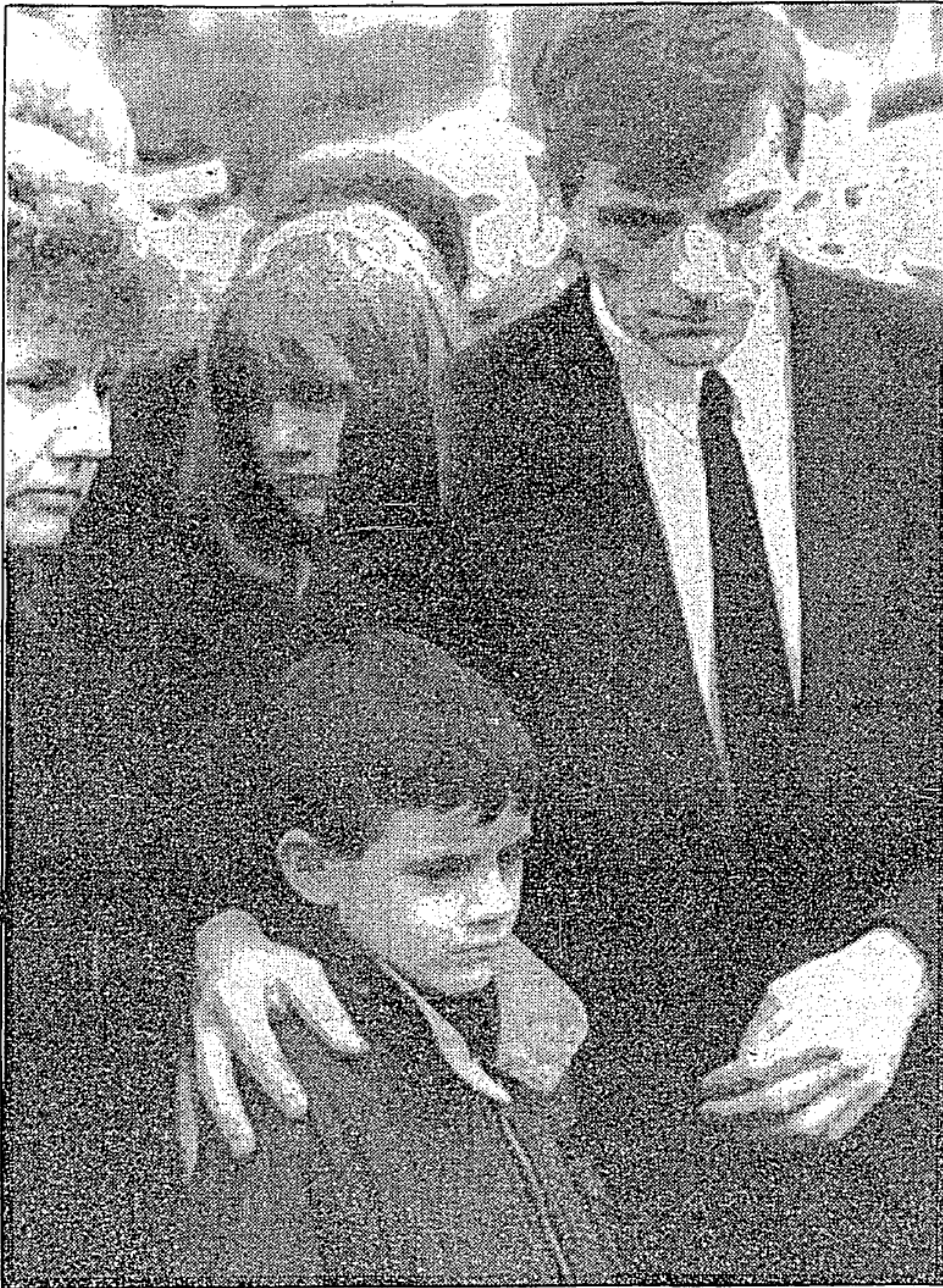


on a year in which murder alternated with high hopes of peace

# EVERYTHING TO LOSE



■ GREYSTEEL: Steven Mullan's father and young brother, Thomas, attend his funeral in the little Derry village.



■ PEACE HOPES: John Hume and Gerry Adams began their talks in February.

October, the month of Shankill and Greysteel, was a time when people began to feel that the situation was sliding towards civil war

defensive measures at his home in Andersonstown. The IRA killed a part-time RIR man at Moneymore by putting a booby-trap bomb under his car.

President Mary Robinson visited West Belfast in June, shaking hands with Gerry Adams, among hundreds of others. She won the respect of nationalists for standing up to official disapproval from some quarters in Dublin. Some unionists were chagrined that the woman who resigned from Labour over the Anglo Irish Agreement had "let them down."

The IRA killed five people in June, including a ex-RUC man, one of their own (who they claimed was an informer), an ex-UDR man, and two members of

the British Army who died in separate incidents on patrol — shot by a sniper.

Nobody died in July. Strangely "the marching month" can often be the quietest time of the year. Dungannon was this year's Orange Parade flashpoint. There was the usual coat-trailing and offence caused to Catholics living in an estate there, but no serious violence.

All three of the people shot dead in August were the victims of loyalists: the 2-year-old son of Sinn Fein councillor, Bobby Lavery, Mrs Therese de Mogollon Dowds and Seamus Hopkins, 24, who had been left brain damaged when concrete blocks were dropped on his head six years earlier.

IN September, Hume and Adams announced that they had suspended their talks to allow the formula they had agreed between them to be considered by Dublin and London. The move was heralded, correctly, as a seminal moment in Irish history. But it did not stop the killing.

The IRA shot Adrian McGovern, saying he had supplied building materials to the RUC. The death caused anger in the SDLP camp, with MP Joe Hendron questioning Sinn Fein and the IRA's credentials in working for peace.

Loyalists shot five people this month, including two Protestants — one a former colleague, another a prison

officer. Three Catholics were also killed by loyalists this month, an ice-cream man on his rounds; newsagent Michael Edwards, a father of six, was killed he slept in bed with his wife; and a hairdresser shot dead in his salon on the Falls Road in front of hundreds of girls returning home from St Louise's School.

October was one of those awful months in the North when people feel the situation is slipping out of control into civil war. Jason McFarland, 20, was the first to die — shot by loyalists as he played pool in a West Belfast pub. He had just returned from town where he had bought his wedding suit.

Six days later, on October

12, Jody Reynolds was shot dead as he drove to work at Shorts in East Belfast. Three days later Paddy McMahon was shot dead as he walked with his girlfriend in North Belfast.

The IRA killed John Gibson, alleging he carried out work for the RUC/British Army. He worked for the well-known Henry company of Magherafelt who have been repeatedly targeted.

But it was the bomb on the Shankill Road which killed nine Protestants, as well as one of the bombers, which caused the greatest shock wave of the year since the Warrington bombing. Its timing, just after Hume and Adams had announced their breakthrough, provoked speculation that it had been designed to wreck the

SDLP/Sinn Fein rapprochement — this was denied strenuously by Sinn Fein. Photographs of Gerry Adams carrying the coffin of Thomas Begley, who had carried the bomb into Frizzell's fish shop, were carried on every front page from London to Dublin and further afield.

The Hume/Adams initiative survived the Shankill bombing. Tragically others did not. Within four days, six Catholics — Martin Moran, Sean Fox, James Cameron, Mark Rodgers, and brothers Rory and Gerard Cairns — had been shot dead by loyalists.

Then, at Greysteel in Co Derry, seven people were shot dead the night before Halloween in the Rising Sun bar. They ranged in age from 19 to 81. The village — and the country north and south went into shock. As panic spread, people refused to go out at night. Pubs in Belfast city centre reported a 80% decrease in trade. Shops were empty, people sat in at night in fear. Things had never been as bad, people said, even in the early 1970s when the death toll was higher.

When the peace marches began, they were unusually large. It was clear a real demand for peace was growing in the community. Tolerance for violence was repudiated. Pressure began building on both Governments to come forward with a new formula, based on Hume/Adams, which might bring peace.

NOVEMBER was quiet, but December saw the killings begin again. The IRA sniper along the border claimed another victim, Lance Bombardier Paul Andrew Garrett, shot dead in Keady. Hundreds of nationalists in the little Armagh village came out to show their respects and anger.

Four Catholics were also killed by loyalists in December, including two in Ligoniel and one who lived in East Belfast. The IRA killed two policemen in Fivmiletown, Co Tyrone. After the hiatus of November, it seemed as though the paramilitaries were back to business.

The Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, and British Premier John Major moved into high gear with a series of meetings which finally saw them produce their Joint Declaration. It's still the subject of much analysis and comment — and will be so for years to come.

Will 1994 be a quieter year? Or will I be sitting down to do my traditional end-of-year review in the same gloomy mood as this one has been written? It's impossible to say.