

NorthBelfastNews

At the heart of the community

belfastproperty
online.com



04 July 2007

Search Site

Lá Nua

- Home
- News
 - Headlines
 - Features
- Opinion
 - Letters
 - Your Texts
 - Editorial
 - Columnists
- Features
- Sport
 - GAA
 - Soccer
 - Bowls
 - Boxing
 - Darts



Nuachtán Laethúil na Gaeilge

From the Balcony



A publisher's blog

By Máirtín Ó Muilleoir

- **Notices**
 - Public Notices
 - Classifieds
 - Deaths
 - Memorials
- **In The Community**
- **BelfastPropertyOnline.com**
 - Property Guide
- **Business and Recruitment**
 - News
 - Comment
 - This Week's PDF Edition
- **Aisling Awards**

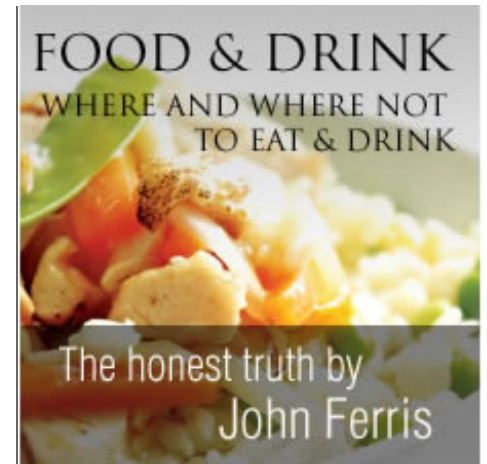
Columnists

Reflecting and deflecting

Meditation in response to state murder an insult to victims

BY Jude Collins

I like Trevor Ringland. Even though he must have been - maybe still is - a tough cookie (you don't play rugby for Ireland and not have a big, wide, deep tough streak), but in his public persona and even face-to-face, he's a soft-spoken, gentle individual. The kind of person you feel this place could use a lot more of. As well as being a placid ex-rugby player, Trevor is a head honcho in Healing Through Remembering. A match made in heaven, it would seem. A strong, gentle man heading up an organisation called Healing Through Remembering. To criticise either would seem as offensive as striking your mother or mocking apple pie.



Remember

Last week Healing Through Remembering urged all citizens in the North of Ireland, in the privacy of their homes, to sit down and remember those who suffered in the recent conflict, and to resolve that such conflict will never happen again.

Was the day a success? Hard to say. I didn't do any reflecting or resolving myself but for all I know, tens of thousands of others did, which presumably would make the day a success in the eyes of Healing Through Remembering. If on the other hand you measure success by a satisfactory answer to the question 'Did the day make a difference?', you might conclude that regardless of numbers participating, the day amounted to fiddly-dee.

Reality

Because just four days after Trevor's Day of Reflection, on Monday of this week, stark reality presented itself. The Public Prosecution Service announced that it will not take legal action against any of the police or security forces who colluded with loyalist death squads to kill innocent civilians. Two people who were victims of that violence - the kind of people Trevor called on us to reflect on last Thursday - appeared on television to give their reaction to the news.

John Finucane is a young man whose father was riddled with bullets while having dinner with his wife and young family. The Stevens Report long ago made it clear that this vicious murder was the work of loyalist killers, armed and aided by the security forces. Despite Stevens, no one in the security forces will be charged with Mr Finucane's death because, the PPS claims, records aren't available, officers can't be identified, the evidence isn't there. John Finucane's response showed superhuman restraint as he accused the PPS of being weak, submissive and cowardly. And if you think that was less than superhuman, ask yourself what you would have said had your father been butchered with the state's aid and you were faced with the PPS's response.

Killed five people

The second man interviewed was Mark Sykes. He was in Sean Graham's bookie shop on the Ormeau Road when two gunmen, one armed with an AK47 and the other an automatic pistol, entered and killed five people. Sykes was lucky - he was shot twice in the chest and once in each arm but survived. His brother-in-law, who was with him, was killed.

Sykes was asked what his reaction was, given that William Stobie, a paid informer, had five weapons confiscated, one made 'inoperative' another 'partially inoperative', then returned to him, allowing one of these weapons to be used to kill people in the bookie's shop that day. Sykes's response was that he didn't believe the weapons returned were made inoperative - who would, for pity's sake? - and that the British legal system was making it clear that those involved in state murder can do so with impunity. He said all this in a calm, measured way. Like Finucane, he showed restraint that was bewildering.

Resolution

The thing is this. Did Trevor and Healing Through Remembering talk to the Finucanes or the Sykes family before coming up with their Day of Reflection? Did they check with the father of Raymond McCord, or the father of Billy Wright, or the sister of Robert Hamill,

or the Bloody Sunday families, or the families of victims of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings? If so, did these people tell Trevor that yes, a day of quiet remembering of lost loved ones and a resolution to avoid such conflict in the future was what was needed?

Not a chance. These people - victims twice over - want the truth.

The truth they already know is that the authorities so far have done all in their power to prevent the facts of collusion from emerging by losing evidence, withholding evidence, destroying evidence, even passing legislation so that access to evidence becomes impossible.

Victims

Healing Through Remembering? It's a safe bet John Finucane and Mark Sykes and hundreds of others have remembered and will remember the victims of violence every day of their lives. It's also a safe bet that they wish, this Thursday, gentle Trevor would call for every citizen who cares about justice, in the privacy of their homes, to write a letter to the British Prime Minister expressing outrage at this cover-up of state murder and demanding what John Finucane called 'truth and accountability in a transparent fashion'.

Trevor Ringland is a nice man and Healing Through Remembering sounds like a well-meaning organisation. But to offer meditation in response to state murder is an insult to all of us with half a brain or quarter of a conscience.

29/06/2007