



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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87A - Nelson
- Collusion

Note for the Information of the Minister
Panorama TV programme on the Nelson affair, 8 June 1992

1. The Panorama programme goes over a good deal of ground already known to us. It does, however, develop some themes and provides additional details, largely on the basis of a jail journal written by Nelson and supplied to the programme makers. The following points are significant:

- Role of British Military Intelligence

Panorama has shown to a wide audience, with the assistance of the former Chief Constable of the RUC

- that the law had been set aside by the Army for a considerable period of time,
- that the Army, chiefly in the person of Colonel J (a Scot named Kerr, who was Nelson's chief handler and a mitigation witness at his trial) had considered this fully justifiable
- that the Army had either negligently or deliberately lost control of their agent.

Nelson had been strongly defended by the Army at his trial and the then Secretary of State, Mr. King, was reported to have written to the DPP at the time of Nelson's arrest describing him as a valuable agent.

It is clear that the RUC, who are unhappy at the role of Military Intelligence, were an important source of information for the programme makers:

- it is stated in the programme that only some of the information gathered by Nelson was passed on to the RUC by Military Intelligence

- it is stated that Nelson played a role in 10 murders and targetted a further 16 people.

- the Army are alleged not only to have known more than they admitted about planned assassinations, but to have given Nelson assistance in the targetting of Alex Maskey (Sinn Fein Councillor) and a Belfast IRA commander.

- South African connection

Panorama highlight Nelson's involvement in the smuggling of weapons from South Africa (some of which were used in subsequent Loyalist murders e.g. in the Ormeau Road betting shop killings).

- Nelson's assistance in saving lives

Colonel J said in Court that Nelson had been instrumental in saving over 200 lives by the information he passed on. Panorama refer to RUC scepticism about these figures and report that, questioned under caution, Colonel J could verify only two cases where Nelson had saved lives, one of them Gerry Adams.

- Review of intelligence operations in the Light of Nelson affair

We had been told earlier this year that an inquiry or study had been undertaken by the British authorities to see what lessons could be learned. We have heard nothing since. We wish to be informed as to the conclusions of this inquiry/study, what action has been taken to prevent an occurrence and what action has been taken against the Army personnel involved in the case.

Anglo Irish Division

11 June 1992