



Cartoon by Jim Cogan

PRESS WATCH

**Our body politic must amputate
helping hand that sustains Sinn
Fein**

Last Sunday, a man stopped me in the People's Park, Dun Laoghaire, and said, "If it wasn't for the Sunday Independent, they'd have it all their own way", writes Eoghan Harris in the Sunday Independent.

He didn't have to say who 'they' were. Like so many in Middle Ireland, he is watching Sinn Fein's rampant march through the Irish body politic with increasing alarm.

However, he told me he was bothered less by Sinn Fein's blitzkrieg than the two major parties' failure to mount a counter-attack.

But no more than the Russians could have beaten the Germans in World War II if they half agreed with their fanatical foes, how can Official Ireland beat Sinn Fein when it half shares the same ideology?

In recent weeks, centrist parties were complicit in three Sinn Fein stunts: paying lip service to the lunatic campaign for a united Ireland, turning up in force at the funeral of Martin McGuinness, and failing to place the blame for the political crisis in Northern Ireland firmly on the shoulders of Sinn Fein.

RTE and other media outlets helped Sinn Fein with headlines about the talks breaking down. They did not break down.

The Provos broke them down by walking out. Just as they broke them down last December by walking out so as to create a crisis.

Back then, too, we foolishly rushed off like a fire brigade to help those who had caused the fire.

Micheal Martin is the only politician with the bottle to brace Sinn Fein. Last week, he told Pat Kenny that Sinn Fein bore the blame for the current breakdown. Full stop.

But Martin is almost alone. Like Trump, Sinn Fein tells us what it has in store for us. But still we don't want to believe.

Let me spell it out. Sinn Fein has a new strategy. To cause constant trouble in Northern Ireland, pursue populist policies in the Republic, and depend on RTE/BBC not to dig deep.

Centrist political parties could start to see off Sinn Fein tomorrow by rejecting Sinn Fein's proposals to set up an all-party committee on Irish unity.

This would hurt Sinn Fein badly because any such 'unity' committee is simply a sly version of a pan-nationalist front.

A pan-nationalist front is Sinn Fein's major aim because it both raises tensions in Northern Ireland and seduces centrist parties to get into bed with Sinn Fein only to rise with fleas.

But what is the point of a pan-nationalist front? Where is the need to confront the combined forces of unionism when unionism itself is divided?

When will the green factions of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael face the fact that Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland are no longer repressed, that the DUP has no designs on destroying the Irish Republic and that the only danger to our democratic republic is the cult of Sinn Fein and the secret cabal of fanatics who direct it?

Centrist parties can't fight Sinn Fein while they subscribe to Sinn Fein shibboleths, or allow themselves to be sucked into Sinn Fein propaganda stunts like McGuinness's stage-managed funeral.

President Higgins should not have issued that soft, vacuous statement that made no mention of McGuinness's victims.

The Ceann Comhairle should not have flown the Tricolour at half mast, a craven concession that would have disgusted Eamon de Valera.

The President and Ceann Comhairle were acting in accordance with the false narrative that McGuinness was a freedom fighter turned statesman.

But McGuinness gave up the gun only under duress. And he never stopped trying to subvert the Irish Republic.

Far from changing, he experienced no epiphany of empathy with his victims and refused to express remorse to the end.

Even as late as 2001, McGuinness was brazenly defending IRA atrocities. Asked by the BBC about the IRA bomb that killed 11 people in Enniskillen he said this: "I felt absolutely gutted by it. I felt this would be damaging to our strategy in trying to build Sinn Fein as a political party." (My italics.)

He was gutted. Not gutted about the bomb or the bodies. Only gutted about the political damage it did to Sinn Fein.

Again, only four years ago, in 2013, challenged at an Oxford Union debate to condemn the murder of Patsy Gillespie, he flatly refused.

But it's not just RTE which peddles the warrior-turned-statesman trope. BBC Northern Ireland is another peace processor at any price.

Last week's Spotlight could hardly have been softer. Here's a synopsis of how it came across.

Martin McGuinness was brought into being by British repression. B-Specials beat up Derry Catholics. Paratroopers shot Derry Catholics.

Young Martin saw the only answer was to bring about a united Ireland where Catholics would be free. By force.

He used force with ferocity. And then he stopped. Spotlight was not sure why. No look into his links with MI6. Or into why the IRA leaked like a sieve.

Balance? Kathleen Gillespie and a few others were brought on to provide nominal balance. Far too late to make any impact.

Balance? Not one word about the Civil Rights Movement, the Sunningdale Agreement, John Hume or Seamus Mallon. Like watching RTE.

How does it help peace to peddle lies of omission about McGuinness? The biggest lie being about his alleged 'journey' from gunman to statesman.

There was no journey. McGuinness was forced to stop shooting and start talking. But he never said sorry to his victims, and he never changed his strategy of victory for Sinn Fein.

Time for Official Ireland to wake up to Sinn Fein's strategy of political subversion in the Republic.

Time the centrist parties commissioned an independent study of how RTE indulges Sinn Fein spokespeople.

Time, above all, for the Republic to stop sending its Foreign Affairs Minister to put out Northern fires that Sinn Fein started.

Sinn Fein broke the Executive. Twice. So why don't we tell them to go and fix it? Why indulge these delinquents?

Certainly any indulgence is not likely to be Charlie Flanagan's fault. Flanagan gets on well with Northern Protestants and is sceptical of Sinn Fein and its works.

But it's doubtful whether Flanagan can make any headway unless the Department of Foreign Affairs has changed its historical culture.

The DFA has always pursued a policy that if not nakedly pan-nationalist certainly holds firmly on to the handle of the pan-nationalist pan.

Luckily, there are some journalists outside the Sunday Independent who are not fooled by Sinn Fein's strategy. Last week, in the Irish Times, Stephen Collins laid it on the line.

"If Sinn Fein makes it clear in the next few weeks that it is not prepared to engage with the institutions established in 1998, the Government in Dublin will need to take a long, hard look at the strategy it has been following for more than two decades."

Collins means the strategy of holding Sinn Fein's hand at every stage. Time now for an amputation. The proper alternative to a pan-nationalist front is a pan-democratic front.

++++++

This article first appeared in the March 31 2017 issue of the Sunday Independent.

++++++

The inclusion of an article in Press Watch does not imply endorsement by CNI. Rather it is an endeavour to present articles from a variety of view points for consideration by CNI readers.

++++++