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# Vilifying the dead

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By Staff reporter

O what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.

The stench arising from the current British enquiry into the murder of the Lurgan solicitor, Rosemary Nelson must surely assail the nostrils of those at the front line in the defence of human rights around the world.

The murders of the defence I

## ADVERTISEMENT

awyers Rosemary Nelson and Pat Finnucane shocked even those of us who were used to the dirty war being waged on our streets. The murders also shocked people in the United Nations, and the European Parliament and perhaps for the first time, the extent of British violations of human rights in the North of Ireland dirty war became a focus for international human right organisations throughout the world. Who would believe that a country claiming to be the mother of Parliamentary democracy would preside over a system, nay even be part of a system that murders lawyers? That only happens in Latin American dictatorships or so they tell us. Yet under British democracy, death squads, official and unofficial, have operated in the 6 Counties for the past forty years.

Rosemary Nelson was a victim of the death squads. The Mother of four children was blown to bits by a bomb placed beneath her car on a cold day in March, 1999. Long before the death squads finished her off, this small woman, a lawyer and champion of human rights, had been subjected to years of threats from RUC officers and Unionist paramilitary organisations in the Lurgan area of the North.

In September 1998 a year before she was murdered, she testified before a United States Congressional hearing during which she stated that because she represented suspects detained for questioning about politically motivated offences, she had begun to experience difficulties with the RUC. She claimed that these difficulties involved RUC officers questioning her professional integrity, making allegations that she was a member of a paramilitary group and at their most serious, making threats against her personal safety including death threats to herself and her children. She also told of receiving threatening phone calls and letters and of being physically assaulted, intimidated and verbally abused by the RUC during the Drumcree standoff in 1997.

Many of the Human Rights organisations including CAJ, the British Irish Watch, and the United Nations special investigator Param Curamaswamy accepted that her complaints were valid. At least sixteen other solicitors had also made complaints against the RUC for alleged threats although it was suspected that this did not represent the true extent of alleged RUC intimidation of solicitors representing Republicans/Nationalist suspects.

So serious did the threats become against Rosemary Nelson that the Independent Commission for Police Complaints took the unprecedented step to refer them to the then Secretary of State, Mo Mowlam.

A lesser person would have given up and moved but Rosemary Nelson was no ordinary lawyer.

She pursued the RUC over the killing of Robert Hamill and successfully helped Colin Duffy to appeal his conviction on a charge of murder.

But it was her work with Brendan Mac Coinnaith and the Garvaghy Road Residents Association that earned her the hostility of Unionist Paramilitary organisations, closely associated with the RUC.

When the death threats didn't work, hundreds of leaflets using the most vile language, impugning her reputation and claiming that she was having affairs with known IRA men, were posted all over Lurgan. It is tribute to her bravery and the loyalty of her husband that she continued to do her work on behalf of the people.

The same allegations surfaced last week when the British established enquiry heard claims by an anonymous RUC Special Branch man hiding behind a curtain, that were similar to the leaflets in Lurgan all those years ago.

Neither those who knew Rosemary or the wider Nationalists community were surprised although most were outraged that in a time of political policing progress; the bad old days of the RUC haven't gone away.

But then scurrilous and malicious allegations and character assassination is the stock in trade of the British establishment and their puppet police and paramilitaries.

The minds of the people had to be destroyed before the subjugation of their bodies.

It was the first story that counted, usually lies, half truths and smears so brilliantly described by the former British intelligence officers, and whistle blowers, Colin Wallace and Fred Holyroyd. Their job in Lisburn RUC station was to peddle as much disinformation as a compliant media would accept.

Both became the victims of character assassination by their British Masters when they fell foul of MI5.

We don't have to stray far from our own City for such examples for examples of the character assassination of the dead. The dead of Bloody Sunday were vilified throughout the world, before their corpses were even cold.

The Widgery enquiry put the official British seal on the story.

Indeed an enquiry has been set up by the British for every atrocity they have committed over the past forty years. The objectives were never about truth or proper investigation but to make the issue sub judice, in the hope that by the time the inquiry reported, the incident would be forgotten.

The opportunity to impugn the integrity of the victim or witnesses was an additional bonus.

Those with long memories will recall the Bennet enquiry into the beating of suspects in interrogation centres by the RUC. Doctor Irwin a police doctor, who had examined many of the suspects, spoke on television about the number of injuries he had seen.

He was accused in a leaked story to the Daily Telegraph, of holding a grudge against the RUC because of their failure to investigate a crime by a member of the security forces against his wife.

The allegations that death squad operations were official British Government policy resulted in another enquiry headed up by the Deputy Chief Constable of Manchester John Stalker. A professional policeman, he got to close to the truth and had to be removed but not before his character and those of his associates had been destroyed and his career as a policeman finished.

Even the reputation and integrity of the United Nations Rappateur Param Cumaraswamy was publicly questioned by the RUC because he raised concerns about the threats to Rosemary Nelson and the lack of a proper investigation into the murder of Pat Finnuane.

The problem with all the enquiries set up over the years including the current ones is that the terms of reference are set by the British.

The lawyers representing the family of Rosemary Nelson were not permitted last week, to cross examine the witness who impugned her reputation.

Yet special status in all these enquiries is given to MI5 as well as to former RUC officers and representatives of the Ministry of Defence. It is becoming clear that the objectives of the current enquiries advocated by the Canadian Judge Cory are more concerned with character assassination than with establishing collusion in the murder of Rosemary Nelson. It is equally clear that the British Government can't afford an enquiry that will be truly independent.

It was the late Fr. Denis Faul who in the course of his work in exposing the atrocities of the British Army and the RUC in the 1970's stated 'I can verify that the British never told the truth about a single thing they ever did in this country.'

If the current enquiries are anything to go by, truth is not part of their agenda.

Someone once stated that Ireland has always been the rock upon which English virtue has floundered. To that could be added the virtue and credibil

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