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Killers will not ruin our peace

Pro fide et patria

Editorial

11/03/2009

The murder of Constable Stephen Carroll is a devastating blow to his family, the PSNI and the entire community in Northern Ireland, which had hoped never to experience the death of another police officer at the hands of paramilitaries.

Along with the murders of two British soldiers in Ardara, the cold-blooded killing of a man who was on duty, performing a vital service to the people of Craigavon, represents a significant challenge to a way of life we had perhaps begun to take for granted.

Given the series of shootings and bombings in recent months, there was obvious concern that the dissidents would eventually succeed in their aim of killing a police officer. The first paramilitary murder of a member of the PSNI is a desperately sad landmark and is clearly aimed at undermining the new policing structures.

It is also being seen as a test of the peace process and while it has been tested before, there is no doubt three killings within a 48-hour period have shaken people throughout the north and raised the spectre of a return to conflict.

However, amid the fear, anxiety and anger, there are positive signs that should provide considerable encouragement.

The power-sharing government has shown a calm, determined and unified approach. Sinn Fein and the DUP have demonstrated a firmness of resolve and a commendably measured response to the most difficult circumstances.

For Sinn Fein, the upsurge in dissident republican activity is a direct challenge to their leadership and after an initial delay in condemning the Massereene attack, senior figures have been unequivocal in their rejection of this insurgent campaign.

The British government and chief constable have also ruled out a return to soldiers on the streets – which the dissidents were clearly hoping to provoke.

However, the overwhelming feeling from members of the public is one of outrage at this threat to peace.


It is important this translates into hard evidence and useful information that can help the police bring those responsible to justice. After the failures of Omagh, these killings will be seen as a key test of the police's investigative skills. At this time, it is also essential all necessary resources are directed at thwarting the dissident campaign.

Today also offers an opportunity for people to demonstrate their firm opposition to the gunmen and show support for the injured and bereaved.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has urged people to attend rallies in Belfast city centre, Guildhall Square in Derry and Newry Town Hall, in order that those offering fear and chaos receive a clear message – this is our peace and it will not be destroyed.

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