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Thursday, March 12, 2009

## Loyalists urged to avoid 'trap' set by perpetrators

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FIONA GARTLAND in Belfast

**SINN FÉIN-UPRG MEETING:** FOLLOWING AN historic meeting between the Sinn Féin Lord Mayor of Belfast and representatives of the Ulster Political Research Group (UPRG), loyalists were called on “not to fall in to the trap” set by those who perpetrated violence over the last few days.

Frankie Gallagher, of the UPRG, which speaks politically for the UDA, said anybody thinking of reacting to the violence should make sure their reactions were peaceful.

The meeting took place in advance of a silent vigil at City Hall in Belfast in the aftermath of the murders of two British soldiers in Antrim and a policeman in Craigavon by dissident republicans.

Mr Gallagher described his meeting with Lord Mayor Tom Hartley, Sinn Féin MLA Paul Maskey and party aide Paul Devenney as “crossing a Rubicon” for the group.

He was accompanied by UPRG members William McQuiston and Colin Halliday. It was the first time they had met with members of Sinn Féin, he said. “One of the things that came out was that though we have ideological differences, there are common issues that we need resolutions to and we can work together on all those issues of education, employment and human rights.”

He believed the loyalist community would remain stable. “There is a hope there that the leaders within the country know what they are doing. There is a hope that the police will do their jobs.”

He believed the mood had changed in the community following the political leadership shown by First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin

McGuinness, who both unequivocally condemned the killings.

This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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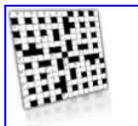
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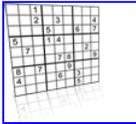
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