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North Belfast News Editorial

North Belfast News

Editor

26/01/2007

Unionists too must play role

As republicans prepare to go to Dublin to vote on new policing and justice arrangements for the North the Police Ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan has produced the most damning evidence to date of a state-run murder campaign in the North over two decades.

Ms O'Loan's inquiry started off with a single complaint from local man Raymond McCord that an RUC informer had ordered the brutal killing of his son.

However as the Ombudsman's investigators began to dig into Raymond McCord's case they uncovered a trail which to date has linked Special Branch agents to at least a dozen murders in North Belfast.

That they were able to get close to the truth at all is testimony to their determination and professionalism. Evidence was withheld and destroyed before they could view it but the most despicable act of all is the refusal of senior police officers and former officers to co-operate with the investigation.

Despite this the Ombudsman has managed to pull together a damning indictment of a police force which run agents and through them paramilitary gangs who were allowed to murder at will.

It should bring to an end once and for all the nonsense, which has been currency in some circles since the publication of the Stevens Report in 2003 into the murder of human rights solicitor Pat Finucane, that collusion was only the work of a few rotten apples.

However, one of the most disappointing aspects of the reaction to the report have been the attacks by some unionist politicians on the professionalism and integrity of the Ombudsman's office.

They do their community a disservice by the blind faith they show to a discredited police force which they regarded as their own. That force allowed the Mount Vernon killer gang to murder Protestants as freely as they had their nationalist neighbours.

Support for any police service shouldn't stretch to the justification of the murder of citizens by agents of the police and security services.

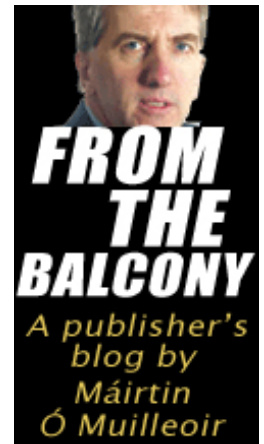
The task of our politicians should be to make policing more transparent and accountable. It is in the interest of all to ensure the Ombudsman's office is given all the tools it requires to do its job more effectively, including the ability to bring police officers to book who have colluded in murder or in covering up it up.

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