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### News

## Pupper-masters of dirty war still pulling strings

Sunday, July 08, 2007

As the PPS rules out any further prosecutions following the Stevens Inquiry, Brian Rowan asks what secrets from Ulster's 'Dirty War' remain to be uncovered - and how many were buried with the victims of the 1994 Scottish Chinook disaster

IN one statement - in something that was out of the blue - an ugly chapter in our dirty war was closed, but for how long?

The recent decision that there will be no further prosecutions following the Stevens probe into alleged collusion between loyalists and the security forces has left behind many unanswered questions.

Those questions are not just about Pat Finucane's killing, not just about that decision relating to the collusion investigation, but take us into a wider context and that wider search for truth.

The 'dirty war' was about puppets and strings, all of it part of a hidden play, something we were never meant to see.

And many of the secrets of that dirty war were buried in the Chinook helicopter crash of 1994, when so many Special Branch, Security Service and Army intelligence personnel lost their lives.

The decisions and orders of those officers were buried long ago.

So, there are cases in which some of the story may emerge, but certainly not all of it.

You got an example of the kind of war games that went on in that recent statement from the Public Prosecution Service - the example of the agent William Stobie passing UDA guns to the police in 1989, and those guns being given back and then later used in murder.

The statement read: "There was insufficient evidence to identify senior police officers or officers involved in the decision to return the firearms to Stobie."

Why? Where did the trail go cold?

Is it possible that some of this goes back to some of those who lost their lives in that helicopter crash?

Getting to all of the truth, all of the decisions, all of the orders, across a whole range of incidents is an impossible task. We may, at some time in the future, get to see some more of the jigsaw, but not all of the picture.

But there is something else happening.

The biggest threat to the secrets of the past is the telling of war stories.

The names of agents - covert human intelligence sources - are seeping out.

Some have been published, others haven't.

But the information that is there - both published and unpublished - requires us to re-examine the 'war' and to ask some more questions.

There are two names - two loyalists - in the most senior positions who I am told were, and possibly still are, Special Branch agents registered as covert human intelligence sources.

The names take you into the leadership of the UVF and the UDA in Belfast - long-time leadership figures who must have been part of and aware of many of the orders which were given.

Those orders meant that people died.

What was the role of these agents? What was their part in the dirty war? What were they paid for?

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I have said before that the puppets and the strings became a tangled mess.

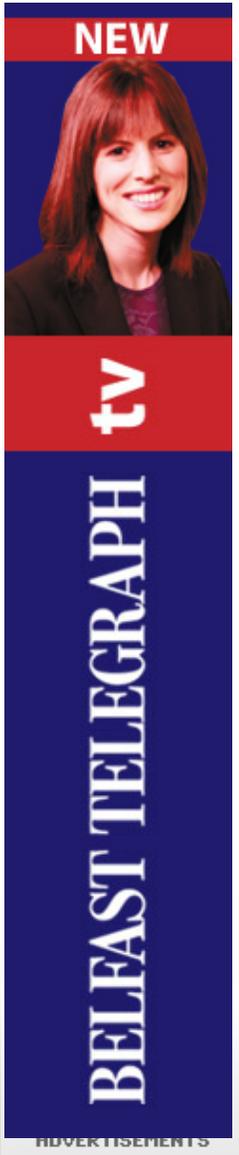
And I am even more convinced now.

The dirty war was a filthy place.

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