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13 August 2007

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Lá Nua

Conrad Atkinson
EXHIBITION



Lá Nua

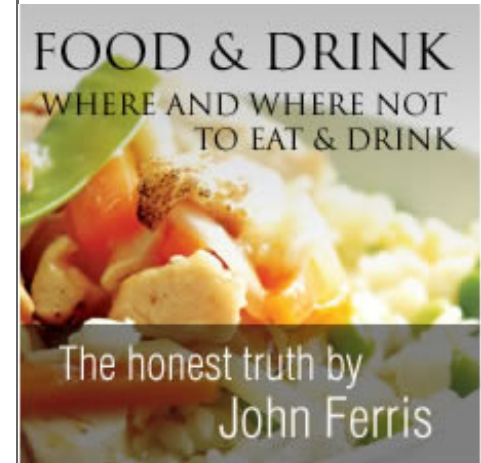
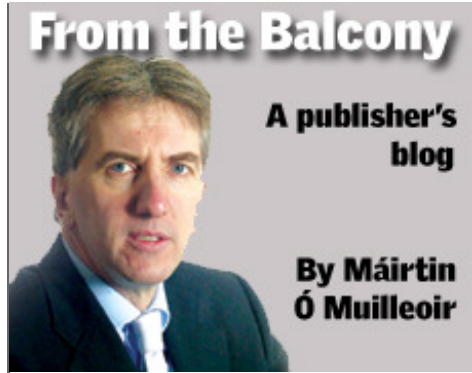
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Editorial

Truth costs nothing but cover-up's expensive



This weekend thousands of people will march to Belfast city centre demanding the truth from the British government about the murders of over three hundred people killed by the state and about many hundreds more murdered by loyalist death squads. These loyalist gangs were armed, financed, provided with intelligence and cover by RUC Special Branch and British Military Intelligence and allowed to carry out a series of murder campaigns against innocent Catholics from the early 1970s onwards.

There are many who say it is time to put the demand for truth to the side and move on. Over the last year several senior police officers and former RUC members have said it's time to end inquiries into the past claiming it is too expensive and time consuming for the police.

Some have said truth is too expensive and they support this by pointing up the cost of the flawed Bloody Sunday Inquiry. This base economic argument, which ignores the depth of feeling among the families of the victims and their communities to get answers as to why the state or its agents were allowed to kill their loved ones with impunity, just does not stand up to scrutiny.

It is not truth which is expensive but cover up. The British government admitted that it murdered 14 innocent civilians on Bloody Sunday but then went to the Tribunal to defend its reputation and its operation on the day of the killings.

The British government refuses stubbornly to disclose vital evidence to families and it continues to cover up the extent of collusion with loyalist death squads despite its most senior policeman of the day John Stevens concluding in his report that collusion claimed the lives of human rights lawyer Pat Finucane and others.

And even as the Police Ombudsman revealed this year the role of loyalist informer Mark Haddock in a whole series of murders former police officers united to attack the investigation rather than call on the guilty officers who allowed Haddock and his gang to conduct their murder campaign to come forward.

Of course the British government and its agents weren't the only party to the conflict and all victims have a right to the truth.

A truth mechanism must be found which will give all victims a sense of closure and all parties to the conflict need to take part in that process. However, it is the British government and the former security apparatus which have resisted any proposals for a truth process other than the courts.

This is not surprising as British courts sentenced around 15,000 republicans and loyalists for their role in the conflict while only a handful of British security personnel ever served time. The present British government has supported the right of the people of Chile to get the truth about government killings of citizens back in the early 1970s the people of the North deserve no less.

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