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Sir, – Manus O’Riordan (August 25th) makes the unworldly assertion that, “From January 1919 members of the RIC should have recognised one duty that over-rode all others: to acknowledge and obey the authority of the democratically elected First Dáil.” Expecting a properly constituted police force, as one entity, to adhere to another, self-proclaimed authority was never going to happen. Look at Syria where the army is only gradually being eroded by defection over two years, despite the Assad regime’s atrocities.

But Manus O’Riordan also ignores the position of RIC men in the north. Given that unionists won a majority of seats in Ulster in 1918, by his logic and belief, as a self-described “two nationist Republican,” the RIC there should have stayed loyal to the Crown, inevitably coming into conflict with their southern colleagues.

Southern separatism should indeed have been conceded to in 1918 just as northern exclusion from Home Rule in 1912. Neither happened. Politics is about some degree of gradualism to allow extrication from previous positions. Revolutionism is not and, if it wins, it obliterates the past, in this case the RIC, for generations – but eventually that past will re-appear.

Jeffrey Dudgeon

The Irish Times - Saturday, August 25, 2012

**Marking the end of the RIC**

From January 1919 members of the RIC should have recognised one duty that over-rode all others: to acknowledge and obey the authority of the democratically elected First Dáil.

In view of his embrace of fascism in the 1930s, the pioneering Garda Commissioner Eoin O’Duffy is not somebody I would normally quote with approval. But I believe in giving credit where credit is due and acknowledging O’Duffy’s role when he once fought a war for democracy. On February 15th, 1920, O’Duffy commanded the first military action of the War of Independence in Co Monaghan: the destruction of Ballytrain RIC barracks.

Following their surrender, he told the RIC men that “at the general election the people had voted for freedom. The police were acting against the will of the Irish people. He appealed to them to leave the force and join their brother Irishmen.” Any retired members of an Garda Síochána who treat these words of O’Duffy with contempt are a disgrace to the uniform in which they once served. – Yours, etc,

MANUS O’RIORDAN,

Finglas Road,

Dublin 11.

A chara, – The two retired Garda Síochána members (August 22nd) who plan to gather at Glasnevin Cemetery today to commemorate the disbandment of the RIC and DMP should certainly do so; but the fact that they sought official recognition is bordering on the unbelievable. As Tom Cooper pointed out (August 23rd) the RIC and “Black and Tans” were responsible for countrywide thuggery and brutality. The RIC also controlled the notorious “B Specials” and other Special Constabularies in the North of Ireland.

The centenary of celebrations is indeed in danger of turning into a commemorative circus to include everything from the RIC to Billy Mc Ginty’s goat! – Is mise,

RORY O’CALLAGHAN,

Mc Dowell Avenue,

Kilmainham, Dublin 8.

Sir, – Tom Cooper (August 23rd) rightly points out the brutality associated with the Black and Tans. However, his critique of the efforts of two members of the Retired Garda Síochána Members Association in organising a commemorative event in Glasnevin to mark the end of the RIC, etc, as carrying political ecumenism a step too far, requires comment.

There are many Irish citizens who have a British dimension to their Irishness and vice versa; and no doubt there are members of the Garda who may have family links with the former Royal Irish Constabulary who feel it their duty to remember the fallen. Is Mr Cooper to deny them that opportunity?

Are republicans/nationalists to be recorded as the only victims of a conflict that has bedevilled the island of Ireland for centuries?  Our forthcoming decade of commemorations will confront both sides of the sectarian divide with unpalatable events of times past and the challenge for all concerned will be their ability to move outside the political box and not be constrained by the historical box. One hopes Mr Cooper et al are up for that challenge? – Yours, etc,

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