

[Register](#)

[Sign In](#)

[Drag this link onto your Home button to make us your homepage](#)

[Help](#) [Sitemap](#) [Home](#) [Skip Navigation](#) [Contact Us](#) [Disability Statement](#)



Site UK Web

[Search](#)

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Sport](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Your say](#)
- [Newspaper](#)
- [Health Info](#)

enhanced by



[Archive](#)

[Forums](#)

[Pixel Page](#)

[Subscriptions](#)

[Motors](#)

[TV Guide](#)

[Quiz](#)

Wednesday, 30th July 2008

Premium Article !

Your account has been **frozen**. For your available options click the below button.

[Options](#)

Premium Article !

To read this article in **full** you must have registered and have a Premium Content Subscription with the **Journal Sunday** site.

[Subscribe](#)

Registered Article !

To read this article in full you must be registered with the site.

[Sign In](#)

[Register](#)

Lost lives

Published Date: 27 July 2008

By Staff reporter

You wonder what they are thinking, the police officers imported from England to work with The Historical Enquiries Team, who are tasked with reinvestigating some three thousand unsolved killings in the North over the past forty years. They have been at the job for almost three years and they don't seem

to be making any more progress than those whose shoddy investigative work, they are trying to address.

Initially it took them nine months to admit that over 1,000 RUC files, if such existed, were missing. You would imagine that they would already have been familiar with the saga of files going missing in the 6 Counties and turning up in the hands of U

ADVERTISEMENT

nionist paramilitaries or found in Orange Halls. Perhaps that's why there has been such a turnover of personnel, with forty percent packing up and leaving in the first year, and another third, the following year. Did they leave out of frustration or anger at such unprofessional conduct by fellow members of a force that claimed to be a law and order agency the same as that 'in the mainland'? Perhaps they felt that the RUC was not in the mould of the traditional British Bobby. Whatever, a lot of the British police officers seconded to the HET couldn't stay the pace and left, maybe for no other reason in that they were just here in the first instance to make a fast buck.

It is clear that the process of investigating the unsolved killings is going to cost more and take longer than the six year £ 34 million budget, set up by Peter Hain, especially if they continue to have staffing problems. The HET has reached the halfway mark in terms of time but are only at 1974, in terms of the examination of cases.

That said, the HET team which includes key individual officers from the Stephens enquiries, must surely wonder why there are so many 'unsolved killings', almost three thousand, and how the RUC, the most highly paid police force in the entire UK, got away with turning the proverbial blind eye to deaths that were going on around them. Everyone knows including the HET that the RUC had almost unlimited resources to do the job.

In 1969, the RUC had some 3,500 members with a further 8,000 in the B-Specials, mostly part time. By 1973 that number had tripled to some 23,000, including the newly formed Ulster Defence regiment. That remained the situation for the next thirty years, which meant that there was one member of the armed services for every 69 people in the North.

Many will argue that the reason the RUC failed to do the job they were paid to do was because there was a war raging on the streets although neither the RUC or the British Government or Unionism, have acknowledged that the conflict of the past forty years was a war, guerrilla or otherwise.

The 'problem' was law and order. That being the case, one wonders that with a garrison which rarely dropped below 23,000, at their disposal, the RUC recruited mainly from the Unionist community, the RUC failed to properly investigate the deaths of combatants and civilians alike.

Not only did they fail as suggested by the eminent lawyer Paddy Hillyard in the book, 'Justice Under Fire,' to police crime', their primary objective as police was focused on harassing the entire Catholic population whom they regarded as 'suspect' and disloyal .

Some 24,000 people were detained during arrest and search operations, in the years 1972 -1977, years that recorded the highest number of fatalities in the conflict.

The total number of arrests over a fifteen year period up to 1986, was a staggering 75, 000, the majority of whom were from the Catholic community.

House searches over the same period numbered 170,000 a statistic which revealed that every Catholic house in the North was searched at least twice.

With such harassment of the Catholic population occupying the energies of the RUC, it was highly probable that they would not be too bothered when non combatants were murdered in the streets. Nor would they have been preoccupied with arresting those involved.

In retrospect it is clear that the RUC and the British intelligence services, many of whom were involved directly or indirectly in the sectarian murders of Catholics, were working to British political agenda of defeating the IRA no matter what the cost in terms of lives lost and secure in the knowledge that there would be no questions asked or no investigations carried out.

The legacy of silence around almost three thousand deaths, has been broken by the relatives of the bereaved and by the work of organisations such as The Relatives for Justice, the Pat Finnuane Centre, Healing Through Remembrance, Cunamh, and ordinary people who want answers from those who deliberately sabotaged investigations, destroyed evidence and told lies and who walked into the sunset of retirement with a golden handshake from Patton.

The HET need to assure relatives that those who were responsible for missing files, those who destroyed evidence, those who failed to do the job that they were paid to do, will be made amenable to the law. That another British Government enquiry has had to search police stations for missing files is of concern to all who recall the attempts to destroy evidence in the Stephens enquiry.

That the work of the HET is being impeded by lack of co-operation not only from past members of the RUC but also by many of the Special Branch promoted to top jobs within the PSNI .

It is essential if this enquiry is to have any credibility that such personnel are questioned on the issue of the destruction of evidence crucial to the investigations of the cover up of the murder of citizens by the State.

It would be nice to think that the British Government in setting up the HET is responding to the demands of relatives for the truth of what happened to their loved ones, and why they had never been given any information on the circumstances surrounding their deaths or why there was no proper investigation by those being paid handsomely for that service.

It would be nice to know how many of the cases under investigation involved killings by the RUC or the intelligence services or how many died as the result of State agencies protecting informers.

No matter the motives for the current politically engineered Historic Enquiry, it will lack any credibility while the British continue to suppress the Stephens reports and while those who added to the pain and suffering of the bereaved, are not held to account.

The full article contains 1121 words and appears in Journal Sunday newspaper.

Page 1 of 3

[Next Page »](#)

- **Last Updated:** 29 July 2008 12:15 PM
- **Source:** Journal Sunday
- **Location:** Derry

Bookmark:



Comment on this Story

In order to post comments you must [Register](#) or [Sign In](#)

[RSS Feed of this article's comments](#)

Delivery formats: [RSS](#), [Atom](#), [Javascript & Email](#)

Sunday News

- [Derry News](#)
- [Inishowen News](#)
- [Agenda](#)

Sunday Sport

- [Sport](#)
- [Coyler's Comment](#)
- [Sports Editorial](#)

Columnists

- [Eamonn McCann](#)
- [Lisa Burkitt](#)
- [Mary Nelis](#)
- [Ellen Unedited](#)
- [Kelli's Confab](#)
- [Father Michael Canny](#)



[What's this?](#)

- [Email a friend](#)
- [Print article](#)
- [Increase text size](#)
- [Decrease text size](#)
- [Be the first to comment on this article...](#)

More Mary Nelis

- [Lost lives](#)
- [Truth and lies](#)
- [Bless me father](#)
- [DUP can't pick and choose](#)
- [Voting no to the bully boy](#)
- [The Famine: A](#)

Today's Vote

Would you buy a book written by Girl's Aloud singer and Derry girl, Nadine Coyle?

Yes

No


[Vote Now >>](#)

[shared tragedy](#)

- [Don't bank on it](#)
- [Don't bank on it](#)
- [Educating for the future](#)
- [The writing on the wall](#)
- [Respect for the dead](#)
- [April 1998 - the time we began to hope](#)
- [Failing the policing challenge](#)
- [An identity crisis](#)
- [Easter Letter to an Taoiseach](#)

[More Mary Nelis >>](#)

Featured Advertising

- [Contact us](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Archive](#)
- [Our sister newspapers](#)
- 

All rights reserved ©2008
Johnston Press Digital Publishing
Sister Newspapers:



This website and its associated newspaper adheres to the Press Council of Ireland's Code of Practice. If you have a complaint about editorial content which relates to inaccuracy or intrusion, then contact the

Editor by clicking [here](#).

If you remain dissatisfied with the response provided then you can contact the Office of the Press Ombudsman by clicking [here](#).

