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From Times Online May 20, 2008

How long should Northern Ireland pursue justice after the Troubles?

Ireland correspondent David Sharrock doubts there is much to gain by prosecuting another Captain Robert Nairac murder suspect



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There was a bitter little rhyme once popular with Irish republicans which ran: *Captain Nairac was a spy, Where is Captain Nairac nye?*

Out of some 3,300 victims, the story of the murder of the Ampleforth and Oxford-educated Grenadier Guardsman continues to exercise a compelling hold on the mythology of the Troubles.

This morning's [arrest](#) of a 57-year-old man seems to flow from a BBC

Northern Ireland television documentary aired last year on the 30th anniversary of Captain Nairac's abduction, killing and disappearance.

The programme's major coup was an interview with Terry McCormick, a South Armagh republican who was the first to assault Nairac on the night of May 15, 1977. McCormick followed him out of the Three Steps Inn after the officer, then serving undercover with military intelligence, drew attention to himself by pretending to be an IRA man from Belfast, chatting up a local woman and singing a rebel song.

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McCormick gave a fresh account of what happened to Nairac after he was abducted by members of the Provisional IRA and smuggled over the border, in a tale which has been retold many times. He admitted to being the man who pretended to be a priest, urging the 29-year-old captain to make a full confession before he was shot.

Nairac, weakened after an hour's brutal interrogation, stuck to his cover-story to the end, saying only: "Bless me father, for I have sinned" before being finished off.

According to McCormick, the story that Nairac's body was put through a meat grinder and fed to pigs – first told by the repentant IRA intelligence officer Eamon Collins in his searing memoir *Killing Rage* (Collins was later beaten to death by South Armagh IRA members) – is not true.

His body was buried in a shallow grave on land near where he was killed in Ravensdale, Co Louth, but when it was grubbed up by animals it was moved and "given a funeral" elsewhere, site unknown.

His remains are still officially the subject of an investigation by the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains, which is hunting for those "disappeared" by the Provisional IRA.

After Nairac's murder McCormick immediately fled to the United States, where he is still living. Six men were subsequently convicted of Nairac's murder and manslaughter, while another three suspects, including McCormick, went on the run.

McCormick is now 65 years old and full of remorse. He is now, he said, "a completely different person . . . It's something that will never ever leave my mind. There's not a day goes by that I don't say a prayer for Captain Nairac."

It is impossible to know how many men and women today find themselves in the same position as McCormick, struggling with their consciences over deeds committed during a long outbreak of inter-



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communal sectarian madness which appears to be over for good.

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James why was it not the 9 counties then why only 6? Perhaps because the British knew they would not keep the majority in the 9 so changed the boundaries arbitrarily. If you convused in the 9 counties now it is more than likely to fall on the side of the Republic.

Rachel, Canterbury,

to Eliza, I LIVE in Northern Ireland we have suffered the demonic barbarism of so called Irish republicans.3000 innocents can` t turn a blind eye because they were murdered by the ira et al
The majority in the 9 counties DID NOT want home rule hence democratic Northern Ireland-the idea then to live .

James, belfast, northern ireland still part of the uk

If we believe that we should track down and prosecute Nazi concentration camp officers and guards even in their old age, then it follows that the same moral hunt must apply to the perpetrators of murderous crimes in Ireland - no matter which side of the sectarian divide they took.

Tim Lewis, Wainscott, United States

And what about crimes against the republic. It seems the republic is oft the forgotten victim in the troubles.

Rachel, canterbury,

Forever

Alan, Chelmsford, UK

Nobody should be imune from proscitution, trouble being in order to snatch peace that we are all thankful for, many have been imprisoned and freed many years before they should have been. It would be hard to impose a lenthly life sentence on anyone from the NI troubled years.

RayB , Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Britain divided Ireland against the wishes of the majority in 1922. Its amazing how many British people are ignorant of this. As a former citizen of N. Ireland I remember too well the hideous apartheid system that Britain turned a blind eye to

eliza, Boston , USA

Justice isn't timebound and families having closure doesn't preclude bringing those responsible to justice whether they're terrorists or Nazis.

Nigel Davies, Manchester, England

as long as it takes.

james, doncaster, uk

Nobody should escape justice. His killers should be found and imprisoned for the rest of their lives.

Carl, London,

In your final paragraph you seem to present the two things as mutually exclusive. Why?

Sophie, Birmingham,

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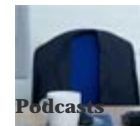
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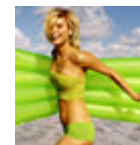
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