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The blanket

A Journal of Protest and Dissent

Colluding in Silence

Mick Hall • 25 April 2007

These days, hardly a week goes by without an article appearing in the newspapers in the north of Ireland about the high level of criminal collusion, which is alleged to have taken place between members of the British security forces and Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries. Greg Harkin, who co-authored the best selling book *Stakeknife* with the former British Army Intel NCO, 'Martin Ingram', wrote [the latest piece to catch my eye](#).

In it he alleged that the murders in 1981 by a unit of the PIRA of the Reverend Robert Bradford, Ulster Unionist MP for South Belfast, and Ken Campbell, the 29 year old caretaker of the Hall in which the Rev Bradford was holding a political surgery, took place despite the British Security Forces having been fore-warned, three days prior to the shootings were to take place, by an informer within the Provisional IRA of the exact time and place that these killings were to occur. Mr Harkin went on to claim that according to his sources, the security forces chose to allow these killings to take place as they wished to protect their informers within the Provisionals. To quote one of Greg Harkin's sources, a former soldier in the British Army Intel Regiment, "I believe the hit went ahead to save agents' lives."

If true, it is a preposterous justification for the State to allow two of its citizens to be murdered —not least because if the Security Forces truly wished to maintain the safety of their informers, all that would have needed to happen was for the agencies who handled them to pull them out; after all they had three days before the assassination took place to do so. That they chose not to implies that they were playing a deadly political game, not just using their highly placed informants to gain actionable information. Surely the *raison d'être* of running informers should be that the general public's safety should be paramount, not that of informers, agents of influence or security service personnel.

There is no such thing as a dirty word. Nor is there a word so powerful, that it's going to send the listener to the lake of fire upon hearing it.
- Frank Zappa



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Like most of the information which has come into the public domain of late and which centers on the criminal collusion which took place between northern paramilitaries and officers of the RUC Special Branch, MI5 and British Army Intel, [FRU], Harkin's latest article has been all but ignored by the politicians, whatever their political persuasion and whether they are based in Belfast, London or Dublin.

As far as the northern political parties are concerned, their silence is sheer political opportunism. The leading Unionist party, the DUP, in the process displays gross hypocrisy, as it has built its support base on support for the police and rule of law. Yet it seems when it is the forces of the UK State that breaks the law, it raises not a squeak. This is from a party whose leader declared that the litmus test for Sinn Fein would be its support for the PSNI and the rule of law.

As for SF, a party that has undoubtedly lost members to the criminal collusion that has taken place between the security forces and paramilitaries, and whose MPs and MLAs have had countless constituents murdered in such circumstances down the years, their sudden silence on this issue can only be described as grubby opportunism and political cowardice. In the past they were at the forefront of the campaigns to highlight any wrongdoing on the part of the British security forces. Now that they are a leading component of the Stormont administration and it has become self evident that their own organization was infiltrated up to leadership levels by various organs of the British security services, they are less keen for any inquiry to take place for fear of what might emerge.

What of the politicians who were the Rev Bradford's parliamentary colleagues at Westminster, and sit as MPs for constituencies in the rest of the United Kingdom? One would have thought they might at least show some interest when a leading newspaper within the UK publishes an article that states that members of MI5, the British army and the RUC Special Branch were aware that one of their number was to be murdered, yet they failed to warn him and allowed the crime to happen, using the excuse that the safety of an informer in their pay was paramount, a man, I might add, who may well have played a role in the MP's murder. But no, not a word is heard from the noble members in defense of one of their own who was brutally slain whilst going about his business as a member of the House of Commons. Workers in a pickle factory would have shown more concern were it to have been one of their number who had been brutally gunned down on the day in question.

As to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, in the week following these revelations he chose to go before the UK Parliament's Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and tell them: "We are spending an awful lot of money on the past." He went on to tell MPs that more than £200m was being spent on investigations and around half of that was on lawyers' fees. While agreeing that inquiries had to be carried out, he questioned whether the province wanted to continue paying out to examine events over recent years or if it wanted to invest in the future instead. It seems as far as Mr Hain is concerned it is better to draw a curtain across the past and allow those who have committed crimes up to and including murder to get away stock free, otherwise something nasty might emerge.

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*A new beginning - a step
forward*

So here we have Mr Paisley, Mr Adams and the representative of the UK State in the north east of Ireland, Peter Hain, all siding with the criminals against their victims, and they are the very people who have recently demanded of the people of the north of Ireland that they must all respect and obey the rule of law.

One does not have to be a conspiracy theory geek to conclude that there is a centralized plan of silence amongst the British government, Unionist politicians and the leadership of SF, with self interest being the motivating factor, the purpose being to convince the people of the six counties and to a lesser extent the rest of the United Kingdom that any inquiry into State Collusion in criminality or indeed a Truth and Reconciliation Commission would be against their best interest.

As someone posting under the handle 'The Dubliner' wrote on the Slugger O'Toole web site, *"the vested interests have convinced the people that truth and reconciliation is not in their best interests and so they to are opposed [to any inquiry]."* Perhaps, but it is early days and one can but hope these revelations about UK State collusion in criminality which are appearing in the media will continue, and politicians will eventually emerge with the courage to stand against the aforementioned powerful forces who wish to consign all talk of an inquiry or Truth and Reconciliation to the shredding machine or the vault deep within the bowels of MI5's new Irish HQ.

This is not only a matter of history, as important as that is. Without a Truth and Reconciliation Inquiry, how can people truly move forward? It is difficult to see how the two communities within the north can be reformed in friendship and tolerance if truth and reconciliation is not in their best interests. The simple answer of course is they cannot be. I am not suggesting people should be legally punished, but they need to go before the people who will be represented by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and admit and answer for their past mistakes and crimes. If there is no Truth and Reconciliation, to put it bluntly the stables will not be cleaned and that will in all probability mean the very people who carry a grave responsibility for the death, destruction and human suffering of the last four decades will be responsible for administering the northern Statelet for the next twenty years, whether they be politicians or members of the secret state. The very thought should enrage all decent people.

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