, and explains the unique motivations behind some of the Chechen and Palestine female suicide bombers.