

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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JOHN WHITE, UDP CHAIRMAN, GMU. 21.8.00

INTERVIEWER

It all turned very sour your cultural festival, didn't it?

JOHN WHITE

Absolutely, and the blame lies squarely and fairly in the doorstep of the UVF who are trying to gain power and control and dominate that area, and surpress other points of view. This cultural festival was planned almost 9 months ago, and even at the start of that they defaced a mural that was put up to commemorate Billy Wright, because they want to dictate the loyalty and what can expressed in that way.

INTERVIEWER

It's not very convincing blaming the UVF entirely for this when you have ranks of UDA men brandishing weapons and wearing masks, is it?

JOHN WHITE

Well, that's got nothing to do with it. This is a well organised event and approximately 20,000 people took part. That parade paraded up the Shankill Road and was greeted by the people of the Shankill Road and many Ulster protestants throughout the province. This was a planned attack by a group of UVF men. What happened, they waited till the last band, so they did, and they attacked that band. They threw beer around one of the lads, they stuck a glass in one of their faces, and they tried to take some flags off. One thing I want to point out also, this parade had no people from the LVF. The LVF were told to stay away. There were people who came in some band and carried an LVF flag. But you know, people in bands are entitled to carry whatever flag they want.

INTERVIEWER

Now you've said that this doesn't mean because these shots were fired at the Rex Bar, and what have you, that there's been a breakdown in the cease-fire, because the cease-fire is about non aggression between republicans and loyalists. I mean what is going on up the Shankill at the moment, I mean why do you disagree that this is no more than a battle over drugs or something pretty unimpressive like that, with all these so called high ideals by the wayside?

JOHN WHITE

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Well I think when you have approximately 20,000 people in an area and you have an attack like that, I think there is bound to be spontaneous reaction. This is one of the most extreme forms of provocation that I have witnessed between rival paramilitary organisations, and that's what resulted in the carnage afterwards. So many people in one area at one time, and when the people, I was actually at the start of the parade, and when the attack occurred the people and the anger there was something that I have never witnessed before.

INTERVIEWER

I mean are you happy, as put quite well by our reporter, Gareth Gorden, on one side of the road you've got bouncy castles and the other you've got masked UDA men That's acceptable to you, is it?

JOHN WHITE

Well they were quite a distance away. The thing about, people are criticising, you know paramilitaries, the thing about many loyalist communities throughout the province that loyalism and loyalist paramilitaries has been ingrained into that society, it's almost part of their culture. And I think it's something we have to accept, you know. And we're striving in this whole peace process, you know, to make paramilitaries a thing of the past, but it's going to be there for a long time, it's going to be part and parcel of many communities in NI.

INTERVIEWER

Well it's a culture which is marching up a cul-de-sac by the looks of things Mr White. I mean what does loyalism represent?

MR WHITE

Well I think this was devastating for loyalism, for unionism and for Protestantism, loyalist fighting loyalist. And I think that both paramilitary organisations should look at the damage they are doing. The winners in all of this is our enemies the SF/IRA. And I'm appealing now for both sides to draw back. I think it's impossible for both sides to get together at this moment in time, but I would appeal for some mutual arbitrary to enter into this before lives are lost, because that's we're heading to. And it is the Ulster protestant people who are going to suffer.

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KEN MAGINNIS, ULSTER UNIONIST SECURITY SPOKESMAN, GMU, 21.8.00

INTERVIEWER

Ken Maginnis what do you think about all this. I mean we have bouncy castles and balaclavas and talk of what it means for loyalism, for unionism, for Protestantism?

KEN MAGINNIS

Well the 2 things don't go hand in hand at all. What we saw on Saturday and what we have seen over the past few weeks has been obscene. It's not just been what has happened on Saturday, although that, to a large extent, brings it to a head. It's where 50 men or thereabouts, can get into minibuses and drive from one part of the city to another to paint bomb and to intimidate. Now it doesn't really matter whether it's inter-**** strife, or it's about *********, I mean between loyalist groups or between republicans and loyalists. The reality is that nobody who is participating and organising this, gives 2 hoots for God and Ulster. It's who controls turf, it's who controls a drug trade, and I've heard people who are involved in the drug trade proposing that they represent what is going on here. This is just something that the police should have taken control of, it's something that the Government should have highlighted and taken action to quell at a much earlier stage.

INTERVIEWER

Well indeed what about the RUC's role?

KEN MAGINNIS

You know what's wrong, you know what's wrong. Unfortunately we've got leadership in the police that will do exactly what politicians in the NIO want them to do, and we've got politicians in the NIO who won't take action against one tradition in case they have to take similar action against another tradition. They are allowing what had promised to be an opportunity for people throughout NI to learn to live together, they are allowing it to be ruined because they are patrician and I'm going right to the top, there is partisanship as far as the way in which the whole Agreement has been handled over the last, particularly over the last 6 months. And at the core of it, is greed and drugs and corruption.

INTERVIEWER

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What do you mean partisanship. I mean what do you think that the SofS and the Chief Constable should have been doing, for instance, in response to what you saw as the growing threat, and its culmination on Saturday.

KEN MAGINNIS

Wendy, neither you nor I are blind, that's why we've been talking about this. And we have been drawing attention to it. What have the powers that be done about the drug trade that's rampant and growing day by day, what are they doing about the massive smuggling on the other side of fuel that's making hundreds of thousands, millions of pounds for a Mafia under subculture that's growing in NI. Ordinary people don't realise the extent to which they are being betrayed at the moment. It's nothing to do with agreements, it's the very ~~****~~ another of what the Agreement was meant to be. It's about governments and ~~under~~ other institutions who don't have the courage to get in and do what they should be doing on behalf of society.

INTERVIEWER

So what should they be doing? I mean is it time for action to be taken against both sets of paramilitaries for instances? What about the prisoners?

KEN MAGINNIS

Well that's exactly what I'm talking about. It's what I've written to the PM about. It's what I've been harking on about, and if anybody wants the debates on the Police Bill or listen to what was being said there, they heard this being spelt out by myself on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party. We've been aware, we don't want to create panic, but now that panic is being created and the spokespeople for society in NI appear to be those who are either directly or indirectly involved in the drugs trade, it's time, I mean we open our papers day in and day out and we see the faces of these people, as though somehow they're folk heroes.

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BILLY HUTCHINSON, PUP. GMU. 21 AUGUST 2000

INTERVIEWER

What John White just said there is putting it fairly mildly, isn't it? That this just may not have a positive affect on other people. People are appalled by this.

BILLY HUTCHINSON

Of course they are. And you know Mr White has not told the truth. And you know I get concerned whenever Mr White prefers to talk about who started it. The whole point is that they've put at least 7 families out of their home and they have also fired shots on 3 different occasions. You know, one of my neighbours had his bedroom riddled with an AK47, 20 shots, 50 yards from the police station. And I think that, you know, Mr White is being a wee bit flippant about talking about ejets. I mean this whole thing started because Mr White has already admitted that there was a meeting took place between the UVF and the UDA, and my understanding is that at that meeting there was an agreement that there would be no LVF paraphernalia and that the LVF wouldn't try to rub the supporters of the UVF nose in it. Now my understanding was that that's what happened. And what happened was these people appeared in a band and produced an LVF flag and started waving at the people. People then went to take the flag off and about 300 supporters of Mr White's people all arrived at the public house and started attacking people. Pulling the grills of the wall and started to fire shots into it. Now the people can tell me that a fracka like that can happen within seconds, and Mr White can justify it, there's something wrong. But I'll tell you this ....

INTERVIEWER

But let me put it to you though, that really whoever started this, this is not what people expected. There is suppose to be peace here. I mean, I don't know if you heard our report on this earlier on, but one of the people in it said, they let these guys out because there was meant to be peace, and there isn't.

BILLY HUTCHINSON

Well, Wendy, I don't deny that. I mean we have worked hard for peace, no question of that. What I am saying is that I could not believe what I seen in the Shankill Road on Saturday afternoon. The carnage in the public house when I went to it, and I could not believe that what happened on Saturday night, I was standing outside the public house talking to people, and we were actually talking about what was going on in the Lower Shankill. And you know, the thing that went on in the Lower Shankill in terms of putting people out, the police refused to go in, the police refuse to speak to me, I couldn't

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get an officer above a chief inspector, the Chief Constable's office refused to deal with me, and these people were on a ***** and the police refused to deal with it. In face, whenever the shooting happened a police officer turned his gun on me, rather than on the car where the gun fire came from.

INTERVIEWER

Is it your understanding, as we also heard in our report earlier, that both of these paramilitary organisations, both the UDA and its associated ***** and the UVF, that both of these organisations have been actively recruiting at the moment. Recruiting young people, bringing them into their ranks, and getting them involved in whatever activities that they are involved in.

BILLY HUTCHINSON

Well Wendy, I'm not actually sure that that is actually true, what I do know is that, you know, there was a parade organised on Saturday and from that parade people fired guns into a public house in the Shankill Road. And you know, I think it, you know, all of this will become, I think, public knowledge soon, because my understanding is that Sky in the Eye has got it all, and I think that you know, there's still people in hospitals, and you know what I would say to Mr White is, you know, there are people in the hospitals who were shot at with gunshot wounds, and you know, these people didn't do anything, they were totally innocent people out on a Saturday afternoon for a drink, and there is young man in the hospital whose whole face has had to be reconstructed and this man was beat to a pulp with sticks.

INTERFIEWER

I mean this kind of thuggish behaviour is unacceptable in any kind of civilised society and you are an MLA for the PUP, which has links with the UVF, which it would seem was the target on this occasion, but this is a kind of tit for tat feud that seems to be going on at the moment.

BILLY HUTCHINSON

But Wendy I think people should understand that the UVF weren't the target here. These were people, people who were in a public house. That's what happened. I mean what I'm saying to you is, you know, one man was lying shot, and as he lay shot and we were trying to give him first aid, he said to me "for God sake Billy, why are these people doing this? I'm out for a drink on a Saturday night." This man was coming out of a public house. Whether he was shot, totally innocent, had nothing to do with it. And these people came by in a car and opened fire.

INTERVIEWER

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So what should the Government do about this. I mean Adam Ingram has expressed his concern as indeed has the SofS as have others, both in our Government and elsewhere. What can they do to try and help to stop this at the moment? Should the prisoners who were released be put back into jail?

BILLY HUTCHINSON

Well Wendy I think that all of that you know is crocodile tears. They had their opportunity on Saturday to do something about it, and they didn't. I mean I was there. Whenever the gunman fired the shots from the car, 1. The police allowed him to do it, 2. They allowed him to drive into the Shankill Estate, and they seen who it was and they know who it as and 3. They allowed him to put the car on to the bonfire. Now, I have to say Wendy, one of the gunmen, one of the gunmen who the police know, drove by my home yesterday, to see the damage that was done to my neighbour's house. Fifty yards from the police station, has not been arrested, none of the them have been arrested, and all of these people have been seen, now what I'm saying is it was a sky in the eye who got all of this. They allowed these people to run about and put people out of their home. And another thing I have to say to you is, that myself and another councillor, tried to get the emergency services to go into the estate on Saturday night to deal with the people who were homeless, the police refused to allow them in.

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