



The blanket

A Journal of Protest and Dissent

Desecration of More Than The Grave



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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Ciaran O Cuinneagain • 13 August 2007

I don't like to use the term 'scum', it reminds me of the Bobby Sands writing 'Fenian vermin etc', wherein Bobby rightly claims it is used to compensate for a lack of vocabulary. And anyhow, the word is bandied around west Belfast so much these days it has lost its potency.

However on Saturday morning last I received a phone call telling me that the grave of my one time friend and comrade Volunteer Joseph O Connor had been desecrated for the second time in a year.

I will never be able to prove who did it, I do however know the identities of those who destroyed his memorial plaque last year. I saw the video footage in which a paint bomb destroyed the once dignified memorial erected by a Dublin slua of na Fianna Eireann in 2001.



I also saw footage of subsequent attacks on the home on which it is mounted.

That is Joe's mothers home, outside which he was murdered in October 2000, the abode of a family who today endure what can only be described as a daily ritual of humiliation.

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John Kennedy

I have watched footage of Joe's mother being slapped and having her glasses snatched from her face, I have watched footage of people trying to break the door down with machetes and of people offering a tenner 'for the first man who can kick that door down', The aim ? to get at the occupants of the house, half of which are under ten years old, none of whom have done anything wrong.

I have watched copious amounts of such footage, in some of it the figures cannot be seen, as they are on the roof humping containers of petrol. The backdrop sound to this sickening footage is always the same, crying children inside and the cackling drunken laughter of youths outside.

And it is always the same youths, their leaders also live in that street you see.

Most sickeningly I have viewed the websites adorned by their photographs and on which they brag about their attacks.

So when I was told on Saturday afternoon that the same gang of cackling drunkards were seen emerging from the city cemetery very early that morning I took the liberty of assuming the obvious.

In my heart I know who smashed the statues and kicked the ornaments from Joe's grave, they are the same people who wrecked his memorial plaque. The same people who last year took a hammer to the headstones embedded photograph, a photograph of a very young looking comrade who should be alive today, to defend his innocent mothers home.

Now it is common knowledge that something of a social dispute has recently occurred in Ballymurphy, no doubt the those who speak for the grave wreckers would like me to dwell on that. Purposefully I will not.

Why? Because that would bring Joseph into the equation of that sorry state of affairs, which (It shouldn't need to be said) he had nothing whatsoever to do with.

So I will put it this way. Youths some of whom I actually feel some pity for, but who I also sincerely believe are housebreakers, death drivers, animal killers, glue sniffers, drug users and drug dealers, as well as low level police informers, are being allowed to commit one of the most despicable offences against moral decency, the frequent desecration of a grave and memorial.

They are not doing it to avenge a death, nor as part of a so called 'feud'.

At best they are doing it to suit faceless men in Springfield road PSNI station (the only people who value their existence), at worst they are doing it for fun.

In the past I personally would have visited these people, not in a confrontational manner, but quietly and reasonably with a view to facing them down morally.

However I am currently a republican prisoner, out 'on licence' having been released from Maghaberry in July last year where I had served three years.

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Anthony McIntyre

These people who I would delight on being able to confront, have what you could call a working relationship with the PSNI, that is the cops arrive only when it is convenient for both parties. They also have a cosy relationship with the media. More than that they are well briefed and accomplished liars.

I have little doubt that my well meaning and dignified approach would soon be interpreted and construed as a hostile attack leading to my immediate return to Roe house, and somehow I cant see the courts offering me the same leniency as they seem to consistently show the grave wreckers.

So instead I am sending this appeal to all and any decent republican readers of the blanket.

These attacks will continue until those responsible are faced down, that should only mean publicly exposing in their faces the complete non existence of moral character or courage possessed by the grave wreckers, until such time as they are compelled by shame and public disapproval to stop.

Failing that they should be physically denied the ability to occupy ground space upon which such appalling anti-human attacks can be mounted.

This is not about anything but protecting my dead comrade who was murdered for opposing what is the now government of 'Northern Ireland'.

I cannot influence the situation in any way.

Please help.

Go raibh mile maith agaibh.

Ciaran O Cuinneagain is an ex prisoner, friend and comrade of Volunteer Joe O Connor

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