



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Brian Nelson Case

The London Independent on 9 January 1992 published a lengthy exposé (attached) on Brian Nelson involving both his links with British Intelligence and his UDA paramilitary activities. The article was by John Ware and Geoffrey Seed who were responsible for the BBC Panorama (Feb 1990) programme on Security Forces/Loyalist collusion which first brought Nelson to public attention. Nelson's trial for murder and other terrorist charges opens in Belfast this week. The Independent article included reference to alleged incitement of the UDA by the British Army to plant bombs in the Republic. It was speculated that this and other "embarrassing" allegations may emerge during the trial.

Availing of the presence in Dublin of senior NIO officials for the meeting on confidence issues on 10 January the Nelson case was raised informally en marge that meeting. This note records points made to Irish officials by interlocuters on the other side.

- John Ledlie: issue was causing them considerable difficulty and would undoubtedly be embarrassing to the British Government.
- it had resulted in considerable friction between the British Army and the RUC.
- the suggestion (in the article) that the British Army computer was inferior to that of the RUC was misleading: it was rather that the RUC, through superior intelligence work, had amassed a better data base.
- he confirmed that the case had been reviewed by the British Cabinet.

- Austin Wilson: he had seen extensive papers on the case but, on the allegation of British Army involvement in a plot to plant bombs in the Republic, (in what seemed a careful formulation) considered these did not indicate that what was alleged had actually happened.

- when asked if the British Government would seek to refute this allegations offered a vague and imprecise reply

- the decision to prosecute had been taken by the AG, Sir Patrick Mayhew. He suggested that Mayhew, who was heavily criticized for his decision not to prosecute in the Stalker case, may have been influenced by the desire to show that a "balanced" approach was being pursued in such cases

- agreed that the case had caused serious difficulties among the various arms of the British intelligence community in NI and seemed to accept that there would be, as speculated by the Independent, a post-trial shake-up from which the RUC would emerge as the main beneficiary

- the NI0 would not be sending an observer to the trial.

Peter Bell, accepting implicitly that Nelson was a British agent, bemoaned the difficulty of keeping track of the activities of Loyalist paramilitaries now that a clearly valuable resource was no longer in place.

P. Hennessy
13 January, 1992