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# Threat of terror stalks residents of Belfast

**By Marie Grady**

BELFAST - Pat J. Smith has the signs of terrorism all around him. The notes from the Royal Ulster Constabulary telling him his house and his mother's house have been found on hit lists. The graffiti touting Protestant paramilitary organizations spray-painted on the wall leading into the Catholic housing development where he lives. The photographs of grave sites of dead members of the Irish Republican Army, a group which is no stranger to terror itself.

Maybe it should come as no surprise. Pat J. Smith is the Belfast treasurer for Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA.

He is also one of the Smith brothers who didn't leave home. Two others, Liam and Martin, are living in Springfield, Mass.

According to Pat Smith, it doesn't take much to become a target here. Walk down the wrong street with the wrong name and you may never reach the end of the road.

But even in this housing development, where Smith says more than 30 people have been murdered through the years, there is something that keeps people like him from leaving.

"I'm from here. I was born here. It's my country. Why should I get out?"

Just across the street there are those who feel the same way. There is a Protestant housing development that is separated from Smith's neighborhood only by Upper Newtownards Road, a street that leads all the way to Stormont. That is the building where a new Northern Ireland assembly later this month will attempt to find a new voice for a people that have been under direct British rule for a quarter of a century.

Some things have changed for Catholics since the violence erupted between unionists loyal to Great Britain and Republicans who want a united Ireland. Laws have been introduced to prevent job discrimination, but Smith says more subtle forms of harassment keep some Catholics from working at shipyards such as the one where the Titanic was built here and add to statistics which show twice as many Catholics are unemployed.

Adding their voices to the call for reconciliation this week will be President Clinton and congressmen, including Springfield Democrat Richard E. Neal. It will not be easy in a place where old loyalties die hard, where children from an early age are educated in separate schools, and where terrorists hit their targets on both sides of Upper Newtownards Road.

It was quiet yesterday in Short Strand, the housing development where Smith lives. It has been so for months after most paramilitary organizations announced a cease fire.

But if you look closely enough you can still find evidence of past troubles. Although he has taken them down, Smith once had thick shutters on his windows to prevent fire bombs and bullets from spraying through. Some in the cluster of homes still have these.

The British soldiers who once stood outside buildings or roamed through town in their armored cars are less visible. But there is an uneasiness that is so rote to people who have lived here for so long that they themselves don't seem aware of it.

The peace process shepherded by Clinton and congressmen like Neal has given many on both sides of the Atlantic a reason for hope. But Protestant leaders, like Ulster Unionist Party Chief David Trimble, say the IRA must give up its guns to come to the table.

In Springfield, Liam Smith says a recent bombing in Omagh that claimed 28 lives may be the catalyst for hard-liners to change.

"I think it has a great chance," he says of the peace process.

But Liam Smith, who has a young daughter with his wife, doubts it will happen soon.

"I think it's going to take a generation of kids," he says.

Jimmy McArdle, a Springfield man who is part of the Irish music group The Bards, says the Omagh blast dealt a serious blow to the ultimate effort of Republicans: unification with Ireland, which was partitioned in 1922 under an agreement with the British that kept the six counties of the North under British control.

Pat Smith, a doorman at a Belfast nightclub who has served as a body guard for Shane MacGowan, the lead singer of the rock group the Pogues, has six reasons to want peace: his children. Three of his boys are in Sinn Fein youth, an organization that teaches the principles of the Republican movement.

He shows pictures of them with Sinn Fein party leaders and remembers a time when his sister, then a girl, was shot on the Ormeau Road here by two men riding by on a motorcycle. Like another brother in the family of seven who was shot, she survived.

Of peace, he says, "there's no other alternative."

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