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Barry Cowan talks to Major Colin Wallis and Capt. Fred HolroydCOWAN:

In the light of the calls by Merlyn Reese in the House of Commons yesterday for the Prime Minister to make a statement about allegations that MI 5 carried out a dirty tricks campaign against leading politicians in the 70's Talk Back has been discussing those claims with the two men at the centre of the controversy, they were both serving with the Army in Northern Ireland at the time. Major Colin Wallis worked at Army Headquarters in Lisburn and admits he was involved in black propaganda against loyalist politicians and senior members of the Labour Party. Capt. Fred Holroyd worked for the intelligence services operating on the ground both north and south of the border. Holroyd says that the Army and the RUC with the collusion of the security forces in the Republic used loyalist paramilitaries in a campaign which involved kidnapping and murder. He also says he had meetings with the then Garda Commissioner Ned Garvey at his Headquarters in the Phoenix Park in Dublin. Holroyd also claims that the security forces in the Republic provided areas in their territory where the killer squads from Northern Ireland could operate unhindered. This morning when Wallis and Holroyd came into our London studio I began by asking Colin Wallis about the claims by the former Northern Ireland Secretary of State Merlyn Reese that there had been a deliberate disinformation campaign against senior British politicians.

WALLIS:

Well certainly this is quite correct because I first made them available to the authorities in early 1975 and I then later had a meeting with a junior Government Minister late in 1975 when I repeated the gist of the allegations and indeed I wrote to Sir Harold Wilson personally in August 1977 when an internal inquiry into MI 5's activities concluded that they had not been involved in any campaign against the Prime Minister. Now of course that subsequently proved to be untrue by Peter Wright's revelations. Then coming up to most recent times in November 1984 I submitted a full dossier to the Prime Minister personally and that was the dossier that was subsequently stolen from Teddy Taylor M.P.'s Office of the House of Commons so in fact this information has been around for a long time but its the first time that any politician seems to have taken an active interest in it.

COWAN: What exactly was the purpose of this attack on Harold Wilson?

WALLIS: Well I can only guess from the information that I was handling at the time, the main objective I think was in late 1973 early 1974 was to prevent the election of a Labour Government and then as the campaign intensified after the February election the main objective seems to be to prevent the reelection of a Labour Government because it was quite clear from the minority Government that was elected at the beginning of the year that there would have to be an election fairly soon afterwards.

COWAN: Now what about the dirty war against Merlyn Reese and Stan Orm who were then at the Northern Ireland Office?

WALLIS: Well certainly they were targets along with quite a few other Northern Ireland personalities because if you go back to the period before the general election Stan Orm in particular was involved with a number of Irish organisations such as the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster and clearly there was paranoia within the security service during 1973/1974 about the growth of the left wing in Britain or what was seen as the left wing in Britain and I think anyone who was involved in organisations that appeared to be leaning towards the Republican side of the house of Civil Rights or Peoples Democracy or anything of that nature was therefore suspect and any connection therefore was used later on the exploit or for political ends.

COWAN: Now why was Northern Ireland such a useful base to attract two former Prime Ministers and a former Secretary of State?

WALLIS: Well it wasn't just Northern Ireland but I think as far as the Northern Ireland aspect was concerned as you remember very well it was a period when in fact there was a lot of media attention and not just in terms of the United Kingdom press but of course we had a large visiting body of press from the United States and from Europe and indeed all over the World even the Soviet Union, and there was a fascination at that time within the World Press of this war within the United Kingdom which was virtually unheard of and therefore, the role of politicians of any party was always very good copy and people

were fascinated as to which side people supported and their activities and so and so forth.

COWAN: Was it the, what I'll call the selective leaking of true information, or was it simply the production of false information which was leaked to discredit these people?

WALLIS: Its a good point, it was both because in fact the press quite often referred to psychological operations as black propaganda, black propaganda is a very specific meaning and in fact a lot of the information that was used, particularly against semi-terrorist targets was accurate intelligence that was to their discredit. The point I objected to particularly was the use of totally false information directed at political targets and political targets who had no possible connection whatsoever with terrorism or with terrorist activities in Northern Ireland.

COWAN: Could you give me an example of the kind of information about any of the people we have mentioned that was fed to the press with a view to discrediting them?

WALLIS: I think its a bit dangerous from the legal point of view because bearing in mind that it is false, but what we can identify for instance is forged documents purporting to come from the Labour Party with names of prominent Labour personalities and signatories and the contents of the document was really of a very extreme left or communist nature, documents they had not written. Also false election leaflets purporting to come from the Labour Party with overtones or with possible links to the Irish situation.

COWAN: It seems almost third world, what you are actually saying Colin Wallis is that people within the security services were attempting to destabilise a democratic Government, that seems almost third world in its proportions. How high up in the security services would the guidance for that kind of operation have come?

WALLIS: Oh, I think one has got to be very careful that our allegations relate only to a number of people, we are in no way attacking MI5, MI6 or anyone else because the majority of people who work with us were or

would have been just as horrified about what was happening as we were but certainly it is clear from what Peter Wright is saying and his activities were really unknown to me, that the knowledge must have gone very high because after all Peter Wright at this time was a very senior officer within MI 5 and was a sort of personal assistant to the Director General. Now I think it's also evident from information that has come to light since, particularly information fed out in the United States, that the network involved was not just simply a small group of disaffected officers. There were people outside the service and in political life who were working with them and therefore the network was quite extensive and quite senior.

COWAN: I'll come back to the broader allegations in a minute but let me bring in Fred Holroyd here because in 1983 I think you gave evidence of dirty tricks on the ground both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic to an RUC investigation team. Can we look at just some of those since we have evidence in recent days of the use of bugging devices across the Border by security forces along the Border here, I mean what about the activities in the Republic, what was going on at that time?

HOLROYD: Well first of all, if I could explain unlike Colin who worked in the headquarters and had access to most of the plans of what was going on policy wise in the province I was actually on the ground with long hair and a beard meeting various people, recruiting sources and doing the sort of nuts and bolts work of intelligence in Northern Ireland. As a result of success that I had there I was recruited by an MI 6 handler under the most extraordinary circumstances and found myself wearing two hats, one working as an ordinary military intelligence officer passing intelligence between the Army and the Special Branch, recruiting sources doing all sort of normal jobs he would do and this alternative role of crossing over the Border into the South and meeting sources there, meeting very senior policemen, bringing intelligence back from the policemen in the South who were just as keen to see the terrorist threat eliminated in Ireland as a whole knowing that in the future possibly then I'd have to deal with the same people if it wasn't contained at this stage.

COWAN: Sorry, are you saying you got full cooperating from the Garda Siochana on the ground?

HOLROYD: What I'm saying is that at that stage a very senior member of the Garda Siochana, I think already he has denied this in Ireland, I met in fact Mr Ned Garvey and his assistants in Phoenix Park Headquarters and I certainly ran for a long period of time three policemen in senior and crucial positions on Border towns on the other side of the Border, your side of the Border.

COWAN: When you say you ran them, what do you mean by that?

HOLROYD: Well, I used to go across and meet them and bring back some pretty high class intelligence about where the boyos were running in the South, who they belonged to, where they were living, what they were doing, their transport, the numbers of their vehicles, this sort of thing and this would be relayed back to my boss in Headquarters in Northern Ireland.

COWAN: And what transpired during your meetings with Mr Garvey?

HOLROYD: Well, the meeting with Mr Garvey, I came back with a great pile of photographs and a load of intelligence about the IRSP, as it happened. But I also did a visit that day when I was down in the South to the Donabate Arms Factory. The Garda were very interested in the machinery that made the weapons in that particular factory the most of it originated in England and I was asked if I could trace it. So it was reciprocal. The only thing I would say that there is no doubt in my mind that we were getting a better deal out of it than the Garda were. I have to say that my impression at the time was that here we were, just ordinary chaps in the security services on both sides, both trying our hardest to bring the terrorist to book and having tremendous problems with our political masters in many ways. In fact, I remember Ned Garvey saying to me on that meeting on that particular day in his office, you know Fred we've got a real problem here were more frightened of our political masters than we are of the enemy and there was a certain amount of ironic truth in that that here we had two Governments posturing away about non-cooperation and selling a line to their own people if you like, while actually on the ground this cooperation was taking place.



COWAN: It was and has been described, and you have described it as a dirty war, how dirty were you prepared to be in the course of that war?

HOLROYD: Well unfortunately I wasn't and that is why I came short. As a result of this information and the quality of it and as a result of me becoming aware of my brigade's headquarters involving themselves in dirty tricks and using some of this information which was relayed back down from MI 6 to them to help them with their dirty tricks, I had grave misgivings which I voiced and also became aware of the John Francis Greene business and the Army's implication in that, the SAS's implication in that.

COWAN: Explain that to me?

HOLROYD: Well in fact I am, lets see I have to be very careful here I don't want to break the official secrets act and end up in the Tower of London myself on the block. We in fact had an officer, Robert Niarac who was working with an SAS undercover troop and he was very keen to take over my job when I finished my tour and he also relied very heavily on myself and my assistant to target his organisation. As a result he tried to make friends with me and on this particular occasion they messed up an operation and I was most displeased and Robert, in trying to ingratiate himself, if you like, back into my good books, disclosed to me that he had carried out an assassination operation with two other chaps across the Border on John Francis Green. Now that made sense because I knew we had picked up on his SAS troop had had John Francis Green under surveillance for some time, he gave me a photograph which the RUC have confiscated and refused to return and in fact I am taking legal action to get back, which indicated to me that the person who took the photograph must have been the murderer because the window outside was showing complete blackness and the police didn't arrive and take their photographs until daylight because they were afraid of mines. And also there was a number on the back of the photograph, it was a polaroid photograph, a colour one of the body, the calibre of John Francis Green which I am quite sure will link it back quite firmly with a batch of film that was issued to the Ministry of Defence. Now knowing that this chap was involved in this sort of operation obviously brought a completely new light, a new dimension, unto the sort of work we were doing. Up until that stage MI 6 had been directing affairs and they were a pretty moral bunch on the whole, certainly weren't into murders and assassinations, but at that time we had a new group of people taking

over and Colin will be able to tell you much more about that sort of background from MI 5. Now MI 5 had very little experience of operating in a hostile environment, most of their work is done in England against sort of organisations such as CND and the like so they are not used to that sort of work and to bring out and do the executive work they had brought a number of SAS people across who of course are trained in political assassination, I mean part of their training programme includes this and also with Frank Kitson's new policy of gangs and infiltrating the enemy the temptation was there of course to take it to its extreme and that's what started to happen. Now as a result of various people in the brigade moving in if you like on my area and attempting to take over I found myself becoming the victim and I resisted of course, I found myself becoming the victim of a number of dirty tricks to discredit me. When my boss at MI 6 left the province and went off to Athens and was replaced by an MI 5 man I then was lifted and told that my wife's doctor had claimed that I was a nutcase and I had to be investigated by the Army and a whole lot of lies were produced which were taken on face value at the time, and moved to England where they refused me permission to return when I was cleared by the medical people there. The incredible thing was that although I passed all the tests that I took in the medical sense I was downgraded on emotional stability within the Army pulling its medical system. Rather ironically they said I displayed anger at the way I was being treated which is really a catch 22 situation.

COWAN: Can I take you back a stage to this struggle that appears to be going on on the ground between those being run by MI 5 and those being run by MI 6, I mean to what extent were they prepared to go, I mean were they just simply prepared to identify targets, go into the Republic and bump them off with perhaps the collusion of the authorities in the Republic?

HOLROYD: Well what in fact was happening was that a number of people, a number of dispirit intelligent bodies that I had brought together to work together started in my absence to pool their intelligence with the express intention of kidnapping and murdering suspected IRA men. Intelligence would come across the Border from my sources there about where they were living, what they were doing, what time they were likely to be in. My local brigade would arrange for soldiers to be waiting for example on our side of the Border and a



team would go across, sometimes UVF Ulster Volunteer Force people or Ulster Freedom Fighters who were being used by the Army and by the Police, the Special Branch in the North, and they would try and kidnap the chap and bring him across in other cases there was murders carried out.

COWAN: Let me come back to Colin Wallace and let me ask you Colin if you could cast some light on what appears to be crucial in both your case and Fred Holroyd's case and the attacks that were made upon you would seem to centre on a change of authority, a change from MI 5 to MI 6 or vice versa, now can you cast some light on that for me?

WALLIS: Yes, I think that's quite true. What happened was that in the early stages, certainly from 1970 onwards, the main thrust of intelligence gathering in Northern Ireland relied on the Army and on MI 6. As it became clear that the state of unrest was going to exist for a long time the intelligence organisation became more permanent and because the two main intelligence services in Britain were going through a period of turbulence as to their role in British society and so and so forth Northern Ireland became very important to them and quite clearly any professional intelligence officer of the day his career could be enhanced considerably by a successful tour in Ulster. Now there were determined attempts particularly during 1973/1974 by MI 5 to gain a foothold in Northern Ireland and eventually the overall direction and control of intelligence changed to an MI 5 officer in 1974.

COWAN: .....Colin I think most people wouldn't see or understand the distinction between MI 5 and MI 6?

WALLIS: Well normally this is basically the crux of the matter because MI 5 was responsible for what they call the defence of the realm within the United Kingdom. In other words they defend the United Kingdom against external threat i.e. the KGB and so and so forth. MI 6 is basically a foreign intelligence gathering operation, in other words they gain or collect information about the Soviet Union and other potential threats from outside the United Kingdom. Now Northern Ireland is of course an interesting one because in ..... purposes the Irish Republic is a foreign country and therefore would be MI 6 and Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom will be an MI 5 parish. However, for one reason or other MI 6 were originally sent to Northern Ireland and this was in theory a break in tradition.

COWAN: And what was the impact of that so far as you were concerned?

WALLIS: I think it was very considerable because as Fred just said that MI 6 is very much politically orientated and they have a very finely tuned ..... for political matters. Now Northern Ireland was a political hot pot and they were working much more closely with successive Governments looking for not only a military success but a political solution and therefore they would talk to the UDA and talk to all sorts of political groups and Sinn Fein and everything else to get the actual feelings of the community. MI 5 on the other hand who come from entirely different background when they began to establish supremacy in Northern Ireland tried by various means to obtain a quick military success. Now in intelligence that just does not work and as a result of their efforts to score points very quickly we lost a large number of agents and their activities in fact became very counter-productive. As Fred was talking about assassination professionally, assassination an activity at that time forgetting about the criminal and moral aspect of it are counter-productive in professional terms because in fact they only provoke an adverse reaction from the community and therefore this often cuts off the supply of information to the security authorities so it is bad from every point of view.

COWAN: Were lives lost as a result of that struggle?

WALLIS: Oh yes, yes this is true. I think Fred and I both have personal experience of this that we were told at one point when the situation got so bad we lost something like ten agents in just over a week, they were assassinated and in fact we had direct orders from our Army superiors not to cooperate with MI 5 at all.

COWAN: What was your experience of that Fred Holroyd?

HOLROYD: Well in fact it was a week after that experience of being ordered not to work with MI 5 that in fact I was lifted out and discredited and my sources were taken over by an MI 5 orientated army officer. So I am quite bitter I suppose about the behaviour of them but there is no doubt about it to my mind and if I could reiterate what Colin says I have experience of other wars besides Ireland in other armies and the one thing that any sensible professional soldier knows is that if

you want to wage a counter terror war for the hearts and minds of the population as the security force that is there as an invited guest or is there as a despotic force you are always going to loose because the local indigenit terrorists are living with the population 24 hours out of 24, if you are a host army you can only move in and out at various times so when it comes to the actual hours open to terrorise poor old civilians in the middle the terrorists that are local will win every time, I mean there is just no way you can win that sort of a war.

COWAN: Would it be true to say that in lifestyle you were occupying very much a middle ground, very much a twilight ground between those two extremes?

HOLROYD: Well, I'm not quite sure of what you are trying to say there?

COWAN: Well since you were neither civilian nor uniform soldier but you were somewhere in the middle?

HOLROYD: Well that's right. I was wearing so many hats I used to say that I was walking on a tightrope and the first gust of wind would blow me off and that 's exactly what happened and there is a certain black humour in the situation and I mean there is a humour in the situation that both Colin and I who got tremendous reports for our work in Ireland, something that nobody can take away of course, were both then lifted out when we had served our purpose so to speak and the harder men wanted to take over to exploit the good work that we'd done and discredited by our own sides and became victims of the very tactics that we were complaining about on the ground.

COWAN: Why was it important to discredit you?

HOLROYD: Well because we knew too much. The strange thing is that at the time I only met Colin once very briefly under very unusual circumstances and because he was wearing an Ulster Defence Regiment uniform I didn't trust him an inch and I didn't say a word in front of him, so I didn't really know him at all but I think what the security services were frightened about was that Colin and I saw, if you like, the left hand and the right hand side of a coin, the face of a coin, the obverse side that the public see, the dark side and our information coming together would be absolutely emphatic and very believable. If they could keep us separated and various other individuals then obviously we

didn't have much credibility but the fact that I was discredited by being put in a mental hospital for a month, the fact that Colin was put in prison on a trumped murder charge, made us impossible to believe by any sane minded media person or anybody in authority.