

Catholic Priests Involved in IRA Murders

By Austin Cline November 8, 2013

According to evidence and interviews, Catholic priests in Ireland actively cooperated with an IRA system that included murdering and 'disappearing' people. The priests imagined that they were doing the right thing by providing last rites to someone who was about to die but not reporting it lest they not be given a similar opportunity the next time a murder occurred.

On some level that might sound reasonable, but it assumes that it's reasonable to exchange the lives of people for possible help to alleged souls in the future. It also means that these priests gave religious legitimacy and justification to murder. They cannot deny support for a system that they actively participate in.

If Fr McCoy had refused to provide Extreme Unction for Mr Molloy, he would have felt he was denying him God's grace.

If he had left the house where Molloy was awaiting death and called the police to try to prevent the murder, then the IRA would have been obliged, in its own security interests, to avoid bringing priests in to comfort others.

Further victims would have been dispatched unshriven. That's the Catholic way of viewing the problem.

It is a view which assumes reasonably benign intentions on the part of the IRA; they needed to kill some people, but they didn't mind them going to Heaven afterwards.

Another perspective would suggest that the ritual of bringing a priest to a person under interrogation might be an act of mental torture; an attempt to convince the person that he, or she, really is about to die, turn the screw a bit further before pulling the trigger, in the hope of exacting a confession. How would a priest feel about being used like that? ...

And there was a logic to this position; he needed to retain his credibility with the IRA as someone who could vouch for the guilt, or innocence, of people accused of car theft, drug dealing, rape and other offences.

Source: Belfast Telegraph Given a priest's beliefs, even though I don't share them, I can't fault him for wanting to provide last rites to someone who is about to die. I also can't fault him for wanting others in the future to receive last rites. I may not think his religious beliefs to be reasonable, but he does and his desires here are not only genuine, but are reasonable given his theology.

However, what's far less acceptable is a willingness to trade lives for the sake of giving last rites. No matter how important the religious ritual may be, it can't be more important than people's lives. As soon as you say, in words or deeds, that a religious ritual is worth being an accomplice to murder, then you become a zealot of the worst sort.