

West Tyrone Voice

Submission of our group to the Eames/Bradley Consultation.

Thursday 17th January, 2008.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

West Tyrone Voice (WTV), like other pro-British innocent victims' groups, has its genesis in the latter months of 1998, in the wake of the early and accelerated release of terrorist prisoners in accord with the provisions of the Belfast Agreement 1998. Victims realised that there was nothing in this Agreement for them, felt keenly the injustice of such early release of terrorists back on to the streets, and came together to 'voice' their concerns, and seek remedies for their trauma, suffering, pain, loss and injustice.

WTV was launched in February 1999 to provide a 'voice for the voiceless,' and a channel through which they could articulate their deepest concerns, not least the deprivation of justice to which everyone in a democracy is entitled, and which they have been denied. Today, we are working with at least 2300 direct and indirect beneficiaries of our services, ranging geographically from the West Tyrone area to South and East Tyrone, Donegal, Fermanagh, Co. Londonderry, with some members living in the Belfast area. Because of resource limitations, we have had to take a decision *not* to take on any more people, since this would raise expectations that we simply could not meet. While group membership is drawn mainly from the Protestant/unionist community, we have a growing number of people from the Catholic community who access our services, and who all have/had links with the security forces.

"Making peace with the past," and "dealing with the legacy of the past," as generally understood, are most desirable aspirations, not least for victims. WTV has been involved at the forefront of this work since 1999, seeking to discover

ways by which the past could be put to rest, and victims given back their own lives which they have 'lost' as a direct result of terrorist violence.

Around 2001, WTV held a workshop at which our members were given the opportunity to rank what they considered their needs, as victims, were, and, tied in with this, was the attempt to discover what would enable them to 'move forward' in their recovery from trauma. Many of the usual things were mentioned by way of needs, but the one thing that surpassed every other need was the need for justice for their loved-ones. This result was forwarded to the Human Rights Chief Commissioner at the time, Brice Dickson, and the intervening years have shown no change in this requirement.

Given that some 231 persons have been murdered who were either from the area and murdered elsewhere, or where murdered in the area, Co Tyrone is the third most hit area in Northern Ireland by terrorists, coming after Belfast and South Armagh. Statistics are relatively easy to come by and record. But what is more difficult to deal with are the qualitative aspects of the 40 year terrorist campaign to which our people were subjected - the fear, anxiety, uncertainty, pain, grief, the frustration, and all those unanswered questions that still exercise our minds.¹ Dealing with the legacy of the past entails dealing effectively with these highly personal and often unrecognised aspects of the terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland.

BEING DANGEROUSLY RADICAL

It is agreed by all that there are no easy answers to this chronic problem. That said, and given the complexity of the issues involved, it is necessary that a radical re-think of what has been done and accepted by most people, is called for. For the 'legacy of the past' to be dealt with effectively, the innocent victims have to be dealt with properly, and it is not sufficient to acquiesce in

¹ R. Cabrera, as cited in B. Hamber (1998:25). *Past imperfect*. INCORE: Londonderry.

currently proposed 'solutions' or options, for these, in our view, do not cut the ice.

What is required, in our view, is a dangerously radical re-think of the options that are available, and identifying options that are not currently available, or might, in the thinking of some, be unavailable. Unless we can get to the root of the problem, superficial remedies will not satisfy the victims, or have any long-term benefit for them or for Northern Ireland. We must be prepared, and able, to leave behind us the defeatist views that things are not going to change. Surrender to what is being done, and proposed, must not be part of our vocabulary. An uncritical acceptance of the *status quo* must be challenged, and those who say there is no alternative to what we have at present, must be shocked out of their complacency. Complacency sounds the death knell to progress, and this we must oppose. This also entails the adoption of a statement made by Daniel O'Connell in the early part of the nineteenth century, when he said that if something is morally wrong, it cannot be politically correct.

Before coming to the positive suggestions of what *might* pave the way for true reconciliation, we must highlight certain negative recommendations that have been unearthed by the Healing Through Remembering (HTR) organisation. Whilst it is important to point out that these are options that they have identified as a result of their consultations, like 'luxuries' that have a habit of becoming 'necessities,' these options have the potential to take on a life of their own, and become the accepted wisdom that all but the most recalcitrant will accept. This has already happened within the SEUPB where, what was clearly a "working definition"² of reconciliation formulated by Kelly and Hamber (2004), became the *decider* in all applications made under PEACE II.

² I consider this "working definition" of reconciliation as propounded by Hamber and Kelly to be seriously flawed, firstly, because it is not a definition of reconciliation at all since it was formulated using a methodologically suspect approach in which what they arrived at was the collation of views and opinions from the grass roots thus telling us how respondents viewed reconciliation, and, secondly, because what it provides in the main is what reconciliation might look

It is therefore reasonably likely that HTR's options will be used as the baseline for dealing with the legacy of the past.

But right at the outset, the HTR report raises a number of very important questions that it assumes, wrongly, are answered in the same way by all stakeholders. The answers to these questions impact directly on how the past may or may not be dealt with, questions that have been marginalised consistently by the establishment:

(1) What/who is a victim? No attempt is even made to provide a proper definition of 'victim.' Lexical definitions have been jettisoned in favour of political definitions, a policy reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's maxim, "A word means exactly what I want it to mean, no more and no less." The term, 'victim,' has been subjected to this biased/prejudiced treatment by the Bloomfield report, and the others that emanated from it.

(2) What/who caused their victimhood? Was it falling down a step, tripping on a loose pavement, bumping your head on something, being raped, mugged, or a road traffic collision? So far as the experts are concerned, it could be any number of mundane events, and nothing else. The Bloomfield report could equally well apply to a road traffic collision as to any number of scenarios where people have been hurt or injured. We are victims of terrorist violence, and indeed the government and its lackeys are the victims of the terrorists' propaganda.

(3) How can the relationship between victims and terrorists be repaired, if it's even possible? But, there again, if there are and were no terrorists in Northern Ireland, then no relational repairs are required. The very term 'terrorist' is not used by the authors of reports, be they academic or governmental, and prefer

like *after* it has been established and embedded within a fractured society. See S Templar and K Radford (2007:13, fn.2) for the full text.

instead to use terms like combatants (ex- or former-), paramilitaries, etc. The only time the term is used, and that sparsely, is when it appears in a direct quotation from a respondent. Indeed, where respondents have used the term frequently, their comments have been deliberately ignored. Reference can be made to the report on Victims/Survivors compiled by Sean Coll of Sperrin and Lakeland Trust, the PAVE Research report conducted by QUB, the HRT report, "Making Peace with the Past," and the recently launched CRC report into these issues. Reading each of these reports, one could be forgiven for concluding that what took place in Northern Ireland was 'no big deal,' and what so-called victims are crying about is but a figment of over-active imaginations. Terrorism did not operate in the province, despite the almost consistent use of the term by international journalists in the quality press to describe the outrages that were perpetrated in our country by the various terrorist organisations. Also, the UK government passed several terrorist acts that had primary relevance to Northern Ireland.

Yet, we are being told at every turn that terrorism did not and does not exist in our country, a policy that may be designed to humiliate and marginalise victims, and make them think that what they suffered is all in their minds.

(4) Why was the definition of "victim" as drawn up by OFMDFM used uncritically in this report? Because the government knows best! There is evidence of the uncritical acceptance of government sponsored and commissioned analyses by those who hold the government and its statutory departments in high esteem, and/or who are dependent upon government for funding. No attempt has been made by *any* body to arrive at an accurate definition of this important term, and which reflects accurately the standard lexical usage.

(5) How does the use of the internationally recognised phrase, "ex-combatant," to refer to both state and non-state actors, avoid implied moral equivalence

between terrorists and security force personnel? This is absolutely repugnant to those who served their country for the good of all citizens. They simply do not see themselves as morally equivalent to those whose desire was to murder as many people as possible in order to help the government hear their concerns. Victims who served on Her Majesty's forces during the worst years of the terrorist campaign are finding it extremely difficult to even have an open mind to the views of those who claim to be helping them, when they persist in using such inflammatory and desultory terms to describe them. If one way is designed to antagonise such victims, it is this use of language. Similarly, it is guaranteed not to encourage them to forgive or forget the wrongs done to them, or to want to 'move on.' They do not see themselves as morally equivalent to the terrorists who tried to murder them, and who actually murdered their friends, families and neighbours.

(6) The debate over the definition of "victim" was highlighted in the HTR report, but why was the debate over the definition of "terrorist" not even mentioned? Terms such as 'perpetrator' and 'paramilitary' are used instead, which, while approximating to what the term 'terrorist' means, is inadequate as a description of the 'fear' that terror invokes in those subjected to its horrors. A person may 'perpetrate' things that are not essentially terroristic, and 'paramilitary' implies that the organisation is working alongside (para) the military. So the term 'terrorist' is consistently and deliberately expunged from government-commissioned or government-financed research reports.

Those who promote these ideas are speaking with forked tongue. They use the term 'victim' frequently, on the one hand, yet, on the other, they say that this term is most disempowering, and they do not want victims to be disempowered. They imagine that the term 'survivor' is more empowering.

But what we find is that this most disempowering term is used extensively, either alone or in its compounded form with 'survivor' by those who prefer not to use it. So it appears that these same people who frown upon the term 'victim' use it precisely to disempower victims. The only people who are disempowered are those who describe themselves as 'survivors,' because they have surrendered and sold out to the terrorists. They accept everything the government throws at them. They adopt government policies 'lock, stock and barrel.' They sing from the same hymn sheet, use the same vocabulary, promote the same ideals as the government. These people are the really disempowered in the country, but those who prefer to describe themselves as 'victims' have more 'true grit' in them than all the others put together. And interestingly, they are also the people who are out promoting real reconciliation in our country, and looking for satisfactory ways of 'dealing with the legacy of the past.'

On this last point, there is a concerted effort being made by the various establishment bodies in Northern Ireland to airbrush out the fact that there was a terrorist campaign in the province at all, and that those who died or were murdered lost their lives by some other means than terrorism. The ridiculous suggestion is now being made by your group that what we had here was a "war," and nothing else. This has the effect of legitimising terrorists as 'soldiers' who were fighting a just cause. From a recovery aspect, this erects a massive barrier for many victims who are made to feel that what was visited upon them was a figment of their over-active imaginations, or they brought it on themselves. This is a very disappointing trend throughout the sectors that does everything but promote healing.

In any case, what is it that victims are to remember? If terrorist violence was not the instrumental cause of their suffering, what was it? Burglary? A road traffic collision? Rape? Mugging? It is obviously *none* of these things, but the quasi-statutory bodies, and their lackeys, and the multitudes who work in the

'reconciliation industry' today are not prepared to give the instrumental cause of our victimhood its proper name - terrorism. Therefore, victims are encouraged *not* to remember the real cause of their pain, but a sanitised cause - whatever that is! It's a bit like the medical professional who is trying to treat pain whose origins are being ignored.

And today, the professionals, the educated classes, we are told, know best. Who are we to pit our experience against their specialist knowledge? As victims, we were not injured by terrorists, because such do not exist today in Northern Ireland; we suffer because our own coping mechanisms are inadequate to the demands that are placed upon them. Today's do-gooders say, in effect, "You were partly to blame for what happened to you, for you supported a regime that discriminated against a section of the community."

That's why baby Jack, 5 months old, was murdered in Strabane by PIRA republican terrorists on 19th July 1972 when they detonated a bomb, showering him with broken glass and debris, crushing his pram. He was responsible for what had happened to him. In a sense, he deserved it, brought it on himself. His young mother was from Cork.

Or the unborn twins who were murdered by republican terrorists in Omagh on 15th August 1998, or the 20 month old baby girl whose life was also stolen from her so violently on that dreadful day. According to the "experts," these civilians only got what was their due, because they belonged to a 'rogue state' that practised injustice, discrimination, etc.

Or the 15 year old boy who worked as a milkman's assistant and the nine year old girl, both of whom were murdered when the PIRA, under the immediate direction of Fr Jim Chesney and the ultimate direction of our DFM, Martin

McGuinness, exploded three indiscriminate bombs in the Co. Londonderry village of Claudy (31st July 1972).

Take the 302 civilian police officers and the majority of off-duty UDR soldiers (87½% in West Tyrone) who were murdered by terrorists. Of what were they guilty? Of trying to keep their country from plunging into outright civil war. These were all *civilians*, together with all the other civilians, who died at the hands of terrorist murderers.

Now tell me, what kind of logic is prepared to twist the facts so grossly that they end up by making the people who died the reason for their murders, and the people injured the cause of their injuries? And that is precisely what this current attempt is doing. Yes, these died as a result of an explosive device, but what is concealed is that the bomb device was placed there by terrorists.

There is a discernible trend today to re-write the history of Northern Ireland, a history that denies the activity of terrorist murderers in the current campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing. They deliberately avoid all reference to terrorism as the instrumental cause of their trauma.

None of these four reports referred to above speak about terrorists, except where respondents use this term. It appears that the authors of these reports all worked to the same principle, namely, the avoidance of the term 'terrorist' to described organisations like the PIRA, INLA, UVF, UDA, etc. When asked why this was done in the QUB PAVE report, the author said that she wanted to use 'politically correct' language and did not want to offend anyone. I challenged this view on the ground that whilst she did not want to offend terrorists, it mattered little if she offended their victims.

I suppose these authors felt themselves under some obligation to deliver what their paymasters were paying for. "He who pays the piper...." These reports were funded by the government.

The fact remains that victims just do not matter. "Making peace with the past" and "dealing with the legacy of the past" are clearly NOT about helping victims recover from the heinous terrorist crimes perpetrated against them by their fellow countrymen; but it is about finding ways of *enabling terrorists live with their demonic past*. It is about *easing their consciences, sanitising their devilish deeds* to such an extent that they are viewed as legitimate ways of securing political goals that perhaps went a bit wrong on occasions; it is about extending to them a form of respectability, and offering them a way of sanitising those evil deeds that they would repeat if necessary.³

Further, there is a sense in which the attempt to deal with the *past* is now totally redundant, given the institutionalised de-stabilisation of Northern Ireland by appeasing the terrorists who have sought to destroy totally our country. What were the past 40 years all about? Why were those good people allowed to die? If the current political arrangement had been secured during Capt. Terence O'Neill's Premiership in the late 1960s, these lives would have been saved. The role of our First Minister, Ian Paisley, must be identified as an instrumental cause of the years of terrorist violence that followed O'Neill's premiership, and aided and abetted by Martin McGuinness. How, then, can the many innocent victims of subsequent years be aided in "making peace with the past"? How can victims come to terms with what the leaders of unionism, for example, have now done to them?

The issue is not now merely about 'making peace with the past,' but about '*making peace with the present.*' The 'present' situation has been a re-

³ Ronnie McCartney, Patrick Magee, John Nixon *et al* have said publicly that they 'would do it again if they had to.'

triggering of trauma and anger for many, though not all, victims - some victims *unbelievably* supported parties that wanted Martin McGuinness as DFM; but many victims feel betrayed by those they trusted, and cannot understand the complete and apparent 'U-turn' by the DUP. These are profound obstacles to any healing for many victims of PIRA terrorism, and for groups like ours that are working on the ground with these angry sufferers. Again, the personally ambitious do-gooders in Northern Ireland have won the day, to the detriment of those who still carry heavy burdens from the past.

This process, while talking frequently about victims, and ignoring terrorists, is about airbrushing terrorists out of the picture, and providing them with a way of rationalising what they have done, and making it respectable and acceptable. As a result, it creates the wrong impression that what victims claim has happened to them was not done by 'terrorists,' as they call them, but by actors in a protracted conflict whose concerns were as valid as anyone else's. Indeed, if your Group has its way, there never was a terrorist campaign here at all, but a 'war'!

Until there is proper acknowledgement of what exactly was done, any moves towards reconciliation for many victims are a non-starter.

Coming now to the various suggestions that HTR has unearthed from its consultations, the following comments are submitted.

"Drawing a line under the past" is NOT an option for those who have suffered innocently in the terrorist campaign, namely, the victims of terrorist violence. It is as easy for a mother to forget the child she bore, as it is for terrorist victims to forget what was done to them. The people who come up with such suggestions simply do not have a notion what those who suffered directly or when a close family member was injured or murdered by terrorists, feel. Their

insensitivity is proverbial, some even admitting that they do not understand or know how victims feel, yet continuing in this role of 'fixer.' Indeed, when one considers the matter, victims, by definition, are those who have had something done to them, not the doers. If terrorists are now claiming to be victims, for what are they demanding an amnesty?

This option is simply a non-starter for victims. It is even questionable morally whether innocent people should be expected to forget the past or to forgive the terrorists, thus betraying the memory of their loved-ones. Is it right or proper to ask victims to forgo justice in the interests of the 'greater good'? We, and the close family members, care about the memory of their murdered loved-ones, and relinquishing what ought to be ours as British citizens is out of the question.

In any case, and granting that it may be a legitimate option for some people, what will "drawing a line under the past" really achieve? It will send out a very clear message to every future terrorist that they can get off with their dastardly deeds, and their victims are so spineless that they won't even look for justice. It sends out a message that 'anything goes.' It reinforces the widely held idea amongst terrorist organisations that terrorism pays in the short to medium term, and gets you what you have set your heart on achieving. In short, it is an acceptable way to deal with 'political' issues, as Northern Ireland demonstrates so clearly.

A "Truth Commission" where every witness has to tell the truth sounds plausible, until one remembers that chief, not deputy, victim-maker, Martin McGuinness, refused to say anything to the Saville Enquiry in the Bloody Sunday enquiry that would implicate other provos; indeed, he refused to break his "republican oath." The Loyalist provos are no different. In dealing with the past, why is it assumed that a truth recovery process is required? The criminal justice system has

served us and most other democratic countries for many years, so why is this being jettisoned?

It is very unlikely that terrorists may be regarded as men of integrity and truthfulness, therefore expecting truth to emerge from this quarter is naïve. Indeed, the government and its agencies will not tell the truth, something that seems to evade government ministers and politicians in many lands. Many officials have signed the Official Secrets Act, so are bound by its requirements. Indeed, it appears that your Group is also bound by some such 'gagging order,' although the GAA member claims that they can disclose everything, while Robin Eames said otherwise.

As well, what kind of morality is it that sells truth for amnesty? We believe that truth must be told irrespective of personal benefits. But sadly, securing personal benefits appears to be the driving force for many today.

"Providing victims with the truth about what happened to their loved ones" is woefully inadequate and does not satisfy all victims' needs. What they need for recovery is satisfaction, and this does not provide it. On a personal note, I know enough truth about my brother's murder - what I now want is for those responsible to be brought to justice. Unless and until this is done, everything else is woefully inadequate.

Let's face it, having an organisation like the PIRA carrying out an internal investigation, as is suggested by 'reconciliation industrialists,' an investigation of those who are covered by their republican oath, is ludicrous. It beggars belief! It is most demeaning for reconciliation activists to even suggest that victims ask the PIRA to investigate the murders of their loved ones. Spare us that! Give us some dignity and respect. If that is all this people can come up with, it

has been at best a waste of money, and at worst, a profound insult to the memories of our dead family members.

Reconciliation is about dealing with the past, especially from a relational perspective. But there can be no reconciliation without justice, just as there can be no reconciliation without acknowledgement. This suggestion that there would be no prosecutions, or no naming of names, is repugnant to decency. Political leadership does not require such a process to transform it - this has already been done through the medium of seismic acts of betrayal by unionist leaders, possibly the greatest act of betrayal that this island, if not Western Europe, has ever witnessed. How can a process that re-traumatizes victims help resolve past grievances? Given that the vast majority in Northern Ireland support this new move, the message being conveyed is that "victims are backwoodsmen who have nothing to offer NI." We just don't count! And that is where terrorist victims are at this moment in time - retraumatized, re-victimised, devastated, betrayed, and very, very angry. What has happened politically in Northern Ireland in recent days renders all such attempts obsolete.

'Community-Based "Bottom-up" Truth Recovery' is farcical in the extreme. How can those who have taken a republican oath ever disclose the truth of what happened? This is like expecting King Herod to investigate the killings of the innocent children in Bethlehem long ago.

Mind you, if groups like WTV were to be given the funding to do so, then we could get our former security forces members trained at the best training establishments in investigation techniques and in-depth detection methods, so that genuine "community-based bottom-up truth recovery" can be ascertained.

This option, and the above one, is concerned with 'truth.' Strange, but true. Yet, the way language is abused and prostituted by reconciliation activists is

inexcusable. Because they do not want to face the truth, they re-write the rules of word usage to suit the current situation, or even to suit those with whom they have a close 'political' affinity. Their refusal to use language accurately actually corrupts language, and makes it less than useful. For truth to be recovered, there must be a common understanding of the language used, otherwise, the effort is wasted.

We must therefore get back to proper norms of linguistic definition, and call things by their proper name. There must also be a clear distancing from language that sanitises the evil deeds of terrorist offenders, and starts to describe them by their proper name - terrorists. In order to live with their God-given consciences, terrorists are looking to government and the legislature to legitimise their actions, and to those working on the ground in the field of reconciliation to be persuaders in this direction. Murderers are longing to be excused by the state and by those they have hurt irreparably. While they go on *ad infinitum* remembering their past and their fallen comrades, we are not allowed to do the same - indeed, our practices of remembering our dead is only tolerated by republicans, despite their sometimes public displays of tolerance. In fact, we are being told to "let bygones be bygones," and to treat what was visited upon us as "water under the bridge." Those who say this are at a loss when asked to explain *how* this is to be done? How does a victim "let bygones be bygones"? How is this done in such a way that the memory of their murdered loved ones is honoured? What steps are to be taken to allow terrorist attacks to be regarded by their victims as "water under the bridge"? How is this done? No one will or can tell us!

Further, the almost global use of *inclusive* language by reconciliation activists is generally offensive to innocent victims, and accounts for the attempts at moral equivalence they draw between terrorists and security forces. Victims object strongly to such indiscriminate use of inclusive language. They certainly do not

bow down to the shrine of inclusivity, or see in it the be all and end all of reconciliation.

However, victims are prepared to use inclusive language to describe those who have been attacked, etc, by terrorists. There is a wideness in their use of inclusive language that is not always recognised. But they also use the language of differentiation to prevent moral equivalence being drawn inappropriately. Wisdom dictates that both forms of language be used especially in complex situations, and ours in one such situation. However, reconciliation activists use inclusive language exclusively, to the hurt of victims, and to the wholesale prostitution of language.

So to sum this section, it is somewhat inconsistent to want to arrive at truth, on the one hand, while using language that almost guarantees that that truth is missed altogether. Language issues must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Recording untold stories is rather voyeuristic, and ought to be avoided. But there again, the 'reconciliation industry' is full of voyeurs, which probably explains why this has been suggested. It is no defense for them to claim that story-telling is not to meet the needs of those who are involved in this type of work, but to facilitate victims in coming to a degree of closure concerning their past history. Many have written and published books recording the stories of victims, and are we to believe that the motives of these authors are wholly pure? Even those who 'feel the need' to 'help others,' fall into this category.

Victims are not interested primarily with community development *per se*, and this admission gives the lie to the HTR report's real agenda which has precious little to do with victims, or truth, or justice, or reconciliation. It is much more about *healing through forgetting* than anything else.

IF A THING DOES NOT WORK, FIX IT!

Let me now come to a more positive presentation of what we believe many victims with whom we work want in order to deal effectively with the legacy of the past. That certain systems must be re-introduced into Northern Ireland's life, is undeniable. But what ought to be put in place for those who have suffered most in the tragic years of terrorist violence that has blighted, not only our beautiful country, but many of its people?

We concede that we have arrived at the current situation as a direct result of adopting the language practice of one of Lewis Carroll's characters. This 'advanced linguistic system' has bastardised language to a point where it is unrecognisable. We still use the *same* vocabulary, but a *different* dictionary. Words just do not mean what they did 10 or 20 years ago, but something *very* different. Standard dictionaries are of no use to us today, so the teaching of English in our schools is placing our young people in a position where what the teachers have taught them is way off the mark when compared with common usage of the same vocabulary, and the increasing influence of the *PC* brigade.

There must then be a whole scale return to the lexical meanings of words, so that when we use a word, we know exactly what we mean by it.

Some of these things include the following:

- (1) There must be a determined attempt by both government and police to round up all terrorists, bring them to court, and let justice have its way.
- (2) If this requires legislation to rescind existing current legislation, so be it. Justice for all criminal activities must be paramount in any

democracy, and Northern Ireland is no longer to be regarded as a 'special case' in this respect.

- (3) There must be the removal of terrorists, or terrorist-related political parties, from government, at local, regional and national levels. This will require a re-examination of the 'unique to Northern Ireland' imposition of D'Hondt, its removal from our political system as a means of generating a government, and its replacement with a mechanism that will facilitate a voluntary coalition of true democrats.

- (4) There is need for all stakeholders to stop playing the game of the 'Emperor's new clothes.' Victims in our group are fed up with this public charade that is going on unabated. Public relations experts are adept at giving impressions, and indeed of outright lying. Thankfully the more extreme manifestations of republican terrorism have largely disappeared, but that does not mean that all is well in the garden. There is still ongoing low-level intimidation, or terrorism (from *phobos*, fear, terror), in the West Tyrone area *inter alia*, with attacks being made on Strabane police station on a regular basis, attacks on Orange Halls with the resultant fear of using these premises for community-based activities, former-security force personnel being on security alert is a daily occurrence, etc. It is time to tell the whole truth about what is going on in our country.

- (5) A renewed focus on the use of the already existing criminal justice system to facilitate truth recovery, and facilitate successful prosecution of terrorist criminals through the courts. Justice is still the underlying and most pressing demand of victims in our group. Without satisfactory justice, there can be no reconciliation, and

without reconciliation, the legacy of the past cannot and will not be dealt with.

- (6) The sincerity of 'former' terrorist activists to be tested regarding their commitment to reconciliation by requiring them to tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' about their involvement in terrorist outrages, and that of others. That was promised in essence by the DUP, who, when power, position and pounds were within its grasp, jettisoned what are reasonable requirements in any democratic country, thus leaving terrorist victims distraught and very angry.
- (7) The security forces to reveal what they can, with an eye to matters of national security, about their involvement in illegal activities, if any. However, there must not be an almost exclusive concentration on, or witch hunt against, the security forces, as has been the case hitherto, thus letting the terrorist 'armies' off the hook.
- (8) If we are to accept that our land was attacked mercilessly by terrorist 'armies,' steps must be taken to treat them as armies and proceed through the War Crimes Tribunal. This is reasonable and sensible since it is wise to begin proceedings against those organisations that murdered the largest number of people, namely, PIRA. This is NOT to concede, however, that Northern Ireland was involved in a 'war,' but to deal with those who self-define as 'armies' in a way that accepts that self-designation.
- (9) There must be an immediate return to the use of both inclusive and differentiating language when describing what has taken place in our nation. The exclusive use of inclusive language is utterly offensive to

many innocent victims, and slows down in some measure their recovery and ability to deal with their past, and live life with some sense of 'normality.'

- (10) When confession has been made in Court, justice must take its course, and the victims provided with all the support they need, both in financial, social and moral terms, and for as long as it takes.
- (11) Individuals convicted of scheduled offenses, or in any way actively associated with terrorist activity, should be barred from holding public office.
- (12) Individuals involved in child abuse should be barred from holding public office. For example, it is widely believed that Martin McGuinness, DFM, was responsible for the deaths, by terrorism, of five children. As an ultimate form of child abuse, such people should be thus barred.
- (13) Those who have been involved in the rape of our country for decades ought to be barred from holding public office. Rapists ought not to have conferred upon them any degree of respectability - they are a danger to society!
- (14) Action taken by government to make it considerably easier for victims to restore some semblance of normality in the face of the injustice that has been done to them. Significant compensation would help ease the suffering of many victims who were denied justice, denied a breadwinner, and the means to educate their orphan children. It would also enable those groups that serve their interests to do so

without having to go 'cap in hand' to sometimes reluctant funders to get the funding to do the job.

There must be recognition that there are at least two distinct nations living on this island, each with its own cultural expression - those who designate as British and those who designate as Irish. This must be recognised. Sadly, the terrorist campaign is so closely aligned in the thinking of many grass roots unionists with Irish culture that it has become synonymous with it.

However, it must be admitted that the problems that we have faced as a nation for the last four decades cannot be described in the rather simplistic terms of "unionism and nationalism."⁴ We have been subjected to the most horrendous terrorist onslaught imaginable, and while there have been fundamental disagreements between unionists and nationalists, only those from these designations who took up arms to fight their cause initiated and sustained the immense difficulties our country faced. Unionists and nationalists have worked together over the years, with a greater or lesser degree of success; but it was the rampant republicans who plunged our land into awful terror, resulting in death, destruction, injury, etc.

Since 'dealing with the legacy of the past' is essentially reconciliation activity, I will now outline what we mean by reconciliation.

For there to be genuine reconciliation, there must be **acknowledgement** of wrongs done, by whom and to whom. It is important that we *start* with those organisations responsible for the majority of the terrorist atrocities, namely, PIRA. This will necessitate personal and individual acknowledgement of involvement in terrorist activities. It is about taking personal responsibility for your part in the atrocity. Where the offender refuses to renounce wrongdoing,

⁴ S. Templar and K Radford (2007:34) in *Hearing the voices*, a CRC Research Award project.

there has been no meeting of minds on this crucial issue.⁵ Until both victims and offenders come to see the offender's actions in exactly the same way, there can be no personal agreement between them. This means that when the perpetrator confesses to the victim, the perpetrator is agreeing with the victim about the wrongness of his crime against him, about what that crime deserves, and is agreeing that what was done ought never to have been done because it was morally inexcusable; and he is sorry/remorseful about this. Conciliation is tantalisingly close when two enemies stand together on the same 'holy ground.'⁶ Tutu asserts that "forgiveness will follow confession and healing will happen."⁷ Tutu is, therefore, agreeing that if there is 'no future without forgiveness', there can be no forgiveness without confession, leading to **apology**, despite the fact that the TRC in South Africa did not require an apology from perpetrators.⁸

In N. Ireland, the rest of the UK and in the Irish Republic, terrorist politicians are viewed currently by law-abiding people as notorious liars (to quote Michael McDowell, former TD and Irish Justice Minister), their 'movements' are comprised of "corporate liars" (to quote the late David Ervine, former MLA), and they lie with as much ease as the rest of us breathe (to paraphrase former IRA terrorist Anthony McIntyre); David (now Lord) Trimble told republican terrorists in Stormont, "Mr Adams, the unionist community simply does not believe you." Therefore it is all but impossible to trust even the words of apology that they might utter to their victims.⁹ So even getting to the point where terrorist-linked politicians will tell the truth is a mammoth task and challenge.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Ex.3:5.

⁷ Tutu 1999:91.

⁸ John W. de Gruchy, 2002:177.

⁹ Compare the IRA 'apology' (July 2002) to the families of the innocent people it murdered, but those described as 'combatants' were not included, for example, the civilian police force (RUC).

Since apology seeks to separate the wrongdoer from his unacceptable actions, where the wrongdoers are 'proud' of their past as terrorists, it is difficult to see how that can apologise for something of which they are proud! Perhaps your Group can facilitate our arrival at such a propitious destination!

Then for true reconciliation, there has to be **repentance**, or a complete turning away from the evils of the past. There has to be a complete change of mind and an acceptance by them personally that what was done by them in the past was wrong, unacceptable and unjustifiable. Genuine repentance will be accompanied by remorse, profound sorrow for hurt caused. The turn around will be so radical that there will be no desire to return to that kind of activity.

As well, to ensure the sustainability of the new relationship, there must be **commitment** to the new relationship, principally on the part of the wrongdoer. As Olen and Barry write,

"If we are to live together in society, we must cooperate with one another. And if we are to cooperate with one another, we must trust one another. And we cannot trust people who treat honesty, good faith, and loyalty lightly."¹⁰

Your Group can help to pave the way for victims to trust those terrorist/politicians who are now in government of our country. We need you to work in order to get the justice we have been denied, to know the truth of what has happened, and so be able to trust our erstwhile 'enemies.' Commitment to the new relationship, based on the above considerations, is essential for any improvement in our lives and for any new future. That means that where the army structures of illegal armies are still in place, commitment to the new relationship is non-existent, therefore any potential trust is damaged.

¹⁰ Olen, J and Barry, V (1999:4,5).

Ideally, and I said I was going to be radical, no terrorist-related politician or party should be in government of any democracy and at any level, and Northern Ireland as a democratic country is no exception. Your group could act as a facilitator in getting all such parties to voluntarily step down, to forgo their places in parliament, assembly and local councils. This is what will really enable victims to 'move forward' with their lives; anything less will be inadequate.

Forgiveness presupposes that wrong has been done by one person against another; in reconciliation work, your help is required to bring terrorists to the point where they are no longer proud of their past, as Martin McGuinness said he was in a Radio Ulster Broadcast last autumn. This is going to be difficult, if not impossible, given that several senior republican terrorists said they would 'do it again'. This does not hold out much hope for the future. There can be no forgiveness where there is no acknowledgement and confession of wrong done. This wrong is so serious that it cannot be put right in many cases. Lives have been taken by these people and that can never be undone. However, if there was any sense in which terrorist offenders and murderers could undo the past, admitting that it was wholly wrong, unjustifiable and ought never to have been done, then perhaps some move forward might be made. To date, I have not met any who will make such an admission. I suppose that when the church refuses either to offer or even receive forgiveness, there is little prospect of terrorists doing this.

Reparations must also be made by the self-styled 'army,' and by the nation on whose behalf it was operating, to those innocent victims of their illegal actions. Thought must be given to how this could possibly be done, if not by the terrorist army itself, then by the sponsoring nation. Victims know that nothing can restore their loved ones to them; they also know that life could be made more bearable than it is, were the proper practical help given.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

West Tyrone Voice is totally opposed to the immoral proposal that the terrorist campaign that was visited upon our people be redefined as a "war," and that an "amnesty" be granted to those who were actively involved in the reign of terror exercised by PIRA *et al.*

There can be no reconciliation without justice, a point made by the director of the Helsinki Komitat in Sarajevo. Truth is important, but truth must lead inexorably to prosecutions and the granting of justice.

None of the proposed options as set out in the various 'dealing with the past' reports commends itself to WTV, but those elements essential to genuine reconciliation, as expounded briefly above, must be implemented, every attempt being made not to force politically inspired solutions on our suffering people.

The Consultation Group on the Past has a difficult task, but it must be able to discern between what is coming directly or indirectly from terrorist violence, and what proceeds from decent democrats. It must have moral courage to do what is right, not least for those who have suffered most at the hands of terrorists, and other law-breakers.

Moreover, CGP may well suffer from the same infection as the other consultation reports that have been written in the past. I refer to the PAVE report compiled under the direction of Dr Karolla Dillenburger, QUB, CRC's recent report carried out by Dr Katy Radford and Sara Templar, and launched in October 2007, Sean Coll's report of 2006, and not forgetting the HTR report with its inclusive agenda. The interesting thing about all of these reports is that they dovetail neatly with prevailing government policy. Given the genesis of your team and its forthcoming report, I find it difficult to imagine that it will

be at variance with current government policy. I hope I am proved wrong in this assessment.

That said, *CGP* must not be pressurised into re-writing history at the behest of republicans, and redefining what has been visited upon our people by murderous thugs masquerading as 'soldiers.' There is simply no way that you can retain your credibility and integrity if you allow those who butchered our loved-ones and attacked many more, from both major communities in Northern Ireland, to determine the outcome of your consultation. They have lied and shot and bombed and bullied their way to where they are at today, and will stop at nothing to get what they have set their wicked hearts on - a United Ireland under Dublin rule.

Ideally, and I said I was going to be radical, I end this submission with a note already sounded earlier: no terrorist-related politician or party that used the means of terrorism to achieve political ends should be in government of any democracy and at any level, and Northern Ireland as a democratic country is no exception. Here, Northern Ireland can set an example to other countries experiencing similar atrocities by adopting a radical approach to dealing with our historical legacy, and refusing to follow blindly what other countries have done in this respect. We must have the courage to be different, especially when the call of status-quo-ism is deafening. Let us have the courage to maintain decency, for that will go some way to ensuring that we do not repeat the past mistakes, which very thing you are desirous of achieving. Republican terrorists have ruled and dominated us for four decades; a break with that past will demand that they do so no more! They must be deprived of any public position, of every opportunity to rule us, and dominate our lives. They have done more than enough to wreck our lives and those of our families. Enough is enough. Eames and Bradley have the potential, if they have the courage, to end terrorist rule in our country, by whatever guise it presents itself!

Nothing would bring greater healing to victims than to see a radical change in this respect, and would send out a very clear message that terrorism does not pay, is not acceptable, and never will be.

Not only must there be no terrorists in government, their innocent victims must be looked after financially, both individually and also the groups that are working with them.

If you get this wrong, you will be remembered by the innocent victims as the people who, sponsored by government, intensified their suffering, and set back their recovery by possibly decades. Until the victims' issues are resolved, there can be no betterment for Northern Ireland.

Submission prepared by Dr. J. E. Hazlett Lynch, Director.
Thursday 17th January 2008.