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Trends. The Truth in Northern Ireland

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What does it take to heal the wounds of seemingly intractable conflict? A resounding positive vote for the Northern Ireland peace agreement on May 22 may contribute somewhat. Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner, Kenneth Bloomfield, has suggested an adjunct--a protector or ombudsman for victims, a memorial and conciliation day, a senior official to champion the interests of victims--suspiciously approaching some of the functions of a Truth Commission.

The truth in Northern Ireland is that no political initiative or group of initiatives will heal the wounds. At best such initiatives provide a cover--a Trojan horse--to allow the extremely slow development of grudging tolerance to be less overwhelmed by intolerance, hatred, and beliefs that some problems cannot even be managed let alone solved. Even an ersatz Truth Commission--let alone the real thing--would provide anything but a cover for necessary psychological phenomena that need to occur and should be strongly contraindicated. The truth about Northern Ireland is that the truth is already too well known. (See Amnesty for amnesty: Towards an international criminal court. (October 10, 1997). IBPP, 3,(11); Britain names Ulster 'Minister for Victims'. (May 14, 1998). the New York Times, p. A4; Comments on Walzer's "Judgment Days": Public accountability for the egregious behavior of political leaders. (December 12, 1997). IBPP, 3(19); Some truth about truth commissions. (February 14, 1997). IBPP, 1(12); Some truth about truth commissions II. (September 12, 1997). IBPP, 3(7).) (Keywords: Northern Ireland, Political Psychology, Political Trauma, Reconciliation, Truth Commission.)