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Political Platform

Andersonstown News

By Gerry Adams MP

25/01/2007

State terrorism was used to uphold the Union

On Sunday over 2,000 republicans will meet in the RDS in Dublin to debate Sinn Féin's attitude to policing.

It will be the culmination of a process of intense internal meetings, and a series of public meetings, that has brought tens of thousands of republicans across this island together for the most democratic debate in the recent history of this party.

Sinn Féin has reached this point after years of difficult but ultimately successful negotiations with the British government on policing. When the SDLP and others settled for less Sinn Féin persevered, and through hard work we succeeded in forcing the implementation of more new legislation, more accountability mechanisms, more change in policing.

In all of the negotiations we have had on this issue with the British, Sinn Féin's strategic goal has been to achieve a civic policing system which is accountable to citizens and representative of the community as a whole. Our objective was to secure a proper policing service and to hold that policing service fully to account. Sinn Féin has achieved enormous progress on the issues of democratic accountability, human rights protections and the ending of political and repressive policing. We have reversed the integration of MI5 with the PSNI, agreed and claimed as a victory by the SDLP at St Andrews. And on plastic bullets our discussions with the British government and the PSNI Chief Constable secured a commitment that these weapons will not be used as crowd control weapons, as well as an acknowledgement of the hurt and deaths they had caused.

We stayed out of policing structures until now in order to bring about maximum change. Now is the time, I believe, for Sinn Féin to go into the new policing dispensation in order to continue to bring about maximum change and to hold to account those responsible for policing.

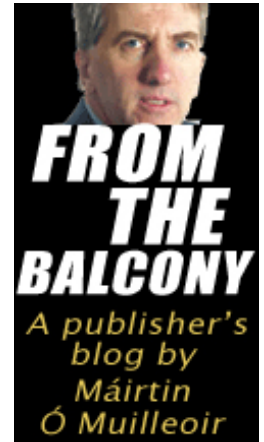
The Sinn Féin initiative on policing is part of our determination to advance our overall struggle towards Irish unity and independence. It is part of the process of change which we are driving in this time of transition on our island.

The Ard Chomhairle motion to the Ard Fheis, if passed, will see Sinn Féin support the PSNI and the criminal justice system; appoint party representatives to the Policing Board and District Policing Partnership Boards; and actively encourage everyone in the community to co-operate fully with the police services in tackling crime in all areas and actively

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supporting all the criminal justice institutions.

The motion also makes clear our determination to robustly support the demands for equality of treatment for all victims and survivors, as well as effective truth recovery mechanisms. This stand was vindicated with the publication of the Ombudsman's report last Monday.

It confirmed what the families of the hundreds bereaved by collusion between British state forces and unionist death squads have been saying for years.

Collusion and state terrorism was used by the British government to uphold the Union. Collusion is a symptom of a bigger problem. That problem is involvement of the British government in Irish affairs.

The history of that involvement is littered with examples like this. Sinn Féin remains resolute in our determination to end that involvement.

This report is only the tip of the iceberg. It is clear from the seniority of those involved within the old RUC that collusion was a matter of political and administrative practice which existed at all levels of the RUC and British government.

The O'Loan report deals with the impact of collusion in a relatively small area and over a relatively short period of time.

The fact is that collusion affected every part of the North and cost lives in the 26 counties. It was the application of brutal state terror against the nationalist and republican section of our people and it also led, as in the case of Raymond McCord Jnr, to the killing of unionist people.

On Tuesday night I spoke to a packed hall of 1,000 people in Newry, which included families bereaved through collusion. The death squads roamed freely there also. The activities of one such gang based at Glananne, and which involved members of the RUC, UDR and MI5 along with unionist paramilitaries, was responsible for killing scores of people.

A report last October by a panel of international legal experts (The report of the Independent International Panel on Alleged Collusion in sectarian killings in Northern Ireland) concluded that at least 76 people had died as a result of this gang.

This included the Dublin and Monaghan bomb attacks in 1974, the killing of three members of the Miami Showband, the Reavie Brothers, Seamus Ludlow and many, many more.

In addition a subcommittee of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice in Leinster House concluded that these were acts of "international terrorism". It added: "The British government cannot legitimately refuse to co-operate with investigations and attempts to get to the truth."

But of course it has. And part of the reason for that is the total failure of successive Irish governments to confront British governments on this policy. Indeed in the case of Seamus Ludlow the Irish government's interest was not in the truth but in blaming republicans.

Sinn Féin has raised this issue with the Irish government many times over the years. And Martin McGuinness is seeking an urgent meeting with the Irish government to discuss the report and all of these related matters.

But there is also an imperative now to expose the political figures, including British Prime Ministers, who sat around the British Cabinet table, sanctioned and received reports on the policy of collusion and state murder.

The RUC Special Branch, British intelligence and their agents were doing exactly what they were paid to do. It was a political policy decided in Downing Street by the British government and implemented by the Special Branch.

Consequently, the political figures involved, including British Prime Ministers, now must also be held to account.

This will be a massive job of work in the time ahead. But let's be clear. This is the right time for republicans to take ownership of the accountability mechanisms we have secured for policing. This is the right time to hold the police to account and to ensure that no one else within policing ever again engages in these activities and if they do that they will be held to account.

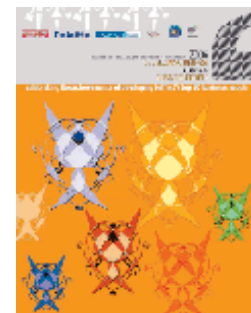
To use our political strength to drum out of the PSNI human rights abusers and use the mechanisms to help families get at the truth.

Our job is to ensure that no one within policing is able to collude with or run death squads. That is our responsibility.

I believe that the new beginning to policing promised in the Good Friday Agreement is now within our grasp. Sinn Féin wants to get policing right.



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The Extraordinary Sinn Féin Ard Fheis is crucial to this. Our vision is of a new policing and justice system throughout this island. To repeat what I said three weeks ago, this is the right thing to do and the right time to do it. The war is over. Let's build the peace.

Now is the time for Sinn Féin to go into the new policing dispensation in order to continue to achieve further change and to hold to account those responsible for policing.

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