NEWS LETTER LETTER FOR PUBLICATION

May 2017

Dear Editor,

Trevor Lunn, Alliance MLA for Lagan Valley in his article (4 May 2017) condemned the proposal for a statute of limitations on the prosecution of soldiers in relation to service in Northern Ireland. That is not an idea I support, as it would be untenable for one category of people to be so exempt from prosecution.

Having said that, the 1998 Belfast Agreement did permit non-military prisoners freedom after a maximum of two years imprisonment. The reason this was not applied to military personnel was to avoid any sense of equivalence between intrinsically criminal actions by paramilitaries and the legitimate security forces of the state. That aspect of the Agreement was one of a number of amnesty-like provisions we have seen in these Troubles.

Mr Lunn wrote, “Murder is murder. The authorities must follow the evidence”, but we already have examples of where that is not the case, not least in the ‘On The Run’ letters also the abandonment of extradition from the Republic.

He can’t have it both ways without being willing to consider the wider issue of amnesty or drawing a line.

Murder is indeed murder but very, very few of the 300 killings by the security forces could ever be so described. The motives involved were at worst arguably mixed or the actions in most cases legitimate. That was not the case for the 3,000 killings by paramilitaries.

The MLA’s remarks are seriously flawed when he wrote, “The argument that soldiers face more focus into their actions is a fallacy as proven by statistics which show Army actions account for around a third of PSNI legacy investigations.”

Given the 10% of deaths attributable to the police and army, by his words, they are three times more subject to current investigation than the paramilitaries. In truth, the disproportionality is due to the pressure to re-open every killing involving the security forces - although, most definitely, not including the 1,000 cases where the death involved was that of a soldier or police officer.

The Alliance MLA calls for justice and truth but we know these are difficult concepts to define, let alone provide. There is no justice in totally disproportionate re-investigations while the notion that all the security files and details on each death should be made public is naïve and dangerous. Police forces and armies rely almost entirely on intelligence to defeat terrorism. If those sources, methods, and agents are revealed, their armoury for the future is denuded. The use of intelligence is how the state avoids descending to the brutality of the paramilitaries.

It is time for the Alliance Party to address the broader issues here not make facile demands.

Yours etc

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<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/trevor-lunn-ruc-and-army-in-the-main-acted-honourably-in-troubles-but-if-evidence-of-wrongdoing-leads-to-trials-then-so-be-it-1-7945601>

**Trevor Lunn: RUC and army in the main acted honourably in Troubles but if evidence of wrongdoing leads to trials then so be it**

**News Letter 4 May 2017**

**Trevor Lunn**

**Recently, a Westminster committee recommended a statute of limitation on the investigation or prosecution of former British soldiers for murders committed during the Troubles.**

The news will have been a major disappointment to victims and bereaved survivors of the conflict here.

Let me state from the outset I recognise the contribution of both the Army and the RUC over the years in Northern Ireland. They often stood between us and anarchy, and in the main conducted themselves honourably.

But this should not obscure the fact in some cases they fell short of the standards expected of them. Therefore if there is evidence showing people died as a result of actions carried out by soldiers or police officers outside the law, then it should be followed and the law applied. Even if it does concern members of the security forces.

Like many MLAs, I work with victims and groups supporting those bereaved during the Troubles. The families of the victims of the Ballymurphy massacre, for instance, have now been waiting 46 years to find out officially why the Army shot their loved ones, who did it and who ordered it.

They are just as entitled to justice as anyone else.

The argument that soldiers face more focus into their actions is a fallacy, as proven by statistics which show Army actions account for around a third of PSNI legacy investigations.

To tell victims, from all sections of our community, a line will be drawn at 1998 and nothing prior to that will be investigated flies in the face of the rule of law and we cannot allow it to happen. Murder is murder. The authorities must follow the evidence and if it leads to prosecutions, so be it.

What happens to those found guilty is a matter for the courts on a case by case basis. To not apply the normal rules of British justice is unacceptable, irrespective of when the crime occurred or who committed it.

**• Trevor Lunn is an Alliance MLA for Lagan Valley**