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The blanket

A Journal of Protest and Dissent

The Battle Against Truth

Forgetting one's participation in mass murder is not something passive; it is an active deed ... it is not a moment of erasure, but of turning things upside down, the strange reversal of the victimiser mentally converting himself to victim ... Sometimes, I think it is I who have suffered most ... throughout history people with blood on their hands have used such rationalisations

– Adam Hochschild.

Anthony McIntyre • 19 August 2007

Truth is a concept alien to the Northern conflict. The peace process provides evidence in abundance of that. At one point, directed by the Lisburn Lie Machine from within Thiepval Barracks, the British Army was in the vanguard of the battle against truth. Over the course of the last decade that particular lie machine lost ground and was replaced by another.

Today, Sinn Fein and truth do not form a brace of words that rest easily in each other's company. Sinn Fein despite pretending otherwise is a truth repellent outfit. This is not because party members as individuals are pathological liars. It is down to Sinn Fein's own perceived need as a strategic collective to pursue a practice of organised lying for the purpose of outmanoeuvring its opponents while simultaneously deceiving itself.

In ways this makes Sinn Fein not all that different from the many other bodies that claimed to be of a revolutionary hue. In his memoir, *The Gatekeeper*, Terry Eagleton wittily sets truth in a revolutionary context.

The question arose whether one was allowed to lie to the working class ... some comrades supported the notion of the 'revolutionary lie' ... the truth was not as the bourgeois ideologists imagined a matter of facts, states of

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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affairs, statistics, of what was indubitably the case and such dismal reifications ... thus it was 'true', in a static, reified sense of the term, that the whole membership of the organisation could have been fitted with ease into a public lavatory, but in terms of underlying dynamics the group was many thousands strong ... the general idea was that even when they were wrong they were right.

Brian Feeney in his *Irish News* column was shooting apples in a barrel when he highlighted the absurdity of Gerry Adams leading a truth march. The Sinn Fein president has established such a threadbare reputation for honesty that in terms of public perception he is to truth what the Anti Christ is to Christianity. Only in the wonderland world of the peace process do the mutually irreconcilable walk hand in hand, aided to no small measure by the regime of hush. Consider a march for Holy Communion led by Ian Paisley. Elsewhere such an event would prompt derision. Here the owners of raised eyebrows would be told not to upset the peace process.

It is only in the Orwellian world of the peace process that the great Anti-Truth can lead a march for truth. Like King Leopold's ghost, the shadow cast by his bearded vestige is like dark shoe polish on a pane of glass. When truth seekers throttle transparency the outcome can only be a truth that merely functions as a weapon in the battle against truth. Truth tends not to be used for reconciliation but for recrimination.

The families of the victims of state collusion have a legitimate grievance that should not be subject to the vagaries of political horse-trading. For this reason they should give consideration to what it is they need from a campaign for truth. If it is actual truth they seek rather than a positional truth then by recruiting Sinn Fein to their cause they leave themselves open to the type of allegation the reactionary Ann Coulter levelled against the wives of some of the victims of 9/11, that of allowing a humanitarian issue to become party politicised.

There is no need to have legitimate demands for justice alloyed by the machinations of politicians. It is hardly the case that the most stunning blow dealt to the British state in recent years on the matter of collusion needed the imprimatur of the political parties before it proved successful. Raymond McCord succeeded in securing the devastating O'Loan report on RUC special branch because he confronted rather than solicited political forces.

It is hard to see how the issue of truth is going to be resolved. The stark answer is that it won't be. The current British government would need to be of the same mind as the present Argentinean government which has taken a strong stand against the record of the 1976-83 military junta and is demonstrably prepared to grasp the nettle of state murder and torture. Under the leadership of President Néstor Kirchner the government in Buenos Aires unambiguously stated that the rule of the generals was morally wrong; previous amnesty laws were overturned and presidents, leading ministers and military officers have served time in jail. There is no equivalent in the North. The incumbent British government is not prepared to admit that the British state's war in Ireland was ethically indefensible.

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Saerbhreachach Mac
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Moreover, those demanding truth need to at least believe in it themselves. When in 1785 the Archbishop of Toulouse was recommended to fill the see of Paris Louis XV1 replied "Ah, no; the Archbishop of Paris must at least believe in God". In this the British state knows it does not have to take seriously any truth campaign fronted by Sinn Fein. If those making the loudest calls for truth are busy narrating silences for their own history their campaigning cry can only amount to 'don't do as I do, do as I say.' In such an ethical quagmire truth can only sink to the bottom as the necessary price for keeping self serving falsehoods on top.

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