

Paul Crawford

Dr Richard Haass,
Panel Of Parties

18th September 2013

Dear Dr Haass,

Firstly, welcome and best wishes for a successful outcome to your important work. I've never before made such a submission to any forum. But I feel compelled to put my opinions forward on this occasion given, what I view as, a determined campaign by Unionists and Loyalists in general, (and DUP, Orange Order and UVF in particular) to rewrite history, undermine the peace, and plunge this society back into armed conflict. My views are my own and I speak only for myself.

About me:

I come from a Nationalist and Republican background of which I am very proud, am a married father and grandfather and one of 9 siblings. My wife (Annmarie) and I are both mental health professionals who additionally share a keen interest in conflict resolution and the creation of a society based on equality.

My father was John Crawford whose life was taken by the UVF on 09 January 1974. He was a business owner and I was 17 years old at the time. According to most formulae that makes me a victim. My opinion is that my father is the victim. I was one of the survivors. I survived my father's murder, British soldiers systematically, routinely and regularly wrecking my home, multiple arrests, beatings – and on 2 occasions suffered torture during interrogation (in my opinion, and I'll be happy to explain why to anyone). All inflicted on a person who has never been to jail. I also survived taking on my father's role (at 17/18 years old) in running the family business until it too was burnt to the ground 3 years later. I also survived searching for my father's body for several hours while the RUC and British refused to help even though Andersonstown British Army/RUC Base and the British Army Billet at Falls Bus depot overlooked and dominated the scene. His body was eventually found by friends when I had gone the half mile home to support my mother.

I say 'was' a survivor because I have for a long time viewed myself as the 'victor'. I consider myself the victor because despite every act of oppression described above I have remained who I am and retained my own identity. Although supremely comfortable in my own identity I am neither bitter nor sectarian and believe in equality of citizenship. I care not one iota if a person is white, black, green, orange, catholic, protestant or pin-striped. I maintain friendships with decent people from every background.

My narrative on the past (very briefly):

Whilst hundreds of years of oppression, occupation and genocide have brought us to this point in our history, I personally relate the present situation to the creation of the 'Northern Ireland State' in 1921 as being most relevant to me.

At that time 6 of the 9 Ulster counties were separated from the rest of Ireland by a British imposed border. Unionist leaders declared the formation of 'A Protestant Nation for a Protestant People'. This was clearly a declaration of the establishment of an apartheid state and an apartheid state should be just as unacceptable here as in any other part of the world. From its' formation these 6 counties were essentially then ruled by a Unionist KKK type regime who enforced discrimination, mayhem and murder through their Gestapo like security services and racist administration. Catholics, nationalists and republicans were imprisoned, murdered and burnt from their homes at will. Many of these attacks were directly carried out by security force murder/reprisal squads while others were carried out by their surrogates in the UVF and other militias. This is not a bigoted or extreme/partisan view but an easily checkable record of historical fact.

The Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) community were constantly fed a diet of conspiracy theories to convince them of the existence of a 'papist' and republican threat. This resulted in the onset of the recent 'troubles' when Gusty Spence and his UVF gang murdered a young catholic barman in Belfast and attempted to murder other people within the nationalist community. When this did not produce the required reaction from the imaginary subversives the John Mc Keag faction of the UVF exploded a bomb at Silent Valley Reservoir and blamed it on the IRA. This galvanised the PUL community in their siege mentality and directly resulted in the anti-catholic/nationalist pogroms of 1969.

Truth recovery and Justice:

Modern warfare takes place in the midst of civilian populations. This is especially so in places like Ireland, Palestine, the Basque Country or Catalonia where the disputed territory is an occupied section of the larger country. Soldiers (generally) no longer travel to foreign battlefields as a ground-force to fight from behind fortified lines. This change in how wars are fought directly accounts for the total reversal in ratios of civilian/military casualties. Civilian casualties during WW1 were approximately 5%, rising to 50% during WW2, 83% in Vietnam and 96/97% in most current and recent wars. These facts, of necessity, completely change tactics of war, impact on population and subsequently conflict resolution.

My father was one of 11 people whose lives were taken by the UVF between October 1973 and February 1974. During this period the UVF were on a declared ceasefire. It is my logical and rational belief (given the circumstances) that collusion between British militarists and their surrogates (UVF) played a crucial role without which the killing could not have taken place logistically.

Three years later, on 28th February 1978, a member of the UVF pleaded guilty to 6 murders and 4 attempted murders plus a myriad of other offences. My father was one of those he killed. Was this justice? The simple answer is - not in my opinion. This person surrendered his guilt to the RUC after being arrested on an unrelated matter. It is my opinion he received a special deal to ensure his silence and to protect his co-offenders who were directly trained, paid and directed by the British security forces and their political masters. This person's name is Raymond Glover and I harbour no ill-will against him. He was not alone, he has completed his sentence, and I hope he is now leading a productive life.

But:

- 2 others carried out forward scouting to confirm my father's presence.
- 3 others were present at the actual scene
- 2 others provided safe houses to come from and return to
- Others provided transport
- Others financed the operation
- Others provided safe passage without threat of arrest
- Others provided weapons
- Others provided training
- Others sat down in committee to endorse my father as a target
- Others failed to report suspicious activity
- Others failed to investigate
- Others covered up the truth
- Others launched a vicious campaign of house raids, arrests and brutality against my family
- Others launched a campaign of misinformation to justify the killing and to blame my father for his own death

This is the truth. These are the facts. At a conservative estimate this list puts maybe 30 people as being directly involved in taking my father's life. And this chain of people stretches from Belfast, through Vauxhall Cross, to the highest echelons of Westminster.

Given the above I would suggest that the truth is clearly known and therefore, in theory, does not need to be 'recovered'. But this is only partly true.

Raymond Glover did not know my father or even of his existence. He therefore bore no personal grudge. The fact is Raymond Glover was a willing and active member of the UVF who revelled in executing the orders passed down to him. It is my logical opinion therefore that responsibility for my father's death is a UVF 'corporate' responsibility and that culpability should in that respect should include their British overlords.

Suggestion 1:

A truth recovery mechanism should be established whereby ALL combatant groups are facilitated to relate their own 'corporate' responsibility to the greatest possible degree.

Raymond Glover, as an ex-prisoner with conflict related convictions (only?), is discriminated against when seeking employment and in other areas. Because the others involved were not convicted they are free to adopt, foster and to (eg) work with vulnerable adults or in security related jobs. This discrimination continues to unfairly punish Raymond Glover many years after his release from prison. Ex-prisoners/combatants were crucial in delivering the peace. They should be free to be full participants in that peace.

Suggestion 2:

Discrimination against ex-prisoners with conflict related convictions should cease immediately. I further suggest that this should be subject to such convictions being purely

convict related and prior to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. I also suggest that amnesty and/or deletion of record of conviction could be a way to achieve this.

It is almost 40 years since my father's life was taken. In that time no evidence has been produced to enable any other person to be prosecuted. The factual reality is that this is never now likely to happen. It would seem to me that the protection/immunity of agents in the pay of British Government agencies is a major stumbling block in this area.

Suggestion 3:

The pretence of seeking prosecutions through such facades as the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) should be dropped immediately. All such bodies should be replaced by an independent and international truth recovery body. An essential component of the establishment of such a body would be the necessity to move from individual to corporate responsibility. This would not let unprosecuted people off the hook, rather, it would recognise reality and facilitate forward movement with consolidation of the peace. It should be recognised that, as active participants to the conflict, ex-prisoners and the unconvicted participants know what drove them. And, as such, they are best placed to steer the present generation away from repeating similar actions. I firmly believe that this is a much more difficult route for them than remaining outside.

Flags and emblems are important to all sides. The flags and emblems of all sides should be respected. As such I think parity should be afforded to both the Irish and British flags, ie: both should be flown or none. People or groups using flags to mark sectarian territory or to intimidate their neighbours are showing total disrespect to their own flag. I would suggest this practice should be illegal but appreciate such a law may likely be impossible to enforce.

Somewhere in the region of 4000 parades occur in the 6 counties annually. Maybe over 90% of these are 'Loyal Order' parades. I sometimes wonder where they get the time for so much walking. That said, I have absolutely no issue with anyone parading where they are welcome or where they have negotiated with others and the individual parade is at least tolerated by agreement.

I recognise that only a very small number of these parades are contentious. But where they are contentious I personally view them as being akin to the KKK marching through Harlem. Although the Loyal Orders argue they have walked particular routes for generations I would argue that demographics have changed in many areas, populations have shifted, and residents in the contended areas are of a different persuasion to those previous generations. To continue walking these routes therefore has become coat trailing, sectarian and abusive and should cease immediately.

Suggestion 4:

No contentious parade should be permitted to pass through or to abut any residential or interface area without direct negotiation with, and the agreement of, the residents concerned. Town or city centres should be available to all.

On the matters of 'sorry' and 'forgiveness' I will be equally brief.

I have lost count of the number of times I've been asked if I forgive. The implication is that if I don't forgive I am somehow less than Christian. The fact is I am a nice person but that I absolutely do not forgive. This is very different from bearing a grudge or wanting revenge. Quite the opposite is true. I firmly believe that if someone thinks they have done wrong they need to address this with their god, whoever that god may be. To forgive, in my opinion, is to say 'it's okay now'. It's not okay now that my father's life was taken and never will be.

I firmly believe also that 'sorry' must be freely given and sincere. A sorry received as a result of demands means absolutely. Neither Raymond Glover nor the militias he served have ever directly apologised for killing my father. I suspect they never will. To me this is irrelevant.

Suggestion 5:

Demands for sorry or forgiveness should be ceased immediately.

On how the victim community is treated I would say this. I see absolutely no difference the trauma and/or impact suffered by any family who has lost a member or suffered injury regardless of circumstance.

Suggestion 6:

There should absolutely be no hierarchy of victims.

My final comment is on the narratives of the past. I have placed this in the plural because I recognise there are many. All are true according to the teller, many contradict each-other but all remain true all the same.

For example:

The UVF truth of my father's killing is likely to be that he was a legitimate target in their terms, they meant to kill him, they carried out a successful operation, and they are not sorry.

My truth on my father's killing is that he was not a legitimate target for anyone and no-one had the right to take his life. He was a hard working gentleman who lived for his family and who happened to be a catholic, a nationalist and a republican. These are all very legitimate things to be.

These two narratives are clearly contradictory and will never align. Both, however, remain true according to the viewpoint of the narrator.

It is because of the reality of differing but true narratives that I firmly believe the Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze/Long Kesh site should not only be built, it should be built as a matter of urgency.

I also firmly believe that this is the correct site to build it given it is by far the most widely known single location of probably the most pivotal episode of the conflict – namely the hunger strikes.

Suggestion 7:

The previously agreed Conflict Resolution Centre should be built as a matter of urgency. It should be built at the previously agreed site of Maze/Long Kesh. All relevant narratives should be included without censorship.

Suggestion 8:

The governments should fund and facilitate, without condition or censorship, the recording and publishing of every narrative from every person or group who wishes to record one,

Suggestion 9:

Compensation for all victims/survivors/victors should be revisited and addressed. Although money is not a motivation for this group it could be a form of acknowledgement, and although costly would likely be much less costly than many more years of conflict.

Suggestion 10:

The British Government should be compelled to participate in truth recovery processes as the combatant group which they were. Investigations can cost millions – a tragedy when the truth could be delivered for free in the right circumstances.

I thank you for receiving this personal submission and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content with your team should this opportunity arise.

Yours Sincerely,

Paul Crawford