



CNI

COMMENT - Fallout from murders will continue long after Southern elections

Alison Morris writes -

Politics in Ireland North and South is as predictable as the awful weather, a never ending cycle of orchestrated outrage and carefully managed crisis.

Reaction to allegations of IRA involvement in the murder of Kevin McGuigan in east Belfast earlier this month built slowly in the South.

Murders in Northern Ireland rarely register in southern politics. With our strange ways and gruff accents we are often viewed as the uncouth cousins at a family wedding, stuck at the table closest to toilets, best ignored.

The killing of Gerard Jock Davison four months ago didn't register really at all, the highest ranking IRA man to have been murdered in

Belfast in over 20 years made headlines in the North but barely a ripple in the South.

Dublin and Limerick are cities where gangland shootings and murders are almost weekly occurrences. 'Bad on bad crime' as it's often called, an awful phrase stolen like many others from the United States, a place where poor lives are rarely valued.

Therefore when similar grudge style killings occur in the North it wouldn't raise too many eyebrows among the Dublin media, well used to reporting on blood on the streets of the capital.

The name of the man accused of murdering Jock Davison was being bandied about within days of the shooting in the tight knit Markets community.

A community of only around 4,000 residents, built around large extended families who interweave through marriage, historically made up of tough dock workers and market traders.

Jock Davison once commanded the IRA in Belfast and was both feared and revered in his own community. While he made many friends, some it now seems willing to go to any lengths to avenge his death, he also made many enemies.

Kevin McGuigan was top of that list of enemies and in the months before his death Jock Davison knew that. He told family and friends that McGuigan was watching his movements. Once IRA associates, the two men had a bitter fall out dating back over a decade.

McGuigan was shot in a punishment style shooting on the orders of Davison, his alleged crime carrying out violent attacks on people he felt had disrespected him or his family.

How men trained and encouraged to be violent killers reintegrate back into society is an issue rarely discussed in post conflict Northern Ireland. While Kevin McGuigan was at home a devoted and caring family man, he was also a trained killer, a man used to settling disputes with weapons.

His resentment against Jock Davison had grown steadily over the years until, as people who knew him have revealed over the last number of weeks, it became an all consuming obsession.

He fortified his home in Comber Court in the Short Strand and left funeral instructions for his family, only too aware of what the fall out from any revenge attack might be.

That members of the IRA were involved in the murder of Kevin McGuigan, is a given.

The level of planning, surveillance and the ruthless manner in which he was killed had all the hallmarks, both in motive and execution, of a Provisional operation.

That people are shocked that IRA members can organise in such a way seems, to me at least, naive. Loyalist paramilitary groups have never even pretended to dismantle their structures and have continued to recruit and appoint new 'brigadiers' and leaders through a cycle of infighting over the years. The murder of Bobby Moffett in 2010 by the UVF an example of 'internal housekeeping' loyalist style.

The difference is loyalists have had little success electorally over the years with no representatives at a senior governmental level.

Sinn Féin on the other hand are in government and have aspirations to replicate that electoral success in the Republic.

Sinn Féin have wedded themselves to politics and along with that must come support for the rule of law. When this latest political crisis fades, as it inevitably will, they're left with much bigger problem.

The PSNI made little headway in the investigation into the murder of Jock Davison and with the death of what many believe was the gunman in that killing that case seems unlikely to ever be resolved in a court.

The party can easily ride out this latest political crisis, they've coasted through worse, but with confidence in police at a low ebb in republican communities it is the long term peaceful political project that will be harder to get back on track long after the Southern elections have come and gone.

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