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United in defiance of the killers

Thursday, 12 March 2009

The people of Northern Ireland in their thousands yesterday told dissident republicans in no uncertain terms that their violence has no support in this community.

The rallies held in Belfast, Londonderry, Newry, Lisburn and Downpatrick added the voice of the ordinary man and woman in the street to those of politicians here, in the Republic and at Westminster in condemning the murders of two soldiers and a police officer during the past week.

While the fanatics who carried out the foul killings may be unremoved by the protests, they can be in no doubt that the province is united in opposition to them.

To them we say, your evil acts can only bring misery to the families of your victims and, quite probably, to your own families when you are caught and imprisoned for a very long time. Yes, the province has been shocked by the murders you carried out and you have gained notoriety on a national scale. But you have failed to divide the politicians who are now

working in a power-sharing administration to improve the lot of every person in this province. If anything, you have reinforced their determination to make devolved government work.

Today First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness are in the United States attempting to bring much-needed investment to Northern Ireland.

Their mission is to bring hope to a province facing uncertain economic times in common with many countries around the world. Their message to all they meet in the US is that Northern Ireland is

not back at war. Your campaign of violence has no meaningful support. The two politicians will also point out — and who better to do so — that physical force republicanism can never achieve its aim of a united Ireland. This province survived 30 years of intense and brutal civil conflict and remains unbowed.

The political leaders doubtlessly will point out to those who fear fresh violence in Northern Ireland that there are many danger spots in the world.

Witness the killing of 15 people in Germany by a teenage gunman and 10 people in Alabama in an

other senseless spree of violence. Just as those isolated acts of violence will not influence the political agendas in Germany or the US, neither will yours knock the peace process off course in this province.

You cannot fail to have noticed that before they left both men — once sworn enemies — stood shoulder to shoulder with the Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde and denounced the murders you committed.

They went even further. They identified your actions as an attack on the political process and vowed that it would not weaken. And they called on people, unionist, nationalist and republican, to give the PSNI any information which could lead to the apprehension of the killers and their fellow travellers.

The people of Northern Ireland have waited too long and endured too much to give up the peace they enjoyed until your attacks.

They are resolutely opposed to everything you stand for and, let there be no mistake, you



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