

Speech at the unveiling of a plaque to Theresa Clinton

April 2018

It is always a privilege to be asked to speak at any event. But when your friends ask you to speak at an event to remember their loved ones it is a privilege beyond profound.

What can I say here on this hallowed ground where Theresa Clinton walked, pushed her prams, made her home, was brutally murdered and carried from on the shoulders of her husband her loved ones?

How can I stand here and tell you gathered about collusion?

You from this community who saw the RUC that night allow free passage to the murderers? Who saw the RUC fight with Theresa's family? Who know the eye witnesses who came forward and who were brought to give statements in an RUC barracks only to have the RUC bring the killers into the rooms?

Who helped Jim clean his home in the aftermath only to witness him find pieces of Theresa's body placed in ornaments by the RUC as some kind of sick and depraved message to him.

How can I stand here on the Ormeau Road which has suffered so much from state killings carried out by state agents.

You know it as well as I or anyone from RFJ know it. But in this place knowing it is not enough, proving it is not enough, having reports saying it was collusion is not enough. Accountability must be had. Otherwise collusion will be the footnote to our conflict rather than weaved into the shameful historical record of the British military policy objective.

There has been a lot of scrutiny of the British military policy of collusion.

We have had incredible investigative journalism – John Ware in particular; Brian Rowan; Chris Moore. All vitally important to giving voice to the victims of the policies.

We have had a lot of official scrutiny. We have had reports into collusion by Sir John Stevens, scrutiny from Judge Cory and of course the De Silva review. There have been Police Ombudsman's reports. We have even had a British Prime Minister say yes collusion happened in the killing of Pat Finucane and apologise.

But these are only have glimpses of what occurred – nearly all of the scrutiny has been on the period between the importation of weapons from South Africa in 1988 until Brian Nelson's arrest in 1991. From then loyalist violence did not dissipate, it grew. We have seen glimpses of the extent of that in the recent Haggarty non-trial, and in the Loughinisland report. Because there was no accountability in 1991 and the state was allowed to continue

with its policy of collusion, we stand here tonight mourning Theresa Clinton and talking about collusion that happened in 1994.

This area suffered immeasurably. Not just the dead, but the injured. Not just those dead killed directly but those who died prematurely. Only a couple of weeks ago this community remembered John Murray – one of the first victims of a shipment of weapons that landed from South Africa in January 1988.

In the six years prior to the arrival of weaponry loyalists killed 71 people 49 of whom were in sectarian/political killings 62%. January 1988– 1st September 1994 loyalism killed 229 people – 207 of whom were in sectarian/political killings - 90%.

For the first time in the conflict loyalist killing rates surpassed that of republicans. In 1995 Relatives for Justice, Mark Thompson and Arthur Fegan, under death threat, compiled the full list of all those killed with these weapons in their publication “Collusion”. After that publication the RUC stopped publishing ballistic details in loyalist killings.

But we are not merely talking about killing capacity in terms of hardware. Much more importantly we are talking about the targeting of a population in an end game of conflict.

The deaths that grew in number and savagery until the ceasefires in 1994 were all part of a plan. And in the absence of a full independent inquiry we are only able to take pieces of the jigsaw and put together an incomplete picture.

That picture is how the British Government, Military Intelligence, the British Military and RUC Special Branch worked together to ensure that while they talked peace to republicans, a policy of collusion attacked the republican nationalist community, attempting to terrorise and demoralise it. It was an end game of a conflict. It was against their own law and against international law.

Yards from here on 5th February 1992 the UDA entered the Sean Grahams Bookmakers on the Ormeau Road. I do not have to tell anyone here the carnage that followed.

On that Monday UDA agent Brian Nelson was given 10yrs as part of a cover up deal, on Tuesday an off duty RUC member shot dead 3 men in the Falls Road Sinn Fein Centre. On Wednesday Chief Constable Hugh Annesley stood outside this Bookies stating that the situation was “not out of control”. Beside him were Raymond White and George Caskey. Many families would say he was telling the truth – the situation was under collusive state control.

Let me put these killings into context that month did not only see an escalation in violence it also saw the publication of Sinn Féin’s document Towards a Lasting Peace. We now know that peace negotiations were underway.

2 years later in 1994 not only were there secret negotiations between the IRA and the British Government, there was a public Joint Declaration between the Irish and British Governments and we knew John Hume was talking to Gerry Adams and negotiating peaceful pathways – this was a very public process towards ceasefires.

In April the IRA called a three-day ceasefire as part of this landscaping. On April 14th 1994 Theresa Clinton was murdered.

Following the publication of De Silva it has become clear that Jim Clinton, a Sinn Féin candidate, was a British security target for assassination.

From 1992 the homes of republican activists and the female relatives of male republican activists were targeted for assassination. It was a clear security tactic to demoralise the republican and nationalist community, isolate republicans and weaken them as they negotiated peace. Far from being a sectarian stalemate this was a clear end game British military policy.

They knew that they would not break Jim. So they murdered Theresa.

The same month Martin Mallon in Tyrone was arrested – he was told by a member of MI5 that they would target his wife. Martin did not break. Weeks later loyalists attacked his family home and killed his 76yr old aunt and wounded his mother. The same policy.

The UVF and the UFF in their statements, written by agents of the British state told us their targets in the late 1990s. They told this community they were part of a pan nationalist front and all fair game. They gloated over our dead as legitimate targets.

Sean Lavery killed in August 1993 in his own home. The son of Sinn Fein councillor Bobby Lavery. Theresa and Charles Fox the parents of IRA prisoner Paddy Fox. Kathleen OHagan 8 months pregnant with four young boys and the wife of Paddy an ex-republican prisoner in 1994. And many many more. End Game Military Strategy.

Far from having the full story of collusion we have repeated patterns of the full story. Isolated incidents of horror and savagery that together give us a picture of a policy that has not been accounted for.

Raymond White, who as one of the most senior heads of RUC Special Branch stood on the Ormeau Road in 1992, is part of the challenge to the Loughinisland Report. The challenge that prevents the very first stage of uncovering the truth of collusion in this area being ventilated.

Many here are involved in the complaint to the Police Ombudsman which focuses on the activities of RUC Special Branch and their direction of state agents, supplying weaponry, providing safe passage, and cover up in this area. The complaint is about collusion. The report is complete. The report cannot be made public because of the challenge by the

Retired Police Officers Association members Raymond White and Ronald Hawthorne to the Ombudsman's report on the killings in Loughinisland. They object to the term collusion. Despite a British Prime Minister apologising for collusion they are fighting a rearguard action against a local accountability body using it.

They are fighting against accountability.

In recent weeks we have seen the vanguard of the RUC challenge the term collusion, we have seen political representatives, including the MP for this area, say that using the term collusion undermines peace, we have seen political commentators pretend that using the term collusion is controversial.

That is part of the same rearguard action being taken against the publication of the report into collusion in this part of our city.

This is a battle that has come to families. Families did not choose this. But how can a family heal when truth is denied? How can a community heal when they are told stating that truth about the conflict is disrupting the potential for peace?

Only accountability for collusion will cure us of this poisonous narrative. Television documentaries are welcome, but are forgotten. Official reports like Stevens, De Silva and the Ombudsman are welcome but disregarded. Prime Minister's apologies in the House of Commons are extraordinary but are meaningless. Only accountability will cure us. Will ensure that families and their representatives can speak the truth and that truth be heard, appreciated and acted on.

So that Theresa Clinton is remembered with the dignity of truth as well as with love and pride.