

2003-06-02

Alex Bradley

Carl Milofsky

Bucknell University, milofsky@bucknell.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/northernirelandarchive>



Part of the [Clinical and Medical Social Work Commons](#), [Clinical Psychology Commons](#), and the [Substance Abuse and Addiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Milofsky, Carl, "Alex Bradley" (2003). *Northern Ireland Archive*. Book 15.
<http://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/northernirelandarchive/15>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by Bucknell Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Northern Ireland Archive by an authorized administrator of Bucknell Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dcadmin@bucknell.edu.

Alex Bradley 1 of 2 6.2.03

(Carl Milofsky begins the session by introducing Alex Bradley to the audience at the 0:21 mark. Carl describes what the clinical psychologist has done in the past and he expresses his excitement to join him. Alex then talks about his excitement as well and elaborates on a few of his past experiences.)

1:50 As a member of the Catholic Christian Organization, Alex Bradley went into Catholic parishes in the northwest of Ireland to see about what separations there were between the Catholics and society. He described that sectarianism was a common theme that he had discovered there.

2:50 He describes from his projector what is known as the “mad dog” within society or the loose cannon. This would be a person that uses extreme violence for any means. But the “mad dog” cannot be unless it is supported by other things.

3:30 State organized terrorism has been set in place to “physically determine the political agenda.” The organized paramilitary would then turn around and support that by using the Irish Republican Army and other forces. They would then have their own political agenda. The fundamentalist religious groups would then feed that system by preaching their messages. The mainstream political groups such as the Social Democratic Labor Party would then act as “the respectable side of politics in northern Ireland.” These three systems would act as a triangle that delivered the terror. Supporting everything would be the “silent majority,” who would then vote for the system and act as the basis for everything to survive.

5:30 Whatever happens to the silent majority will then feed through the different groups all the way to the mad dog, or the top of the chain, who could then murder 15-20 people in a church if he saw fit.

6:10 Alex then allows the speech to open up to a discussion if the students feel willing to do so.

6:25 Alex Bradley summarizes Sectarianism, which is a belief system that revolves around religion as it plays a big role in decision making which could influence or cause “destructive conflict.” This would then lie as the support that would then feed the mad dog.

7:20 He then gives an example of this. The Presbyterian Church would be at odds with the Catholic Church by accusing them of being “anti-Christian” and would sometimes condemn Catholics. Catholics could then be perceived as the enemy and the mad dog could then kill a member of the Catholic Church.

9:00 About five years ago, Alex went to attend a conference at a hotel to find a group of Presbyterian supporters outside. He was handed a leaflet under the assumption that he was a

Protestant. Once inside, the Catholic opened the paper to find Pope John Paul with a stop sign through his head. The heading said "White Protestants should not pray with Catholics." Being Alex's first experience with this, he was shocked to find more defamatory comments about the Catholic Church on the leaflet.

11:00 He then describes that if this message is passed down through the religious movement, then there would be a reason for the rise in murder rate of innocent Catholics.

12:40 Alex then expresses that the levels of violence have decreased considerably. But through the 1970's and the 1980's over 3,000 people. Many killed through Sectarian violence and hatred, others through the military. Now there is a society that is traumatized by the movement and can empathize with Americans who have dealt with the September 11 attacks. Now insurgent groups are trying to address the legacy of the 30 years of conflict.

14:30 He then mentions that after his talk, Alex would then like to open up his discussion to the audience and to ask questions.

15:10 Alex Bradley then describes trauma as having three elements that could be influenced by television and other media outlets: trauma through serious injury, trauma through emotional disturbance, and trauma by an emotional disturbance that occurred a number of years ago.

16:50 He then poses, "What makes a victim a victim?" He mentions that members of the violent organizations would experience trauma, even though they implemented harm. Then he gives the official definition of a victim.

18:15 Alex then brings up Bloody Sunday and describes his time of interviewing the victims and spectators of the tragedy. More specifically, he worked with the relatives of those who had been shot. This group was then looking for answers as to why their loved ones died.

20:30 He then opens up the floor to questions that the audience may have.

20:40 Question: "Can you explain who the victims were again? Or the definition of a victim?"

20:55 This definition by the Irish government lasted from 1997 to 2002. "An individual who has been seriously affected or traumatized by violent incidents or physically and psychologically traumatized by civil unrest in Northern Ireland."

22:00 Question: "In the U.S, during WWII, when the United States government put the Japanese in internment camps, after they came back the government offered money to the families a sum of about \$20,000 as an amend to what had happened. I was wondering if the government had any plans if they would do that. I know it's not necessary, but did the government plan on doing anything such as give money or offer benefits if a family member was lost?"

22:40 The government has been putting money into groups who have been meant to provide services to those that have been affected. But actual cash payments have not been a consideration. This is so because the government has seen it as a civil unrest, rather than war taking place. So Alex cannot see anything happening such as a cash payment for many years because there would be an outcry from many groups. Even though there was paramilitary involvement for 30 years, the community lacked national support. So he does not believe anything will happen like that, in the short term at least.

24:25 Question: "If we define everyone as a victim, how is it possible to move on from what has happened in the past."

24:40 What has been happening in Northern Ireland as of late is that the mindset has been changing. As a therapist working with people who have been affected, it is likely that they will remain stuck there. And they are changing the terminology now to survivor, instead of victim. So if they can change the way they think with Cognitive Behavioral therapy, then the behavior may change and they may begin to heal.

25:35 Question: "With speaking to people in the community, I heard that it was difficult to forgive and move on without some sense of responsibility especially with relation to Bloody Sunday. And I heard that it was difficult to forgive without the British or someone accepting that it was their fault. From the viewpoint of a therapist, I would like to hear how you think this lack of taking responsibility has affected people and how they could move on."

26:15 "Forgiveness is key to addressing any issue of injustice." says Alex. He goes on to agree with her that when someone acknowledges responsibility, then the healing process becomes a lot easier. There has been talk of a truth commission in Northern Ireland, much like the one conducted in South Africa, that could occur. The commission in South Africa worked as well as it did because not all of the truth came out. So he has doubts as to whether the truth commission in Northern Ireland could succeed. Alex mentioned that he has been trying to get people to take a Christian approach to resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland because they are a Christian society. Alex heard on TV once that a man said "There are too many Catholics, too many Protestants, and not enough Christians." The main message of the cross is forgiveness, but many of these groups are unable to forgive and are left with resentment. And this resentment will eventually destroy people, both psychologically and physically due to stress. So Alex believes that there should be more forgiveness because they are all Christians and because nothing good can come of hatred.

29:50 Question: "Could you elaborate on the definition of an act of terror or terrorism?"

30:00 Alex: "My interpretation of a terrorist act would be something which is carried out through violent means such as attempting to overthrow the state. So if someone has a political motive and decides to overthrow the government through a violent means, then that would be a terrorist

act.”

30:30 Question (from the same person): “Didn’t you make reference to state organized terrorism?”

30:35 Alex: “State organized terrorism is something which has been in Ireland from the beginning of time, since the British arrived here (Ireland).” He says that state organized terrorism occurred in the 1600’s when the Irish were driven off of their land. He also refers to other instances in the 1800’s when this form of terrorism has occurred. And because of this, many people fled to America to start a new life. This has spawned 40 million Americans of Irish descent living in the U.S.

Alex then gets back to the question and says that since 1970 the British have instituted paramilitary groups and have kept them under control. But these paramilitary groups were also used to kill innocent Catholics to install terror in the Catholic community. He then refers to “Steak Knife,” who was a man that was “programmed” by the British military who was then placed into a prominent position in the Irish Republican Army. This man’s job was to kill farmers and also to report back to his British leaders. Alex stated that it was only recently that he was exposed after 20 years.

He then says that state violence is within every military institution. Soldiers may behave poorly, but that is because they are programmed to kill. Alex says that a line should be drawn when the state sanctions violence, something that he believes is happening today in Northern Ireland as more information is released. He believes that there will be a lot more to hear about this, a lot more information on state organized terrorism is yet to come.

34:45 Question: “You were mentioning the churches and how much division there is between them. I feel that it’s not just the churches, but also politics is also intertwined. I was wondering if the government could work towards separating the two.”

35:35 Alex mentions that this relationship has been around for hundreds of years, not just in Ireland for the past 30 years. He describes Northern Ireland as having 5 main churches: The Catholic Church (which represents about 45% of the Northern Ireland population), the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Church of Ireland, and the Presbyterian Church named after Reverend Paisley. About a dozen other churches have stemmed off from those as well. Alex says that the Catholic Church has always been more political than actually religious. Except in the Republic of Ireland where there was a state set up by the Catholic Church where the church was actually dictating to the state. He then refers to the Celtic Tiger, which is the financial growth of the Republic of Ireland that separated the state from the church. And because of this, the church really has no influence anymore. But Northern Ireland would be separate from that because the main political parties and churches had little or no say. And this gave rise to the paramilitary groups that don’t adhere to what the churches really say. But Catholics as a whole have always been more political in the establishment of a united Ireland. With withdrawing the Protestant Churches, the Catholic Church lead their allegiance to the Queen of England. This tied the Catholics to royalty which solidified them as essentially the church of England thanks to

the Queen.

39:45 A man from the audience was describing his trip to Derry in where he found a Catholic church. While the church was in service, he found 6 cars parked outside with their windshields shattered. The man then asked, "Where do you place that kind of violence in the way that you understand the role of violence in the society now?"

40:20 Alex then stated that it plays into the triangle that he mentioned at the beginning of his lecture. The people who smashed the car windshields assumed the role of the "mad dogs," or the guys who bring this violence without any request from outside groups. Alex describes the man's incident as relatively minor. But what could happen in the future would be the same person bringing a gun into the church, something that has happened in the past.

He then describes a killer named "mad dog" McGlinchey. This man climbed through the ranks of the paramilitary only to break off and "run around the country looking for a soft target." Alex states that most of these "mag dogs" not only have a political agenda, but also are caught up in the drug world as well. This is now emerging in a post-conflict period.

42:15 Question: "How accurate is the term Rome Rule?"

42:25 Alex mentions that he had described this earlier with the Republic of Ireland, and that Rome has lost the influence that it had. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church was seen as the main, powerful institution to which Irish people would take their allegiance. But what has happened in Ireland in the last 10-15 years is the dropoff in church attendances. Whereas before, it was very difficult to get a seat in the church. This does not mean that there is a decline in spiritual belief, but rather that the institution of church has lost their influence. Alex says that people are now seeking their own spiritual direction.

43:24 A man in the audience asked a question pertaining to religious communities, but it was not possible to hear the question.

43:45 Alex: "What has been happening in the north of Ireland would be that the Protestant government did not want a united Ireland. They didn't want this because they didn't want to come under own rule." And this could have been the case 10-15 years ago. Alex says that a decade ago existed strict laws around contraception. He gives the example of condoms and most abortions being illegal.

44:45 Question: "How significantly do you think the lack of availability of condoms has impacted HIV transmission in the Republic of Ireland?"

45:00 Alex: "If AIDS had been an issue in the 1930's and 1940's, then certainly, it would have been a major calamity. But what's been happening in the Republic of Ireland was that the sale of condoms was illegal while the use of them would be permitted."

45:30 Question (sam man): "Do you know anything about AIDS education and prevention campaigns in the Republic?"

45:35 Alex: "There are AIDS campaigns in the Republic and there are groups who are trying to provide education. There is free information available through magazines."

45:50 Question (same man): "No I understand that, but in '85 the epidemic..." Alex then cuts the man off to retort.

45:55 Alex: "In '85 then no. I would say then that there weren't. And I think it's fair to point out as well that Ireland would be a largely homophobic society."

46:05 Question (same man): "Does that mean there are no homosexuals in the Republic of Ireland?"

46:10 Alex: "Absolutely not (the men laugh). I know that in the city of Derry we have a large homosexual community. And they would have the full support of the mainstream legal parties through funding." Alex then describes an organization that counsels and supports members from the gay community that recently was given 100,000 pounds. He then says that he personally works with gay couples and that there isn't an issue. "But the reality is that within our society there is a homophobic element which I think is changing. It's changing through knowledge and information."

47:00 Question (from a new person): "Do you think that homophobia is changing in religious practices?"

47:05 Alex: "I would believe so because church doesn't have the same influence that it used to. I have to say that most Catholic priests that I know would be gay. That's a reality." Alex then describes an experience that he had a couple of years ago. He said that the director of a group he worked with, a priest for 37 years, saw a magazine sitting on a table that said "It's time to address Ireland's gay priests." The priest picked up the magazine, read the cover, and threw it down, and said, "Do they have nothing better to write about?!" The two then went into a discussion and the both addressed the issue. Alex then emphasizes that Ireland is changing and that everyone is learning to respect differences.

49:05 A woman brought up that she has heard that people identify with a religion even if they are atheists or if they don't believe in what the church is saying.

49:30 Alex: "That ties them to tribe. We have a tribal divide within Ireland and we are identified not only by our church but by our political persuasion as well." He then expresses his satisfaction with mixed religious and non-religious marriages. "We do have a changing society and hopefully it's for the better."

51:10 Question: "Are gay marriages part of British law?"

51:15 Alex: "No. They're still illegal in Britain. I think Denmark may have them and possibly Holland. What Britain does recognize now is that gay couples have the same rights as married couples i.e. they can buy a mortgage and a home. If they separate that person would have the same rights as a couple that would be experiencing a divorce."

51:45 Question (same person): "But without the formality of marriage?"

51:50 Alex: "Without the formality, yeah. But I think that is going to change too. It was brought up before and it was shot down, but I think it will come up again (he's referring to a bill that would legalize gay marriage)."

52:25 Seeing that there are no more questions, Alex suggests a tea break for 15 minutes. This is the end of the video.