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A HAPPY, PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

British had Doomsday withdrawal plan in '74

By Eamon Phoenix and William Scholes

AT THE height of the Troubles in 1974, Prime Minister Harold Wilson drew up a secret 'Doomsday' plan in readiness for a "panic" British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, according to secret files published today.

Previously confidential government papers made public in Belfast, London and Dublin under the 30-year rule, detail the collapse of the north's power-sharing executive in 1974, Catholic Church concerns at the behaviour of the British army and chief minister Brian Faulkner's call for "apprehension of prominent IRA men like Martin McGuinness".

In a bizarre twist, papers also reveal that the Uganda dictator Idi Amin made an offer to Mr Wilson to host Northern Ireland peace talks in his country.

While thousands of pages of minutes and documents have been made public, in Belfast the actual day-by-day minutes of the executive, recording ministerial views and decisions, have mysteriously "gone missing".

Political historian Dr Eamon Phoenix said: "This is the first occasion in 20 years of covering the Stormont cabinet files for this newspaper that I found such a tranche of vital historical material to have been unaccounted for."

The British plans to withdraw from Northern Ireland are contained in a proposal by Mr Wilson to give the north "dominion status", effectively severing it from Britain.

Under the plan, which was circulated to only his closest advisers, all British funding would have been cut off within five years, although a small army garrison would have been retained.

The Labour prime minister thought

that the scheme, which would effectively have returned the north to Protestant majority rule, would provoke an international outcry and could lead to massive bloodshed.

In a memorandum sent only to his principal private secretary, Robert Armstrong, he warned that in the face of the political crisis and the upsurge in violence, drastic measures might be inevitable.

Mr Wilson drew up his memo at the end of May 1974 following the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive, led by unionist Brian Faulkner and Gerry Fitt of the SDLP. His full plan is still considered to be so sensitive that it has not been released to the National Archive.

Mr Wilson said there would have to be guarantees built in to the Doomsday plan to protect the rights of Catholics.

"It is open to nearly all the objections set out in the document - outbreak of violence and bloodshed, possible unacceptability to moderate Catholics, ditto to the Republic, the United Nations and the possible spread of trouble across the water, to name but a few," he said.

Meanwhile, because executive minutes are missing in Belfast, the views of particular ministers on such issues as housing minister Austin Currie's introduction of a punitive levy on "rents and rates strikers" or the late education minister Basil McIvor's proposals for integrated education are not currently available.

Senator Maurice Hayes, a senior civil servant in 1974, recalls the "funereal atmosphere and mixed feelings" which shrouded the executive's downfall.

A spokesman for the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland confirmed that the missing files had "so far" not been located.

> Ugandan despot's offer > P9

> Cabinet papers > P24,25



■ LUCKY GIRL: Five-year-old hit-and-run victim Oonagh O'Reilly shows off her Christmas presents yesterday

PICTURE: William Smyth

Child's 'miraculous' recovery

By Suzanne McGonagle

A FAMILY are full of hope for the new year after nurses said their five-year-old, who was left in a coma after a hit-and-run accident, is now doing "really well".

The mother of Oonagh O'Reilly last night looked forward to a great 2005, just two months after her youngest daughter suffered serious internal injuries when she was struck by a van in west Belfast.

Little Oonagh, from Monagh Drive in Turf Lodge, spent almost a fortnight in a coma and around nine weeks at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

She had been happily playing after school with a seven-year-old friend at Norglen Road when the horrific crash happened.

The west Belfast family maintained a bedside vigil at Oonagh's side amid

fears that she might have suffered brain damage.

But their concerns were allayed when the Gaelscoil na Mona pupil made what her family described as a "miraculous" recovery.

She suffered a broken pelvis and ribs and damage to her liver and lungs, but no brain damage.

Oonagh's terrifying experience was a distant memory on Christmas Day, when she awoke to find a Barbie computer and doll and pram awaiting her.

Her mother Veronica last night said the family were then given an early new year's present on Thursday when nurses visited and said "everything was going in her favour".

"She is doing really well, she's just great," Mrs O'Reilly said.

"She has to go back to hospital on January 13 to get some more X-rays done, but the doctors are delighted with how she has got on. Everything

is going in her favour.

"We had a quiet Christmas - as long as she is well and all the rest of the kids are okay, we will be fine."

Mrs O'Reilly said the support her family had received had been "unbelievable".

"Following the accident, there was so many people who were really good to us," she said.

"I still get people coming up to me in the town and saying 'Are you the mother of that wee girl' - and they're really interested to see how she is getting on. It has been unbelievable how much support we have received."

"Oonagh is doing brilliant, and as long as she is on the mend, then we are all happy."

"She is the baby of the family, she does everything for herself, which probably helped her along after the accident."

"She's a wee fighter - she's great."

Ahern raises donation to €10m as public digs deep

By Catherine Morrison

IRISH people are continuing to donate thousands of pounds every hour to help victims of the south-east Asia earthquake, following an unprecedented response to appeals. The Irish News and Trocaire last night urged people to continue donating money to assist the millions of homeless people in the affected region.

More than 125,000 people have been confirmed dead since the St Stephen's Day tsunami hit the Indian Ocean countries.

Trocaire will today send the first of its aid workers to Sri Lanka - one of the worst hit countries - to assist local organisations dealing with the aftermath of the undersea quake and resulting tidal waves.

Vicky Tindal said one of their priorities would be assessing the most urgent needs of the area.

"Clean drinking water, medical supplies, food and shelter will be of an immediate priority," she said.

"There's huge need for immediate relief and the hugely damaged infrastructure has

made workers' jobs there doubly difficult."

Meanwhile, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern last night pledged an extra €10 million in aid for the countries affected.

His announcement came after aid agency Goal yesterday criticised the Irish government for an "inappropriate" disaster relief donation of just €2 million.



Chief executive John O'Shea had called on Mr Ahern to "substantially" increase the financial commitment, adding: "It's possible that the Irish government hasn't grasped yet the enormity of the tragedy, or the mood of the Irish people."

Mr O'Shea praised the Irish public for their "incredible" generosity, saying they deserved to see a similar show of commitment to help from ministers.

Belfast's 'Black Santa', Dean Houston McKelvey, had raised a staggering \$420,000

by last night after three days of his sit-out on the steps of St Anne's Cathedral.

Donations were arriving at such a pace yesterday that another barrel had to be brought in to cope with demand.

Britain's Disaster Emergency Committee has already received \$45 million in donations to help the victims of the tsunami. At one point, call centre operators were taking up to \$15,000 a minute.

Meanwhile, traditional New Year festivities were last night overshadowed by grief as millions remembered the plight of tsunami-ravaged Asia. Prayers and tears replaced celebrations for many around the globe.

Around a million revellers paused in Sydney, Australia, for a one-minute silence, while a two-minute silence was held in central London.

Anyone wishing to help the Irish News/Trocaire appeal should use the freephone number 0800 912 1200, or leave donations at the Irish News offices at 113-117 Donegall Street, Belfast during office hours.

> Earthquake in Asia > P3,4,5

Suspect £20 notes not part of robbery haul

By Barry McCaffrey

THOUSANDS of notes thought to have been stolen in the \$22m

Northern Bank robbery are actually legitimately in circulation.

Police last night said a warning issued about \$20 notes with the serial numbers CD0500001 to CD0550000 had been withdrawn.

All other serial numbers previously advertised as suspicious have, however, been confirmed as stolen.

A spokesman for the Northern Bank said it had advised police at the time that a small proportion of notes with the supplied serial numbers may have been properly issued.

It has issued a revised list of stolen notes to police and local banks.

The confusion was clarified after police were given two \$20 notes passed to staff at

Dundonald Ice Bowl in east Belfast on Thursday.

The notes were discovered after staff checked the serial numbers with those issued by police after the December 20 raid. It emerged yesterday that the notes were not from the stolen batch.

Meanwhile, police yesterday carried out a third day of searches in west Belfast. Yesterday's searches are understood to have taken place in the Beechmount area. It is believed that to date, however, officers have failed to find anything connected to the robbery.

A number of complaints relating to the raids were due to be lodged with the Police Ombudsman yesterday. Solicitors claim damage has been caused to private homes, community sector offices, businesses, Church property and offices of government departments.