Daily Ireland

end game

HISTORIC IRA STATEMENT

Irish Republican Army

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) as we know it, was borne out of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and the Irish Volunteers.

More specifically, the Irish Volunteers were formed in 1913 in direct response to Edward Carson's Ulster Volunteer Force in the north.

Carson set up the Protestant UVF as an armed force which was prepared to use violence if the Home Rule Act was introduced in Ireland.

In a Gaelic League article entitled 'The North Began', Eoin MacNeill, called on Irish nationalists to form a force to demand Home Rule.

During the latter half of the 19th century, the Irish republican organisation, the IRB advocated armed revolt to break the connection with Britain and it was behind the abortive Fenian revolt of 1867.

The IRB had also been active in the 'Dynamite' campaign of the 1880s when Irish republicans, including one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising, Tom Clarke, had carried out a number of bomb attacks in Britain.

The IRB quickly infiltrated the fledgling Óglaigh na hÉireann (Irish Volunteers), its leadership seeing this as an opportunity to forge an army capable of carrying out an armed insurrection against British rule.

The Volunteer movement split following the beginning of the First World War, but the IRB continued its preparations for a rising.

As the Rising approached the IRB leadership, including Pádraig Pearse, forged an alliance with the armed workers' defence group, the Irish Citizen Army, led by socialist leader James Connolly.

By Easter Monday 1916 the rebel force, which attempted to overthrow British rule in Ireland, was made up of 1,300 Irish Volunteers and 200 members of the Irish Citizen Army and collectively, they were known as the 'Army of the Irish Republic'.

The increasingly repressive measures taken by the British government after the Rising drove the Irish Volunteers organisation underground, but military training, recruitment and procurement of arms gathered pace.

On the political front the republican Sinn Féin party won a decisive victory in the 1918 Westminster elections and it set up the First Dáil, a parliamentary body which proclaimed Irish independence.

On the day of the First Dáil's meeting in January 1919 a group of Irish volunteers at Soloheadbeg shot dead two members of the RIC in an act which became regarded as the starting point of the War for Independence which took the form of a guerilla campaign against police and military personnel from 1919 to 1921.

Volunteers took an oath of allegiance to the First Dáil. By 1919 the organisation was increasingly known as the Irish Republican Army.

The army fought a successful guerilla campaign until a truce in 1921 after which the Treaty, which split Ireland into the north, consisting of six counties and the Republic of Ireland in to the remaining 26, was signed by the IRA's Director of Intelligence, Michael Collins.

After the 1921 treaty the IRA split in to those who remained loyal to Michael Collins and those who supported Eamon de Valera.

As part of the Treaty, members of the Dáil had to take an oath of allegiance to the British crown, and it was that which divided the IRA.

The Collins camp argued the oath did not matter since "Ireland had achieved the freedom to achieve freedom".

As a result the majority of IRA volunteers took up the fight against the new 'Free State' and Michael Collins' new Free State army during the Irish Civil War of 1922-'23.

The Civil War ended in defeat for the IRA, with hundreds killed and thousands imprisoned after a vicious struggle.

Three years after the end of the Civil War De Valera resigned as president of Sinn Féin, set up Fianna Fáil and entered Dáil Éireann.

The IRA meanwhile refused to recognise the institutions of the new Irish Free State or the existence of the newly partitioned six-county northern state.

In the new unionist dominated Northern state the IRA saw its main role as defending nationalist communities from loyalist and police led pogroms.

Following the Civil War, defeated and demoralised, the IRA began slowly to reorganise. Under the leadership of Easter Rising veteran Sean Russell in the 1930s it prepared for a new English bombing campaign.

That campaign began in 1939 and continued into 1940 but the campaign was overshadowed by the beginning of the Second World War and a ruthless crackdown by De Valera's government in the South on republicans, which included the shooting of several republicans by Irish police.

The IRA campaign in Britain fizzled out, most of its membership languished in northern and southern jails and its headquarters staff had effectively ceased to exist.

By the late 1940s however, the IRA began to show signs of revival again. Óglaigh na hÉireann made plans for a new military campaign to remove the British occupation of Northern Ireland, but this time the campaign would be played out in the north, not Britain.

By 1956 the Border Campaign, as it became known, was well under way.

Fearing reprisals on nationalists from protestants in Belfast the IRA leadership restricted the campaign to areas outside of the city and it was fought mainly in the border counties of Fermanagh, Tyrone and Armagh.

A series of attacks on government and military installations was followed by the introduction of internment north and south of the border.

More significantly, public support on the ground was not as strong as anticipated with most northern Catholics ignoring the call to arms.

By 1962 the IRA leadership admitted defeat in the Border Campaign and ordered its units to dump its arms. Twelve people – six RUC men, six IRA men – died between 1956 and 1962.

The defeat sparked off years of debate in the IRA about its future direction. Its chief of staff Cahal Goulding wanted to move away from physical force and take the Republic Movement into radical politics.

However, events in the North in the late '60s overtook Goulding's drive to change the IRA.

Young, educated Northern nationalists began to demand an end to the institutionalised anti-Catholic discrimination which characterised the gerrymandered unionist dominated state.

In 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed. The Civil Rights Association demanded the scrapping of the rule that only property owners were allowed to vote in local council elections.

Businessmen and property owners, the vast majority of whom were Protestants, were given six votes while thousands of working-class Catholics, who did not own their own homes, were given no vote. Local councils had the power to issue state housing, and to appoint civil service jobs. Catholics were hugely underrepresented in the civil service and at senior levels right through industry.

NICRA also called for the scrapping of the gerrymandering voting process – where the number of council seats in unionist areas was beefed up to ensure unionist majorities on all the north's 26 councils – the disbandment of the exclusively Protestant B Specials police force and the removal of the Special Powers Act.

The civil rights campaign took to the streets but in October 1968 a peaceful civil rights march in Derry was attacked by RUC officers with batons. The scenes of blood-spattered campaigners attacked by batons and water cannon was filmed and shown all over the world.

The events of that day radicalised thousands of young nationalists. It also triggered off a series of pogroms which saw Catholics being forced to leave their homes in Protestant areas.

Following four days of serious rioting in Derry and Belfast in August 1969, then Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Major James Chichester Clark, called on the British government to send in British troops.

Police and loyalists had laid seige to several nationalist areas of Belfast. The peace line had been drawn, around 1,500 Catholic refugees were burnt out of their homes during the pogroms in Ardoyne, Bombay Street, Clonard district and the lower Falls.

Catholics built barricades to block off their streets, eight people were dead and hundreds injured.

The IRA had taken up its arms against the backdrop of the continuing violence against Catholics. In August 1969, the IRA famously possessed enough weaponry for one job – "one rifle, one Thompson submachine gun and two handguns".

Angry at how the IRA in the south had failed to organise a defence of their communities during the violence of that summer, the Belfast IRA withdrew its support from Dublin for some months.

"The IRA is fully committed to the goals of Irish unity and independence

Gerry Adams watches as an IRA guard fires a volley of shots over the coffin of Bobby Sands PHOTO:ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

While the Dublin leadership were pushing ahead with plans to drop the abstentionism (from membership of the Dáil) other northern IRA members were seeking arms and ways to protect northern Catholics.

The IRA split into what became known as the Official IRA and, at first, the Provisionals.

As British troops rolled in to Belfast during 1969 and 1970, it was soon obvious they were not there to protect Catholics.

A resurgent IRA however, was involved in defending nationalist areas at Clonard, Ardoyne and Short Strand in June 1970 and young people began to flock to its ranks.

After the defence of these areas, one Lower Falls resident and former RAF serviceman was mowed down by a British Army tank as he tried to talk to soldiers. The British Army posted a cordon of soldiers around the Lower Falls and started searching and wrecking homes.

After a day and half of the 'Falls Curfew' residents were running out of food and provisions until, finally women had to venture across the cordon to bring supplies.

The IRA gradually moved from defensive operations to offensive and it shot dead the first British soldier to die in its new campaign, Gunner Curtis, in February 1971 in the New Lodge Road. It also launched a commercial bombing campaign in town centres.

The British government responded with the introduction of internment on August 9, 1971. On that morning hundreds of men had been arrested from their homes and imprisoned without trial, evidence, questioning or proof of having committed a crime.

Only nationalists were interned. Recruits to the IRA increased dramatically.

The IRA's ranks were further boosted following the murder of 14 civilians in Derry by British soldiers after a civil rights march protesting against internment.

Within weeks of Bloody Sunday the unionist government at Stormont collapsed and the north was directly ruled by the British government.

IRA attacks peaked in 1972 with over 100 British soldiers killed. In June 1972 it announced a truce and republican leaders, including Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, met representatives of the British government at a secret meeting.

Less than a fortnight later, a British Army operation codenamed "Motorman" saw hundreds of troops invade the no-go nationalist areas of Belfast and Derry. The army set up surveillance posts and the IRA was forced further underground.

More than 1,000 republicans were jailed and the IRA's military campaign with the British developed into a stalemate.

As British attempts to set up a power sharing administration involving unionists, the Alliance party and the SDLP collapsed in the face of the Loyalist Workers Strike of 1974, the IRA entered once again into talks with representatives of the British government late that year.

They entered into critical talks with the British over the withdrawal of troops from the north. The negotiations collapsed and, so too did the ceasefire in 1975.

The British introduced its new three track strategy of Criminalisation, Ulsterisation and Normalisation in an attempt to defeat the IRA.

This saw prisoners being tortured in Castlereagh and Gough Barracks, tried before non-jury Diplock courts, and denied political status in northern prisons. The locally-recruited RUC and UDR were pushed into the front line of the fight against the IRA and a huge propaganda effort was launched to deny the existence of political conflict.

The IRA responded to this by restructuring its organisation making it more difficult to infiltrate.

After British Secretary of State Roy Mason had claimed the British were squeezing the IRA like a "tube of toothpaste" it responded with a new wave of attacks in late 1978 and throughout 1979.

The IRA killed Lord Louis Mountbatten, a cousin of the Queen, who had a holiday home in Co Sligo in 1979. He died instantly when a 50 pound radio-controlled bomb exploded on his fishing boat.

The same day the IRA struck at the heart of the British establishment again when it detonated a radio-signalled bomb on the Warrenpoint Road, Co Down killing six British soldiers.

A further 12 soldiers were killed minutes later when a second bomb exploded.

The new conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher was determined to break the IRA by criminalising the prisoners refused political status and on the blanket protest in the new H-Blocks in Long Kesh.

For four years around 300 IRA and INLA prisoners refused to wear prison issue uniforms or clean their cells.

Realtives' groups and the newly organised Sinn Féin campaigned for the prisoners on the outside.

Street protests and marches were arranged, senior Catholic clergymen appealed to the British government to restore political status without success. As prison officers stepped up the beatings of prisoners the IRA made them a target and assassinated several officers. But the British would not move.

Eventually, the prisoners went on hunger strike, and when the first of the hunger strikers, Bobby Sands, died on May, 5 1981, support for the IRA sky-rocketed and Sinn Féin's profile was hugely advanced.

Bobby Sands was elected to Westminster during his hunger strike and hunger striker Kieran Doherty was elected as TD for Cavan/Monaghan while another prisoner Paddy Agnew was elected TD for Louth.

Ten men died on the hunger strike but the political landscape changed forever as a result.

Sinn Féin embarked on an electoral strategy in 1982 winning five seats in Assembly elections. The Republican Movement was now operating a twin-track strategy of armed struggle by the IRA and a strategy to build political strength by Sinn Féin.

The IRA's campaign continued in the North, but the battle had become a deadly war of attrition. It suffered its heaviest losses in one incident at Loughgall in Co Tyrone in 1987 when eight members of the East Tyrone Brigade were killed in an ambush.

It continued to inflict casualties on the British army, RUC and UDR, with some spectacular results, but the campaign seemed deadlocked.

Towards the end of the 1980s the IRA tried to up the ante by launching a sustained English and European bombing campaign while the campaign in the north was maintained.

Meanwhile the Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams began an engagement with SDLP leader John Hume, and he mapped out a route to peace in a publication called Pathway to Peace, at time when the conflict was still at its height.

The Sinn Féin leadership expanded on this strategy in the early '90s in a document called Towards a Lasting Peace which signposted many of the changes in republican thinking about how to bring the conflict to a conclusion.

The IRA also engaged in a series of secret meetings with a British government representative over a three-year period up to 1993.

By then Gerry Adams and John Hume had sent a joint document to the British and Irish governments which set out the nationalist position and which suggested that a peaceful resolution to the conflict could be found.

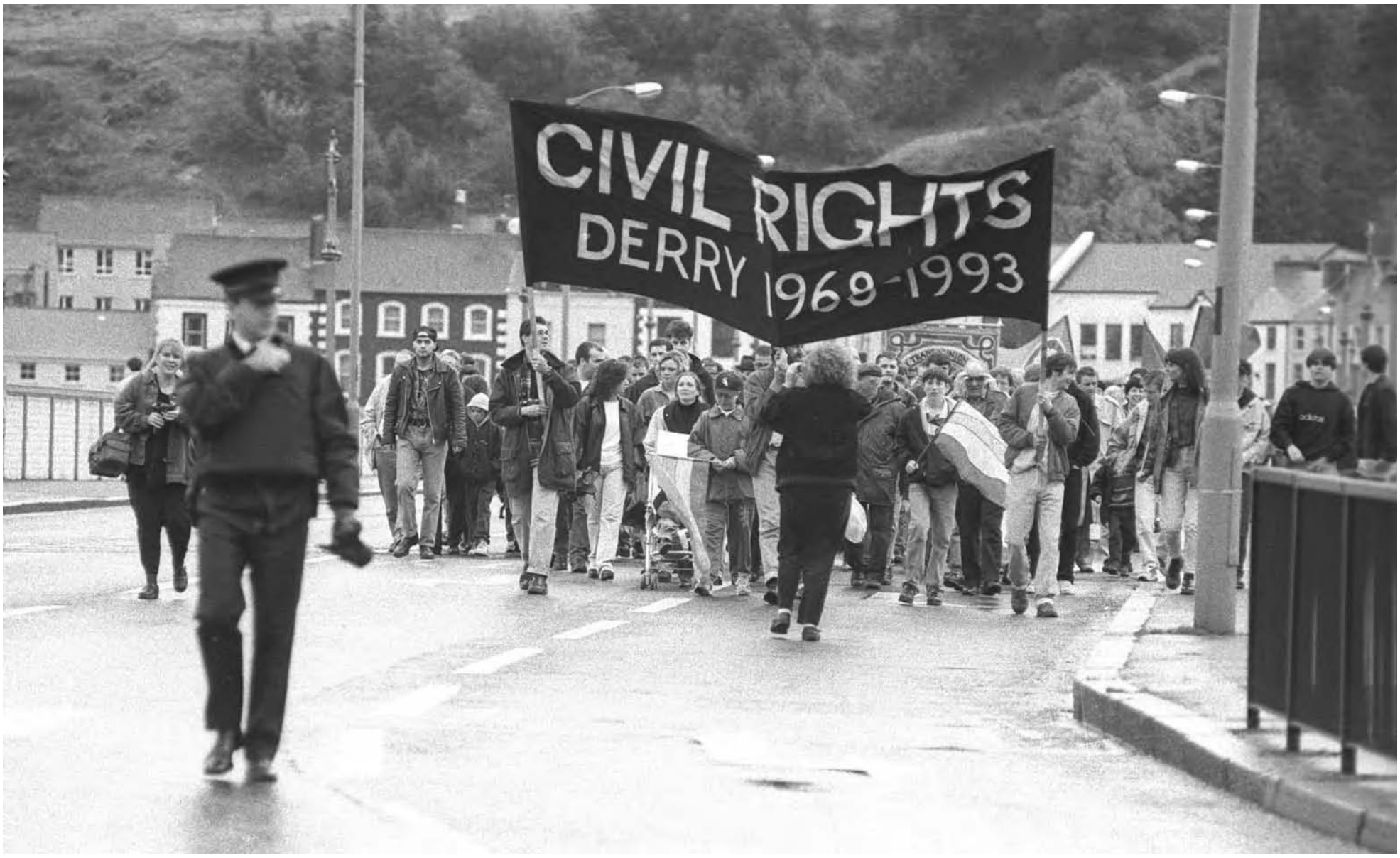
The nationalist leaders had the private support of Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds for this initiative, which paved the way for the IRA's cessation of military operations in 1994, which began the slow process of negotiation which led to yesterday's historic statement.

and to building the Republic outlined in the 1916 Proclamation *IRA Statement* ”

A nationalist rally reaches the City Hall in Belfast in 1995. PHOTO: MAL McCANN

Nationalist protesters turn their backs on the Apprentice Boys as they walk on the Derry walls in 1996.
PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY

Bogside Residents protest against the Apprentice Boys' march in 1997. PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY



A Civil Rights commemoration march taking place in Derry in 1993 crosses Craigavon Bridge PHOTO: JARLATH KEARNEY

Bishop Edward Daly, carrying a bloodstained handkerchief, and Civil Rights demonstrators attempt to get a wounded man to safety while surrounded by Paras in the Bogside on Bloody Sunday.

BLOODY SUNDAY:

Lethal state force had to be met

EAMONN **HOUSTON**
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"The paras stole the youth and they are responsible for deaths that occurred right across the board. I've always said that."

- John Kelly

When General Robert Ford, the British Army's commander of land forces in 1972, watched as the troops of 1 Para stormed the Bogside on Bloody Sunday, the Irish Republican Army in Derry was in a fairly weak state.

The Provisional IRA's campaign had been running for three years. Within the nationalist community in the North's second city, it enjoyed only patchy support.

As night fell on January 30, 1972 and news of the deaths of 13 civilians – a 14th would die a few months later – was absorbed in homes in the Bogside, Creggan and Brandywell and other nationalist heartlands, it began to become clear that the IRA's meaning and role was about to alter significantly.

The Parachute Regiment's assault on a Civil Rights march in an urban area was a fateful miscalculation by the British military.

The 'arrest' plan on the day had been carefully designed to suck the IRA into a military confrontation on the streets of the Bogside.

But the IRA did not take the bait.

Glenfada Park – one of the main killing grounds on Bloody Sunday – had been pinpointed by General Ford and his commanders as the area most likely to contain IRA volunteers.

Favoured by the IRA for launching attacks, Glenfada Park was largely screened from British army lookout posts perched high on Derry's walls.

It was there that Ford and Colonel Wilford's pincer movement would entrap armed IRA men.

However, IRA volunteers were present only in a civilian capacity on Bloody Sunday having acceded to requests from the Civil Right's march organisers.

The killing of unarmed civilians with brutal precision both shocked and enraged nationalists across Ireland, and populations in countries world-wide.

The response was predictable. The IRA became the last resort of the nationalist people. For the youth of Derry and elsewhere, seeing the deaths of teenagers and young people, Jack Duddy (17) Hugh Gilmour (17), John Young (17), Kevin McIlhenney (17), Michael McDaid (20) and William Nash (19) - gave fire to a burning sense of revenge. The lethal British military operation on January 30, 1972, would spur many young men and women to react in kind across the North.

Ill-equipped and struggling for support, the Provisional IRA was all of a sudden seen as a genuine response against a British government that chose to seek a military solution to a social and political problem.

At the time, many of the young men who swelled the ranks of the IRA had no other motive than avenging an attack on innocent people.

For them it was a natural, legitimate reaction.

Bloody Sunday would become a catalyst in modern Irish history, fulfilling WB Yeat's prediction in his poem Easter 1916:

"Now and in time to be, Wherever green is worn, all changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born."

The 'terrible beauty' would eventually take the form of prison protests, violence and a deep sense of comradeship and Yeat's words would be borne out across the six counties.

For John Kelly, brother of Michael shot dead by paras in the Bogside on Bloody Sunday, the day marked a "death of innocence".

"As we all know there were queues to join the IRA after that day," he says.

"I have always said and maintained that the paras were responsible for countless deaths that day, including soldiers, policemen and everyone who died during the Troubles.

"Many young people in Derry and across the North lost their lives through ending up in prison.

"The paras not only murdered people that day, but they carry the responsibility of the blood that was spilled since. For the youth, they were angry and the people became angry and determined.

"The paras stole the youth and they are responsible for deaths that occurred right across the board. I have always said that."

"We all know, there were queues to join the IRA after that day" - *Kelly*

Joe Cahill with SF leaders at Dunville Park in May 1997 PHOTO: MAL McCANN

Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams is held aloft following his 1983 election success. PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams and Pat Doherty protest at Stormont in 1997 after being refused entry. PHOTO: MAL McCANN

Bertie Ahern visits west Belfast December 1997 and meets Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams. PHOTO: MAL McCANN

Gerry Adams addresses a rally in 1986. PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

"...seize this opportunity and make Irish freedom a reality - *GerryAdams*"

Terry Enright Snr beside a stone cairn on Black Mountain dedicated to the memory of his son Terry who was murdered by loyalists in 1998 PHOTO: MAL McCANN

TERRY ENRIGHT:

Ordinary people fighting injustice

All politics is local. Terry Enright is proof of that. He is not an MLA, TD or councillor, yet he is one of the people that has spearheaded community activism in the North.

The devastating murder of his son Terry Jnr by loyalist gunmen in 1998 failed to deter that activism, instead strengthening his resolve to achieve his goals through grass-roots community work.

In the context of yesterday's historic statement from the IRA, Mr Enright has said there is an immediate need for republicans to create a holistic grass-roots movement that would seek the equality and human rights not yet delivered by the Good Friday Agreement.

A chat with Mr Enright in his west Belfast home opens up a treasure chest of anecdotes about his work in a plethora of community groups.

A former Long Kesh internee, Mr Enright was one of the first community activists to devise and take part in practical cross-community projects in Belfast.

"Nationalists and republicans have been very content to let Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness argue out issues at the level they are arguing them out," said Mr Enright.

"However, I believe that a movement similar to the civil rights movement is needed. We need community groups to complement everything that they are doing at that level.

"What we need is a groundswell of people saying that not much changed for them since the Good Friday Agreement."

Mr Enright said he believed people on the ground in nationalist areas across the North were still subjected to inequality.

"There is still so much to be done in terms of the Good Friday Agreement. Perhaps the biggest example of that is the fact that, to all intents and purposes, institutionalised sectarianism is still a major part of this state," he said.

"There has been a steady programme to undermine Sinn Féin. On one hand, they have been given acceptability, yet in the background there have been people in the civil service constructively working against those gains that have been made in terms of equality.

"There is now a situation whereby basic issues such as civil rights and people's right to have a job have been totally undermined."

Mr Enright also drew attention to the distribution of Invest Northern Ireland funds.

He highlighted the lack of sanctions set up to combat breaches of fair employment legislation as one of the issues that have to be addressed.

The Upper Springfield Development Trust, the trade union Unison, the National Trust, the Belfast Hills Partnership, the Black Mountain Environmental Group, the Equality Coalition and the Human Rights Consortium are just some of the groups for which Mr Enright works tirelessly.

"For many years, I have been involved in trying to save the Belfast hills. That is just another example of ordinary people trying to fight against injustice, corruption and the ability of the state to do what they want," he said.

Whether it's immersing himself in the battle to save the Belfast hills or working to get a better deal for the people of north and west Belfast, Mr Enright said community activism was an essential part of the way forward for nationalism.

In the context of the IRA statement, he said: "There is an obligation on the republican movement to set up further political education about this stage of the struggle.

"There is so much happening in communities that republicans can get involved in. I am vice-chairman of the Upper Springfield Development Trust that has brought people together to organise themselves around social and economic issues.

"People need to realise that these issues are all human-rights issues that have to be tied into a broader context. There is a necessity for people to raise their perspectives about these issues and seek justice and equality and move things forward."

Mr Enright maintained that the IRA statement would not necessarily mean an immediate move by the Democratic Unionist Party back to the negotiating table "so people need to act now themselves at local level to make things better".

He said there was still a place for former IRA volunteers in the broader political struggle.

"It is okay for Sinn Féin to have a strategy of how they are going to deal with future political gains," he said.

"However, those people who now find themselves with little or nothing to do should realise that there are lots of roles for them.

"You don't have to be a politician. There are lots of other things you can get involved in and you don't have to be contented with just treading water.

"In community activism, everything you do is political.

"While community workers may not be members of Sinn Féin or the SDLP, they are all working to try and change people's lives."

Drawing parallels with the civil rights struggle in the North in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mr Enright said: "Just as the civil rights movement played an important role for people, there is now a similar role now for people to work around issues of equality and human rights.

"I hope that people will come more politicised and carry forward this strategy."

Mr Enright's son Terry Jnr was shot dead by Loyalist Volunteer Force gunmen as he worked as a doorman at a Belfast nightclub on January 11, 1998. Terry Jnr was also a well-respected community worker.

In his memory, the Enright family set up the Terry Enright Foundation, an organisation promoting cross-community youth work.

Terry Enright Snr said: "I believe that Terry's killing made us stronger. The personal loss was very difficult for all the family but I believe that it strengthened our resolve, made us much stronger and more determined."

The younger Terry played for the local Gort na Móna Gaelic Athletic Club, which later named its new pitch after him.

His father has carried on his memory through community activism.

As the republican struggle moves into a new phase, Mr Enright said such activism was the way forward for nationalists across the North.

> "In community activism, everything you do is political" *-Terry Enright*

Mary Nelis addresses a rally in Belfast in the early 80s and (facing page) Mary in more recent times PHOTOS: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE/ MAL MCCANN

A child plays by a burnt out van on the Falls Road in 1981. PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

RUC men and British soldiers block the sidestreets into Belfast city centre to prevent nationalists from marching to the City Hall. PHOTO: ANDERSONSTOWN NEWS/ARCHIVE

The aftermath of the release of Private Lee Clegg in 1995 saw street violence. PHOTO: MAL McCANN