



ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS



The Voice of the Irish in America

FREEDOM for ALL IRELAND BULLETIN

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FFAI ISSUES UPDATE

A- Brexit chaos forces May resignation as Johnson-Hunt vie for PM-British Prime Minister Theresa May ,was forced to resign after a six month Brexit delay and humiliating Westminster votes. Her successor, narrowed down to either Boris Johnson or Jeremy Hunt, is being chosen by paid up members of the Conservative Party, (approximately 160,000). The incoming leader of the Conservative Party hopes to have enough Westminster votes to continue May's term as Prime Minister without facing a general election. Brexit is now scheduled to take place on October 31st, but the European Union and Ireland are unlikely to add more concessions to the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by May. The drive to complete Brexit by that date means a growing risk of a "no deal" requiring customs and border controls across Ireland.

May announced her resignation in a tearful statement in which she said she had done "everything I can" to convince MPs to support the withdrawal deal negotiated with the European Union and it was now in the "best interests of the country for a new prime minister to lead that effort". She became Prime Minister because David Cameron resigned after a referendum mandating Brexit. May's took the post to preside over Britain's withdrawal from the EU. She quickly called a general election in 2017, expecting an increased majority to strengthen her hand but lost seats to Jeremy Corbyn and Labour. She became a minority party Prime Minister, depending on votes from the Democratic Unionist Party.

She negotiated a 599 page Withdrawal Agreement but her deal was rejected with May facing historic Westminster defeats. The main objection to her Withdrawal Agreement, was the "backstop" to avoid a disastrous hard border across Ireland. No deal Brexit would make the six counties Europe's land border with Britain, requiring customs, tariff and immigration checks. The EU invited the north to remain in the customs union, with customs, immigration controls etc beginning in the Irish sea, (meaning at entry points into England, Scotland or Wales). Brexiteers within Prime Minister Theresa May's Tory Party, joined with the DUP, to veto a "backstop" or safety net that would only begin if a full trade agreement was not reached by the end of 2020.

The front-runner is Boris Johnson, former Foreign Secretary and Mayor of London, viewed as a hard-line Brexiteer, who threatens to leave the EU on October 31st deal or no deal. Jeremy Hunt originally voted to Remain in Europe but will now implement Brexit. The winner will have about 100 days to solve the Irish problem.

B-Banners for Bloody Sunday murder-accused spread across north-
Banners and flags supporting the single British Trooper charged with murders on Bloody Sunday are spreading across the north. The trooper, named only as "Soldier F" is scheduled to appear in court in Derry in August to be charged with the murders of James Wray and William McKinney and the attempted murders of Patrick O'Donnell, Joseph Friel, Joe Mahon and Michael Quinn. Banners have already been put up in Belfast, Ballymoney Bangor, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Portadown and Tandragee, proclaiming support for him. A banner on the Lisburn Road, one of the busiest in Belfast bears the slogan "our soldiers are heroes not criminals."

Victims groups have complained that the banners are a hate crime and should be taken down by the PSNI. Photographs have been posted showing members of the PSNI constabulary standing by and observing as banners are being put up. The PSNI issued a statement saying "it was not the responsibility of the PSNI"

and they "would only act to remove flags where there was a substantial risk to public safety."Soldier F" is the only British trooper charged for any of the 13 killings and 15 wounded on Bloody Sunday, January 28, 1972.Other Bloody Sunday families were deeply hurt as it had been thought that up to 18 prosecutions would be announced.

C-Opportunity for Stormont talks deal fading-With the July-August Orange marching season beginning, Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and British Prime Minister Theresa May said in a joint statement of talks to restore Stormont, there was a "narrow window of opportunity to reach agreement in the immediate period ahead" but that it was essential to "intensify talks to this end."

An intensified round-table session then lasted only 25 minutes. Afterwards Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney and British Secretary Karen Bradley did not comment. Bradley's position was weakened by the resignation of Theresa May who appointed her. It is now speculated that the talks may be paused over the summer months as the same sticking points which led to the breakdown of a tentative agreement in February 2018, appear to remain. These issues include an Irish Language Act, firm legacy mechanisms, the Renewable Heat Initiative and social issues. Last year a DUP-Sinn Fein agreement fell apart on Valentine's Day, when the DUP reneged on a compromise proposal allowing an Irish language Act along lines of similar measures in Scotland and Wales.

Stormont collapsed in January 2017, after the late Martin McGuinness resigned over the refusal of First Minister Arlene Foster to stand aside during an inquiry into the Renewable Heat Initiative scandal. The RHI Inquiry concluded last December after 114 sessions, but the final report is still pending. This report may be highly critical of Arlene Foster and could reflect on her suitability to be First Minister. There disputes about legacy mechanisms and whether the British will fully implement the institutions agreed at Stormont House. Social issues could be resolved by abolishing petitions of concern which allow vetoes.

D-Ballymurphy Commander says was not told about 11 killings- -As testimony in the Ballymurphy Massacre Inquest nears its conclusion, shocking revelations continue. British, Army Lt.

Colonel Derek Wilford, who commanded the Paratroop Regiment's first battalion, claimed no one told him about the killings of a Catholic priest ,a grandmother and nine others to him in 1972.The British commander said he would have treated the killings seriously "had it come my way",but it was a "complete surprise". Wilford also commanded Bloody Sunday five months later in Derry. He said in his written statement that his battalion had been interviewed after Bloody Sunday but nothing like that happened after Ballymurphy.

Another paratrooper testified that his unit had run a prize "sweepstake" with the money going to troopers who "got a kill." Terry Laverty, in a written statement described how the trooper who killed his brother John Laverty bragged about it.

The evidentiary portion of the inquest is nearing conclusion.

MARK THOMPSON-MARK McGOVERN AOH TOUR

Mark McGovern, Professor of Sociology at Edge Hill University in England, studied dozens of collusion killings in Tyrone and South Derry, applying academic research standards. Helped by Mark Thompson and Relatives for Justice, Professor McGovern was able to combine documentation compiled by victims' families, with court transcripts and British military studies to put together a shocking new look at British collusion in the context of British military strategy.

The importance of American support was underlined by a special appeal by Tyrone victims' families to relatives and friends in America to attend the AOH sponsored launch.

The tour opened at the historic MacSwiney Club in Philadelphia, because of connections to Carrickmore man Joe McGarrity, and to Liam Ryan, whose murder was one of those investigated in the book. The event began with presentations of a Congressional Proclamation from Congressman Brendan Boyle and a City Council presentation, congratulating the two men for opening a new chapter in the battle for legacy justice.

Mark Thompson, of Relatives for Justice outlined the facts of some of the cases investigated. He began with the example of Kathleen O'Hagan ,a pregnant woman killed in front of her children because her husband Paddy O'Hagan was a well known

Republican. Mr. Thompson described the number of threats the family received, the remote area, timing and other circumstances which proved this and other horrific murders could not have been carried out without British direction. Ironically it was pointed out that Mrs. O'Hagan had family connections in America.

Mr. Thompson also pointed to Malachy McAllister, who helped organize the tour and who was targeted by the British for a loyalist assassination attempt by one of their agents. Malachy McAllister's current fight against deportation was raised throughout the tour.

He said that American help from the AOH and other Irish American organizations was crucial if relatives of Britain's victims were to have any chance for truth.

Professor Mark McGovern began by tracing the development of British military strategy in counterinsurgency back to 1896. He also cited the myths or "stories the British tell themselves to justify how they fight wars". They say they use "minimum force" and "uphold law and order" while the actual strategy in colonial situations was to demoralize the population with murders and insure that those who carried out murder for the crown would never be caught.

Professor McGovern, then pointed to the evidence published in the da Silva Review, Stevens Inquiry, Ombudsman Investigations, and Court Transcripts etc. He spoke of his own research, family interviews and investigations in accordance with academic standards. He said "the evidence is now undeniable and it is just no longer credible to pretend Britain did not collude in these killings."

Here as in other venues, people stood in line to buy autographed copies of the book, before the speakers took the floor.

NEW YORK

Professor McGovern and Mark Thompson traveled to New York City for an event at O'Lunneys Time Square, where they paraded in behind piper P. J. O'Hara.

A number of friends and relatives of the victims mentioned in the book attended. Liam Ryan's sister Mary, and his friends Patrick Clarke and Gabriel Megahey, were called up to present a citation on behalf of Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, while Eamonn O'Brien presented a citation on behalf of Westchester County Legislator David Tubiolo.

Many key AOH and veteran Irish activists were introduced, including a number of relatives of victim John Quinn.

In Washington DC, Professor McGovern and Mark Thompson launched the book at the prestigious National Press Club in an event attended by Irish Embassy and British Northern Ireland Office representatives, as well as Congressional aides and Irish American leaders. They met Congressman Peter King to start a series of key Congressional briefings on Wednesday June 5th, before giving a briefing at the Irish Embassy on the need for Irish government help in the battle for legacy truth. They held a launch in Virginia at Murphy's Irish Pub in Old Town Alexandria. On Thursday, they appeared in Rutherford New Jersey in a special launch featuring Malachy McAllister and organized by AOH National Treasurer Sean Pender.

Professor McGovern and Mark Thompson were at the Watertown AOH Hall, near Boston on Friday, the Newport Rhode Island AOH Hall, on Saturday, and on Sunday June 9th at the Gaelic American Club, in Fairfield, Connecticut.

They concluded a whirlwind tour with a launch at the Albany Irish American Heritage Museum before briefing Irish American legislators.

The response to the tour has been overwhelming, with hundreds of books purchased and forcing a reprint by the publisher.

"This book is an important chapter in the battle for legacy truth ,as victims' families in Tyrone, south Derry and indeed across the north lived it. Loyalists may have fired the shots but British crown forces directed murders and protected killers as part of overall British planning. This book and these speakers have had a tremendous response in AOH sponsored events and in meetings with Congress.

" It says a great deal that victims' families thought American help and the AOH important enough to come to us as soon as the book was released, to ask our help. The AOH is proud to stand behind them in the fight for legacy truth".

COOPER-McKEE-McKENNA REMEMBERED

Sadly we must note the recent deaths of three giants whose historic roles in Ireland should not be overlooked.

Ivan Cooper was a Protestant leader of the north's civil rights movement, and SDLP founder who led the Bloody Sunday March in 1972 and served as an MP. (He had hoped to meet AOH members alongside Eamon McCann during the February FFAI tour, but could not do so because of ill health).

Billy McKee was a legendary IRA commander in Belfast and founding member of the Provisional IRA, wounded while defending St. Matthew's Church in 1970, and later won a Hunger Strike for political status in 1972. He was a lifelong Republican.

Kevin McKenna, was the longest serving IRA Chief of Staff and held that key position from 1983's difficult days through most of the Good Friday negotiations.

FFAI MONTHLY BULLETIN

Please check for the monthly FFAI Bulletin on the New York State and National AOH web sites. We want to give you monthly updates on key events in the north with short analysis and explanation.

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