



• Newsletter Sign up for email alerts and WIN a helicopter flight

Ulster Rugby shirts from only £25!
Click here now to get yours



An SS Moore Sports & Belfast Telegraph promotion

• News

◦ Editors Viewpoint

◦ Letters

◦ Columnists

• Entertainment

• Jobs

• Cars

• Homes

• Other Titles

• Services

• The digital gateway to Northern Ireland news, sport, business, entertainment and opinion

[Home](#) > [Opinion](#) > [Columnists](#)

Laurence White: Why did the state not solve more murders?

Friday, 11 July 2008

In the aftermath of the Omagh bombing 10 years ago, the relatives of the 29 victims were promised the world by the Prime Ministers of both the UK and Ireland.

No stone, they were assured, would be left unturned in the efforts to bring the dissident republicans responsible for the worst atrocity of the Troubles to justice.

The reality was much different. No guilty person was brought to justice. The investigation into the killings by the police on both sides of the border was shambolic. The Police Ombudsman in Northern Ireland produced a damning report into the police handling of the investigation right from the initial warnings about the bombing.

Then, at the trial of Co Armagh man, Sean Hoey, the first person to face

Print Email

Search



Bookmark & Share

Digg It

del.icio.us

Facebook

Stumbleupon

Business Direct.
The hassle free way
to manage your
business banking.

[Apply here](#)



a murder charge in relation to the bombing, the judge, Mr Justice Weir, delivered a scathing criticism of the investigation, citing unreliable DNA evidence and poor record-keeping and accusing a detective sergeant and a scenes-of-crime officer of "deliberate and calculated deception" in their evidence. Hoey was acquitted. The end result is that there is now unlikely ever to be a successful prosecution of anyone suspected of being involved in the atrocity. The only way that could change is if one or more of the perpetrators were to walk into a police station and confess to the crime. The chances of that happening make winning the Lottery look like a mere matter of time.

What are these?

Meanwhile, the relatives are trying to get their own justice by bringing a civil action against people they suspect of being involved in the bombing.

They are relying on the fact that a civil case needs less certainty of evidence than a criminal trial. It is really their last throw of the dice. Having been failed by the authorities in two states, they really had no other option.

Just what the ordeal of having to bring the civil case will do to the relatives is unknown. What we do know is that they have suffered grievously already. Most of them, it seems from evidence given to the civil case, are still suffering every day of their lives. They, like so many other relatives of people murdered who have not seen the killers brought to justice, are unable to put the past behind them.

Some of the Omagh relatives are clinically depressed. Some still have an anger burning inside them which is eating away at their lives. Some have found temporary, but inadequate, solace in alcohol or prescription drugs.

Their lives changed forever on that fateful day in 1988 and the hurt they felt at the loss of their loved ones has only been compounded by subsequent events. They feel betrayed and they were betrayed.

They are not alone. There are more than 3,000 unsolved murders dating back to the beginning of the Troubles and this week it was revealed that a costly re-opening of more than 1,000 of those cases has resulted, to date, in ONE case being referred for possible prosecution.

How could the state with all its security apparatus and operatives make such a mess of investigating murder and bringing the killers to court? In some cases did the state want to protect the guilty who were its agents? In most it was probably inefficiency. Yes, there were huge pressures on the state as the body count piled up, but even by the law of averages there should have been a better outcome in many more cases.

Omagh, and the fact that no one is ever likely to be found guilty of those 29 murders, will stand as a testament not only to the ruthlessness of terrorists but to the uselessness of the state's response.

Also in this section

- Justin Kilcullen, Director of Trocaire: Why Myers is wrong to write off Africa
- Ruth Dudley Edwards: Mosley's sex parties may be odd but they're none of our business
- Noel McAdam: The Assembly is bogged down... can MLAs dig themselves out?
- Gail Walker: Why media row with Iris just doesn't add up

Top stories from Monday, 21 July 2008

- Robert Fisk: When the war propaganda turns out to be factual

Closing date
1 August 2008
For terms and
conditions log onto
[www.ulsterbank.ie/](http://www.ulsterbank.ie/gaabusiness)
gaabusiness

Ulster Bank Ireland Limited
is regulated by the
Financial Regulator

