

Towards a shared future

(1) The difficult questions

compiled by

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Introduction

The 100 documents produced to date as part of the *Island Pamphlets* series have been compiled from over 400 small-group discussions held at community level over the past twenty years. In these discussions the myriad problems facing Northern Irish society have been discussed in great depth, and given rise to a complex range of responses. More questions have emerged than answers. Given the recent upsurge in inter-communal conflict, however, some of the more fundamental questions need to be addressed with a new urgency. Where are we going as a society? What do we want for our future? How do we envisage getting there? These questions are not just for politicians and communities to address – each one of us has to ask whether our own attitudes assist or hinder moves to reach a new accommodation and build a more tolerant society.

In an effort to assist this process, some forty individuals working at the grassroots in Belfast were interviewed, each being asked two questions:

- (1) What do you believe to be the difficult questions our two communities must address if we are to move to a shared future?**
- (2) How do you believe we can best confront the legacy of sectarianism?**

The initial intention was to publish the answers in one pamphlet. However, more material was gathered than anticipated, and it was decided to spread the responses over two pamphlets (Nos. 101 and 102), with each question being accorded its own document, a slightly problematic approach given that many of the interviewees saw the two questions as inextricably linked.

Michael Hall *Farset Community Think Tanks Co-ordinator*

Note: The interviewees were interviewed sometimes singly, sometimes in pairs, and their contributions collated under themes. Normal practice in the pamphlets is not to attribute any of the quotes. However, a few people who read the drafts felt that this created some confusion, given that people from both communities were involved. Accordingly, I have prefaced each quote by one of four letters: [**L**] representing a member, or former member, of a loyalist organisation; [**R**] a member, or former member, of a republican organisation; [**C**] a community worker based largely in the Catholic/Nationalist community; and [**P**] a community worker based largely in the Protestant/Unionist community. This is not entirely satisfactory, as *all* of the interviewees are involved in community work of some kind, and a number of them would see their work as embracing both communities. ('Unlettered' quotes are additional questions asked by me.)

A brief overview of events often referred to in this pamphlet

Out of 2500 Loyal Order parades held annually across Northern Ireland, only 5% are considered contentious. One of them is a feeder parade by three North Belfast lodges making their way into the city centre on the Twelfth [of July], where they join with other lodges and proceed to the 'Field' on the outskirts of Belfast, for refreshments and speeches. The outward (and return) route of this feeder parade takes it past Ardoyne shops, at an interface between the Protestant and Catholic communities. In recent years the parade has occasioned a nationalist counter-protest and frequent disorder. In the lead-up to **12 July 2012** a nationalist residents' group again announced that it would be holding a large counter-demonstration and march.

Given this history, the Parades Commission (set up by government to adjudicate on contentious parades) determined that the return parade must be completed by 4pm. The Orange Order condemned this ruling, claiming that it did not give their members time to attend the celebrations at the Field. After some deliberation the Order decided that it would 'bus' a token number of the lodge members back to Ardoyne just before 4pm, where they would parade the contested stretch before being bused back to the Field.

Soon after the token parade had taken place serious rioting broke out, with petrol bombs thrown and the police using water cannons. Three cars were hijacked (with one set on fire) by nationalist youths and a dissident republican gunman fired ten shots at police.

In a separate incident in North Belfast a Shankill Road-based loyalist band was filmed marching in circles outside St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and playing a tune to which onlookers sang sectarian lyrics.

Members of this band were later interviewed as part of BBC1's *The Nolan Show*. The programme was notable for both the fraught studio exchanges, and the negative opinions expressed by the young bandsmen, who claimed that Protestant culture was in retreat and under threat.

In its determination regarding a Royal Black Institution parade on **25 August**, part of which would also pass St. Patrick's, the Parades Commission stipulated that this band should not take part, and that no music be played outside the church. These rulings were ignored.

On **2 September**, a Nationalist parade, organised by the Henry Joy McCracken Flute Band and Republican Network for Unity, took place in North Belfast. It had originally been deemed uncontroversial by the Parades Commission, but, given the prevailing tensions between the two communities in North Belfast, the outcome was three nights of the most serious rioting seen for years (largely centred around the Carlisle Circus/Denmark Street area).

On **6 September** The Royal Black Institution apologised to St. Patrick's Church for what had transpired on 25 August. Loyal Order representatives later met with the parish priest and some of the parishioners, but not members of the nearby Carrick Hill residents' group.

On **29 September** 30,000 people took part in a march through Belfast to mark the centenary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant. The march passed off peacefully. However, a number of bands broke a Parades Commission determination that only hymns should be played going past St. Matthew's Catholic Church in East Belfast. A small crowd of Protestants were also present outside the church, urging bands to break the determination, and one bandsman was photographed urinating at the church gates.

On **1 October**, Orange Order Grand Chaplain Rev. Mervyn Gibson visited St. Matthew's Church to apologise for the behaviour of the bandsman.

All interviews were completed before the murder of prison officer David Black.

The difficult questions

What is a ‘shared future’?

It was evident from the interviews that the concept of a ‘shared future’ was highly problematic, and no consensus emerged. If anything, the opinions expressed highlighted the potential for future distrust and discord.

- [P] What is a shared future? Could a shared future mean people just getting on with their own business and living in the communities they currently live in? Or does it mean that communities in the future should be integrated? Should education be integrated? What does it look like? We have consultants and academics producing these wonderful documents and compiling all these surveys, but what do they really amount to? What is it that the people of Northern Ireland actually want? And will they ever be able to agree on anything? And if they can’t, can we all ‘agree to disagree’ and still move forward?
- [C] I suppose the first question has to be: what does ‘a shared future’ actually mean? I don’t think people have given much thought to what it means. The biggest issue for me is the continuation of the social-class difference. When you have a class divide then you are always going to have problems around what people perceive as a ‘shared’ future. Does it just mean a peaceful future, with two former enemies living in peace? Or does it mean a proper equity and *a sharing of the resources* of our society?
- [P] Part of the difficulty to me – in the political sense – is in how we envisage our future. As a Unionist I see my future within the United Kingdom. Someone from the nationalist/republican community probably sees it within an all-Ireland context – although, on that point, has anyone asked the government of the Republic whether they *really* want to shoulder the extra burden of one and a half million Northerners? And are the two options equal? Within a UK context I am quite happy to share my Britishness. But I am also a member of the Orange Order and it is clear from some of your recent pamphlets that many republicans see the Orange Order as fascist. If those who see our future within an all-Ireland context also see me as a fascist, how could I ever expect it to be a *shared* future?
- [P] In 2008 the parade from Legoniel was coming down with only three police officers in attendance, to walk past Ardoyne. Now, we had got to a level of understanding and agreement then, so what has happened between 2008 and 2012? We are doing *even less sharing* now than we did a few years ago.

- [R] Within the nationalist community we still have a sense of going somewhere, certainly republicans would have. Okay, some republicans are impatient, they feel that change isn't coming quick enough. But I believe that with nationalists and republicans there is an expectation that over the next lot of years we will move to a different constitutional arrangement. On the other hand, I think you would have a very different perspective within the unionist community. I think that unionists are very much against change; they want the status quo, in terms of the constitutional position, to be a settled matter. And I believe that they are not confident that it is, and that then feeds some of the more reactionary attitudes which emerge in regard to their politics.

- But if republicans feel that things are ongoing – that this is *not* finished – is it unsurprising that unionists feel that it isn't settled? If republicans have a different future in mind, how can they work towards a shared future now?

- [R] In terms of the republican project republicans are very up-front about what our agenda is. Our agenda is for change; to change people's lives for the better. We believe that that change can be brought about in the context of a new all-Ireland republic. We believe that the involvement of almost one million Unionists in the body politic of the island can only be for the good. I firmly believe that the body politic of this country needs a good injection of Presbyterians and Protestantism into it. There is a different ethos, and a democratic ethos, at various levels within Protestantism which doesn't exist within Catholic institutions, and in an all-Ireland republic that can only be a good thing. The problem for us is that we have to convince a section of the Protestant community that their interests lie with the rest of us.

- You talk of 'changing people's lives for the better', but a number of my interviewees noted that not only Protestants but people within the Catholic community, including the working-class, look at the state of the economy down south, and are not convinced that any linkage would be for their betterment.

- [R] I have absolutely no doubt that the majority of nationalists in working-class areas would buy into the prospect of a new republic. A lot of the problems that you have at the minute, in terms of the economy of the south, can be rectified. And we're not talking about next year, or the next two to three years, but a process which is going to take ten, maybe twenty years. We accept that there is going to be a transitional period, and that in terms of the finances, that can be got right. A whole new system will have to be worked out.

Not all nationalists, however, would be confident about this approach.

- [C] My dream would be to see a united Ireland some day. But I work with Protestants day and daily, and I know that their concerns are centred totally on Northern Ireland. I would ask Sinn Féin: if you are working on the basis that this state is only temporary, how can you build for *today*?

• [P] We need to have a real debate as to what a shared future actually means for people. And whether people even want to share. For, no doubt, some probably don't. And do they even need to? I think it is working together and building mutual respect which is important; geographical unity must not be people's priority.

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Drawing lessons from the conflict

Quite a few of the interviewees felt that one important, and difficult, question was: what was the conflict all about? And what has been learned from it?

• [L] I firmly believe that the Unionist political establishment wined us all up. And then, once the war started, they disowned us. I was in H-Block 7, and on one wing there was 102 prisoners from the Shankill Road, all young lads. And I said to myself: is this the only part of loyalism that's actually fighting this war? There were a few from Londonderry, a few from Fermanagh, Portadown, but in one wing 102 prisoners were from the Shankill Road. And that was UDA prisoners; the UVF had their own wing and probably the same numbers. And it opened my eyes. I said to myself: *who* is getting wined up here, it seems to be just the working class. I just hope and pray that it never goes back to that and that my children and grandchildren never see it, or never have to go to prison.

• [R] I know Protestant people who didn't want anything to do with loyalism. The same way there's people in my community who wanted nothing to do with republicanism or violence. And for saying openly that violence was wrong they were verbally and physically attacked, especially during the hunger strike period. These were people who would have attended chapel, would have been seen as 'SDLP-lovers'. Yet they were raising genuine questions which at that time republicanism didn't want to countenance. And then, when you see the whole sea-change today, it's a bit sickening for a lot of people. I can recall a guy handing out SDLP leaflets outside St Kevin's school and he was given a severe kicking. I know they ones who did it, and not that long ago I reminded them of it: 'You were kicking him because he supported peace, he didn't want violence... and now see where you lot all are.' It is galling. But, we have to be honest, a lot of people in our community had no time for physical-force republicanism.

• [R] A guy told me that he was once in a bar in Bray and Seamus Costello† walked in. And this guy said to me, 'We were young then, and very republican,

† A former member of the IRA, Costello was a founder of the IRSP [Irish Republican Socialist Party] and Chief of Staff of the INLA [Irish National Liberation Army]

and we were listening to the old forties men, some of them even twenties men, and we were eager to get into the struggle. And Costello got up onto a small stage and said, “I am appealing to you as young men not to be deluded, and not to follow the dreams of old men.” And those words have stuck with me all my life. I came back and got involved in the defence of St. James’s when loyalists attacked it. Yet when it was all done and dusted there was this realignment within the Provisionals and they didn’t need the likes of me any more. And I kept thinking back to that night in the bar and asking myself: why the f**k didn’t I listen to Costello?’

Okay, Costello got involved in the war, and met force with force. But he didn’t want people to be motivated by the old romantic nationalistic stuff, but to fight for socialism. Costello and his like were frowned upon by the old brigade because they were considered ‘communists’. This guy told me that, as adjutant general, he used to go to meetings and the old guard would be sitting there. And they were fervent Catholics, and Costello was being asked: ‘Tell us this: are you a communist? Why do you not go to mass on Sunday?’ And this was supposed to be an Army Council meeting! We saw that people were living in poverty and we wanted to do something about it. But these old men didn’t care that landlord agents were going round and threatening people with eviction. They didn’t want to know about my granny getting evicted out of Serbia Street: ‘What’s that got to do with us? We’re fighting a war against England here.’ But what about the working class! McMillan† was right when he said, ‘We stand not on the brink of victory but on the brink of sectarian disaster.’

- [R] As republicans we should ask ourselves: if repeated armed campaigns keep failing, is it not time to question whether this is the right way to go about achieving our goals? Are such actions not self-defeating? I don’t disrespect anyone who believes in armed struggle but they need to be able to tell me their reasoning as to why it should be used *today*. You can’t just harp on about the 1919 Dáil Eireann; we are nearly one hundred years away from that, you need to come up with a sound argument for its use today.

- [P] We have all got to realise that human life is sacred. We don’t need to walk on one another to get somewhere in life. What we need to do is talk through any problems in a reasoned way. The situation throughout the Troubles was that those who talked loudest were usually bad-mouthing the ‘other’ community: ‘Those f**kers did this... that f**ker did such and such....’ I listened to it for years, and I’m sick to the teeth with it. And most of the ones with the loudest mouths sat in their homes while they sent other people out to do their dirty work, or go out and petrol-bomb people’s houses. They were once going to do me because I wouldn’t take the oath of allegiance [to the paramilitaries] and I told the local commander: ‘I took one oath of allegiance when I joined the British Army and I

† Liam McMillan, Official IRA, speaking in 1973.

will take no more. I will defend my home and my area, I don't need you people to tell me to take any oath about that.' Now, I got a hammering for it, but I'm still here. Every time someone got shot, people's only thoughts were for revenge. But that didn't solve anything, we were all just getting deeper and deeper into a mess. How do we make it better? We need to look for the good in other people. We also need to ask of ourselves: was there things *we* did wrong? Let's look at *our* role in events. Personally, I know there were things I should never have done, thoughts I should have challenged.

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- [P] Brian Feeney was on TV on the topic of the Ulster Covenant and he reminded people that at the time of the signing of the Covenant over 200 Catholic workers were expelled from the Shipyard. But he added that over 500 Protestants were also put out because they wouldn't sign it. That's a history we don't hear about. I never knew that as many Protestants died during the Famine as Catholics. We should be exploring this all far more in our schools. I don't think we really understand the history we are all fighting about.

- [P] The defence associations supposedly arose to protect our areas, yet very soon you had rival organisations who were at each other's throats, fighting over protection money and things like that. Johnny Adair and his drug-dealers did more damage to the Shankill than the IRA ever did. We can't allow those days to come back. We have to teach our young people that that was never the way to protect our families and communities, all the hate that was involved, even Protestants killing their Protestant neighbours. Don't get sucked into this again by people full of hate and animosity.

- [R] Loyalists have always said that their politicians used and abused them. Then you have the recent trouble around Carlisle Circus and what can they not wait to do? Stand side by side with Unionist politicians! To get shafted again! They are constantly doing the same thing. We don't really learn from the past.

- [R] We need to acknowledge that the sectarian system was colluded with by the Catholic Church and other sectors within the nationalist community. We can't keep saying that all the problems of Unionism or everything which was wrong in this state was the fault of Unionists, or the British. We had a helping hand in that somewhere, and we need to be self-critical of our own past. We can't just keep blaming the 'other side', we have to look at where our community also got it wrong. And one of the places where we got it wrong was republican violence. The republican, or socialist, message was lost in the sound of gunfire; it just pushed the Protestant people further away from what we said we believed in.

- [R] The rationale behind the violence was never questioned, it was accepted because that is what we do as Irish republicans. Then, when the ceasefires bedded in, you started having dealings with people from the Protestant community who had lost loved ones from our violence and you could see the hurt and pain they were suffering. All of a sudden at forty years of age I was being asked questions about republican violence I would never have been asked before. In prison any questions around the use of armed struggle were solely about tactics, not a critical take on the violence involved.

- [L] It's not just the warring sides who need to learn from the conflict. The politicians have questions to answer. We were being marched to the top of the hill and down again. I have been there myself, right from Paisley's 'Ulster Says No!', so I know how we were constantly manipulated. As well as that, the war might be over, but we are still getting dehumanised in the likes of the *Sunday World*. That's a strategy there from someone, that we are dogs, rats, pigs – pig-faced 'mad dogs' and 'king rats' – all that sort of stuff. That dehumanising stuff. That is so people in the wider civic society can more easily dismiss us: 'Sure, look at them, I read about them in the *Sunday World*, they're nothing but a bunch of criminals, drug-dealers, special branch informers....' All this stuff, that's dehumanisation. That creates barriers for us, stopping us being able to move forward. But we *are* moving on. We're educating ourselves, we're going back to school, we're empowering our communities. And yet the likes of the *Sunday World* and our own middle class don't really want us to move on. If they truly do want us to move on, they have to *let* us move on.

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Some people felt that lessons had also to be learned regarding the 'peace process' itself.

- [P] People come here from all parts of the world to learn about our 'peace process', and they ask about start-dates and personalities. Did it start with Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern? Or was it the 'Hume-Adams' discussions? I tell them that the peace process started *the same day the very first stone was thrown*. Individuals in both communities knew that what was going on was madness and they did what they could, if not to halt it, to at least lessen its impact on our traumatised and embattled communities. There were numerous initiatives: from activities aimed at enticing young people away from the nightly stone-throwing at the interface, to more serious efforts to engage with the 'other' community.†

- [P] I can recall the risks we took, even during some of the worse times. I

† For more information on this topic see Island Pamphlet No. 90, *Self-help at the grassroots*. This is available as a free download from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/islandpublications/>

remember one time we sought a meeting with certain people and were taken into a club in Andersonstown, through an iron door and metal cage. The first thing one person said to me was, ‘We don’t really want Orange bastards like you around here!’ Hardly the most encouraging start! Actually, I wasn’t aware that the police had learned about our meeting, and were outside watching. If we hadn’t come out by a certain time the heavy mob were planning to come in and get us out. Those were scary times. To be honest, see the ones around here who talk about engaging in conflict resolution and ‘confronting things’ – they’re only amateurs.

- [P] I applaud what ex-prisoners have done and continue to do in their work for peace. But people often forget – including ex-prisoners – that individuals were working to build bridges at a time while the paramilitaries were still killing people. But our role has been almost air-brushed out of the history of the peace process; somehow it is all down to ex-prisoners, or even the ‘all-party talks’. I am not denying that ex-prisoners gave the peace process a real impetus, and a credibility, but the work of peace-building *had already started* while most of them were in jail, and was often done *despite* the actions of some paramilitary members, who threatened us or broke our windows, until more enlightened leaders came along who saw the value of cross-community work.

The truth

Many of the interviewees from the Protestant/unionist/loyalist community highlighted the need for an all-embracing truth rather than a selective one.

- [P] There is a lack of truth in our everyday dealings. People will not state their true position; they state *a* position depending on who they’re with, or who they’re stating it to. Few of us are being totally honest about how we feel about any situation. If anything comes near the truth about what is happening here it is in your pamphlets, because people feel that your pamphlet process is secure – in many ways it is anonymous – but it is truthful. It encourages people to express views that often they don’t even feel able to voice within their own communities.

- [L] The big questions have never been debated, really debated. If you look at debates, say the one recently in Stormont about the parading issue, it was all about the past: ‘I am right; you are wrong!’ It was like listening to children out in the street having the same discussion. There has never been a real, genuine debate in this society. And, as for dealing with the past, how can you deal with the past when you have leaders on both sides who won’t be honest. A prime example is Gerry Adams still claiming he was never in the IRA! How are we meant to get anywhere near a truth process? When Martin McGuinness spoke to the Saville Inquiry, okay, he said he was in the IRA, but he still stuck to the IRA’s Green

Book. And the perception is, rightly or wrongly, that anything that has to be dealt with in Northern Ireland is all against the state. It is a rewriting of history: what the IRA was doing was right, was legitimate. All republicans are interested in is blaming other people for the reasons they got involved in the violence. This approach has to stop, for it will get us nowhere.

• [L] I came from a loyalist family, went to jail, got involved in the peace process, and was actively involved in the decommissioning process for our organisation. And what I have learnt is that it is all about understanding: we need to understand other people's perspectives. Both sides have this mindset that it was the 'other side' who done all this stuff on us, we didn't do anything back. But we *did* do a lot of bad shit back, just as they done a lot of bad shit to us. And it's about meeting in the middle and going: hold on a bit, *we weren't* right, *you lot weren't* right. It is about all of us trying to understand why we were each doing what we were doing. And get rid of this hierarchy of victimhood, which republicans are deeply embedded in. Enough of that bullshit – we both done bad on each other. Proper peace will not be achieved here without an understanding of each other's differences and rawness. And we have to meet more. It's all about relationships. If we build up relationships with the nationalist/republican community, and we meet and break down barriers, hopefully we can counter the dehumanising aspect of the conflict. I was told that Catholics had big noses, their eyes were close together, and they were monsters. My granny and granda told me all that, so from an early age republicans and Catholics to me were dehumanised. They didn't have faces, they were monsters, they were out leaving indiscriminate bombs to blow our people to bits. That's what we were told. And our desire was to inflict more hurt back on them. And what made it easier to inflict hurt back on them was that they were faceless monsters. So by us building relationships with them, with the Catholic community in general, and vice versa, we are humanising each other.

If we build up relationships with the nationalist/republican community, and we meet and break down barriers, hopefully we can counter the dehumanising aspect of the conflict.

• [L] The question which needs to be asked of everybody is whether they are prepared to be honest. Take Sinn Féin's opposition to the 'Welcome to Northern Ireland' signs. Now, such things might seem small but they are big to a lot of people. They see it as an indication of Sinn Féin's real intentions. We need honesty. Tell us where you really stand. We are not stupid, we know you are ultimately seeking a united Ireland, but at this moment in our history are you willing to live in a shared Northern Ireland or not?

• [L] People talk about the need for 'truth'. There are things which were done which we can't escape from; it needs to be told the way it was. Many loyalists will play down the amount of gangsterism that existed in our organisations, but,

for f**k's sake, many people would have robbed their own granny! And think of all the skeletons in the cupboard. Like the torture Prods inflicted on other Prods. Such as stripping someone naked, attaching jump leads from a car battery to their balls, and then throwing them into a bath of cold water, to interrogate them. So if they are going to bring it out, bring it *all* out, warts and all. There's people still alive with dark memories which they have stored away and never allowed out. And there's a lot of ones now in their twenties and thirties who talk about conflict but were never involved in it and don't know what it was like.

- [L] I think the biggest problem towards a shared future is that people want to take us back to the past, and the biggest thing facing the unionist/loyalist community is that, according to republicans, we were seemingly responsible for every bad thing which ever happened in this society. And until that changes nothing will progress. Sinn Féin are not interested in a shared future, they are only interested in a shared-out one. And I don't think that resolves the problems that we have; what it does is reinforce sectarianism. We need to know whether the people who are in political power are really interested in sharing our future.

- [P] There was an announcement recently that Jeffrey Donaldson and Ian Paisley [Jnr] had set up an organisation† which would provide 'specialist advice in conflict resolution'! But it wasn't the politicians who made the peace process. I can't understand what Jeffrey Donaldson would know about it, for he left the Ulster Unionists because they dared say they would be willing to go into government with Sinn Féin. And what would Paisley Junior know about a peace process?

- [L] During the time we were trying to consolidate the peace process, members of the DUP were sharing platforms with dissident loyalists, and calling me and David Ervine traitors. I think the other term they used was 'hard men gone soft'. But that has all been forgotten. Just as loyalists have been written out of the process by the Provisionals and Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin apparently did it all by themselves; they forget that if it hadn't been for the PUP, the UDP and the Women's Coalition they wouldn't have been in the talks process in the first place, because we were arguing to have them in. I was talking to secondary-school kids the other day and they knew nothing about the talks process and the loyalist input; they thought the peace process had been brought about by Sinn Féin and the DUP!

- [L] I hear the call for inquiry after inquiry, with Sinn Féin on many an occasion leading the rallying cry for 'truth': we all need to hear the 'truth' about what happened, from incident 'A' right through to 'Z'. And everyone is entitled to hear the truth, that's fair enough, but it must actually mean that *everybody* hears it. My own personal opinion is that the former Provisional movement want all the participants to tell the truth *bar themselves*. If we are genuine and sincere about getting to the truth, then it must be 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the

† QUBRIC Ltd. Mr Paisley is quoted as saying, 'This is an excellent opportunity to advance the benefits of the Northern Ireland peace process and the role of unionists within it.'

truth'. One very worrying thing for me relates to the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday. The initial ethos behind that inquiry was the families' demand for truth. After many years and over £238m to the public purse, the families received an unequivocal apology from the British government. Now, that was momentous, for the British government don't do apologies. Given all the conflicts they have been involved in around the world, I have yet to hear anyone else being apologised to. But I said to myself: well, fair play to them families, because in real terms they are every bit entitled to hear the truth, no doubt about that. But then the emphasis of *some* of the families moved from the truth to seeking prosecutions, and that had never been on the radar. I would be loath for any kind of truth recovery process to be set up until we establish from day one that all parties to the conflict will tell the truth. And that includes the British state. If the state has to tell the truth, then so be it. But so have republicans, and so must loyalists. If we are going to deal with it, we all have to tell the truth.

- [P] See this crap Declan Kearney† came out with about unionists having to 'step up to the mark'. What about republicans stepping up to the mark? I would ask him: Do you condemn Enniskillen? Do you condemn Darkley? Do you condemn La Mon? Now, recently republicans have talked of 'regret' for actions like these, but I'm not talking about *regret*, I'm talking about *condemnation*. These things were totally wrong, and must be condemned. When we all start condemning the atrocities which were committed and acknowledge that they were *wrong*, then perhaps we can begin a genuine engagement.

The Orange Order and marches

Few issues provide a barometer of current communal divisions than the heat generated as a result of contentious parades. The following are a selection of the widely-differing views expressed on this topic.

- [R] Even Carson understood the need to treat the minority with respect, but for whatever reason the Unionist establishment didn't do it. Why not be magnanimous? Down through the years the Orange Order has made the mistake of not doing things which were accommodating, giving a wee bit. Why keep standing on someone's neck? It will eventually be turned into hatred for them. And they refuse to talk to residents. But eventually they will have to recognise that this is 2012 and they have to show respect to our communities.

- [C] Can it be done by dialogue? I think it can. I am of the opinion that the Carrick Hill residents are up for a solution. They are accommodating, they accept that

† In a speech at Westminster, Declan Kearney, Sinn Féin's national chairman, said that Northern Ireland's First Minister needed 'to stop talking out of both sides of his mouth', should 'start doing grown-up politics,' and that unionism needed 'to step up to the mark'.

they live near the city centre, so they don't want to re-route the march. I can't see why the Orange Order can't sit down with them.

- [P] First we are asked to play only religious music, hymns and such, going past places of worship. That's fine, but then we are asked to play only a single drum beat at a particular part of the route. Then that single drum beat is demanded for whole stretches of the route. I can see where eventually there will be no music allowed at all; it is like a domino effect. If there ever was to be a united Ireland – in which our culture would supposedly be 'protected' – I can see us having to march without bands at all, for they wouldn't be allowed to play anywhere.

- [R] At the core of the Orange Order is their anti-Catholic ethos. That band dancing round and round like monkeys was seen by the Catholic community as the same old Protestant triumphalism. I can't join the Order because I was born and reared a Catholic. It is like trying to force a Klu Klux Klan march through Harlem. It just wouldn't happen.

- [R] We can't just take a simplistic view of this whole issue. I remember in the sixties, with other people from the nationalist and republican community, being battened off the streets for trying to exercise my right to march into the city centre, yet now my community is telling Protestants that they can't march. We have a right to protest, but not a right to stop a march. Where would it end? If residents didn't like a socialist march going past their area, the precedent would have been set where they could prevent it. Or a march of gay and lesbian people.

- [L] I believe that the dissident problem and the parading issue are connected. We are throwing petrol on the dissidents' fire; we are giving them air. Sort it out through local accommodation, we don't need a Parades Commission. The Orange Order should sit down with local residents' groups – whether republican, nationalist, whatever – and come to local accommodations. Only then can we move forward and only then will we take the wind out of the dissident argument about these things.

The Orange Order should sit down with local residents' groups – whether republican, nationalist, whatever – and come to local accommodations. Only then can we move forward.

- [L] Senior republicans are walking in parades alongside people carrying bass drums with images of rocket launchers on them or IRA volunteers' names on them. They're walking in parades with people with replica guns, they're walking in parades with people wearing military-style uniforms. So, we *all* need to sit down, both sides, and look at this whole question. Parading is a big thing and the Orange Order have to realise that demographically things have changed and they might not be welcome to walk up certain places any more, just as the Hibernians wouldn't be welcome to walk up the Shankill. But I also think there is a game being played here between the dissidents and Sinn Féin, and the parading issue is

just a diversion. Because parades *can* go peacefully. We have seen it down here [in North Belfast], where both communities can agree. There is nothing written in stone, but people are working together all year, and the parade is only one day. That's where we need to get to.

- [P] The Protestant community feels protective towards the Orange Order because republicans are against it so much. But my uncle was a trade unionist in the Shipyard and whenever he was trying to organise a strike for better wages or conditions the Orange Order leadership always sided with the management.
- [P] We have sat down with a group of residents and over a period of time come to some sort of agreement, only to find that other people aren't happy with the agreement – usually dissidents – and next thing there is a totally *new* residents' group formed, who claim that the group we sat down with don't represent the views of the area any more! We don't know who we are dealing with half the time, or who will honour any agreement we make after months of discussion.
- [C] That is a difficulty. And it's about including everyone. I think it's wrong to use contentious marches as an excuse to heighten tension, but it's hard for people in Ardoyne to see the logic of Orangemen getting a bus to just outside their area, getting off that bus, marching past the area – and then getting on the bus again! The only logic seems to be an exercise in triumphalism. And why come back at all? Why didn't they just stay and enjoy their day at the Field?
- [L] I'm fifty, I'm probably one of the youngest ones in here. We [ex-combatants] will not be here for ever. Other people will inevitably come along and push us aside and tell us to mind our own business. We work with ex-republicans and it's like looking into a mirror, for their communities experience the same problems that we do. But it's all about respect. Is it really that much to ask of the nationalist community not to be offended with members of a Loyal Order walking by a row of shops? Why should they want to get up at seven o'clock in the morning to be offended? Can they not just give a wee bit? And the Orange Order should give a bit too. I really believe the Order should be talking to residents' groups. The Orange Order are leaving it to us – ex-combatants, community activists – to do all the talking, to do all the negotiating. But I believe that you can't negotiate unless you have a main player in there. Some of us have gone to meetings with republicans and come back with possibilities but are met with: 'Oh, no; we don't talk with them.' And if you haven't got the big player in there, then nothing is going to come out of it. So, I'm not putting all the blame onto the Catholic community. I think if the Orange Order came out and said, 'Right, we're going to negotiate, we are going to show the Catholic people that

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But it's all about respect.*

we are going to respect their rights, and we'll talk through what is offending them', I think it would go a million miles. It would also put the onus back on the residents' groups and prove just who is sectarian and who isn't.

- [L] I sit on the Centenary Committee in the City Hall, and its all 'PUL' representatives: the Orange Order, the DUP, UUP, and ex-combatants from a UVF and UDA background. And I keep harking on about the Order talking, but the Grand Master is going, 'We don't talk to terrorists....' And yet they're sitting in the room with loyalist ex-terrorists. Ex-prisoners, on *both* sides, are part of this community, you can't push them out. Without the conflict those people wouldn't even have been in jail. But that's where I come from – I get frustrated with the Orange Order as well, and I think if they made that wee small jump it would be really helpful. Now, I know that the Orange Order have recently said that they will now allow local lodges the freedom to talk to residents. I hope it does happen, I really do. But I hope when they do go into any talks they are not their usual negative selves and try and look down on people, because republicans will not take that. Rather than going in with all these demands, you go in first to listen, and then see where the other side are coming from, why they feel offended – and you take it from there.

- [L] I was in the Orange Order for eleven years, and a member of my lodge was arrested and was jailed. And we were organising a wee gala night to help his family at Christmas, when the hierarchy came and told us that if our lodge run anything to do with prisoners we'd be expelled. I put my collar on the table and walked out that night – and never went back.

The elusive search for working-class unity

Both republican and loyalist interviewees spoke passionately about working-class issues, but rarely from a unified perspective.

- [R] The Left and republicans should be coming together to discuss what to do about this current situation, because working-class people are being hammered as never before, and our young people have no hope and no job prospects. How do we try and convince the progressive elements in the Protestant working class that they must break their connection with big-house Unionism?

- [R] We don't want the Six-Counties joining the 26-Counties as it exists, for that will take us nowhere. It will do nothing for the working class. It is about saying: here is the type of Ireland we want to achieve, it is about a socialist republic, in which different nationalities, British and Irish, can co-exist. Do you think that if the British pulled out of here tomorrow, we would all go: 'Great, we've won, let's go home and celebrate!' No. Because the same social problems we have today you will have in a united Ireland.

- Republican socialists are always talking about a socialist *Ireland*. Some loyalists have said to me, ‘Why don’t republicans start by saying: let us work together to see what we can do in a *socialist Northern Ireland* first, and then who knows what might progress from that? Why does it always have to be a socialist *Ireland*?’
- [R] I think that’s a fair point. I think that would be a great theme for a discussion. The IRSP would be totally up for that: let’s explore the idea of a socialist North. For years many republicans have adopted a condescending and patronising approach to Protestants: ‘When we have a united Ireland the scales will fall from your eyes and you will realise that you’re all really Irish.’ But all assumptions can be wrong, nothing is that certain that it can’t be amended in the light of new events or new thoughts. So, yes, that would be a good place to start. If we are only thinking of the working-class, then why not consider such a question? Put it out for debate, and don’t exclude anyone.
- [R] In prison I was asked, ‘What if the UK became a socialist republic, would you still want to go in with a capitalist Ireland?’ Of course! ‘But why? You would give up a socialist republic to go in with a capitalist state?’ Yeah. ‘So is being Irish more important to you than being a socialist?’ They were just trying to get you to think. Was being Irish the being and end all of everything? I imagined it was, and that if there was a united Ireland all the problems would be solved and everybody would be happy. What a ridiculous notion! I still feel amazed at how naive I once was. So, as you suggest, let’s take the nationalist thing out of the debate and focus on: would *type of society* would you like? what is the best way of achieving it?
- [P] We have been working on the ‘health inequalities’ issue, and after thirty, forty years of working with people on community programmes, while it may have enhanced the lives of those who went through the programmes, when you look at the situation today the communities haven’t changed a wit: there is still high unemployment, poor educational attainment, and a lot of health issues, people dying younger, young people in trouble with the criminal justice system. Everyone is putting bits of sticking plaster on bits of the problem but people in our communities are still sicker than people in more affluent areas. There is a lot of energy being put in to smooth over and help treat different issues, but very little energy going in to changing the structures and the systems which determine the way wealth and resources are distributed throughout society. And so the misery created by the failure of the system continues from generation to generation.
- [C] Start on the social issues for they are very similar for both communities, and are going to get worse. In our counselling project we are swamped under at the moment: the number of people attempting to take their own lives, the number of people out of work, maybe lost their houses, who just can’t cope. We had another young man there last night tried to hang himself and that is now becoming a regular occurrence. And I know from talking to people who deal with the suicide

issue in Protestant areas that it is a big issue in their communities as well. There are so many issues which affect *both* communities.

- [R] When I saw how much energy Protestants – particularly working-class Protestants – were able to put into the celebrations around the Covenant, with over 30,000 people out parading in Belfast, and contrast that with the small numbers of people who get involved in protests against the [austerity] cuts which are going to seriously affect the lives of working-class people, I despair. Sometimes I even wonder if many people are really concerned about working-class issues. There is no radicalism now in nationalist/republican communities. But we need to find a radicalism that is not confrontational – in terms of the Protestant working class – because to me a genuine socialism is one which includes them. So, it is how you get that working, and how you bring people back to basics.

- [L] It's not just about a shared future between unionists and nationalists, but whether people are prepared to share with the working class, and that is a big problem. If we look at the present distribution of power in this society, it is all geared towards the middle class. Another thing too: the 11-plus doesn't work for working-class kids, Protestant and Catholic, and yet we have politicians who won't deal with it. So a shared future is not just about reconciliation, it is more than that. It is not just around the constitution or sectarian issues, but also around the social issues. And I think that we lose sight of that all the time, because we all go back to our sectarian trenches and judge matters from there. To my mind, working-class Catholics or Protestants are not being represented in the Assembly. Now, Sinn Féin might challenge me on that but they need to show me how. All the policies currently being espoused are not going to move our communities on, in social and economic terms. Since the Good Friday Agreement was signed, if you go into areas like Mount Vernon or the New Lodge, what has improved? I don't see any change whatsoever. I think working-class people are disconnected from the peace process, they're disconnected from the Assembly. The political parties need to make that connection. And a shared future must mean social equality.

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- [L] Sinn Féin are the party that once said they wanted a 32-county socialist republic, yet there is not one thing coming out of the Assembly which can be identified as having anything to do with socialism. They are in there as nationalists, certainly not as republicans in the tradition of 1798.

- [C] My main interest is the health of people, and I find the ways doors are closed against any new ideas very frustrating. I am involved in complementary medicine. A pilot was run and it was shown, with independent assessment, to be

financially viable and medically viable, even produce better results. That report is sitting on a shelf; they will not launch it. They said that there was no money for it. But alternative medicine is actually known to *save* money, so the cost argument doesn't stand up.

- [C] It is going to be increasingly hard for people to pay their debts as the cuts bite deeper. And I think the suicide rate will go up even further.
- [R] Are 'the folks on the hill' going to do something about all this? I doubt it very much. The will is not there to tackle the hard questions: about taking money off the wealthy, for that is a bit too close to home. It's more a case of: let's get rid of DLA, sure they're all spongers; let's get rid of Child Benefit. I say to young people, 'Stop voting for these parties, Sinn Féin included. You should be voting for someone who espouses socialist politics, or is wanting to change things.'
- [R] Both your questions have left-wing answers. For the Alliance Party-types a 'shared future' is about feelings: we're all going to feel better if we get on. We will still have suicides every week in Belfast, still have welfare cuts, but at least we'll all feel better. The 'peace process' was sold on that shite. We can't talk about socialism in Ireland while still having Partition. One has to go with the other, and it is at that point where a significant amount of the Protestant community appear to be happy enough, living in poverty, as long as they have that border there.
- Protestants have said to me that, *from a working-class perspective*, why should anyone imagine things would improve for the working class in a united Ireland, certainly given the state of the South at the moment?
- [R] Without wanting to sound derogatory, I don't think their understanding of socialism is up to scratch. The very process of building revolutionary socialism in Ireland will require massive changes to the way the economy is run. It will be nothing like it is today. By the same token, in a process of revolutionary socialist change it would make just as little sense for Irish socialists to cut ourselves off from any similar process occurring in Britain. Because once again the same social frustrations we experience in Ireland will be happening in London, Manchester, Glasgow... and hopefully leading to a similar revolutionary response. So I could envisage, and I would be quite happy – even as an Irish republican – to see socialism advancing in terms of unity between England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, in the true sense of socialist solidarity. I would have no problem with that. Nor would I have any problem with those who consider themselves British who live on this island continuing to celebrate that aspect of their nationality.
- One of the other ideas put to me, is why can't both working classes in the North build socialism in the north first, with the national question left open-ended?
- [R] What I would say to loyalists is: first of all show me that you're serious about your socialism. If you are serious about your socialism I can't see why we

couldn't have that debate – in terms of keeping the 'national question' open-ended. But to date loyalists have given a very limited commitment to even basic social-democratic ideals. And if their socialism can't be seen as serious and genuine then why would we relinquish our ideals to national liberation, on behalf of people who haven't convinced us that they even accept equality? But, certainly, if loyalism was to say to me that we want to genuinely explore the socialist road, but republican terminology – all the 'united Ireland' stuff – is scaring us off, then, without compromising my own national liberationist ideals, I would certainly be open to discussing what we could do to ease their concerns. Definitely, I think it would be worth it, to make progress towards genuine socialism.

What of the impact of armed actions on efforts to build working-class unity?

• [R] In regard to those involved in, or supportive of, armed actions, I do think that they need to consider any negative impact that arises from those actions. If our goal is a socialist republic, then, as [journalist] Eamonn McCann pointed out, we are not going to get one without the Protestants. Therefore if armed actions alienate the Protestants from republican socialism to an extent which is more detrimental than any benefits which could be gained from armed actions, then a very serious debate needs to be undertaken. At the same time, what I would say is that it would be extremely foolish of republicans to throw away the capability to mount armed actions. I think loyalism, Britain, the PSNI, the Free State, would all be more than happy if we – the republican family – were to say: we are all socialists now, let's grind our guns into dust. And then they would be quite happy to trample over us as they did before.

• [R] I would disagree with that. I think decades of armed struggle should have convinced us that Unionism is not going to buckle under the gun. We have to convince Protestants that they are not physically at any risk and that expressions of their culture and identity are to be protected. But most of all we must focus on working-class issues, and the threat of a return to armed actions only makes that more difficult, if not impossible.

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Questions for the politicians

For the interviewees one of the primary questions was: are the political parties able, or even willing, to lead this society into a shared future?

• [P] The political parties have let the people down. So have the banks, so have the churches. During the Troubles the churches didn't want to know what was happening to working-class areas. And in the Catholic community, especially

following the child abuse scandal, people feel the same. So what security is there for an ordinary person when all these institutions have let them down?

- [P] I have a problem with some of these bloody hypocrites that you find in Sinn Féin and the DUP. They're a bunch of wasters and liars and cheats – and they are *driving* people apart, because if they don't drive people apart they can't exist. I just get so angry.

- [L] I think there is a need for someone, or some group, to show leadership. From a place of authenticity and integrity. When I listen to the politicians and other so-called 'leaders', there is so much hypocrisy and contradiction in what they say. When I worked with young people at risk, people often criticised the behaviour of those kids, and told them they needed to change or whatever. Now, that's all well and good. But these young people are going back into communities and households which *haven't* changed. And I equate that to the way things are in the political arena as well. If our leaders are asking people to do one thing but they themselves are doing another, how do they expect others to change their attitudes? So, one of the questions for me is: what is the *integrity* of this thing that they call a 'shared future'. What does it actually mean? Are politicians only playing lip-service to it?

- [P] The 'peace process' really derived its main energy from the grassroots, but then, when the politicians were dragged screaming into it, it became a 'political process'. I believe that people made the mistake of assuming that the two processes were one and the same. The community, which had its own pressing everyday needs to worry about, stepped back a bit, saying, 'Well, the politicians are now talking together up at Stormont, let's leave them to it and we'll concentrate on our community development work'. The politicians encouraged that – 'You lot stay away from political affairs, leave that to us to handle.' So, the peace process took a back seat, in deference to the political process. It took a while for people to realise that the politicians were not really involved in a *peace* process at all.

- [C] I think that if anything was to come out of this pamphlet it would be to encourage funders, politicians, to see the need for more opportunities for dialogue between communities. Of course, maybe the politicians don't want that. Maybe the DUP and Sinn Féin would see that as a threat? After all, they are in power, so would they really want to put resources into facilitating such a debate?

- [L] My question is this: is there a seriousness in the peace process? Do our politicians really want peace? I believe that both the British and Irish governments left the stage far too early, and I think that's why loyalism is in the state it's in today. Because there was nothing there to fill the vacuum, to guide them, whereas in republicanism there was Sinn Féin. And our politicians have totally disconnected. Okay, at the minute they're trying to make *some* sort of connection, but I think that's more to do with Peter Robinson losing his seat in East Belfast, and other politicians can see that happening in communities like this.

• [L] We have worked hard at establishing good working relationships with the ‘other’ community. And we repeatedly find that there are people out there determined to undermine us, including certain politicians. It probably doesn’t suit politicians us becoming, in Jackie McDonald’s phrase, ‘respectable and electable’. You have just to look at the present political world. It is dynasties. There are few young people coming through from outside the ‘club’. Whereas if you look at Sinn Féin, they have done it right, by bringing a whole new generation in.

• [P] Bread and butter issues need to come to the fore. We are not seeing political parties genuinely working together on those issues. There seems to be no desire among our politicians to do something different, to actually challenge the government on issues like welfare reform.

• [P] And you know what is wrong in Northern Ireland – people don’t want to take responsibility, whether it be the government, the local politicians, the PSNI....

• [P] We haven’t got the right people in leadership. It is all crisis management, there is no one sitting down with a ten-year or twenty-year plan for this community. And then egos come into it. Why are they not sitting in our community centres getting our young people involved in politics? They have no interest in working-class kids, they prefer their own circles.

• [C] Some people say: get rid of the lot of them. But I would be afraid that in getting rid of the politicians, those who are powerful in society will look at ways in which they can acquire even more power. And you would have abolished the electing system. The sad truth is that people have deliberately chosen politicians who they *know very well* will continue the same kind of destructive politics. On the one hand you have people saying we want change, and on the other you have people saying we’re going to make very sure that there *won’t be* any change. So people connive at their own suffering. You do feel tempted to say, ‘Well, being a democrat, if that’s what you want, if you want sectarianism and vote for it, then who am I to say that you shouldn’t have it? I don’t think it’s a good choice but it’s up to you.’

You do feel tempted to say, ‘Well, being a democrat, if that’s what you want, if you want sectarianism and vote for it, then who am I to say that you shouldn’t have it? I don’t think it’s a good choice but it’s up to you.’

• [C] I believe that the present global crisis is largely artificial and is enabling politicians to do what they wanted in the first place. They have invented a recession so that they can reduce the standard of living of the working class. The working class were no longer thinking about job security but about rising prosperity. So now people are being told: your houses have too many rooms, you are eating too much, your children are getting free transport, you are taking holidays to places of your own choosing. How dare you! Wages were rising and people had no job fears. That had to be reversed. Otherwise how could a minority of people continue

to make unnecessary wealth, and that's what it is: unnecessary wealth. People talk about the system failing; it is not – *the system is succeeding admirably!* It is doing exactly what it is intended to do: reduce living standards so that job insecurity rather than prosperity becomes people's main concern.

- [C] More people are admitting that things are wrong, but we are at the point – what do we do about it? And it is at that point that people realise just how powerless they are.

- [L] I use the term, in public, 'so-called politicians'. And I wouldn't have cared whether it was the DUP in front of me or the Shinnars – or Alliance Party for that matter. I called them 'so-called' politicians because they were only playing at it. Now, at that time in the wider loyalist family there would have been a disconnect between ourselves and the DUP and the UUP. We made a conscious decision to get them into the room and start conversations. We must hold them to account and determine what we can do together. And it *is* beginning to happen, but it has been a job of work to get them to sit down with us.

- [C] I don't believe that our politicians are being honest with people: too often they talk differently when they are speaking to their constituents than when they are sitting down with one another in Stormont or in local councils. A lot of politicians – *and* some community leaders – tailor what they say depending on who their audience is. They nod and agree at debates in Stormont or in the councils, or wherever, about hate crime and sectarianism, then go back into their constituencies and take a different line. That is wrong. If you want to tackle sectarianism you need to do it honestly and openly. I know certain individuals who over the years have said, 'I'm sorry, but we have to play to our constituencies.' It's all to do with getting a vote. And I'm talking about both communities here. If you have to play up to sectarianism to get a vote then that is very scary, for how are we ever going to change attitudes around sectarianism?

The media

Some interviewees felt that those in the media had serious questions to ask of themselves.

- [P] The media play a massive part in influencing events, no question about it. And what do the media want? They want trouble, they want conflict, they want to see petrol bombs thrown, and all the rest of it. They fill the screen with all these images, and then they go on to say how terrible it is. I don't know how many times we have seen that band walking in circles outside the chapel. And take the Covenant parade. Despite the fact that it was happening right across Belfast, where were the media congregated? In Clifton Street. Directly opposite the chapel there was a bank of press photographers, and I mean a bank of press

photographers. And every camera was focused on each band passing the door of the chapel, accompanied by lines of police. St. Matthews Church on the Newtownards Road – the same: lines of police in riot gear. Screens, everything. Whereas up the Newtownards Road past St. Colmcilles – four policemen! And in excess of 30,000 people wearing Orange collarettes walked past it without a problem, and without giving offence. And I asked why. And the answer was that that was an affluent area. First of all, the people up there were quite happy to let the parade go past, they could ignore it if they wanted to ignore it. But in working-class areas we have chosen to make a big issue out of it – both communities. There were people who came from South Armagh to be offended at Clifton Street. And on our side we had idiots who decided to piss against the chapel, or when they're playing a hymn to beat the drum as loud as they can.... Why are working-class people doing this to one another? Especially when the media are there like vultures to record our every move.

- [L] The media loved [Johnny] Adair and my question used to be: how did we get from articulate people like Davy Adams, Gary McMichael and Davy Ervine to a skinhead with a muscle-shirt and tattoos? The media took us there. Nobody else; they ignored these other people. I have refused to go on *The Nolan Show*, because he just wants you on so he can ask you loaded 'just answer me yes or no'-type questions. That's what he's at.

- [L] I think it's time to move on from media presenters like [Stephen] Nolan and his confrontational type of approach, and get people who can manage discussions constructively. Because what Nolan is doing is that he's just taking us back. He creates a confrontation and then everybody just jumps in, and the next thing there's a shouting match. And a lot of people listen to it, and I'm sure it is formulating their views. And you listen and go: why is he using this approach? I suppose he feels he has to play devil's advocate, but I just think that in a place like this, at a time like this, we don't really need that type of media approach.

- [L] The likes of Nolan doesn't get what we are trying to do on the ground. Does he not understand that an organisation has many facets, some good, some bad, and that things do change, but it takes time. People need space, and encouragement, in what they are trying to do. Maybe it is just the nature of journalism to go for the sexy story, the controversial, and to pot with the consequences? Maybe that's all that journalism amounts to these days.

Maybe it is just the nature of journalism to go for the sexy story, the controversial, and to pot with the consequences? Maybe that's all that journalism amounts to these days.

- [L] I was at a dinner with a BBC radio producer and I could not believe how sectarian she was. I confronted her, saying she had a sectarian view on loyalism, and I asked her her view on republicanism, and I got this wonderful soliloquy

about republicanism and how the IRA fought a legitimate war. And I said: ‘Are you listening to yourself? You are supposed to be a journalist working for the BBC and you have made a decision that one side is wrong and the other is right. How could you ever interview me and give me fair airtime? You would have to edit my contribution to make it conform to your own preconceived analysis.’ But she didn’t get it, she didn’t even realise that her viewpoint was so one-sided.

Policing

Clearly, communities have questions to ask of themselves regarding policing, but, likewise, the PSNI have their own challenges to confront.

- [R] I accept that there is still a problem within the nationalist/republican community with regard to policing. I think that people are quite happy to avail of all the police services whenever it suits them, but on a more fundamental level, in terms of joining or viewing the cops as ‘our’ police service, I don’t think they are fully there yet. I mean, how many kids from Ballymurphy would even consider joining the cops? How many from Andy’town? Few kids there would say: that’s the career choice for me, that’s what I want to buy into. And that’s to do with the whole legacy of the conflict.

- [R] The police also have got to set themselves challenges. Such as when they see young people they don’t automatically view them as potential problems. One of the things that *Coiste* did was to bring together kids from four different secondary schools. We also brought in a youth group which is based here in *Tar Anall*, and made up of the children, in some cases the grandchildren, of former republican prisoners. And we brought in Pat Sheehan, as a former IRA prisoner, a hunger striker, now an MLA and a member of the Policing Board, to talk about his journey and how he views policing. We brought in the Children’s Law Centre to talk to the kids about their rights when they are stopped in the street. And we brought in the PSNI neighbourhood teams from Grosvenor Road and Woodburn. And after all the presentations there was a very good discussion, during which the kids were able to direct honest questions to the cops. It was excellent. It was groundbreaking, and I think that is what you need. You need a constant interface and constant intercourse between young people and the cops.

- [C] Over ten years ago I started working with the Families Bereaved Through Car Crime, and one of the first things the families wanted to do was to debate and argue with the PSNI on what their response was to joy-riders and car crime. It was really bad around that time. And not long after starting that campaign I was told I had to go ‘up the road to talk’ to certain people, top republicans, and they told me that republicans in Upper Springfield were thinking of putting me into Coventry, because of the work I was doing on behalf of the bereaved families with

the PSNI. I was lambasted for fifteen minutes solid. I know, because I watched the clock behind their heads. And the greatest irony was that when Sinn Féin signed up to policing the *same* people who threatened to put me into Coventry were now happy to be working away with the PSNI!

We helped get the Auto Crime Team started up and it has all worked fantastically. Where is the joy-riding now? There was only one incident last week and that was the first for this year. It was a fantastic campaign; those people came together and said they weren't going to stop until they achieved results. We walked the streets for three years solid, we never stopped, every week for three years. Some of the families had to move out of their homes because they were attacked by the hoods and the joy-riders, but yet we were still being lambasted in the pubs and clubs by republicans who should have known better. Yet all we were asking the police was: 'What is your response to joy-riding?' It was as simple as that. One of the joyriders tried to knock me down, twice. We were on a white-line protest and they tried to run us down. I went to the police and they said they couldn't arrest anybody without statements. So I brought 48 people to the police station to give statements. And then at the top of the Whiterock I had to throw myself out of the path of a car which came right up at me and just missed me. I used to get letters, saying, 'You're dead, we'll f**king bonnet you!' I asked one joy-rider what that meant and he said, 'We'll knock you over the bonnet and then reverse back over you, you bastard; f**k you and the families!' There was an element who were under constant pressure from us, but the families were fantastic, they were relentless, never stopped. And in the end the families prevailed.

[People involved in the Families Bereaved Through Car Crime group] walked the streets for three years solid. They were relentless. And in the end the families prevailed.

But as well as being hassled within my own community for engaging with the police, there was a time when it was the police who were doing the hassling. I was asked to develop CRJ [Community Restorative Justice]. Our project up here was the first and it set the blueprint used by others. And then I heard that [the then Chief Constable] Ronnie Flanagan had told someone to tell me that the police were going to arrest me. Because we were trying to deal with problems ourselves, we were technically 'withholding information' from the police, which was a crime. A week later the Shankill youth were doing a conference in the Europa Hotel and Ronnie was on the panel, and Tom Winston from [Greater Shankill] Alternatives and I got stuck into him. I said, 'By the way, I'm the one you're going to arrest for trying to stop kids being beaten or shot.' And all the Shankill youth got into him too, saying, 'Leave that community worker alone!' I was a community worker, busting my balls working for people and risking getting my widows put in – and they were going to arrest me?

• [L] I have no problem working with the police and holding them to account on how they police loyalist communities, but I don't think they treat both communities equally. I think the PSNI only pay lip service to our community's needs in a way they would never be able to do with republicans. Look at their 'Pathfinder' funding: sometimes the entire allocation for a district has gone to nationalist areas. Are they buying republican confidence in the PSNI? Policing issues around the Twelfth also made me question my commitment. Police decisions then almost caused mass murder at Ardoyne.

Is there a danger of a renewal of the conflict?

The series of events which immediately preceded the interviews for this pamphlet sent shock waves through both communities, and raised unwelcome fears.

• [L] I think we're as far apart, in terms of the 'peace process', as we were when coming to the end of the conflict. I think the only thing which is stopping a resumption of bombings and shootings is that there's enough sensible heads still in local communities who experienced the conflict and know that it's not something you want to go back to willy-nilly. But there's young ones out there who are just waiting for a chance to get involved.

• [C] When you watched the news over the past four to six weeks, you could have felt yourself back twenty years. I think the level of cross-community dialogue we used to have is very much absent. That's partly because you have become so wrapped up in what is going on within your own community, particularly because of the social and economic problems, which are horrific at the minute, and which are getting much worse. I think within our community things are much worse than they were at the beginning of the peace process, and it's hard to understand why, especially now with local politicians in power. I think that come 2015 what you will find is that within communities groups will be fighting with each other for a share of the small pot that is going to be there.

• [R] There's a lot of people in nationalist areas would be concerned at the way loyalism has been acting of late, starting with last year.† Because how loyalism usually gels itself back together is by killing Catholics. A lot of people are saying that if Haggarty goes into the dock he can put the entire UVF leadership

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† In June 2011 UVF members were accused of making a mass attack on the Catholic enclave of Short Strand in East Belfast.

away. And all the HET stuff.† So loyalism is under heavy pressure, and usually how they always get out of that is to kill Catholics. The feeling is that if there is another Massereene or another cop killed by the dissidents the loyalist leadership mightn't be able to stop things from escalating. People are genuinely concerned. Especially in interface or vulnerable areas.

- [L] The supergrass thing is like a cloud hanging over this community. It has the potential to destabilise the whole situation. You have got people keeping a lid on things at the moment and moving forward, but what if they are taken out of society...? Now we are hearing stories that there is another supergrass in the offing which might open things right up – and it's not in the loyalist community – so it'll be interesting to see how *that* is handled.

- [R] Kids in our areas are left without any hope. Fifty of them were standing the other night outside the chippy, drinking and taking drugs. And these young people have even less than I had – at least we had a leisure centre. And there are no jobs other than mickey-mouse training schemes. There is only one youth worker and he tries his best but he has no resources. But what if a few years on some of these kids say, 'I'll throw my lot in with these dissidents; a bit of adventure, I can be macho, I might get a few quid out of it.' Or they might go the other way – fully into drug dealing. The likes of those ones down in Divis Flats who are now multi-millionaires. One of them drives around in a £40,000 car and he throws money to his cronies to get themselves a pint. And the kids are watching this: 'Look at that car; I want some of that!' In our day, we watched IRA volunteers taking on foot patrols or opening fire on peeler jeeps. But that is gone. What impresses young people now is guys driving about with top-of-the-range cars, with the gold hanging off them – and they are their idols now. And what is being done to counter that?

- [C] The drug problem around this area this last ten years has got out of hand. In Beechfield Street on a Friday night there are cars constantly going up and down selling kids drugs. And these are not strangers coming in, these are locals. I know some of them, they never worked a day in their lives, yet now they're driving these big Range Rovers. And I'm going: why are the peelers not lifting them? I could catch them if I wanted to. If the IRA was still here they could catch them. I'm positive there's people giving information to the police: mothers and fathers who don't want to see their kids exposed to these people. And people come to me and say: can you not do anything about it? And I say, 'No, I can't.' The only other way is for the community itself to challenge them and people are afraid to do that. When the anti-drugs groups were formed there were people going to their doors... but they had the back-up of the IRA then; they don't have that now. People are not going to put their heads up above the parapet. These guys have

† Historical Enquiries Team, a special unit set up by the PSNI to review old cases. Loyalists have accused it of focusing more on them than on republicans.

got guns now. They're actually taking on republicans in the South. Look at that Real IRA leader killed in Dublin a few weeks ago.

- [L] See the parades at Ardoyne? I have no doubt that if it wasn't for the people who put on a yellow bib [as parade marshals] and placed themselves in between the [republican counter-] parade, the police and the community, we would be back to war. And people don't understand that, they don't realise where that takes you. You get all these ones: 'We want to walk up that road! We want to do this... let us get into them!' I have stood at Ardoyne on the Twelfth morning and been spat on by women because we were trying to keep the peace.

- [L] At one point, watching the republican [counter-] parade, I was standing there with some senior loyalists, just observing. And in front of us were all these 'SuperProds' with their posters who were supposedly going to do all this stuff. But see when the two sides got to within a few feet of each other, the SuperProds bolted! And the likes of myself, who were standing at the back just watching, had to go to the front, alongside the police, to stop some 2000 republicans coming up Twaddell Avenue. Yet these ones who wanted to do all the fighting were away! And even if that hadn't have happened, at six o'clock they'd have been away, leaving the people who live there to deal with whatever is left behind. It annoys me that you don't see these people do anything positive for their community throughout the year, from one year to the next, but on the 12th July you see them with their carry-outs and they're SuperLoyalists, and everyone else is wrong and they know the way it has to be done. They don't have a clue!

- [L] I remember sitting in a room with the whole battalion of the UVF in this area, and the leadership was talking to them. And one young lad said, 'Our culture is being completely eroded. I live in Holywood and I was putting my flag up and the woman across the street asked me not to.' And he wanted to go back to war just because of this. And one of the leaders said to him: 'Look, I don't want to sound belittling, but you don't look old enough to have played a part in the conflict, is that right?' 'No, I didn't.' 'Well, do you know what conflict is all about? Do you know what it does to people? What it does to families? We, unfortunately, have the power to go right back into it, but that isn't a decision that will be taken lightly. And it won't be a decision that one, two or four people will make; it will be a decision that everyone will be involved in. I think you need to go away and read up and understand what conflict actually does to communities, what it does to people. There will be no going back.' The problem is that young people growing up now feel they have something to give, and that people like myself and others are holding them back: 'Youse had your opportunity; now it's our turn.'

The problem is that young people growing up now feel they have something to give, and that people like myself and others are holding them back: 'Youse had your opportunity; now it's our turn.'

- [P] I don't think it will ever go back to where it was, but you're a bullet or a bomb away for it to *start* to slip back. It will only take one half-wit to do something stupid. And our politicians are feeding into that. All it takes is for the dissidents to do something, or make a mistake. If there was a mistake in North Belfast people are not going to sit on their hands. There are wee groups within loyalism who would want to strike back. People like us don't have the same authority we used to have, that is all going out the window. People have to understand that those of us in 'leadership positions' can't hold the line forever. It is dangerous. There is nobody at the moment can talk on behalf of all loyalism. Working-class areas have next to no clout, they have nobody really representing them, or speaking up for them. Things could so easily escalate which we will not be able to stop.
- [L] Loyalism is dysfunctional: the UDA has one way of working on things, the UVF has another. There are 44 different denominations among the Protestant churches. Unionism and loyalism is fragmented.
- [C] To be honest, that recent rioting shocked me. I was sitting dejected, and other workers I talked to felt dejected also. I mean, I did all this twenty years ago. Some of us put a lot of effort into building up relationships with people on the Shankill, with individuals from both the UDA and UVF. Indeed, apparently there was one occasion when [Johnny] Adair asked, 'Why is there no smoke on the mountain; why are no houses being burned up there?', and the UDA and UVF in Springmartin and Highfield told him to get lost, they weren't getting involved in that. And I believe that was assisted by the strong relationships that community workers from both sides of the interface had built up.
- [L] We are on public record for condemning parade violence, from whoever it comes. I am on public record for condemning the violence that took place over three nights in Denmark Street.
- [L] I wish I had a pound for every time I had been called a traitor.
- [L] Republicans used to say, 'those loyalists can't even speak with one voice.' A lot of people will turn round now and ask, 'where is *your* one voice now?' Sinn Féin are challenged openly in public forums these days. The dissidents are using the sense of disenchantment as a breeding ground. And my fear is that if the big issues aren't addressed, we will see the rise of dissidents in loyalist communities.
- [R] I still think that armed actions have the potential to challenge the status quo in Ireland. When an armed action occurs, it can go in one of two ways. It can have an immensely negative effect on everything. It can bring confidence in republicanism down. But at other times it can raise it up. Sometimes there is something about a successful armed action against British imperialism that can really lift people's mindsets out of apathy. The British state has always said to Irish Republicanism: we have you in the palm of our hand, and you can't

move. When someone *does* move it makes a fool of the claim that they have monopolised our lives.

The need for more conversations

One thing on which almost every interviewee agreed was the need for more inter- and intra-community dialogue.

- [R] You can only start by having conversations. Throw out questions – like you do with your pamphlets – and say: ‘Look, what do you think of this? how can we tackle this?’ So things like this exercise: asking people how they think we could get to a shared future, is there any possibility of it – can only be positive. Do people *want* a shared future? Is it wrong to force people to live together if they don’t want to? There are a multitude of questions like that.
- [R] We never questioned things before; indeed, were never allowed to ask questions. And people might say, ‘Well, our Joe didn’t die for that.’ But if you try and explore what he *did* die for, f**k, that’s sacred ground where you can’t go! But there *are* big questions there, and they need addressed. I think this way is best: where you’re not setting out to attack anyone, you’re just throwing ideas and questions out there. There’s a guy who comes in here and takes the pamphlets into Maghaberry because they want to read them in there. And they are going different places, including down South, and people who have read them are coming back to us on them. Even if they find things they disagree with, at least it is creating a dialogue, it’s getting people to think. Nobody is an expert in anything, you’re learning things every day. It’s about us saying: here’s what we’re about, let’s have a discussion. You can leave that room holding the same principles but at least you have heard different arguments and have hopefully listened to them.
- [L] There’s a lot of people involved in dialogue at the moment; there’s a lot of people involved in conversations about the past and about how we move on, but for me they are not always the right people. There are a lot of people claiming they are the leaders of their community, but are they really? They might be speaking for some small section of their community but not for all their community. The word ‘gatekeepers’ has been used quite a lot; until we manage to bring more and more of the people who live in our areas into that room and join in the conversation, and reach an understanding, we are going to still be here in twenty-five years’ time.
- [L] It is so disheartening for me when I see a group of guys up at the Maze site, with placards reading ‘No Shrine for Republican Terrorists.’ What do they want to do? Airbrush all that out of our history? So nothing happened here? We need a place where we can *all* talk about what happened to us, a joint centre where

we can all meet, regardless of whether it is republicans, loyalists, police, prison officers... we need somewhere we can all go and we can look at our conflict and talk. And we need to take ownership of our own history. Academics and journalists were doing it instead. We have started an oral history project to let people say what happened to them and their communities. We are not going away. How can we? We live here. We are from this community. We *are* the community.

- [L] Start focusing on all the good stuff going on out there, because there's loads of it. People volunteering for their community forty hours a week and not getting a dickey-bird out of it. I asked one man why he did it: 'Well, if I didn't do it, nobody else would do it. I care, I live here, I care about our kids. If we don't do things for them they will just get into trouble; that's why I do this.' And those things are untold. See if all the positive stuff people are doing was to stop tomorrow, that small minority who want to take us backwards would gain momentum and our communities would be so fragmented it would be unbelievable. There would be another group set up, no doubt about it, a new loyalist dissident group and away they'd go. And they would start smashing away with the republican dissidents, and the next thing we'd be off and running again within two or three years. As easy as that.

See if all the positive stuff people are doing was to stop tomorrow, that small minority who want to take us backwards would gain momentum.

- [L] We are not all going to kiss and make up, but we have to start by being honest with one another. Peacewalls cannot come down just like that – there has to be consultation between people on both sides of any wall. Start perhaps with removing the fence at the top, then the next year lower the wall a foot, then another foot.... It might take generations but if we work at it it can be done. Kids cannot continue going to separate schools with separate curriculums. Big, big questions. It cannot go back to what it was like before. It's great that our kids today can go into town and not be afraid of getting caught up in a bomb, or waking up each morning and hearing about the latest killing on the news. Okay, there are still small groups within loyalism dealing in drugs. We agree, we tried to manage that situation ourselves as best we could. But as for the rest it is for the police to handle. It won't be the first time we have gone into a police station and given them the names of those who are drug-dealing in our areas.

- [C] To me, it's about sitting down and trying to convince the Protestant working-class people that their needs are better served within an all-island framework, but one in which their culture, their traditions, are protected. And having everything enshrined in a constitution that guarantees everyone their rights. And there can be dual citizenship, where people on this island can be Irish *or* British. I believe that the way to build towards a shared future is through having conversations with the other community, trying to convince them that it isn't about trampling over their rights, it isn't about trampling over their traditions.

• [C] I would welcome more opportunities for people to have more debate and dialogue. No matter how hard-line people are it is only when you get into discussion with them that you can undo the misperceptions they have about the other community. When I go to meetings and tell Protestants that only 37% of people from West Belfast voted in the last election it surprises them, for they assumed that our community felt it was ‘going somewhere’. People here are totally demoralised by the absence of any dividend from the peace process, and they are constantly asking how the social and economic conditions within our communities have got worse given that we now have our own local Assembly. If people are talking about a shared future it needs to start at the grassroots, and the only way to do that is to create opportunities for people from both communities to engage in debate and dialogue.

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• [R] We put up a joint commemoration plaque to a member of the Provisional IRA and a member of the Official IRA, who had both been shot dead by the British Army. It was the first time that anything like this had been done. And at the unveiling ceremony there was a mixture of people there: Provisionals, Officials, INLA, dissidents, the lot. Republicanism has been terribly split at times, and it has caused so much pain and hardship. When we started this last year people said we would never do it, but we ended up being able to do it. So there is a willingness there for people to move forward. You have to move forward *within* communities as well as between communities. You have to be inclusive. Sinn Féin should be making more efforts to bring these people into debate, into the process, and arguing their case. I do really believe that many people are looking for a way out of the wilderness, but the mechanisms must be there to make them feel confident in themselves to move out.

• [R] I was asked to speak at a recent commemoration in West Tyrone, and as part of my speech I said that while Sinn Féin was currently engaged in outreach work with the unionist community, we also realised that it was important to be doing outreach work – or, more accurately, ‘in-reach’ work – within the republican family. And many people said to me afterwards that they welcomed those sentiments.

• [R] One of the other things we did during the course of the *Féile* this year was we brought UVF ex-prisoners onto the Falls Road to do a presentation on their attainment of political awareness while they were in the cages of Long Kesh. They also showed a DVD which had former UVF prisoners recounting their stories about prison, and about the impact their imprisonment had on their families as well. It was all very interesting stuff. Admittedly, there were a number of times when it could have got a bit fraught, but there you are: two massive challenges

that we were involved in on the Falls Road here during the summer – engagement between the police and young people, and bringing the UVF into our areas to basically tell their story.

- [R] It is all about engagement and breaking down barriers. That can only come through direct contact, but also identifying joint campaigns which people can buy into. Issues like housing and social issues should be areas where we can make common ground. And it *is* happening, take between Mount Vernon and the New Lodge – the tower blocks there, which have similar problems. It is painfully slow. Especially when mainstream unionism is antagonistic to it; grassroots loyalism seems more receptive.

- [R] Long before it became sexy to meet with loyalists, I was meeting with members of the PUP, and we were taking a risk and they were taking a risk. But both sides did it, and we asked each other hard questions. But there's not so much of that going on now, except for funding reasons.

- [P] I think discussing in small groups is better than large public debates. In public debates people tend to talk to the gallery, but in small groups people can actually find themselves involved in a learning process.

- [L] In big groups a lot of stuff comes out which makes you feel that either that person hasn't moved on, or they assume that this is what they are 'expected' to say in this company. It's a big struggle we have within the loyalist community. I talk to people who just will not move on; everything that happens on the 'other side' is wrong, everything they represent must be wrong; there is no effort to try and understand anything, or anyone's else's perspective. And, unfortunately, they are the people who are shouting that wee bit louder, and so they're the people that the DUP are trying to placate, because of their fear of not being seen as staunch enough in their defence of Unionism. Those people act as if they are SuperProds or SuperLoyalists, and when you try to talk any sort of reason, they put barriers up.

- [P] I think we need to negotiate differently. Rather than going into rooms, like before, to try and hold on to as much as we could, we need to go into the room and see what people actually want and what we could do together.

- [L] When you are talking across the political divide, it's not necessarily about building friendships, but establishing working relationships. Friendships can actually damage what you are trying to do, because you don't bring your community with you. The government talk about us working to the model of 'DDR' – decommissioning, demilitarisation and reintegration. Now, the two 'D's have happened, but not the reintegration. In fact, it's getting worst, people are getting pushed to the side and left on the shelf. 'Well, so what?' some people might say, 'they caused all the problems we have, and they'll pay for it.' It's as if loyalist paramilitaries are being blamed for everything that happened here.

• [L] At our recent conference Hutchie said that he wanted to see the whites of the republicans' eyes, rather than shouting over the fence at them. It's easy to shout over the fence, but when you're sitting down and debating things you have to think harder, and consider the consequences. Some people don't think that far; they just think for the moment.

• [P] If you look at the number of interface meetings and activities and dialogue that is going on in this part of north Belfast, and over in West, the amount of positive work and agreement that comes out of that dialogue is remarkable. The potential for agreement between community representatives is quite high, and it has resulted in an ending of interface violence in certain areas, with the exception of Ardoyne around the Twelfth. But at not one of those meetings is a unionist councillor or MLA at the table. Now, to me that sends a message; it allows them to point the finger at us: 'It's those boys, they negotiated that away, it's those ones who wanted that gate closed/opened.' It creates an easy opt-out for politicians. Yet, by rights, they should have their local councillors *courting* us to get involved in face-to-face dialogue with republican/nationalist communities about real stuff, real issues, on the ground, so that we can all move forward. But no, they keep their people at hands' length.

• [C] We don't meet as much as we used to, the two communities. We used to meet on a regular basis, not just at crisis times or during the summer. We would have discussions, debates, residential. Even the likes of the West Belfast Festival – we started encouraging the Protestant community to be involved in that in some shape or form. But because we are not meeting as much we're not getting the opportunity to really debate and discuss some of the issues you have brought up.

• [C] Twenty years ago the people who were sitting down were actually combatants, not ex-combatants. *Everyone* has to be talked to. Every organisation will eventually have to be talked to. But that takes good leadership.

• [L] Because your pamphlets come from all sides, sometimes they can be used to explain your own position, and other times they can be used as a stick to beat you with! But that's a good thing, if it engages people in serious and genuine conversations.

• [P] I don't know of any conflict anywhere in the world which hasn't come to an end without some degree of debate and dialogue, Sometimes wars come to an end through force, but in terms of building peace that has to come through discussion, and I don't think you can do that unless you can confront your past.

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