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1/5
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1. Aftermath of Gibson killings

- (a) Following the extensive media coverage devoted to the killing of Lord Justice Gibson and his wife by the IRA on 25 April, today's "An Phoblacht" was, not surprisingly, dominated by the story and its implications, as the IRA leadership sees them. The front page story (headlined "The final court of justice") was devoted to a detailed look at the career of Judge Gibson, whom it depicted as "thoroughly representative of the North's colonial judiciary: unionist, bigoted and biased against nationalists who constantly used the law to prop up British rule in the Six Counties". The article went on to list several cases involving Judge Gibson, which it claimed supported this view of him.
- (b) The editorial of "An Phoblacht", headed "the stark failure of British rule in Ireland", claimed that "we are witnessing nothing less than the unprecedented defeat of the British in Ireland and it is that and not the death of a show-trial judge, in which we rejoice. The British cannot defeat us. And we can win.... There is a long, hard and painful struggle ahead. But for the first time in a long, long time the IRA is out in front. The Republican Movement has got the measure of the British".
- (c) The editorial concluded with an attack on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the RUC and the SDLP. It maintained that the Agreement was "looking more threadbare than ever... The SDLP/Dublin Government experiment to turn the Six-Counties into a democratic state is an impossibility and is a contradiction in terms. Last Friday, RUC Headquarters, against the background of IRA successes, called upon all political parties to support the RUC. That statement, issued out of desperation and directly aimed at the SDLP was a calling-in of the Hillsborough chips, but failed to elicit a response. As the IRA said, the SDLP cannot call for nationalist support for the RUC because such support simply does not exist".
- (d) The "War News column" of "An Phoblacht" claimed that the "political and propaganda reverberations" of the Gibson killing and "the increase in IRA attacks across the North have shattered the illusion of 'normality' carefully constructed by the British in recent years".
- (e) Other articles in the paper covered, inter alia, media reaction to the Gibson killing (this piece commenced: "A dead UDR or RUC man gets scant mention from the British media. A judge though.... gets star treatment")

and reaction from leading political figures. The paper's political analyst, Hilda MacThomas, claimed that the event provided the Government here with a "chance to prove itself a good collaborator". She referred to Seamus Mallon's comment that everything should be done to "facilitate security on both sides including allowing the RUC and Garda across the border as far as is necessary", as being "quite remarkable".

2. Irish Press interview with IRA spokesman

The "Irish Press" of 30 April carried an exclusive interview with "a spokesperson for the General Headquarters staff of the IRA", who discussed recent events, including the Gibson killing. Among the points made by the spokesperson were the following:

- The Gibson killing was a specially planned "GHQ operation", "... but we will keep them guessing how we knew he was there".
- He echoed the "Phoblacht" claim that the IRA is now "winning" in Northern Ireland: "the IRA is out in front - the Brits know it and the nationalist people know it".
- He refuted as "absolute rubbish" claims that the upsurge in IRA killings was "to compensate for Sinn Fein's poor showing in the general election in the Republic or to counter charges by the breakaway Republican Sinn Fein group that they were winding down the 'armed struggle'."
- He pointed to internal "difficulties in Belfast over a two year period". There had been an intensive reorganisation over the last 18 months "and the IRA was now confident that its organisation in the city was watertight". A similar reorganisation had been undertaken in several other areas" and these, together with the IRA Convention which had been held last Autumn (the first since 1970) and which had elected a new leadership, had had a major effect on morale.
- As to the balance between political and military activities, the election of the new leadership "certainly does not mean the armed struggle will be wound down. If anything, it means the opposite".

- He claimed that cross border security cooperation was "meaningless unless it commands the support of the people in the border areas, and it doesn't".

- Asked if the present level of attacks would continue, he replied "probably not", as the IRA would thereby lose the element of surprise: "This is a crisis which will abate shortly but will recur again and again... Lulls also suit the IRA".

- On Sinn Fein's electoral prospects in the North: "We are realistic and mature enough now to realise that it is quite likely we will never achieve the position of overtaking the SDLP, but that presents no problem or difficulty for volunteers on the ground. Election results are not going to affect our strategy.

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