



Book Review — *Kincora: Britain's Shame—Mountbatten, MI5, the Belfast Boys' Home Sex Abuse Scandal and the British Cover-Up*, by Chris Moore.

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In *Kincora: Britain's Shame*, Chris Moore provides an in-depth analysis of the harrowing abuse that occurred at Kincora Boys' Home. Drawing on interviews with survivors and George Caskey, the detective in charge of the criminal investigation, alongside transcripts from police interviews with both victims and the perpetrators, Moore provides a disturbingly clear account of years of abuse that culminated in the conviction of six men in 1981. Three of these men—William McGrath, Joseph Mains and Raymond Semple—were employed at the Kincora Boys' Home. However, these convictions failed to provide a neat conclusion to the Kincora saga. As Moore aptly observes, key questions remained unanswered, primarily: why had the abuse been allowed to continue for so long despite multiple reports from residents? And why did William McGrath, who had staunchly professed that the allegations levelled against him were politically motivated, suddenly plead guilty at the eleventh hour—just when it seemed he was on the cusp of implicating the British state in a cover-up of the abuse (pp. 43–44)?

Moore claims that shortly after the Kincora convictions he was approached by a social worker who put him in contact with a detective who had uncovered evidence of abuse at the Kincora home in 1975. It was this source that led Moore to suspect a larger cover-up had taken place. The unnamed detective had been ordered to stand down an investigation into Kincora after he uncovered information that implicated multiple police officers and civil servants, amongst them Peter England, an undersecretary at Stormont and MI5 officer (p. 53). Moore concludes that William McGrath was at the centre of the British intelligence services attempt to suppress investigations into the abuse at Kincora due to his status as an intelligence asset. McGrath was first approached by intelligence services in

1958 to facilitate clandestine communications beyond the Iron Curtain under the guise of bible shipments. Later, his position within the Protestant Unionist community would be used to subtly influence political tension in Northern Ireland through political agitation and to gather information on key players in the Unionist community through his relationships with leaders such as Ian Paisley. As the Troubles began in Northern Ireland, suspicions of McGrath's involvement with British intelligence services arose. Intelligence officers investigating the Unionist movement were ordered by their superiors to disregard McGrath and Tara (his Protestant paramilitary organisation). Accusations that he was both a homosexual and an intelligence asset from UVF leadership drove a wedge between the UVF and Tara, decimating the latter's membership. It was following the decline of Tara in 1971 that McGrath came to be employed in Kincora (pp. 78–79).

Moore claims that he was first notified in 1982 of MI5's interest in the Kincora investigation by Caskey, who warned him that his reporting on the subject was upsetting those at the intelligence services. Further digging revealed that in 1975, the same year the RUC's investigation of Kincora was shut down, an intelligence officer, Brian Gemmel, was ordered to cease his investigation into the Tara organisation and McGrath's alleged homosexuality. Moore concluded that this was no mere coincidence but instead a concerted effort to obstruct investigation into Kincora. This obstruction would continue as intelligence services refused to allow police to interview officials despite demands from the Northern Ireland director of public prosecutions. It was confidentially relayed to Caskey that Kincora was the centre of an intelligence operation. Moore claims that leaked MI5 documents show that the RUC were kept in the dark about the true nature of the intelligence assets within Kincora. The extent of intelligence services' interference in the Kincora investigation is far more sinister than mere non-cooperation with police. Moore recalls the experience of Collin Wallace, an intelligence officer, who attempted to blow the whistle on the danger posed by McGrath to Kincora residents. Wallace was subsequently reassigned, dismissed and imprisoned for six years on manslaughter charges that were later overturned due to falsified forensics presented by the state, leading Wallace to believe he had been targeted in retaliation for whistleblowing. Additionally, Moore claims that one of his confidential

sources inside Stormont was threatened with imprisonment if they continued feeding information to Moore.

Beyond the institutional cover-up, Moore also investigates the extent to which the abuse extended outside the walls of Kincora. In an interview with survivor Richard Kerr, Kerr divulges that he was sometimes brought to hotels or the homes of men, where he was subsequently abused, making Kincora not just a site of abuse but a centre for child trafficking. One instance detailed by Kerr involved him and another Kincora resident, Stephen Waring, being abused by Lord Mountbatten at his Sligo residence. Given that Mountbatten already had a reputation for perversion and deviancy, and considering his proximity to the Royal Family, Moore asserts that it may have been in the interest of the British state to prevent him from being publicly implicated in a paedophilia scandal. Kerr contends that Mountbatten was not the only wealthy and influential man he was abused by, recalling similar incidents involving 'businessmen, politicians, doctors and lawyers' (p. 230). This led Moore to believe in the possibility of a paedophile ring that operated out of Kincora, with the consent of MI5 to obtain leverage on possible intelligence assets. Kerr was living in London by the time that the Kincora scandal had garnered public interest and during this time he was visited on multiple occasions by individuals who he assumed were plainclothes officers, who encouraged him to stay silent about the abuse he suffered, a request he complied with out of fear for his life.

Overall, Chris Moore provides a thorough analysis of the abuse carried out at Kincora and of the intelligence services' obstruction of both the 1975 investigations and later inquiries that followed the public scandal. Moore offers several possible motives behind the cover-up: that intelligence services intervened to protect William McGrath, an MI5 asset; that inquiries were obstructed to shield the Royal Family from embarrassment if Mountbatten were implicated; or, most disturbingly, that MI5 knowingly allowed a paedophile ring to operate at Kincora in order to gain leverage over potential assets. The selection of sources is excellent—first-hand accounts from survivors and George Caskey provide vivid insight into both the abuse and the investigation. Official documents, used alongside leaked or declassified intelligence files, demonstrate how the cover-up was sustained by selectively withholding key information. The book's thematic

organisation allows Moore to explore the institutional breadth of the scandal, though it occasionally comes at the expense of temporal clarity, making the timeline somewhat difficult to trace. Nevertheless, *Kincora: Britain's Shame* is a well-articulated and accessible work that will appeal to both academic and general readers alike.

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