

the IRISH NEWS

Pro fide et patria

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These threats are quite real

BILLY HUTCHINSON'S statement questioning the authenticity of threats made against 300 nationalists and a specific warning to a Catholic postman is somewhat disturbing.

In his statement the PUP MLA for North Belfast does "utterly condemn" the threats, but only if they "are genuine". Mr Hutchinson goes on to say that he is "quite dubious of the authenticity of these threats" and that he is "led to believe that they are founded merely in hearsay among the workforce rather than any solid police intelligence".

In fact, the Red Hand Defenders singled out the postman in a telephone warning to this office using a recognised codeword and, as for the almost 300 nationalists, their details were found on a computer disk police believe belongs to the UDA.

As to Mr Hutchinson's belief that the Red Hand Defenders is now "defunct", it is worth noting that the murders of three young men were admitted by this organisation. Gavin Brett, Ciaran Cummings and Daniel McColgan - a Catholic postman - were all murdered in an area believed to be influenced by one UDA brigade.

And it is also worth noting that security sources have in the past indicated that they believe the Red Hand Defenders name has been used as a flag of convenience by the UDA and LVF when they have carried out murders, particularly when these organisations were supposed to be observing a ceasefire.

Whether the Red Hand Defenders actually exists as a separate physical entity as distinct from the UDA and the LVF is a moot point. The fact is that someone killed these three young men and then used the RHD name to admit the murders. So when an individual is warned that his life has been threatened by the RHD he is entitled to take that warning seriously.

However, Mr Hutchinson goes on to assert his belief is that these threats have only surfaced in an attempt to thwart "ideological loyalism attempts to bring stability to the community".

Perhaps Mr Hutchinson is referring to reports that representatives of the UDA and UVF are engaged in talks aimed at creating some sort of common approach.

If those talks lead to a re-establishment of the UDA ceasefire then they will have been worthwhile and perhaps the fact that details of 300 nationalists have been found on a disk linked to that organisation will become less threatening.

Latest scam plays on fear

MOST people who have an email address will have been subjected to at least one attempt to con them out of money.

Messages from fictitious people claiming to have large sums of money they need help in transferring from one country to another have been the most common scam.

But there a number of others. Today we report on a scheme which attempts to trick people into believing they are actually taking security measures by transmitting their credit card details.

This is particularly insidious and illustrates just how devious these people can be.

It is therefore important for all of us to take stringent precautions before we even consider transmitting our credit card or bank details across the internet or via an email.

Quotes of the day

There's no point in coming to Hillsborough to talk to us - they have to give us the detail of what they're prepared to do

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams

The film was fair to his musical achievements and gave him every opportunity to explain himself

Journalist Martin Bashir defends his recent documentary *Living with Michael Jackson* from allegations of misrepresentation and distortion

We are talking about getting this right for everyone, we're not in this to score points or to secure partisan victories

SDLP leader Mark Durkan discussing steps to overhaul the criminal justice system

This should serve as a warning to those organised criminals who are not only defrauding the Exchequer but driving legitimate businesses to the wall by their actions

Jane Kennedy, NIO Security Minister and chair of the Organised Crime Task Force, speaking after police and customs officers shut down a major fuel laundering plant in Co Armagh



Ministers risk necks on sleeveless errand

WHILE the world waits with bated breath for the bugle call to arms in the Gulf, the Ulster 'Bore War' keeps intruding like a mangy dog looking for a bone. We marvelled that Tony Blair was able to escape from the high tension of a worried House of Commons to fly over to Neverneverland to confront the bewildered Stormont politicians seeking a path through the jungle and mangrove swamps of the last colony. The meeting - the umpteenth meeting, it seemed - took place in Hillsborough Castle behind locked iron gates where some idiot protesters had already gathered.

Against the background of the scare news that an al-Qaida terrorist was on his way to Heathrow to shoot down an airliner with a ground-to-air missile, it was courageous of Tony and Trimble - who earlier faced each other across the Commons floor - to risk their respective necks for such a sleeveless errand. Trimble, who seems to relish masquerading these days as a world statesman rather than in the grotty old job back home of first minister and knee-knocking leader of a befuddled unionist party, need not have bothered coming.

He could have sent a note across the floor to the Prime Minister, a repeat of the old refrain that 'no matter what deal you do with Sinn Fein we are agin it'. Panic stations having set in, there were thousands of troops and police with tanks surrounding Heathrow as they left, while, over at Hillsborough, there was fog outside to match the greater fog inside as Blair, Ahern and Dublin ministers met first to talk about a 'deal' to get the

homeless Ulster politicians back in out of the cold by the new deadline of March 3. Coming out after several hours listening to the same old stories, the two governments looked more confident than the local politicians. Come to think of it, Hillsborough Castle is hardly the setting for a breakthrough anyhow. It must be haunted by the ghost of the gouty old Duke of Abercorn. This was his official residence as first and long-time Northern Ireland governor representing the king of England and cheerfully turning a blind eye to Craigavon's rejection of George V injunction to the new government to hold out the hand of friendship and show fair play to the minority left to his tender mercies. The impoverished old Duke, glad to hold the job, never lifted a finger to steer Craigavon away from his Orange agenda. It took the minority 50 years to waken up to the realisation that a civil rights campaign could shake the one-party sectarian edifice better than the years of sterile

anti-partition abstentionism.

How the unionists must pine for those lost years when the northern nationalists and republicans played so neatly into their hands at election after election.

How will we know if that 'deal' is really on schedule?

First sign will be when the Crossmaglen watchtowers come tumbling down, then the policing issue and the £3 million cash - thrown mostly to the so-called deprived loyalist ghettos. The idea is to somehow encourage local leaders to galvanise their communities against the gangster warlords who now control them. With the UDA/UVF lifting anything up to £15 million from drugs, extortion and prostitution, this seems like a drop in the ocean. Now that 70 or so of 'Mad Dog' Johnny Adair's 'C company' have fled to Scotland, the problem for the new police service, apart from the Assets Recovery Agency, is how to smash the remaining mafia feildoms. Meanwhile, members of the Scottish assembly are seriously concerned that Scotland could become a dumping ground for fleeing sectarian murderers and gangsters from here.

They want the police to come down harder on these thugs than the powers that be here did over the years. With the Scottish authorities making strides to clean up football sectarianism in Glasgow, the last thing they want at this time is an influx of paramilitary feuding gangsters from Northern Ireland.

With apologies to the BBC programme, how about an up-to-date version of this problem entitled *Heartless and Mindless?*

JAMES KELLY



On This Day/February 15 1934

By Eamon Phoenix

All is well again in 'Derry' household

SOME weeks ago the Derry North Ward Unionist Association gained discreditable publicity by instructing the corporation to institute an infamous vendetta against the right of Catholics to a share of employment in the public services of the city in which they are in a majority.

It is true that the number of Catholics in the various municipal offices there leaves no scope whatever for a development of policy on the drastic line suggested in the North Ward, but the will to persecute them, if there were any to be persecuted, was, nevertheless, an evil revelation. The whole idea has not earned any added respectability from the fact that its promoter in the first instance has since attained cabinet rank in Northern Ireland.

The same Unionist body seated in the shrine forever dedicated to the sacred 'civil and religious liberty' ideal, went further and declared the unionist head of the nationalist borough excommunicated from office and from orthodoxy as one whose outlook on these matters was

deemed incompatible with the Sir Basil Brooke mentality.

The sensation thus occasioned was intensified by the resignation immediately afterwards of the North Ward Association's chairman, who is also head of the city's Special Constabulary, as a protest against the summary ejection of the mayor from public life. As a result of hectic consultations and some mysterious accommodation behind the scenes, after the manner usual in these squalls within the ascendancy, the edict was withdrawn, the chairman resumed office without reference to his previous and impelling decision, Sir Dudley McCorkell returned to lead his minority municipal government and all was well again within the household - at least as well as it can be with Derry, the orphan of the political storm.

Basil Brooke and the Irish News
SIR Basil Brooke MP, Unionist minister of agriculture, at a meeting of the Mid and West Tyrone Unionist Association at Omagh yesterday,

said he himself had been the best bit of "copy" *the Irish News* had for some time. *The Irish News* always accepted it that he was talking about Catholics. He wished to say that in talking about disloyalty it was not his aim to attack religion but he was not going to join in a ramp for a united Ireland.

There were disloyalists among Catholics and Protestants and any man who called himself a loyalist should not employ anyone who openly declared their intention to destroy their constitution.

Lord Londonderry's tribute to Devlin
LORD Londonderry KG, secretary of state for Ayr at Westminster and former northern minister of education in a letter to Senator TJ Campbell, writes: "I express my deep sense of personal loss at the death of Mr Devlin who was a very old and valued friend of mine, in spite of the wide divergence of our political views. I know that he is greatly missed everywhere in Northern Ireland."