



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

A Criminal Cover-up!!



IRA priest, James Chesney

“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil,” Ecclesiastes 12:14. “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known,” Luke 12:2.

In the October 2002 issue of “The Burning Bush”, we carried the story of a Roman Catholic priest who confessed to the Belfast newspaper, The News Letter, that he knew that a fellow priest, “Father” James Chesney, curate of St Patrick’s chapel, Kennaught in Co. Londonderry, had led the IRA unit that had bombed the Co. Tyrone village of

Claudy in July 1972, killing nine people, including a 9-year-old girl and a 16-year-old boy. A subsequent police inquiry has reported its initial findings and they make startling reading even for a people who have become used to deceit, lies and cover-ups! Police files show that the priest’s role in the bombing was known to them but he was never even interviewed!

A Police Service of Northern Ireland review of the 30-year-old case has led to rediscovered documents which show that “Father” James Chesney’s apparent involvement in IRA terrorism was discussed at the highest levels of the Government and the Catholic Church, but the priest was never questioned by police. Instead, he was moved from a Co Londonderry parish to Donegal after the case was discussed privately by the then Secretary of State, William Whitelaw and the late Roman Catholic Primate, Cardinal William Conway. PSNI Assistant Chief Constable, Sam Kinkaid, informed relatives of the nine people killed and over 30 injured of the developments, at a meeting on December 20th. He made reference to an official Northern Ireland Office letter to police which showed that Mr Whitelaw and Cardinal Conway discussed James Chesney on December 5, 1972, five months after the bomb. The Assistant Chief Constable reported that the letter said Mr Whitelaw “gave the Cardinal a full account of his disgust at the priest’s behaviour and also indicates that the Cardinal knew the priest was behaving improperly”. Mr Kinkaid said: “The letter then states that the Cardinal mentioned the possibility of transferring the priest to Donegal.” Some police files showed that, after the bombing, a member of the public told Cardinal Conway and a senior RUC officer that the priest played a role in the attack. Mr Kinkaid said he regretted that “opportunities to arrest and interview all of the suspects were not taken in 1972”. James Chesney died of cancer in 1980. These sensational disclosures have very serious implications for the Northern Ireland Office, the Roman Catholic church and for senior police officers serving at the time of the atrocity. They also raise serious questions for certain politicians who claim they were aware of Chesney’s IRA involvement. This incident clearly shows that far from having a pro-unionist bias, as is so commonly reported, there were those of high rank in the old RUC who shielded and sheltered the Roman Catholic church from the disclosure of its many links with republican terrorism.

Questions



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For the Roman Catholic church, caught out in a world-wide exposure of its concealment of pervert priests, there is the added crime of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice by concealing the activities of a priest involved in murder and terror and removing him from the legal jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland authorities. What adds to the wickedness of the activities of Cardinal Conway is the fact that among the victims were members of his own flock. But justice for them obviously counted less than concealment of the priest murderer. What of the politicians who knew of the involvement of Chesney in the atrocity? Former SDLP politician, Ivan Cooper, claims that he knew of the priest's involvement from the time of the incident. If he knew, then it is inconceivable that John Hume, his close associate and leader of the SDLP, did not know. Why did they not do something to highlight this crime? After all, they both had shown their ability to focus world opinion on alleged irregularities on the part of their political opponents when it suited their political agenda. If proof of John Hume's acquaintance with the priest's involvement in this atrocity is forthcoming, then he should be forced to return his ill-gotten Nobel Peace prize. What of the ecumenical churches? Is it possible that the leaders of these were unaware of these events? They certainly are aware of them now and coupled with the disclosures of the paedophilia rampant amongst Rome's priests, will they persist in leading their flocks toward re-union with Rome?

What of the loyal orders, the membership of which is largely drawn from ecumenical churches? Will they continue to march to services within churches seeking union with a body as corrupt as that which Rome is daily ever more clearly shown to be? The exposed murderous activities of James Chesney have raised embarrassing questions for many to answer.

New Allegations

Following the Chesney disclosures an article in "The Sunday Observer" of 22nd December carried an article on other priests involved in the IRA at the time of the Claudy bombing. "Calls have been made for a full public inquiry into the role of clergymen in terrorism after The Observer learnt that three more priests were involved with the Provisional IRA at the time of the 1972 Claudy bomb massacre. One of the priests was the IRA's officer commanding the Provos' North Antrim Brigade. He cannot be named for legal reasons. The other priests who joined the IRA at the beginning of the Ulster Troubles were Father Patrick Fell and Father John Burns. Fell served more than 10 years in an English jail over a conspiracy to cause explosions in Coventry during the early Seventies. He was convicted alongside Frank Stagg and Michael Gaughan, two IRA men who died on hunger strike in English prisons. On his release, Fell, like the priest who bombed Claudy, Father James Chesney, was allowed to serve as a priest in a rural parish in Donegal. In 1972, Burns disappeared from his parish at St Theresa's Catholic Church in the Possilpark area of Glasgow. He fled back to Ireland after Strathclyde police raided his home searching for weapons and explosives. He was given sanctuary by fellow priests but later left the priesthood. The role of the priests emerged following revelations that the Catholic hierarchy and the British Government colluded to cover-up the involvement of Chesney in the Claudy atrocity."