

No. Ireland Report: Chance to Clean House

by Mary Jane Freeman and
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High-level British government officials—past and present—have potential cause for great concern. On April 17, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir John Stevens, the most senior police official in Great Britain, released a summary of his still-secret 3,000-page report on collusion among British Army intelligence, Loyalist paramilitary groups, and the British police force, to murder Catholics in Northern Ireland. This isn't a new story, but the implications, if pursued, are enormous.

In 1998, an *EIR* book review and interview exposed the “dirty war” in Northern Ireland hinted at by the Stevens report. Filmmaker and author Sean McPhilemy's book, *The Committee: Political Assassination in Northern Ireland*, detailed this deadly collusion and pointed to higher-level government involvement. *EIR* wrote, “McPhilemy goes beneath the surface phenomena to tell a blood-curdling tale of collusion, from 1989 to 1991, between the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Loyalist paramilitary death squads, and respected Protestant citizens above suspicion, to plan and execute the murders of Republican paramilitaries and Catholics.” He documented collaboration between the RUC's Special Branch, British Army intelligence's Force Research Unit (FRU), and British Army agent Brian Nelson, in the murder of human rights attorney Patrick Finucane and others (see *EIR*, July 24, 1998).

Stevens' investigations began in 1989, after the RUC failed to find Finucane's killers. According to the Stevens report, joint work between an RUC agent and a British Army agent in the Finucane murder included stolen Army weapons given to the killers, a photo of the victim, and a map of where he lived! A confession by one of the murderers who was being recruited to work for the police, was ignored. Thus, the Stevens report, if ever made public, would, it seems, show that the Army and RUC could have prevented the murder, or caught the killers, and did neither.

This third Stevens report has centered on the FRU's role as a covert Army intelligence unit which recruited and deployed infiltrators. Brian Nelson became one of its most infamous agents. Potentially the most explosive aspect is that the head of the FRU, at the time when these murders were committed, was Gordon Kerr. Until February 2003, Kerr was the British Ministry of Defense (MOD) military attaché in Beijing—posted there after the FRU was disbanded and he was promoted to brigadier general. Kerr's sudden reassignment to the Iraq War front apparently occurred after Stevens had, in early

February, said he was preparing papers for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) in Northern Ireland relating to a prosecution of Kerr and 20 others, according to the *Sunday Herald*. A senior military source told the *Herald*, “This posting makes Kerr untouchable,” as he won't be “dragged away from essential war work” for questioning. Other *Herald* sources who know Kerr said, “It seems bizarre. . . . He isn't an expert in Arab matters.” Since the release of the Stevens material, the MOD insists there is no reason to discipline Kerr.

Kerr's chief FRU operative, coordinating the Ulster Defense Association's (UDA) perpetration of at least 30 murders, was Brian Nelson—the same one named by McPhilemy. Under Kerr's direction, he became the UDA's intelligence chief. In January 1990, the Stevens team identified Nelson as a key suspect, made plans to arrest him and others, but just hours before the arrests, they found their secure headquarters in flames. The fire alarms, telephones, and heat-sensitive intruder alarms were disengaged, and their files destroyed! Stevens insists it was arson. Notably, Nelson turned up dead in the U.K., supposedly of a brain hemorrhage, six days prior to the announcement of Stevens' new report. Asked whether Nelson took damaging secrets to his grave, Stevens replied, “I think he held things back.”

One reason Stevens gives for withholding the full report, is that most of it provides evidence he is preparing to present for prosecutions. But whether his work will be used merely to prosecute lower-level military and police officers, or to clean out higher-level officials who sanctioned and controlled this de facto assassination bureau, remains to be seen.

For example, McPhilemy's book also included evidence pointing to arms deals from South Africa, involving Israelis, to Loyalist gunmen. Some of his less-developed evidence pointed to British intelligence (MI5) and Secret Air Services (SAS) commandos being involved. *EIR* asked McPhilemy if then-circulating intelligence reports that Israeli intelligence official Rafi Eytan had been brought in by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in the early 1980s, to use Israeli capabilities against the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland, might buttress the story-line of his book. He replied, “Well, it certainly is not out of character with Margaret Thatcher.” Lord Mayor of Belfast Alex Maskey put his finger on it, in response to the Stevens report: “This is not about rogue elements with the British system. It is about a state policy sanctioned at the highest level.”

A serious investigation would follow out the leads in McPhilemy's book, and in *EIR*'s special reports, *The True Story Behind the Fall of the House of Windsor* (September 1997), and *George Bush and the 12333 Serial Murder Ring* (October 1996). This could blow back against current British Prime Minister Tony Blair, because of Blair's Iraq War policy. Thatcher, who was Prime Minister when the murders occurred, may be implicated. A senior British intelligence-linked source told *EIR* that Kerr and the FRU had to have been acting “on orders from the highest level.”