Dear Editor,

Kieran Glennon’s article *Facts and Fallacies of the Belfast Pogrom*. (HI September/October 2020) was fair and balanced. His title was of course hinged to the unpublished Father Hassan (GB Kenna) book ‘Facts & Figures of the Belfast Pogrom 1920-1922’. Hassan’s failing was one-sidedness not unlike that of its contemporary *The Irish Bulletin*. As Glennon indicates, he only made one original mention of the IRA.

However using the propagandist term pogrom for what happened in Belfast from July 1920 to October 1922 is itself fallacious. The phrase has first to be put into context and defined. By July, the war of independence was over a year under way while the conflict in Ulster was not exclusive to Belfast. The Derry riots which started in April 1920 were a precursor, and involved some twenty deaths including Sergeant Dennis Moroney, the first RIC officer to be killed in the province. Ulster was preparing for the political endgame with the violence starting in both communities.

Pogrom is a Russian word meaning to wreak havoc and destroy. There it involved massacre and expulsion of the Jewish ethno-religious group. Is this similar to what happened in Belfast? The answer, as accepted by most observers, is no. That the Catholic community suffered death, destruction and expulsion at a higher rate than the Protestant is none the less true, as made clear in the literature.

Fr Hassan wrote of 267 Catholics and 185 Protestants dying in Belfast between July 1920 and June 1922, giving a total of 462 people. Alan Parkinson in *Belfast’s Unholy War* (2004) has 498 dead up to October 1922. Glennon breaks that figure down to 181 Protestants plus 33 police officers or 214, and 254 Catholics plus 29 IRA men or 283. Given a population proportion of three to one, the Catholic 56% of deaths was much greater but then it could be crudely expected that the bigger population would inflict a higher number of casualties on the lesser. If Ulster was the unit under consideration the proportion would be less stark.

Refugees fled south in significant numbers, particularly from the Catholic commercial class while there was considerable population movement north out of the border counties. Nearly a hundred RIC, RUC and USC officers were killed in the six counties in the three years which is a minority response unheard of in Russian pogroms.

The assassination of the Woodvale MP, William Twaddell, in May 1922 in Belfast and of Sir Henry Wilson, North Down Westminster MP, and former CIGS, in London, in June accelerated the introduction of the Special Powers Act and internment. It was effective then but not in the 1970s. However, as the HI editorial points out, northern nationalists were essentially abandoned in the 1920s, not least by Michael Collins, and again in the early 1970s when Jack Lynch’s broadcast promise to not stand idly by turned out to be a hollow, if destabilising, statement. The civil war ultimately put paid to the northern IRA’s campaign and the 1920s troubles came to an abrupt end. When they recommenced fifty years later (50 years ago), their memory was far from absent, not least in the older generation.

Jeffrey Dudgeon