

# THE IRISH TIMES

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## An Irishman's Diary

DO YOU know that this State now discriminates in favour of terrorism? It is already the law of the land that provided a terrorist murders with a revolver, he cannot be extradited to another jurisdiction. Now the law says that suspected drug-offenders (but nobody else) may be held for questioning for a week.

Somebody caught with a marijuana joint can be interrogated for a week, and be extradited to Northern Ireland on suspicion of smoking a joint there; but a man responsible for the Lisburn bombing, or involved in the planning of the bombing of London with 10 tons of high explosives, would have to be released within three days of his arrest; and if he had admitted to a handgun murder outside the Republic, he could not then be extradited.

Does that not make your blood run cold, that we have permitted or even created legal loopholes for IRA killers, but not cocaine-users, to wriggle through? Does it not chill your heart that there has been no outcry about this? Does it not put ice in your veins that this legal situation appears to represent the political will of the Irish people?

The white powdered cocaine which you snort up your nose for purely personal pleasure gives you a week of interrogation; the white powdered sugar which you use to dismantle London, or the Channel Tunnel, gets you three days maximum. Then goodday sir, sorry to have been troubling you.

### **Misrepresented**

Of course the foregoing will be misrepresented as some sort of mitigation for drug-smugglers — it is not. Our failure to deal with drug-smugglers as that crisis developed is now yielding its rich harvest, a harvest which merely emulates the altogether more ruinous crop which has flourished in our fields because we have not dealt with terrorism with the necessary courage and political will.

Yet merely to state this simple truth is widely seen as backing for British policy or for unionism. It is neither; nor is to deplore Bloody Sunday of 1972 or the activities of the Shankill Butchers tantamount to supporting the Provos. Yet such misrepresentation is a norm in

### **Michael Collins: provoked police murder squad.**

discussing the role of violence today and in the past. Recently, for example, David Moane of Dublin, following a recent critical diary about Michael Collins, said that as usual I displayed my usual wilful ignorance of "the history of Irish nationalism in (my) attempt to justify the imperialism that oppressed it."

This is pathetic stuff, unworthy of the playground logic of 10-year-olds. I do not and did not justify British Government misdeeds. It is possibly beyond David Moane's powers to grasp more than one point at a time, but in the very article which prompted his letter, I specifically said my criticisms of Collins were "not to justify the crass and blundering idiocies of the British Government, nor the brutalities and homicides of its agents." To transmute that into a justification of British imperialism requires a rare alchemy.

### **Murder justified**

Rowan Collins is up to something similar when he justifies the murders of men of G Division in 1919, alleging that its intelligence was responsible for numerous atrocities. Excuse me: which ones? I had said that there was at that time — 1919 — no police murder squad. There was later, in response to the activities of Collins's squad, but not then.

He offers the knowing justification that one detective, Daniel Hoey, had pointed out Seán

Mac Diarmada for the firing squad. The allegation, without a source-note, was first made in Tim Pat Coogan's biography on Collins. It is meaningless.

Mac Diarmada was a paid organiser of the Irish Volunteers, and had been one of the signatories to the Proclamation; with his polio-limp he was easily identifiable, and made no attempt to conceal himself.

Gerard Kenny accused me of not answering questions asked by other readers, notably Lieut-Col Duggan on August 27th, 1995. August 27th, 1995, was a Sunday. The Duggan letter appeared the year before.

### **No answer**

Since it did not deny my main thesis, that IRA men in the spring of 1922 engaged in the murder of West Cork Protestants, it did not require an answer. Do not take my word for it — Tim Pat Coogan's Collins biography reported how after an IRA man named O'Neill was shot during a raid on a Protestant farm, three Protestants were shot in Dunmanway, "and over the next week, the latent sectarianism of centuries of ballads and landlordism claimed a total of 10 Protestant lives."

In fact, more than 10 men were murdered. The man who shot O'Neill, Herbert Woods, an ex-soldier, was — it is believed — tortured after surrendering to the IRA. He and his uncle, John Hornibrook, were then murdered and their bodies secretly buried.

Other killings followed, and as Tim Pat Coogan acknowledges, many Protestants fled Cork. To deny this reality is like denying the reality of the massacre of the Catholic McMahon family, very possibly by policemen, in Belfast a few weeks before.

Do we never learn that there is no clinical use to violence within divided communities? It always unleashes emotions, hatreds and expectations outside the control of those who initiate it. It always ends with whimpering men being dragged from their homes and shot, whether that home is in Srebrenica or in Short Strand. It is the one enduring truth we should take from our history; yet it is the lesson we ignore each generation.

**KEVIN MYERS**

