

Reg Kray: Crime And Punishment

Reg and Ron Kray were convicted for murder in 1969 and sentenced to a minimum of 30 years' imprisonment. Ron Kray is now in Broadmoor and is unlikely to be released.

Reg Kray is in Gartree prison in Leicestershire and still hopes that he will be granted parole before the end of the century.

They have been the subject of many books. Their autobiography *Reg And Ron Kray, 'Our Story'* was published in 1988. **Reg Kray** recently submitted this memoir to *Marxism Today*. It is based on a recollection from 1959 when he was in Wandsworth prison and is dedicated to the memory of Flossie Forsyth

His name was Flossie Forsyth. He was just turned 18 years of age and he was due to be hanged by the neck till death. Young Forsyth had been involved in the killing of another teenager on a tow-path in the Peckham area of south London. He had been convicted of murder. I could see his shape behind the thick red curtain that covered the cubicle in the right hand corner of the church close to the altar. At the time I was serving 18 months in Wandsworth prison. I had read the kid's case and seen his photo in the daily newspapers. It was the face of a good-looking, blonde-haired kid. Now as I sat in deep thought at the boy's terrible plight, I could not help but feel great pity and sympathy for him. His young life was to be snuffed out like the flame of a flickering candle in a few days time.

I tried to picture his last few days alone in the presence of a group of warders who would watch his every move. They would make sure he would not take his own life. He would have no privacy at all, not even to go through his daily ablutions. I doubt he would get any last urges to masturbate or to think sexual thoughts. The occasional cold stares of the warders would stifle such thoughts or urges in his discomfort and misery. What comfort could he expect from people so cold and distant, even if one or two of them did try to be friendly.

I guess the tears would fall, after all he was just a boy;

even a man would shed tears knowing there was no hope. The prison padre would probably visit him so as to offer some solace and words of advice on how Flossie should be brave in the face of his coming death. Everyone wanted things to go smoothly on the day. No fuss or kicking or screams of terror were wanted. The padre too was a total stranger like the wardens. I guess Flossie would have yearned the closeness of his parents' household and remembered how he would get ready to go out with his mates each night to have some fun. It was just one of those kinds of nights that had led to his present predicament and his nightmare existence.

He had gone out for the night to have some fun. They had met another local kid on the towpath on the way to the local dance hall they intended to visit. Though I forget the exact details, remarks were exchanged between Flossie's group and the other kid and a fight started and all joined in because the lone teenager had put up such a fight. This same boy fell to the path where he lay to die. Forsyth and his friends were all eventually arrested and charged with murder. The case was named the 'The Towpath Murder'.

I thought of the victim too and it distressed me that a young life should have been taken. To me they were all victims, there were no victors - they were all losers. I felt sure that none of them



Reg and Ron Kray: Cheated Pierpoint of his guests

thought that tragedy would follow in the wake of their night out. I also thought of the parents of each side and felt great sympathy. I felt like rising from my seat to go to the pulpit and to say aloud: 'Let the kid come with me, I will take care of him. Give him a chance, he is just a teenager. I will straighten

him out.'

He was not an evil person or a killer in the true sense of the word. Fights and attacks were common in the Peckham area at this time. This must have weighed heavily against the accused and been a deciding factor of guilt by association with such an area. All these years later I

still think of Forsyth and the haunting sight of this slightly-built figure in that box-like cubicle, and of his last thoughts. I could not fathom how someone could place a rope around such a young neck and kill like the killing of a chicken. Why could not justice have been tempered with mercy in the case of one

so young? One life lost on the towpath was already one too many. The death of Forsyth did not act as a deterrent - his death was retribution because of a lack of compassion and understanding and the wish to straighten out a young life. We should try to learn and understand as well as judge and condemn. We should look at the causes and effects. Would one stamp on a flower if it began to wilt? Young Forsyth's life was wasted. He became a statistic when he could have been saved. Are we not all guilty, that in our ignorance society has not yet learnt better than to think of the use of a rope!

My brother Ron and I were spared this spectacle by the abolition of hanging and so Pierpoint was cheated of his guests. I guess there were others disappointed too, that Ron and I were not debased by the ritual of the rope. But I ask those who judge to first read *Our Story* by Reg and Ron Kray. Fred Dinenage is the ghost writer. He echoes the thoughts of Ron and I; please read and then conclude if our lives were better for the saving. Above all let us remember the last days of Flossie Forsyth and the lesson learnt that his death did not act as a deterrent.

We should remember some of the details of his last days, of how the ritual would take place in the cold light of day. Young Flossie would be awoken from his restless sleep and the warmth of the grey prison blanket where he lay curled as though seeking the sanctuary once again of his mother's womb. He would then be offered the pleasure of his last request of the choice of meal for breakfast. The anxiety would by this time have built up the bile of his queasy stomach so much so that he would feel physically sick and wish to vomit but, because he had not eaten, his stomach would be too empty to bring anything up.

He felt panic as the warders closed in on him to escort him on his last few steps on shaky legs. He felt faint. Too confused to think his last thoughts, he felt the coarse thick rope round his neck. •