

Most PopularMost Emailed

BreakingSportBusinessWorldGossip



Irish News
Ulster All-Stars 2008



Issue Changer:

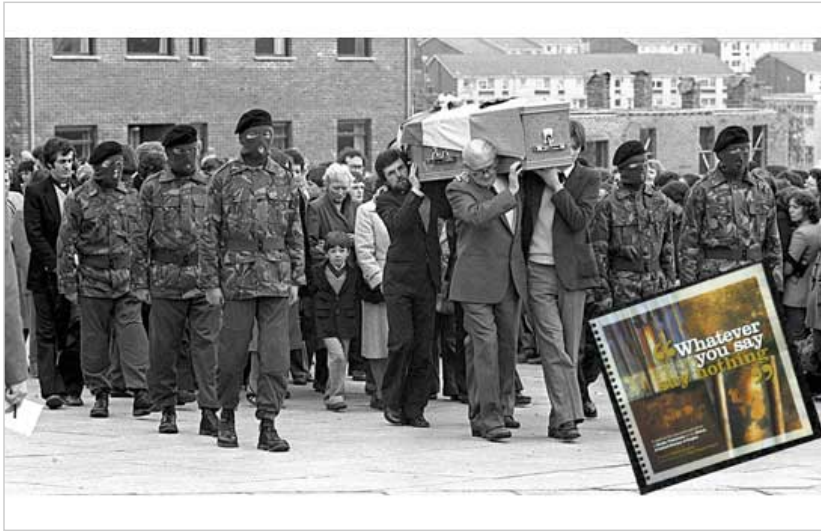


NEWS >

Most believe Protestants ethnically cleansed in border areas

By Claire Simpson

26/09/08



CONTENTIOUS: The funeral of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands in 1981. The election of Sands as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone that year was a major difficulty for many Protestants, according to a new report, 'Whatever You Say Say Nothing'. They saw the election "as a clear and unambiguous vote of support for the retention of the 'armed struggle' and the purging of Protestants from the land," the study found

That Protestants were 'ethnically cleansed' from border regions during the Troubles is an "accepted fact", according to a report commissioned by the Church of Ireland.

The report, commissioned by the Church's Hard Gospel project, looked at the experiences of Protestants living near the border in the Clogher diocese during the Troubles.

It found that the majority of people interviewed believed that Protestant families were strategically 'picked off' by republican paramilitaries, forcing many to leave their homes.

Many felt it was unlikely that paramilitaries would ever be brought to justice for crimes committed during the Troubles.

And some were critical that neither Protestant nor Catholic clergy seemed able at the time to speak out about the importance of making peace.

One person interviewed said: "There was fear and isolation – no-one came to our aid".

The report found that although marrying a Catholic was not viewed as acceptable, relationships between Protestants and Catholics during the Troubles were seen as generally cordial.

Many interviewees felt their Catholic neighbours did not support the IRA but could not speak out for fear of

possible repercussions.

However, a major bone of contention for many Protestants interviewed was the election of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone in 1981.

The report's author, David Gardiner, said the majority of those interviewed saw the election, and still see it, "as a clear and unambiguous vote of support for the retention of the 'armed struggle' and the purging of Protestants from the land".

Some of the respondents questioned the role of the Catholic Church during the Troubles, saying they could not understand why the Church gave Christian burials to republicans.

The Rev Earl Storey, director of the Hard Gospel project, said the research also posed difficult questions about the Church of Ireland's role during the Troubles.

"The idea is to give a voice to members of the Protestant/Church of Ireland community in border areas, to get them to talk about their

experiences during the Troubles – because it needs to be talked about," he said.

"The impact on that community in the Troubles was immense. It's a community that's not used to voicing their experiences."

Mr Storey said he hoped members of the Catholic or nationalist community would respond to the questions raised by the report.

"I think that very often in Northern Ireland it's a case of 'whatever you say, say nothing'," he said.

"The point of this report is it is talking about very difficult issues. We have to talk about these things and talk about them constructively."

Bishop of Clogher the Rt Rev Michael Jackson said he felt the diocese had broken new ground "in the quest for understanding and mutual respect in the asking the invisible questions".

Bookmark: [Digg](#) [Delicious](#) [Reddit](#) [Facebook](#) [StumbleUpon](#)

 Email this story

[print advertising](#) | [media pack](#) | [online advertising](#) | [privacy statement](#) | [about us](#) | [contact us](#) | [subscribe](#) | [login](#) | [archives](#) | [sitemap](#) | [careers](#) | [home](#)