

RIC-DMP

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Sir, - In what is yet a further effort to undermine and muddy the narrative of Irish history by conferring a bogus respectability on the actions of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries during the Irish War of Independence, retired garda Gerry Lovett of the RGSA, who is also secretary of the Royal Irish Constabulary/ Dublin Metropolitan Police Commemoration Committee, organised a church service for those RIC members killed opposing Irish independence (August 24th). Your political columnist Stephen Collins (Opinion & Analysis, also August 24th) lends unqualified support for this remembrance ceremony. How can one honour the RIC without also honouring the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries who were an integral element of policing in Ireland during the 1919-1922 period? To do so would be an affront to all who suffered appalling abuses from this group of uniformed thugs who spread terror throughout nationalist Ireland in the service of the Crown.

Your reports, both of which indicate attendance at the event by an official representative of the Garda Commissioner and a government minister, signal a most regrettable trend and a reflection of low self-esteem and self-loathing.

Have we forgotten that it was the Royal Irish Constabulary who fired indiscriminately into the crowd in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday in 1920 killing 14 innocent spectators and players. These were the armed colonial police force tasked with enforcing British rule in Ireland despite the massive rejection of this rule by the electorate in the 1918 General Election. Why would the Retired Garda Siochána Association wish to stand in slavish obsequiousness to those members of the RIC and Black and Tans who sacked and burned more than three hundred buildings in Cork City in an act of reprisal in 1921? This unruly mob displayed an absolute indifference to civilised policing. Even the commander of this undisciplined group, General Frank Crozier, resigned in protest at the deployment of these men. – Yours etc.

TOM COOPER ,
Delaford Lawn,
Knocklyon,
Dublin 16.

28 Aug 2013

Sir, – Stephen Collins’s article (Opinion, August 24th) appears to represent one of a growing number of recent attempts to de-legitimise Ireland’s War of Independence. His bold description of the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries as “counter-terror” organisations makes this position even clearer. Without offering any evidence, your correspondent also argues that the “vast majority” of RIC victims in that war were “ordinary Catholics and Protestants”.

Historically, the RIC as a body was involved in the carrying out of Britain’s policy of reprisals against the civilian population from about June 1920, following the arrival of divisional commissioner Lieut Col GBF Smyth from England. And it was the RIC who murdered the democratically-elected lord mayor of Cork, Tomás MacCurtain. Your Editorial (August 26th) on Bloody Sunday 1913, describes the DMP and RIC as a “brutal, partisan police force”.

Another troubling aspect of Stephen Collins’s argument lies in its logically implied dismissal of the sacrifices of the police mutineers of Listowel Barracks in 1920. These policemen resigned their commissions rather than, in their own words “commit murder”. They were followed by an estimated 1,100 of their colleagues who, likewise, sacrificed their livelihoods by resigning in solidarity, over the course of the following few weeks as the news of Smyth’s murderous speech spread through the country. The emphatic endorsement of the 1918 election results and the now universally-recognised right to live free from colonisation, do not seem to feature in the neo-con thinking articulated by your correspondent. Once again, it seems we are being told that only empires, with their juggernaut killing machines, have an incontestable right to physical force. – Yours, etc,

BILLY FITZPATRICK,
Ashfield Park,
Terenure,
Dublin 6W.

27 Aug 2013

Sir, – I read Stephen Collins’s Opinion piece (August 24th) with increasing bafflement. Mr Collins wants the Irish people to honour the RIC and DMP who “guarded” the same people for a century. He suggests the RIC was on a par with current police forces as we know them today. Nothing could be further from the truth. The RIC had nothing in common with any other police force within the UK (as it was

then constituted). It was the only armed police force and was more akin to a paramilitary force.

The list of atrocities carried out by the RIC/DMP include mass evictions; the murder of civilians in the Dublin Lockout; the shooting dead of the mayors of Cork and Limerick; the selection of the 1916 leaders for execution; and the shooting of prisoners. In my native Galway they are particularly remembered for the killing of Fr Michael Griffin, who they summoned on a fake mission of mercy before killing him and burying him in a bog. Also the murder of two brothers, Patrick and Harry Loughnane, who were dragged for miles behind lorries until they were unrecognisable.

And if we do commemorate this body we also include in this the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries who both served within the RIC as additional man power to suppress the insurgents. The figure of 500-plus RIC dead includes the numerous Black and Tans and Auxiliaries who were killed during the War of Independence. – Yours, etc,
ANDREW MCGOWAN,

Aungier Street,
Dublin 2.

27 Aug 2013

Sir, – It is not every week I get to read Stephen Collins's column. I did however get to see his latest paean to "national reconciliation" and the desirability, as he would have it, to kiss and make up with the Royal Irish Constabulary, and the Dublin Metropolitan Police (Opinion, August 24th).

He tells us these gallant bodies of men "guarded us for nearly a century". Could this, per chance, be the same DMP that exactly 100 years ago engaged in murderous attacks on Dublin workers during the Great Lockout? Oh, yes it could! In this month in 1913, at the beginning of that titanic struggle by the worker class to wrest a civilised living from the employers, our guardians launched an unprovoked attack on people heading to O'Connell Street from a meeting at Liberty Hall. This attack left 200 injured and James Nolan and John Byrne, both members of ITGWU, SIPTU's predecessor, dead.

Ireland's first Bloody Sunday followed, demonstrating another example of the DMP as our guardians. Mr Collins really should cop on and see that his Hobbesian view of society, and the role of the police in it, is codology of the purest water.

Police forces exist to guard the property and wealth of the ruling elite from encroachment by the rest of us, anything else they do is incidental to this. On the other hand, maybe I should stop reading Mr Collins's drivel. – Yours, etc,

NICHOLAS COULES,
Suncroft Drive,
Tallaght,
Dublin 24.