



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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LOYALIST VIOLENCE 1992

1. GENERAL

To date this year Loyalist paramilitary groups have been responsible for 29 deaths, which figure reflects the continuingly high levels of Loyalist violence recorded since the beginning of last year (they were responsible for 40 security related fatalities in 1991). As in the past, and despite their claims to the contrary, the vast majority of those killed this year have been innocent Catholic civilians, often shot at random. With one exception, the pattern of murders can be traced to two distinct areas: the Greater Belfast area (including Lisburn) and the south shore of Lough Neagh (i.e. North Armagh, East Tyrone and North West Down). The increase in violence has prompted at least two books and considerable media attention: this has at least resulted in the tacit acknowledgement of our view that Loyalist violence cannot be categorized as merely "reactive". Allegations of collusion between members of the security forces and Loyalist paramilitaries continue and a number of instances of this have come to light during the course of the year.

2. STATISTICS

- (i) Violence levels generally have remained relatively stable over the past twelve years. The average total number of fatalities for the years 1980-'85 was 78, which is just slightly lower than the average for the years 1986-'91 (which was 80). However these figures mask what has actually been a relative decline in levels of violence attributable to Republicans and a corresponding growth to those attributable to Loyalists. From the years 1986 to 1988 the average number of fatalities for which Loyalists were responsible annually was 18. Since 1989 to the end of last year that average had risen to 28, an increase of 56%. In contrast to this, the average number of fatalities for which Republicans have been responsible has declined gradually from a figure of 57 annually for the years 1986 to 1988 to 45 for the years 1989 to 1991 (a reduction of 21%).
- (ii) To date this year there have been 68 security related fatalities, in respect of which Loyalist groups have been responsible for 29 (or 42% of the yearly total thus far), Republican paramilitaries for 28 (41%) and the Security Forces for 11 (17%). Thus, at the current rate, for only the second year since 1969, Loyalists are likely to be responsible for more deaths by the end of this year than Republicans.
- (iii) The U. D. A.'s paramilitary wing, the U. F. F., alone has shot dead 16 people, which is greater by two than the highest number of fatalities for which they have been

responsible in any one year to date (14). This fact undoubtedly influenced the decision of the British authorities to proscribe the U.D.A. in August of this year, at which time the Secretary of State announced his satisfaction that the organisation was "actively and primarily engaged in the commission of criminal, terrorist acts."

3. FEATURES OF LOYALIST MURDERS

Of the 29 Loyalist murder victims this year, 22 have been Catholic civilians, five have been killed in internal feuding or punishment shootings, while one was a member of the IPLO and one a member of Sinn Fein. Thus the overall characteristic of Loyalist violence remains the random assassination of Catholics. This was most brutally illustrated when a UFF gang opened fire indiscriminately in a betting shop on the Ormeau Road in February, killing five people.

Even when allegations are made of the victim's involvement in the Republican movement, many of the fatalities are the victims of mistaken identity, having no connection with Sinn Fein or a Republican paramilitary group. (The UFF shot dead Philomena Hanna on the Springfield Road as she worked in a chemist's shop, alleging that she was the sister of a local Sinn Fein Councillor, which was not the case.)

Loyalists have attempted to justify a number of killings by stating that they were carried out in reprisal for a Republican murder, such as the case of Terence McConville, who was shot dead by the UVF in Portadown in what was justified as a reprisal for the IRA murder of RUC Constable Colleen McCullough in Newry some days before. However these reprisals usually entail the random selection of a Catholic, as in McConville's case.

With the exception of one case, Loyalist murders have been confined to the Greater Belfast area and to the south shore of Lough Neagh. Both the UFF and the UVF have been active in the Belfast area, although this is predominantly the UFF's area of operation¹, with 14 of the 20 Loyalist murders recorded in this area being attributable to that organisation. Loyalist mobs have been responsible for three deaths in Belfast, where individuals were either stabbed or beaten to death in sectarian attacks.

The area of North Armagh, East Tyrone and North West Down (dubbed the "murder triangle") has assumed the appearance of a centre of operations for the UVF, which has claimed responsibility for 7 of the 8 Loyalist murders in the area. The local UVF gang, believed to be led by an

¹In a recent newspaper interview, a spokesman for the UFF claimed that the organisation had a membership of 400 to 500 alone in the W. Belfast area.

individual called Billy Wright (or "King Rat"), is based in Portadown and is particularly vicious. The most notorious murders this year in the area were those last month of an elderly couple living in an isolated house near Moy, Co. Tyrone. Their deaths bring to four the number of members of the family to be killed by Loyalists this year.

4. **CONTINUING ALLEGATIONS OF COLLUSION**

Allegations of collusion between members of the security forces and Loyalist paramilitaries persist. In April the RUC advised 15 individuals in the Fermanagh area that their personal details, as recorded on security force files, were in the possession of such paramilitaries. In a more serious incident of its kind, last month, the "Antrim Guardian" newspaper received copies of army photomontages of 20 suspected IRA / INLA activists, one of whom was Danny Cassidy, a Sinn Fein election worker, murdered in Derry by the UFF in April amidst allegations of frequent and open harassment by the security forces. Some days later information likely to be useful to paramilitaries concerning individuals in the Armagh / Tyrone area also came to light.

5. **NEW LOYALIST PARAMILITARY GROUPS**

In addition to the heightened activity of long established paramilitary groups, a new group, known as the Red Branch Knights, have emerged and have sent live ammunition through the post to individuals and business' which have "links with the Republic", including the Belfast offices of the International Fund for Ireland. They have been responsible for a number of fire bombings and claim to have been foiled by a security force check point in an attempt to murder a NIO official working at the Anglo-Irish Secretariat. Information available indicates that the organisation existed briefly in the early 1970's before disappearing.

The Red Hand Commandoes shot dead Michael Anderson, a Protestant, in Belfast on 9 October last, claiming that he was a police informer. The organisation, believed to have close links with the UVF, was last heard of in August of last year when the Loyalist Retaliation and Defence Force, believed to be a cover name, shot dead a newsagent in Belfast who stocked copies of An Phoblacht.

Declan Smyth,
Anglo-Irish Section,
13 October, 1992.