

Loyalist Decommissioning



Fifteen years after the announcement of the CLMC none too secure ceasefires and four years after PIRA decommissioning Loyalist paramilitaries have also decommissioned. Well the UVF and RHC have while the UDA has made a faltering and internally acrimonious start.

On Thursday 18th of June the Belfast Telegraph broke the news that the UVF and the UDA had began the process while by Friday 19th it was confirmed that the UVF and RHC had "handed up all weapons under their control". It was also reported that the UDA had carried out its first act of decommissioning, witnessed by the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, on 16th June.

These organisations were key protagonists in what are known as Northern Ireland's 'troubles' and seldom lived up to their own self-image of taking the 'war' to the enemy, ie armed Republican groups. Both organisations have carried out numerous sectarian murders that were simply about terrorising the entire

Catholic population of the north into 'withdrawing support' for armed force Republicanism.

While many of those who went on to take active roles in these organisations cited the IRAs bombing campaign in the early seventies, that included attacks on Protestant bars and the economic centre of Belfast, as motivation for their involvement it must be remembered that the opening acts of violence of the recent troubles occurred back in 1966.

It was the newly formed UVF who carried them out. The group was forged amid much scaremongering about a heightened nationalist threat that grew up around the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. Their first victim was a 77 year old Protestant widow, Matilda Gould, burnt to death after a petrol bomb was thrown through the window of her house. The murder took place on 7th May 1966. The UVF had mistakenly identified Matilda as a Catholic. On the evening of the 27th of May a 28 year old Catholic engineering worker was shot by the UVF. He as a result of his wounds 15 days later. On the

morning of Sunday 26th June three young barmen, whom the UVF had falsely claimed were IRA men, were shot leaving a pub off the Lower Shankill.

The UDA emerged in September 1971 as an umbrella organisation, from various vigilante groups formed in response to, and to engage in and co-ordinate, the communal violence that erupted between working class communities in the north. At its peak of strength it held around forty thousand members and its was not proscribed until 1992 even though it had long been acknowledged that it was using the name Ulster Freedom Fighters as a cover for its paramilitary and sectarian campaign.

While the PIRA killed more people than any other groups involved in the troubles the UVF killed 550, the UDA killed 431 and the RHC 19 people. The UVF carried out the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in 1974 which caused the largest single loss of life in the conflict, killing 33 people.



Loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for some of the worst sectarian atrocities, from the Shankill Butchers to Greysteel, the Miami Showband massacre to Loughin Island.

While collusion with state security forces undoubtedly occurred but not on the levels imagined by Republicans. Loyalists were capable of pursuing their campaign without explicit direction from the 'Brits'. The truth that various security and intelligence agencies ran high level informants and agents in both Republican and Loyalist organisations is the more uncomfortable truth.



On Friday 19th June Brian Rowan, writing in the Belfast Telegraph lauded the leadership of the Loyalist paramilitary groups for behaving "as a leadership should" there is a real danger that without consultation some rank and file members may not be on board. This has already proved problematic for the UDA with their Londonderry and North Antrim area attacking other Brigades, particularly in Belfast and claiming the 'Loyalist' working class in their areas have withdrawn support for government and the PSNI.

While the Leveller welcomes the decommissioning carried out by these groups and hopes that in the case of the UDA it will indeed be ongoing we look forward to the complete demilitarisation of all armed groups



and the state. Although in relation to the latter we won't be holding our breath.

Hopefully, as more and more workers are coming together to fight in their common interests, we can create a movement that decommissions the dead-end ideologies of Loyalism and Republicanism. A movement that instead seeks to create a new society based on freedom, equality, solidarity and the principle of from each according to ability, to each according to need.

Deezer