



# CNI



***Martin McGuinness with his Sinn Fein protege Michelle O'Neill***

**Press comment -**

**Nominating McGuinness for a peace prize hasn't helped his own party to bury the past**

**Unencumbered by principles, Sinn Fein are facing tough choices north and south, writes Ruth Dudley Edwards in the Belfast Telegraph...**

... It was bad news for Sinn Fein last week that no doubt well-meaning people nominated Martin McGuinness for the Tipperary International Peace Award. On Talkback, I was asked to comment on comparisons between him and Nelson Mandela: some nationalists see both as peace-makers; some unionists condemn both as terrorists.

I said I considered that an insult to South African blacks.

Republicans have successfully brainwashed many supporters into believing that conditions for Catholics in Northern Ireland were as bad as those for blacks during apartheid in South Africa.

Yes, there was gerrymandering and discrimination in some areas (not always one-way), but all citizens were equal under the law and had the same rights to educational and welfare benefits undreamt of in the Republic of Ireland.

I hate any kind of violence, but I cannot condemn it in all circumstances.

The majority in South Africa were truly oppressed and — unlike the minority in Northern Ireland — had no democratic route to reform.

So though a moral justification from just-war principles could be made for some of the ANC's brutality, I see none whatsoever for the IRA campaign.

There has been widespread sympathy for Mr McGuinness even among old enemies, but the furore over the peace prize has caused all sorts of embarrassing allegations to be aired once more.

As Michelle O'Neill, his protege, hits the campaign trail, people are reminding us of the authoritative 2015 report that the remnants of the IRA still control Sinn Fein: Mr McGuinness, like Gerry Adams, has never ceased to be in charge.

A new generation has now heard relatives making allegations about Mr McGuinness's links to such horrors as the 1972 Claudy bombing (which killed nine people), the 1984 murder of teacher Mary Travers (for the crime of having a father who was a Catholic magistrate) and the coercion of civilians to drive bombs to targets (particularly the awful 1990 story of Patsy Gillespie, his family held at gunpoint, who was

forced to drive a car bomb into the checkpoint at Coshquin where he and five soldiers were killed).

Mr McGuinness, like Mr Adams, was in charge when in 1997 two constables were shot in Lurgan to put the frighteners on the new Labour government, and 2004, when the okay was given to carry out the Northern Bank robbery, which netted more than £26m.

Mr Adams must be furious at this dirty washing being exhibited once more when he is facing serious political problems on both sides of the border.

Michelle O'Neill is obedient, and will be ruled from Dublin, but she's inexperienced at handling embarrassing questions that Mr McGuinness would have swatted away.

In the last Assembly election Sinn Fein's vote dropped 2.9% and People Before Profit (PBP) snatched two seats: they've damaged Sinn Fein in the Republic too.

Challenging from the left, with coherent policies against austerity and in favour of Brexit, they've driven the unprincipled Mr Adams to shock many supporters by talking about potentially going into coalition with Fine Gael.

President Trump is another headache, for the SDLP has taken a high moral line and will not go to his St Patrick's Day trash, while Sinn Fein are simultaneously denouncing his policies while saying they'll still go. Meanwhile, there has been the embarrassment of the FM/DFM letter inviting Mr Trump to visit Northern Ireland, which has not evaporated despite Ms O'Neill's lame statement that in view of recent events she would rescind the invitation and is sure Mr McGuinness would agree.

What's difficult for Mr Adams is that the big prize, as always, is power down south — where there could be an election soon — which relies on all seeming calm up north with the Brits and the unionists being blamed for everything.

Yet for Martin McGuinness to win this prize would further remind people of the IRA's reign of terror.

So as the good people of the Tipperary Convention make their choice, they'll be doing Sinn Fein a favour if they choose one of the other nominees.

Next year, their external advisers might think of nominating brave victims who've stood up to paramilitaries.

Kathleen Gillespie, Ann Travers, or those people who took a civil case against the Omagh bombers come to mind.

**Ruth Dudley Edwards in the Belfast Telegraph  
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[See also:](#)

Ruth Dudley Edwards' [The Seven: The Lives And Legacies Of The Founding Fathers Of The Irish Republic](#), published by Oneworld Publications