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News

Lynda Gilby: It felt like war...

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Sunday, January 13, 2008

A ROSE by any other name? I can scarcely believe that 37 years after the whole shebang kicked off here, we are still fighting over whether or not we have been through a war.

Well it sure as hell bloody well felt like one.

When I arrived here in September 1970 and we dodged gun battles in Shaftesbury Square to get home to our student digs, it felt like war.

When soldiers and policemen were shovelling what looked like heaps of raw meat into black bin bags at Oxford Street Bus Station, it felt like war.

When, curious, I wandered down Leeson Street in the hushed, velvet darkness, the street lights having been shot out and the only sound, the purr of patrolling Saracens, it felt like war.

It felt like war, too, when internment was introduced, also when the Shankill Butchers held sway - in times of war, incipient psychopaths invariably find a place for themselves.

It felt like war when the UDR was formed and recruited like crazy; when dark tales of interrogation emerged from Castlereagh barracks; when a bunch of Protestant workmen were blown to smithereens and when loyalist gunmen, screaming: "Trick or treat!" spray the bar with bullets, killing pensioners, Prods and Catholics in the process.

The objection to calling the conflict a war seems to be that by doing so, it implies that the terrorists were "soldiers" and that this somehow legitimises their atrocities.

Nonsense! It doesn't matter a tinker's toss what you call it. Bush and Blair have spouted ad infinitum about the "war on terrorism" and I haven't heard anyone, so far, object to their terminology for similar reasons.

Nothing, but nothing, could ever legitimise the outrages we have seen. We have, indeed, been involved in a war - a particularly dirty and squalid little war - where no side, not republicans nor loyalists nor security forces emerge as snowy white.

The only important thing now, surely is that it NEVER starts up again.

Bhutto drops her son in it

BENAZIR Bhutto was many things. She was certainly brave. She was beautiful. She was a highly intelligent woman. But as a mother, she was rubbish.

How dare she place such a hideous burden on her 19-year-old student son (below) by designating him her successor.

The boy looked absurdly young and vulnerable as he parried questions at a press conference last week. Pleading to be left alone to complete his studies before assuming his mother's mantle.

And Jeremy Paxman hardly emerged covered in glory when he gave the lad a very hard time on Newsnight.

No contest. It was like kicking an Andrex puppy.

These are the carefree years when the boy should be concentrating on getting a decent degree, getting drunk and getting laid.

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Instead, he is now surrounded by security, weighed down by the onerous responsibilities ahead of him, knowing that his martyred mother has almost certainly signed his death warrant.

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