



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Republicans curse Martin McGuinness



McGuinness and IRA leaders O'Connell, MacStiofain and Twomey at a press conference in Dublin, 1972.

The “darling” of Irish Republicanism, former IRA gunman, Martin McGuinness, has run foul of supporters of four Belfast republicans who are presently on the run, after being convicted of abducting another republican and beating him. The four and their supporters have accused the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein leadership of betrayal.

They are saying that it is “disgraceful” that Martin McGuinness had called on the men to hand themselves over to the authorities. “They did what they did on the IRA leadership’s orders. They’re facing a big stretch in Maghaberry (prison).

How many years in jail has Martin McGuinness done?” a supporter of the men said.

Graffiti saying “***** M McGuinness. Support the Tohill 4” has appeared on the nationalist lower Ormeau Road in south Belfast where friends and relatives of one of the men live.

Gerard McCrory, 34, Harry Fitzsimmons, 36, Liam Rainey, 32, and Thomas Tolan, 34, were due to appear in court a fortnight ago to be sentenced for the abduction of dissident republican Bobby Tohill in 2004. Sentences of between five and ten years each were expected.

Bench warrants have been issued for their arrest. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness have appealed to them to give themselves up. “What they should clearly do is present themselves to face the charges they pleaded guilty on,” McGuinness stated.

Another supporter of the men said: “These men didn’t take a rush of blood to the head and decide to go out and kidnap Bobby Tohill. They were on an IRA operation, sanctioned by the Army Council.

The supporter claimed that “the same people who sent them out” are now betraying them “because they want to get into government with Paisley.” “It’s despicable. I don’t know how Sinn Fein has the cheek to abandon and criminalise these men at the same time they commemorate the hunger-strikers.”

It is reported that despite “serious tensions” with the leadership, the men are receiving financial assistance from the IRA.

Sources close to the IRA say: “The leadership is against them being on the run but has no option but to look after them. There is contact with them and it’s hoped they’ll see sense and hand themselves in.”

Dropped charges

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde, and later the Independent Monitoring Commission, blamed



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the Provisionals for Tohill's abduction.

But IRA membership charges against the men were withdrawn because the organisation wasn't specified as being in breach of its ceasefire under law.

Tohill had a history of clashes with the Provisional IRA and, just before his abduction, had called its director of intelligence, the man who later planned the Northern Bank robbery, a criminal.

Tohill was abducted from a Belfast bar and bundled into a van which was later stopped by police. CCTV footage showed the four men emerging from the van wearing disposable boiler suits and Tohill, naked from the waist up, covered in blood.