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GLEN BARR

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Mr. Glen Barr, aged 32, is the Vanguard Convention member for Derry. Prior to becoming involved in politics he worked as a fitter with British Oxygen, and was for five years convenor in Coolkeeragh power station in Co. Derry. He is an ex-member of the Loyalist Association of Workers (L.A.W.). Over the last few years he has had extremely close associations with the UDA and is Chairman of the Central Co-ordinating Committee of the U.W.C.

In the June 1973 Assembly elections he was elected without reaching the quota. From June 1973 until the UWC strike in May 1974 he took very little part in Assembly debates and received no publicity. During this time however he must have been building up the UWC organisation and improving his relationship with the para-military organisations, particularly the UDA. Almost overnight in May 1974 Glen Barr became a household name because of his many public appearances during the UWC strike as spokesmen for the Loyalist Co-ordinating Committee. The main demand of the UWC at the time of the strike was for a new Assembly election but this demand was dropped after the fall of the Executive. Between May and September 1974 he again retired into the background. Coming up to the October Westminster elections Barr did his utmost to secure the UUUC nomination for the Derry seat. On 9th September 1974 Barr in the company of Andy Tyrrie of the UDA, had his first meeting with an officer of this Department. It became clear at this meeting that he had extremely close links with the UDA and was to a large extent under the influence of Andy Tyrrie, Chairman of the UDA. Barr has, on numerous occasions in private, voiced his disapproval of the established loyalist politicians and his hopes for the emergence of a loyalist working-class political party of some strength. In the Westminster elections of October 1974 he gave his support to Ken Gibson of the Volunteer Political Party in West Belfast in opposition to the UUUC candidate, John McQuade. This resulted in his being suspended for three months from the UUUC. Gibson secured only 6.04% of the vote.

In mid-November 1974, four people, Mr. Glen Barr, Mr. Tommy Lyttle, the UDA spokesman, Mr. Harry Chicken and Mr. Andy Robinson, both UDA men, took part in a week-long visit to Libya. There have been conflicting reports of the purpose of the visit. The UDA's version is that they went to Libya for the following reasons:

1. To sever Libya's financial and arms aid to the Provos., on the assessment that a possible UDI situation may arise in Northern Ireland;
2. To inform the Libyan Government of the loyalist point of view;
3. To seek help for the ship-building, aircraft and other major industries in Northern Ireland;
4. To seek financial aid for the UDA to fight the Convention elections and for the future development of the UDA.

The visit was strongly condemned by many loyalist politicians and resulted in Glen Barr being issued with an ultimatum to resign from the Vanguard Party by its Standing Committee. Due to the support of William Craig, however, he survived this threat and continues to be a member of the Vanguard Party.

Around this time Barr began to talk in private of independence being the only realistic solution to Northern Ireland's problems. Ideally independence could be negotiated with financial support continuing from Britain. He maintains that in such a situation the minority would have to be fairly represented in government and that there would have to be some constitutional guarantees and also a Bill of Rights. However, it has since become clear that Barr feels that independence should be seized in a situation where the Convention fails and it is proposed to continue direct rule indefinitely. His attitudes in this regard have been shaped to a large degree by the influence of Andy Tyrie and the UDA who in turn, are extremely

disillusioned with the established loyalist politicians (with the possible exception of Craig,) and who see independence as the only situation in which they could gain real power.

Barr has not as yet voiced these policies in public. It is extraordinary in fact when one considers the amount of publicity which Mr. Barr has received if this is compared to the number of reasoned policy speeches which he has made. Both in the Assembly and the Convention he has made rare and brief interventions. He seeks and receives publicity on limited specific issues such as making the return of certain loyalist prisoners held in Great Britain a precondition for his entry to the Convention, when he was in fact already aware that the Northern Ireland Office had conceded the claim in principle. Also, numerous articles have appeared in the Sunday World newspaper to which Mr. Barr lends his name but which are not written by him and which are full of banal generalities. Mr. Barr appears to be, and this is confirmed by an officer of this Department who has met him on a few occasions, an intellectual lightweight who has reached his present position of prominence because of a series of publicity stunts and most importantly his strong connections with loyalist para-military groups and his chairmanship of the Co-ordinating Committee of the UWC. In the Convention elections in May 1975, he succeeded in getting elected on the first count with an increase of 1,500 first preference votes on his Assembly election performance.

Glen Barr should not however be underestimated. While he presents little if any challenge, at present, to the established loyalist political leadership (he was decisively defeated recently in the annual selection of officers of the Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party), in any situation in which the loyalist para-military groups attempt to seize power he will be to the fore in leading any such attempt, with William Craig, the only other established loyalist

politician who is likely to be ahead of him. His knowledge of and standing with the various loyalist para-military groups and the UWC are the key to his present prominent position and the main reason why he has received the continuous support of William Craig within the Vanguard Party.