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A Journal of Protest and Dissent

Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission

Mick Hall • 21 September 2007

It has become increasingly clear, since the new DUP led administration was established at Stormont, that there is no political will within the leading political parties of the United Kingdom and Ireland to work towards a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission that looks at the years of the north of Ireland's 'dirty war', including the criminal collusion that we now know took place between UK Security Forces and Irish para-militaries.

For the London based political parties, real scrutiny of the 'secret state' has always been out of bounds. At best a Westminster Parliamentary committee will periodically look at the work of the security services. The members of this Committee are more often than not selected due to their longevity as parliamentarians, past links with the military, or worse, the very security services they are tasked to investigate. Thus no one is surprised when the members of this committee merely tinker around the edges and offer up a report that give the boys and girls at Spook Central an 'A+'.

Consider that the UK Security Services down the years failed to see the threats: the Argentine military posed to the UK Protectorate the Falkland Islands; allegedly reported wrongly to the British Prime Minister Tony Blair that Saddam Hussein's regime had WMDs etc; and at one time had as head of the counter-espionage department which worked against the Soviet Union, Kim Philby, who went on to end his career as a KGB General and holder of the Order of Lenin. One might have thought at the very least a little more diligence would have been more appropriate when overseeing the security services. But such is the obscure Byzantine ways of the class ridden British Establishment.

The north of Ireland's political parties, many of whom represent politically the victims of UK State collusion, are little better. The Unionists secretly regard any collusion that took place as being a necessary price to be paid for defeating and bringing to heel the Provisional Republican Movement. The SDLP is far too timid to go out on a limb over this matter as it is not how they operate, still believing after all that has happened in the

There is no such thing as a dirty word. Nor is there a word so powerful, that it's going to send the listener to the lake of fire upon hearing it.
- Frank Zappa



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north of Ireland that back channels are the way to conduct 'civilized' political business when dealing with the UK State.

As to Sinn Fein, whilst I have no doubt the majority of its membership wish to see the British murder machine in Ireland exposed and brought to account, their leaders, having signed the GFA, are like a fly caught on an old fashioned fly-paper, believing they have no option but to concede this one to the British State, as they are fearful of what might be revealed about contacts between the security services and leading Republicans if any Commission was to seriously look into the dirty war. When periodically SF leaders fail to restrain themselves due to pressure from below and start making public statements about the need for a collusion enquiry, the British quickly swat them down by retaliating with a leak to some opportunist Unionist politico, who threatens to name some unfortunate Sinner as a long time British security force informer.

So does this mean a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission is dead in the water as many commentators now claim? Not at all. What the aforementioned means is that the responsibility for bringing any TJ&RC into being rests where it always has, with civil society, both in Ireland, the UK, EU and USA. Mr friend Anthony McIntyre is mistaken when he wrote in [a recent Blanket article](#) that

"It is hard to see how the issue of truth is going to be resolved. The stark answer is that it won't be. The current British government would need to be of the same mind as the present Argentinean government which has taken a strong stand against the record of the 1976-83 military junta and is demonstrably prepared to grasp the nettle of state murder and torture".

For what Anthony failed to mention was that previous Argentinean Governments were just as hostile when it came to looking at the dark years of the Military Junta in Argentina as the current British government is to a TJ&RC. It was only continuous pressure from Argentine Civil Society that brought about a change in government policy, beginning with the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who three decades ago began their protest in Buenos Aires in support of the victims of the Junta's dirty war.

Are those who have been the victims of UK State collusion in criminality any less worthy than their Argentine counterparts? Of course not, nor should we underestimate the great reluctance and hostility any campaign for TJ&RC will face from the UK State and its Irish political acolytes. But the struggle for human rights and state accountability has never been easy and has always been paved with a mirage of governmental mantraps and diversions. But by mentioning the Argentine example Anthony has done us a service, for what it shows is solidarity, persistence and bloody mindedness can achieve progress if not tiny miracles. For time and again the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were told by the naysayers that they could never succeed and were threatened and bullied by the representatives of the State and various political parties who were complicit in the Military Junta's dirty war. But succeed they did.

We should also not over look the fact that like its Argentinean counterpart, the campaign for a TJ&RC may well take time to achieve its aims and during that period many of the current politicians who are placing road blocks in its path will gradually be leaving the political scene. This leaves the way open for others, possibly more opened minded and less tainted by the past, to take their place and thus it is essential that when this generational change occurs, a strong, vocal TJ&RC Campaign is knocking on their door.

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The struggle for a TJ&RC is part of the broader struggle for the United Democratic Socialist Republic. For with the GFA, the British State is doing all it can to turn the clock back and rewrite its brutal history in the six counties. An ongoing campaign to expose the levels of UK collusion in criminality during the long war is necessary to expose those who choose to acquiesce to the revisionist historical viewpoint. There are those who will and do claim that the military occupation of the six counties during the long war was all about enforcing the rule of law. The very presence of an active TJ&RC campaign and the British State's refusal to establish such a Commission will tell the world that British claims about being the guardians of the rule of law in Ireland are nothing less than historical hogwash.

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