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AN OLD LIE REFUTED YET AGAIN

By Rev. Ivan Foster



PSNI Chief Constable George Hamilton

The report reproduced at the end of this article is taken from the County Fermanagh weekly newspaper, 'The Impartial Reporter', dated 20th November 2017.

In it the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, George Hamilton sought to refute criticism of the police response to the IRA bombing of the Remembrance Day wreath-laying ceremony in Enniskillen back on November 8th, 1987.

WRONG

Mr Hamilton said that criticism of the police investigation into the atrocity was totally wrong. The bomb exploded as a parade of Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) soldiers was making its way to the memorial and as people waited for the ceremony to begin. It blew out the wall of the Reading Rooms, a Roman Catholic Church property which the police had not searched because of the objections of priests in previous years. It was here that many of the victims were standing. The explosion buried them under rubble and hurled masonry towards the gathered crowd. Bystanders rushed to free those trapped underneath.

Eleven people were killed, including three married couples. The dead were Wesley and Bertha Armstrong (aged 62 and 55), Kit and Jessie Johnston (aged 71 and 62), William and Agnes Mullan (aged 74 and 73), John Megaw (67), Alberta Quinton (72), Marie Wilson (20), Samuel Gault (49) and Edward Armstrong (52). Edward Armstrong was a serving Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) officer and Samuel Gault had recently left the force.

The twelfth fatality, Ronnie Hill, died after spending 13 years in a coma. Sixty-three people were injured, including thirteen children, some of them permanently.

The Director of the victims' group, South East Fermanagh Foundation, Mr Kenny Donaldson had criticised the police response in an interview given to the News Letter on November 7, 2017.

As one who lived through that dreadful time, I know that the police were politically hindered from a proper investigation, irrespective of what the police chief now says.

I was preaching in Ballynahinch Free Presbyterian Church that morning. The police interrupted the service to pass me a message that it was feared that two members of my congregation had been killed. Mr and Mrs Alan Stephenson had been buried in the rubble.

Thankfully, it turned out that though Daphne Stephenson was very severely injured, injuries from which she suffers to this day, Alan escaped with much lighter injuries, though I believe the trauma contributed to his premature death from Multiple Sclerosis some years later.

I immediately left the service in the hands of the





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elders and raced homeward, stopping halfway to make a phone call to my wife from a phone box for the latest news. It was then that I heard the glad news that Alan and Daphne were alive.

In the days that followed, the government and the ecumenical churches mounted a most wicked campaign to conceal the culpability of the Roman Catholic authorities who had blocked any searching of their property where the bomb was planted.

- That was the first grave failing of the police. They did not insist on searching the Roman Catholic premises as they had on other years. (See my article '**The Poppy Day Massacre**').
- The police, through its then chief, Jack Hermon, then sought to placate Protestant anger by saying that hundreds of Nationalists had phoned in to give information regarding the bombing. That was a blatant lie!
- Mr Gordon Wilson, who was injured in the bombing alongside his daughter Marie who died holding his hand, was feted as an example of "Christian virtue" after statements in which he claimed that he had 'forgiven' his daughter's murderers. This statement was likewise used to suppress the right and righteous anger that arose amongst Protestants, weary of the ongoing IRA terrorism, about which the government forces seemed unable to take effective action!

Twelve months later, Mr Wilson changed his statement and denied he had ever forgiven the bombers since 'only God can forgive sin'!

This was another lie used to cover-up the atrocity.

- Furthermore, some 12 months later, a police officer disclosed that the names of the IRA bomb team were known to the police and that two of them were still in the Enniskillen area, frequently seen walking about the town!

So much for a serious police investigation and a "no stone unturned" investigation as promised by the government!

How can a senior police officer say that there was no failure on the part of the police when no one has been prosecuted for one of the most dreadful atrocities of the 30 years of IRA terrorism? What more can be said in condemnation of a wicked failing on the part of the police than that 30 years later not one person was so much as interviewed about the crime, even though the criminals were known to them?

COVER-UP

Why this nefarious cover-up? There was a universal dread amongst ecumenists and compromising politicians, both local and at Westminster, that the Protestant population would rise up and finally throw off the shackles of complacency and demand a proper response to the murderous IRA campaign. The Roman Catholic Church had openly sided with the terrorists, protesting whenever any were killed by the security forces and constantly mounting a campaign of vilification against the police and army. The ecumenical churches had with smirking cowardice sided with popery on this issue.



Bystanders fleeing from the scene of the explosion

To this day, the whole "Poppy Day Massacre" is smothered in ecumenical propaganda with the annual Poppy Day event in Enniskillen promoted as a wonderful 'joint' event, uniting Unionist and Republican, Protestant and Roman Catholic. In truth, 8th November 1987 was the outcome of popish intransigence against anything British. That spirit is still evident as the contro-



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versy surrounding the erection of a memorial to the death of the IRA victims clearly shows. The Roman Catholic Church, according to relatives of the victims, does not want the memorial erected because it has a poppy symbol upon it, as a recent **Belfast Telegraph report** indicates.

My criticisms at the time were vindicated within twelve months as the reprinted articles below from "The Burning Bush", the monthly publication I then edited, show.

The first article appeared in "The Burning bush" in September 1988 and the other two in December 1988.

Despite Mr Hamilton's blustering words, the Enniskillen bombing stands as a shameful blot on the reputation of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as the Northern Ireland police force was then known.

There were those within its ranks who willingly allowed themselves to be wickedly used in the covering up of the machinations of the Roman Catholic Church, as it sought to shield its adherents from the just consequences of their murderous activities. The history of Roman Catholicism shows that this has ever been its penchant!

Why George Hamilton persists in seeking to defend the indefensible actions of policemen, priests and politicians 30 years ago is any one's guess!!

At the end of his statement, the Chief Constable says: "We can't make the evidence up."

There was "evidence" aplenty 'made up' in the wake of the bombing 30 years ago and it is clear much evidence was either concealed or simply not acted upon!

Here are the reports from "The Burning Bush" of 1988 and below them is the recent report of the Chief Constable's defence of the police failings of 30 years ago taken from "The Impartial Reporter".

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE TEARS IN ENNISKILLEN

RUC MAN SAYS FERMANAGH NATIONALISTS GAVE NO HELP IN HUNT FOR REMEMBRANCE DAY KILLERS.

THEY SAY THAT IF YOU WAIT LONG ENOUGH THE TRUTH WILL EVENTUALLY SURFACE. SOME OF IT HAS SURFACED IN ENNISKILLEN. IT APPEARED IN A ARTICLE IN THE LOCAL PRESS COPIED FROM A DUBLIN NEWSPAPER.

In the article a RUC Superintendent is reported as saying that not one call was received by the Enniskillen police from the Nationalist community after the Enniskillen bombing in which eleven Protestants were killed by a bomb planted in a Roman Catholic church building. The story reveals nothing new to Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church since that fact had been reported to the minister by a policeman and told to the congregation months ago. Arising from this disclosure there are some important questions:

1. Why did the RUC tell the general public after the bombing that a great deal of helpful information had been received from the Nationalist community?
2. Why was this disclosure reported first of all in a Dublin paper?
3. Why does the police officer, who gave the information, not come right out and expose the lies that were told by the Chief Constable (Jack Hermon) and others, lies which are still being repeated about the 'Enniskillen Spirit'?
4. Why have the local ecumenists, so vociferous at the time of the bombing, not made any comment on the total silence of Fermanagh nationalists as to the identity of those who murdered members of their own congregations.



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5. Is nationalist silence the reason why no one has ever been as much as interviewed about the massacre?

These and other questions must join the long list awaiting an answer concerning one of the worst tragedies in the Ulster troubles. Sadly, too many are prepared to accept the silence.

('The Burning Bush', September 1988.)

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"KILLERS ON THE DOLE"

POLICE SAY THEY KNOW THE ENNISKILLEN BOMBERS

Two of the IRA team of bombers who killed eleven Protestants in Enniskillen on 8th November last year are still living in the town and are drawing £32. 75 a week 'dole' money.

That is the claim made by an English Sunday newspaper. the 'Sunday Express' of November 6th (1988).

'WE KNOW THEIR NAMES'

The report quotes a local RUC man, Chief Inspector Gerard O'Callaghan as saying, 'We know their names, faces and often see them about the town. But we cannot act against them. If we pulled them in they would admit their names and addresses and then remain silent. The 'guilt by silence' rule is not yet in force We know they are tied in with the three who live across the border in Donegal and Leitrim. The bomb could well have been brought into town in pieces and assembled in one of the men's houses.' An RUC statement referring to this report did not deny the substance of it.

HELPLESSNESS

Was there ever such an acknowledgement of the helplessness of the RUC to deal with the IRA? How the IRA must laugh at such a confession of impotence!

Chief Inspector O'Callaghan uses the fact that the 'guilt by silence' rule does not apply as a reason why this scandalous situation is allowed to exist. The rule will soon apply, Inspector! There are quite a few people in Enniskillen who will watch and see if the police will then be any more successful.

('The Burning Bush', December 1988.)

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ENNISKILLEN - ONE YEAR LATER!!

Victims throw off the ecumenical gag

Recent publicity surrounding the 1st anniversary of the Enniskillen bombing provided proof of the truth of a statement issued by Rev. Ivan Foster within days of the bombing.

The statement issued on 11th November 1987 contained the following :

" ... The decision not to search the building is an example of the continual capitulation to Roman Catholic Nationalism which has enabled the IRA campaign to continue until now. Effective measures against the terrorists are curtailed because it would bring a storm of protest from the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, Protestants must live and die with tragedies like Sunday past. It is forgivable, therefore, if a person views a little sceptically the sympathy of those who in different circumstances would have been crying 'police harassment'. As a Gospel Minister who longs to see his country return to the paths of true Biblical righteousness, I have watched with grieved heart the exploitation of this terrible tragedy by the ecumenical clerics in Enniskillen. That which should be used to turn the people back to the God of the Holy



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Scriptures is instead being used to advance unity with Romanism. Is it not ironic that the Church of Rome, whose intransigence and anti-police feelings are largely to blame for the bomb not being detected, should now be a trustee of the fund established to help the victims of the bombing? Surely Enniskillen Protestants are not so deceived as not to see this deceit."

The local newspaper "The Impartial Reporter" made mockery of its name and refused to publish the statement. Yet it is now clear that my allegations about ecumenists manipulating the incident were true.

A BBC programme on the survivors of the bombing contained interviews in which those who were themselves seriously injured or lost loved ones in the massacre stated their opposition to that which was said by Mr Gordon Wilson. The press was led by ecumenical clerics to believe that Mr Wilson was speaking on behalf of all those who had suffered as a result of the explosion. Mr Wilson's statement, widely reported as containing his forgiveness of the IRA bombers who killed the eleven Protestants including his daughter Marie, became the epitome of the so-called "Enniskillen Spirit". Week after week, the ecumenical press has gone over and over Mr Wilson's words, drawing from them every possible encouragement for the "unity with Rome" movement.

The so-called "Enniskillen spirit" gave rise to all sorts of ecumenical ventures. The best known was initiated by the main churches. The inclusion of Cardinal O'Fee, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, caused some resentment amongst the other participants. Consequently, only the Church of Ireland Primate, Dr. Eames and the Cardinal took part in a poorly attended rally in the King's Hall, Belfast. The poor attendance and the internal disputes signalled the failure of the abortive "peace" venture. Instead of ending with a triumphant Festival of Peace in November it fizzled out with a "tea and buns" gathering for the faithful few in Elmwood Presbyterian Hall in Belfast. The hollow charade that it was became clear to all but the most devoted disciples of ecumenism.

The media attention on the 1st anniversary gave an opportunity to those who disagreed with the whole ecumenical spiel that had been published for the previous 12 months, to have their say. Families of those killed in the bombing expressed their disagreement with the sentiments of Gordon Wilson. One man who was very grievously injured by the bomb courageously spoke out against the Church of Rome saying it was the force behind all the IRA violence.

CHANGE OF MIND

Mr Wilson now says that he did not forgive the bombers. We agree with him when he says that only God can forgive sins. What I, and many others, find annoying is that it has taken him 12 months and many awards, honours and accolades to correct the erroneous interpretation placed upon his words. His many awards were all given on the basis that he had shown, what the ecumenists cared to call, the Christian spirit, by forgiving the bombers. Now it appears he has not forgiven them at all.

AN EXAMPLE

The whole affair provides the Ulster Protestant with an example of the unprincipled actions of those who are set on uniting the Protestant Churches with the Roman Catholic Church. Nothing is too sacred, not even the murder of eleven Protestants and the injuring of 62 others some of whom will never recover, for those schemers to exploit and manipulate to accomplish that evil end.

(‘The Burning Bush’, December 1988.)

Report from the "Impartial Reporter" of November 20th, 2017.

"PSNI Chief Constable George Hamilton has accused those critical of the police investigation into the 1987 Enniskillen bombing as "helping to rewrite history for the Provisional IRA."



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The police force has in the last week been criticised and challenged by Lisnaskea based victims group South East Fermanagh Foundation for having "failed the families" of those killed.

SEFF Director Kenny Donaldson told the News Letter on November 7: "Or what about the criminal justice system, inclusive of the police who have failed the families via a catalogue of mis-truths which has left many feeling despondent and deeply hurt?"

But Mr. Hamilton has rounded on his critics, hitting out at the "inaccurate", "unwise" and "ill founded" claims describing them as "conspiracies" and "grossly unfair."

Speaking to The Impartial Reporter after attending a special Remembrance service in Enniskillen on Sunday, Mr. Hamilton said the criticism levelled at his police force is "re-traumatising victims."

"People who inaccurately or unwisely are blaming police inadequacy is not just unfair on us but actually it's re-traumatising victims because they listen to that, they start to believe those conspiracies which are completely ill founded. There is no evidence whatsoever.

"It distracts attention from the Provisional IRA, the people who carried out these murders. There's almost more attention and criticism coming to the police from some quarters, some surprising quarters, and that is something that I think is unfortunate. I think it's actually helping in a bizarre way to rewrite history for the Provisional IRA," he said.

He said he has read articles in the last week that have "concerned" him "about people being shielded or the investigation not being conducted properly."

"The investigation was of its day originally, 30 years ago. That's why we have reviewed that investigation three times. We have reinvestigated it in 2005, 2006 to modern day standards. It is my personal commitment to say what can be done has been done," he said.

Mr. Hamilton, who served as a constable and sergeant in Enniskillen in the 80s and 90s, said as times goes by "it becomes less likely that people will be brought to justice, that there will be a criminal justice outcome for what happened here 30 years ago."

"That's not to say that we've given up, there is a commitment from me, personally and professionally, that if any opportunities arise either through new technology or forensic science, through witnesses coming forward, whatever the source of that investigative lead would come from we will grab it with both hands and give it very pro-active attention."

He said the families of the 12 who died as a result of the bombing "have been through enough" and "the last thing I want to do is to be raising expectations."

"I know it's enough, my heart goes out to the families. It is hugely regrettable to me that no one has been brought to justice but it hasn't been for a lack of trying," he said.

Mr. Hamilton said the investigation into the Enniskillen bombing is not closed, stating that "investigations of this nature never get closed in the sense that we have them sitting in a state of readiness to go should new information or new forensic opportunities come in."

"Nor is it sitting with a whole series of investigative actions in a stack waiting to be done. The investigation is complete but it is not closed because we haven't been able to bring anybody to justice and I think sometimes it's difficult for people who are not working in the criminal justice system to fully appreciate that," he said.

SEFF's Ken Funston accused Mr. Hamilton of having "no interest in investigating the past" when he spoke to the News Letter on November 10, stating: "The PSNI would profess that they are doing everything within their power to bring the perpetrators of the Enniskillen atrocity to justice, unfortunately I do not think anything could be further from the truth."



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Mr. Hamilton told this newspaper: "I think frankly that is grossly unfair of those people who are making up things that simply aren't true about people being shielded, about there being no will to investigate this.

"There has been every will to investigate it and it has been investigated to a high standard. We can't make the evidence up", he said."