



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

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### **"Belfast Telegraph" columnist's timely comments on Clare Short's statements**



**Linda McDowell is a regular contributor to the columns of the "Belfast Telegraph". While I do not endorse everything that she writes, very often her comments are perceptive. Her comments on Clare Short's statements in the "Belfast Telegraph" of 8th October are a prime example of the best in her admirable column. We quote at length from the article. *The Editor.***

"In an interview with the Gulf News (which presumably, she felt was far enough away from Blighty for her comments not to matter) Englishwoman Clare Short was this week feeling the pain of various terrorist outfits from al-Qaida to the IRA. She understood, she said, why some Arabs embraced Islamic militant groups such as al-Qaida. "I think the killing of civilians is always wrong - the Prophet Mohammad's teachings said it was wrong - but I think the cause is just." Also she understood the anger. "I understand their anger completely..." She understood she said, because her father came from Northern Ireland and she knew the history of Ireland. "My father came from Northern Ireland and as you know in Irish history, starting off in the resistance to colonialism, there has been a use of force, and I understand the history of Ireland and I understand why people think 'I can't get justice in any other way'."

Needless to say, given this background, she also understood the IRA... "I think it's always wrong to target civilians, because even when you understood the IRA, they never targeted civilians. That's a terrible moral deterioration that's taken place. "The American public fought against British colonialism with violence, the free French fought against German occupation with violence, the Palestinian people are entitled to resist occupation. I mean, it's in international law (and) the Iraqi people are entitled (to resist occupation.)" So there you have it. George Washington on the same moral plane as a madman who hacks off hostages' heads live on the internet. And Charles de Gaulle no better than some scumbag Hamas suicide bomber....

But back to the understanding Clare - and what I cannot understand about her and people like her, is this: How come they are always so acutely understanding of the sensitivities of the terrorist? But show no understanding, no compassion nor any respect whatsoever for the feelings and sensitivities of terrorist victims?

The IRA never targeted civilians, eh? The IRA who murdered nigh on 2,000 people, the vast majority of whom were civilians? That IRA, Clare? The IRA who murdered 21 civilians and gravely injured 182 civilians in two pubs in your own Birmingham constituency exactly 30 years ago next month? The IRA who massacred ten civilians returning from their day's work in a local factory at Kingsmills in south Armagh, the county in which you are rightly proud to trace your roots? The IRA who blitzed Belfast in a spate of more than 20 no-warning bombs on Bloody Friday, killing and maiming civilian shoppers and workers when they unknowingly fled (just as the IRA had intended) from one explosion, directly into the path of another? The IRA who murdered civilian customers in a fish shop on the Shankill in



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1994 and in previous years on the same road, the customers of local bars and even a furniture shop? What military target does Clare Short imagine a furniture shop might house? The IRA killed two babies in that attack. Does the injustice their parents suffer even for one moment trouble the sensitive “liberal” heart of Ms Short?

Does she ever wonder about the “moral deterioration” of the man who masterminded the La Mon atrocity? Eleven civilians died there. It is hard to see how the man who planned that particularly barbaric incineration of innocent human beings could have confused the annual dinner of members of a collie club with a military target.

Does Clare tell herself that the 11 people who died in Enniskillen on Remembrance Sunday weren't civilians? Since they were paying tribute (along with countless millions of others throughout the world) to the Fallen of two world wars, did she feel that made them an obvious military target? But then the same argument would not extend to Claudy where nine villagers were killed as they went about their daily civilian business. One of the dead was an eight-year-old girl washing a shop window. The car bomb was parked close to where she was working. No room for confusion there, you'd think. So how are we to reconcile that one, Clare, to your “civilians exempted” understanding of the IRA? Or Teebane? Or Coleraine? Or Warrington?

Tempting as it may be to put Clare's claim of IRA innocence down to a Short memory, the fact is that it's something much more despicable. For this is a serving British MP - a woman who is old enough to remember exactly what the IRA did during the Troubles.

This is not someone whose memory is limited to the timescale of the peace process during which the IRA has tried to reinvent itself as HRT - Human Rights Terrorists. Clare Short knows what the 'Ra (republican colloquialism for the IRA) is responsible for. But since she approves of the cause she attempts to re-write the history of the methods. For Clare Short to claim that the IRA never targeted civilians is on a par with any other British MP to try to claim that the IRA's bloodbrothers in the loyalist paramilitary gangster armies didn't target civilians either. It is despicable, it is shameful and it is so gratuitously offensive, it is hard to credit that the halls of Westminster are not, at this very moment, reverberating with calls for her resignation. For this is the other thing that I can't understand about Short's rant - how relatively little condemnation there has been about it.

Instead, the frowning faces of our media watchdogs have this week been turned upon Billy Connolly. The comedian has been more savagely condemned for remarks (meant in jest) which were likely to hurt the family of one terrorist victim, than the MP has been for remarks (said in earnest) which will have hurt thousands. Clare herself, with her insight into injustice, might even have the phrase to help us understand. Yup. That's the one. “Moral Deterioration”