

A Troubled Book

The Killing of Thomas Niedermayer

David Blake Knox

Kilorgan, Co. Dublin: New Island Books (<https://www.newisland.ie>), 2019

Colin Wallace

In 2010, former Detective Superintendent Alan Simpson of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) published *Duplicity and Deception* (Dublin: Brandon), the second of two books about his experiences as an investigating officer in Belfast during the 1970s and 80s.¹ They were set during what Simpson called the 'Twilight Zone of the Troubles'. His books provide a stark account of the conditions under which detectives then had to live and work, not least of which was knowledge of the killing, both on and off duty, of over 300 of their colleagues.

One of the most controversial cases Simpson investigated was the dramatic kidnapping by the Provisional IRA of 45 year-old Thomas Niedermayer, a German national, who was the Managing Director of the Grundig electronics factory on the outskirts of Belfast. He had been awarded the OBE and was an honorary West German Consul to Northern Ireland.

During the late evening of 27 December 1973 two men, who claimed to have collided with his parked car, lured Mr Niedermayer from his home at Glengoland Gardens in West Belfast. He was then forced into another vehicle and driven away. Three days after he was kidnapped, he was killed in a struggle while attempting to escape from his IRA captors. His remains were secretly buried in an unofficial refuse tip at Colin Glen Road, not far from the family home, on the outskirts of Belfast. Following an intelligence lead, Alan Simpson and his RUC team discovered Niedermayer's body in 1980. One man was convicted of manslaughter in 1981. One other was convicted of responsibility for Niedermayer's illegal detention.

Niedermayer's death created an appalling legacy. In June 1990 Niedermayer's widow Ingeborg returned to Ireland and booked into a hotel at

¹ The first was *Murder Madness* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1999).

Greystones in Co Wicklow, in the Irish Republic. It would appear that she then walked into the sea fully clothed and drowned. Her body was found washed up on a beach a few days later. Her daughter Renate, who had answered the door of the family home to two men who kidnapped her father, moved to South Africa to live. Within a year of her mother's death, she too had taken her own life. Gabrielle, the elder of the Niedermayer children, also died by suicide, and a few years later so too did her husband.

Alan Simpson's account of the investigation that led to the discovery of Thomas Niedermayer's body and the arrest and conviction of those involved in his abduction and killing, is a tribute not only to his own ingenuity and determination to solve that case, but to the work of his team of detectives.

When my attention was drawn to the publication of a new book, *The Killing of Thomas Niedermayer*, by David Blake Knox, I expected that it would expand significantly on Alan Simpson's account. Sadly, that is not the case.

The core of the Blake Knox version feels like a poorly and minimally rehashed version of what Alan Simpson wrote, but padded out with largely irrelevant material about Irish and German history. To make matters worse, information in the book is largely unsourced. It is littered with mistakes. Blake Knox, who is presented as an accomplished author, film director and journalist, has produced a poor imitation of the book written by the police officer who investigated Mr Niedermayer's disappearance. Alan Simpson expressed his personal dissatisfaction with Blake Knox's efforts (*Belfast Telegraph*, 3 July 2019)² and a scathing review by Katie Binns in *The Sunday Times* on 20 July 2019 noted, 'the reader is left to trawl through a haphazard catalogue of Anglo-Irish events with no detail deemed too irrelevant'.³

To my great surprise I am referred to on a number of pages, though I had no involvement in the Niedermayer case when I worked with the Army in Northern Ireland during the 1970s. To makes matters worse, the author failed to contact me to check if the information he planned to use about me was accurate.

Chapter 23, entitled 'Fake News', advances numerous demonstrably false allegations in relation to my role as the Senior Information Officer in the Information Policy (PsyOps) unit at British Army HQ in Lisburn during 1973-74. My alleged activities introduce and frame the front and back end of that chapter, on pages 181-4 and 193-4. I am alleged also to be responsible for

² <<https://tinyurl.com/y23wfpjp>> or <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/alan-simpson-three-ruc-colleagues-and-i-spent-four-weeks-secretly-digging-for-thomas-niedermayers-body-38276136.html>>

³ <<https://tinyurl.com/yyuqvanw>> or <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/book-review-the-killing-of-thomas-niedermayer-by-david-blake-knox-bkfsrpq7w>>

highly discreditable activities outlined between pages 185-192. In addition, I am discussed on pages 207 and 292-3.

I address Mr Blake Knox's untrue assertions in two parts. I indicate first how, using freely available evidence, Mr Blake Knox's analysis is factually mistaken. In Part II, I explain why such errors are symptomatic of a broader pattern of deliberate and sustained disinformation by Government agencies, designed to conceal wrongdoings of the past

Loyalty, a much-misused term during the post-1968 Northern Irish 'Troubles', travels in two directions, upwards and downwards. If a government seeks loyalty from the electorate, it must demonstrate that it acts with integrity: for example when members of its own Security Forces speak out about wrongdoing. It should not turn a blind eye when that is the expedient thing to do. The fact that the 'Troubles' actually occurred is, in no small measure, due to such expediency. That is also why abuses inflicted on children, such as those that took place at Kincora and other institutions, continued unabated for so long. 50 years on since 'the Battle of the Bogside' and the introduction of British troops to the streets of Northern Ireland, it is important that we learn, and relearn, these lessons.

On 14 August 1969 I went down to the barricades on the edge of the Bogside with Lt. Colonel Bill Todd, CO of the Prince of Wales' Own Regiment of Yorkshire, and we had a discussion with Bernadette Devlin about the situation. It was a surreal atmosphere – one I shall never forget. Despite everything that has happened to me and to Northern Ireland since then, I remain and I shall continue to remain, a strong supporter of the work of the Security Forces, as demonstrated by people like Alan Simpson, CID detective Johnston Brown who wrote *Into the Dark* (Dublin: Gill Publishing, 2006), plus thousands of other Security Force members who served honourably in Northern Ireland during the 'Troubles'. I also believe that there is a legitimate role for activities such as Psychological Operations in armed conflicts. That does not mean that I support Parliament being deliberately misled by those in Government service. Psychological Operations are weapons and, like all other weapons, they should be handled with care.

Ireland as a whole was, and remains, one of the most hospitable and friendly places on earth. Yet, during the course of the Troubles, it has also been the setting for events that revolt the human conscience. What happened to Thomas Niedermayer and his family is one of those. Blake Knox's regurgitation of false or misleading information in relation to that tragedy, without any apparent attempt at verification, only makes an appalling situation worse for all those concerned.

Part I

The IRA did not announce publicly that they had taken Niedermayer, though they soon afterwards contacted the British government with their demands. Thomas Niedermayer was offered in exchange for transfer to a prison in Northern Ireland of Marion and Dolores Price (plus six others) then in custody in England. The Price sisters were convicted in London, on 15 November 1973, of conspiracy to cause explosions. In pursuit of the transfer, the sisters went on hunger strike and were force-fed. In the absence of official confirmation of the IRA contact, Thomas Niedermayer's disappearance occasioned extensive speculation. On 29 December, David McKittrick reported in the *Irish Times*,

'Totally contradictory theories about the incident are circulating in Belfast . . . including several that cite both the Provisional and Official wings of the IRA, as well as mysterious references to "non political" motivations. The most widely held belief in Belfast is that the Provisional IRA had carried out the kidnapping as a prelude to bargaining for the release of the Price Sisters, currently on hunger strike in British prisons.'

On the following Monday, 31 December, the newspaper followed up with this:

'... the original popular theory that he had been captured by the IRA as a prelude to political bargaining is beginning to give way to speculation concerning [Niedermayer's] financial and domestic situation. The RUC are continuing to investigate every possible motive.'

Official sources appear to have promoted detailed misinformation in the days, weeks and months following. It implicated loyalists who opposed and then successfully collapsed the new Sunningdale Agreement power-sharing administration in May 1974.

In late January 1974, under pressure from the Reverend Ian Paisley, who appeared to be in possession of leaked information, the British government revealed the original IRA contact. Despite continuing misinformation, IRA responsibility for Niedermayer's fate also featured in press coverage.⁴ In attempting to tell this story, Mr Blake Knox embellishes extensive misinformation from official sources about my role at that time. Introducing the 'Fake News' chapter, he writes:

'Among the tactics [British] Military Intelligence employed was to use off-the-record briefings to the press to suggest that Niedermayer's kidnappers were not IRA members, but loyalist paramilitaries. One of those who was responsible for such briefings was a senior information officer with the Ministry of Defence called Colin Wallace.' (p. 181)

⁴ See, for example, 'RUC believes consul kidnapped by Provisionals', *Irish Times*, 26 January 1974.

According to Mr Blake Knox, I am a 'professional fantasist' (p. 182) who originated untrue stories spread about Thomas Niedermayer. On p. 184 the following appears:

'Following the [Thomas Niedermayer] abduction, journalists were given off the record briefings from [Colin] Wallace and MI5 officers that suggested several alternative reasons for what had happened. In two of these scenarios, loyalists were blamed for the kidnapping. According to Robert Fisk, journalists were told that "a prominent Protestant politician was involved in the murder of the former West German Honorary Consul to Belfast". The reason given was that the politician's wife was allegedly having an affair with Niedermayer. The woman in question was Doris Hilgendorff and her husband was William Craig, the anti-Sunningdale unionist politician. In an alternative version of this story, it was Craig who was having the affair with Ingeborg Niedermayer.'

Before making very serious allegations, a responsible author would first attempt to confirm his or her sources of information. Mr Blake Knox never attempted to speak to me. He provided no sources for his assertions with regard to my behaviour. As I shall show, such briefings were not carried out by me, or by the PsyOps unit in which I worked. If anything, we undermined them.

For the record, I cannot recall ever giving a press briefing, or causing such a briefing to be given, either on or off the record, on the subject of Thomas Niedermayer. Neither did I spread misinformation about his abduction and subsequent disappearance. Initially, the Army took the view that the kidnapping was entirely a police matter, albeit we were interested in the IRA's first known use of kidnapping as weapon. The Army did not want to say or do anything that would make Mr Niedermayer's situation worse. Moreover, we were initially given to believe that it was likely that Thomas Niedermayer would be released unharmed. That may well have been the IRA's intention, but things went badly wrong.

Mr Blake Knox withholds his source information even when citing what appear to be newspaper articles. In the absence of assistance from the book, his unsourced quotation concerning a 'a prominent Protestant politician' may be based on a London *Times* article by Ireland Correspondent Robert Fisk on 25 March 1975 (also *Irish Times*, same date). If not, he should have no difficulty indicating an alternative. It stated:

'An officer attached to 39 Infantry Brigade at Lisburn last year toured newspaper offices in Belfast, suggesting that a prominent Protestant politician in Ulster had been involved in the disappearance of Mr

Thomas Niedermayer, the West German honorary consul in Belfast, who was kidnapped from his home in Belfast just after Christmas in 1973.'

There are two points to consider. First, that officer is not me. My official designation was Senior Information Officer, HQ NI. I was not part of 39 Brigade. Robert Fisk, an experienced journalist with whom I was in contact, would not have misidentified me. 39 Infantry Brigade's Public Relations Officer at that time was Major Ronnie Sampson. A letter dated 4 August 1977 from the Civil Adviser at Army HQ in Northern Ireland to the Ministry of Defence's Directorate of Army Security, stated, 'Ronnie Sampson used to be the PRO 39 Inf Bde.' It goes on: 'He was responsible for spreading rumours about the association of Niedermayer (W German Counsel) and Mrs Craig (wife of William Craig).' The letter therefore confirms exactly what Fisk wrote. It does not suggest that any other member of the Army, including me, was involved in spreading such rumours about Thomas Niedermayer. I knew Major Sampson well at that time, albeit he had no role in Psychological Operations. I am in no doubt that, had he circulated such rumours without authority, he would have been severely disciplined and, almost certainly, immediately removed from his post. I remember that happening to another public relations officer for a much less serious unauthorised activity. The fact that Sampson remained in post until the end of his tour of duty in Northern Ireland speaks for itself. I am sure Robert Fisk can corroborate the essential facts as they apply to me. I am assuming, as there is no indication to the contrary, that Blake Knox did not attempt to speak to Robert Fisk either. Had he spoken to either or both of us his errors could not have been published.

Second, Major Sampson's newspaper office tour did not, as implied by Mr Blake Knox, take place after the Niedermayer kidnap in late December 1973. It occurred over 9 months later, in October 1974, after the Ulster Workers Council strike collapsed the Sunningdale power-sharing executive. At that time, William Craig's loyalist Vanguard movement had a semi-fascist image. He had spoken in 1972 of drawing up lists and of 'liquidating' enemies. He appeared to be advocating a form of UDI or 'Ulster independence'. Loyalist paramilitaries, who were in the ascendant post Sunningdale, approved of Craig's hard-line stance. British Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, on the other hand, was very upset at the defeat of power-sharing. He felt, not without reason, that the security services were partly responsible. That is one reason why Craig became a candidate for a media-based attack. It was of such thoroughgoing ineptitude it had an opposite effect to the one intended.

Ronnie Sampson's activities followed on from an earlier proposal from the Northern Ireland Office to spread the very same rumours in or about September of 1974. The request was made to Peter Broderick, the Chief

Information Officer at Army HQ NI, just prior to his departure from Northern Ireland. It was then passed on to the PsyOps unit where I worked. PsyOps rejected the request. It was totally at odds with what we had been told about the kidnapping shortly after Mr Niedermayer's disappearance. Moreover, relationships between the Army and the NIO were rather strained at that time. We suspected that the information supplied to Peter Broderick by the NIO could be part of a ploy to discredit the Army. In any event we decided not to use the information.

The 'rumours' included suggestions that Craig's amorous liaison with Mrs Niedermayer took place in Ravensdale Riding School, County Louth, in the Irish Republic. (That was where Judith Ward, who was falsely convicted of the 3 February 1974 'M62 Coach bombing', worked, both before and after her British Army desertion in the early 1970s.) If publicised, this 'rumour' might have undermined Craig's stature generally, in particular with his loyalist paramilitary admirers.

It came as a complete surprise when we discovered that Major Sampson was assiduously briefing the press on the Craig allegations. Journalists came to our door, seeking corroboration. All we could say, truthfully, was that we had heard the same rumours but could not substantiate them. Possibly as a result of our response, plus their own inquiries, no journalist in Britain or Ireland touched the story.

Major Sampson's efforts found one outlet, the German *Bild am Sonntag* newspaper on 27 October 1974. Craig and his wife sued immediately. They were awarded substantial damages and an apology in the London High Court one year later, November 1975 (not December, as Mr Blake Knox writes on page 187). An *Irish Times* headline on 12 November 1975 read, 'Craig libel story was spread by Army man'. The ensuing story, by Conor O'Clery, identified him more precisely than Fisk, as follows:

'A British Army Intelligence Officer helped to spread the allegations for which the Vanguard leader, Mr. William Craig, was yesterday awarded damages amounting to a five-figure sum. [. . .] In October 1974 the British Army Intelligence officer, a major attached to 39th Brigade at Lisburn Army H.Q., approached individual journalists working for *The Irish Times*, *The Times* and the *Guardian*.'

Though Ronnie Sampson was not an Intelligence officer, here is not merely confirmation of the identity of the source, but also the date of the misinformation campaign. In addition to Robert Fisk and myself, Mr Blake Knox could have attempted to confirm his misconceptions with Conor O'Clery.

Having carelessly confused me with Major Sampson, Mr Blake Knox made another mistake, this time with regard to timeline. In recounting the story of

Craig's libel award, he failed to divulge the *Bild* article's October 1974 publication date. He implied that it was published just after Niedermayer's disappearance. Mr Blake Knox encouraged this impression by conflating it with another story published on 4 February 1974 in *Der Spiegel*, a more serious German publication. Mr Blake Knox managed to date the *Der Spiegel* article 'five weeks' after Niedermayer's abduction. His considerable ire was reserved for similar but in fact unrelated stories in two German publications, published seven months apart. Curiously, Mr Blake Knox ignored the fact that essentially the same information appeared in the 3 February London *Observer*. Kevin Myers' front-page article there was headlined 'Arms-smuggling clue to abduction'. Mr Blake Knox obscures this by writing (p. 185), 'the allegations were given credence by some British newspapers, including the *Observer*'.

Layers of misinformation in the *Observer* and *Der Spiegel* on 3 and 4 February contained significant detail, strongly suggestive of an official source. The *Der Spiegel* journalist was Borries Gallasch, the magazine's London correspondent from 1976, who died in 1981 from cancer, aged 37. Mr Blake Knox does not name him. In papers of former Taoiseach Dr Garrett Fitzgerald, deposited in University College Dublin, Gallasch is identified as talking to an Irish Department of Foreign Affairs official. Mr Blake Knox cites this discussion (p. 187) without naming the source or Gallasch. The journalist was reported as saying that Niedermayer had liaisons with female members of Grundig staff, that his wife was alcoholic and that Niedermayer knew his abductors, who were not in the IRA. Niedermayer's numerous alleged affairs were said to be a cause of his disappearance.

In the subsequent *Der Spiegel* and *Observer* articles, detailed information on alleged loyalist arms smuggling using Grundig containers, about which Niedermayer was said to be uneasy, his alcoholism, mental instability and adultery, plus other factors, were given as the cause of the loyalist abduction and killing of Thomas Niedermayer. A loyalist leader given the name 'Andrew Carter' – a thinly disguised William Craig – was alleged to be involved in the arms importation and also with Niedermayer's wife. Craig was named in the stories as someone with insider knowledge that Niedermayer was dead. In response Craig explained in the *Guardian* on 4 February, that on 17 January he had passed on to Mrs Niedermayer, through Grundig, the leaked information (referred to earlier) obtained by Ian Paisley.

For Myers, in particular, putting two and two together and getting five, Paisley's knowledge indicated loyalist intimacy with Niedermayer's fate. 'Few sources believe', he concluded, that the IRA contact with the British government 'was genuine'. Mr Blake Knox may, yet again, care to explain why he did not ask Kevin Myers about his certainty in 1974 with regard to

Niedermayer's fate.

The misinformation raises some very important questions. Who would have gained from circulating such false information and what was the objective? Where did the journalists' information, that contained signs of officially inspired accurate and inaccurate information, come from? Since Major Sampson's efforts to implicate William Craig arrived many months later, the immediate source remains a mystery.

In the passage cited above from page 184, Mr Blake Knox mentions MI5. We do not know if that suggestion is as much a product of Mr Blake Knox's imagination as is his false allegation of my involvement, or if there is substance to it. From the foregoing, I consider it unlikely that Mr Blake Knox can enlighten us further on the point.

Had Mr Blake Knox researched and presented information professionally, consulted people who were around at the time, and not confused the timeline, he could have followed up the origin of the untrue, though well-constructed, initial misinformation about Niedermayer that emerged almost immediately after his disappearance. Instead, Mr Blake Knox's book ranges far and wide over the course of Irish history. The book is remarkably thin on Thomas Niedermayer's actual abduction. That arrives on page 165. It is thick with Mr Blake Knox's political perspective and conspiracy theories with regard to my alleged role. It is therefore ironic that the author criticises 'wild conspiracy theories' – which he fails to detail – about RUC Special Branch, that 'would have done credit to Colin Wallace in his heyday'. (p. 207) Again, the reader is expected to take Mr Blake Knox's word for it that he knows what he is talking about. Special Branch was, asserts Mr. Blake Knox, 'the target of black propaganda from both republican and loyalist paramilitaries as well as the object of lurid fantasies on the part of some journalists'. (p. 208) On this basis, he gives no more than cursory attention to Special Branch's controversial role, alongside military intelligence, in colluding with loyalist paramilitary violence.

As official investigations by Lord Stevens, Sir Desmond de Silva QC, and Baroness O'Loan have shown, widespread concerns about the Special Branch were anything but 'wild conspiracy theories'. Mr Blake Knox even ignores Alan Simpson's powerful critique:

'It has long been acknowledged that Special Branch were a force within a force, essentially a law unto themselves, with their activities constantly being monitored and guided by MI5. It is a well-voiced tenet of government that no one is above the law, but I am sure I am not the first one to propose that MI5 is. In short, they are untouchable, their principal rule being "Thou shalt not be caught."'

Accounts of Special Branch and MI5 collusion with loyalist paramilitary violence

are, in fact, based on considered and extensive testimony and evidence.

After ignoring Simpson's critique of Special Branch, Mr Blake Knox's acknowledgements and bibliography section notes, on page 291, though in a gestural fashion, RUC CID detective Johnston Brown's 'intense and vivid' *Into the Dark: 30 Years in the RUC* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2006). Like Simpson's, Brown's book, based on personal experience, is a comprehensive account of collusion with loyalists, including even the possibility that Brown's family was set up for assassination. Mr Blake Knox also ignores this critique. The killing of solicitor Pat Finucane by a loyalist British agent is similarly bypassed. Brown described Special Branch's subversion of his attempt to catch and convict Finucane's killer.

Mr Blake Knox's prejudice in favour of a view of the world presented by this 'force-within-a-force', may account for his hostility to evidence I and others have placed on the public record, plus his errors in writing about my alleged connection to the Niedermayer story. What is all the more surprising about Mr Blake Knox's extended discussion of Special Branch is that it had little to do with resolving the Niedermayer mystery. That was down to CID Chief Superintendent Alan Simpson, whose efforts receive scant attention from Mr Blake Knox.

Part II

An understanding of continuing attempts to discredit me, of which Mr Blake Knox's book is a good example, is in the public interest. Evaluating them demonstrates the substantive charges to be, as with the misinformation in the Niedermayer case, always false. Let me address some more of Mr Blake Knox's errors and omissions.

From 1968 until February 1975 I was on the staff of Army HQ Northern Ireland at Lisburn on the outskirts of Belfast. In 1971, I began working for the Army's Psychological Operations unit, which then operated under the cover title of 'Information Policy' (IP). To cover my activities, the MoD created a fake civil service job description for me under the title 'Head of Production Services', within Army Information Services (AIS). I was also a serving officer in the Ulster Defence Regiment, with responsibility for psychological operations on behalf of that Regiment.

I had been informed on 24 December 1974 that I was to be moved in February 1975 from my Northern Ireland position to an Army HQ in England. I was told this was because my life was under threat. I found that very hard to credit. My life was in no greater danger than any other member of the security forces. I lived in what was probably one of most heavily protected military bases in Northern Ireland.

Mr Blake Knox writes, on page 193:

'Colin Wallace resigned from the Ministry of Defence in 1975. [...] Wallace resigned in order to escape disciplinary action for his unauthorised release of classified documents to a journalist. It seems that the documents that he released had been read by the journalist's cleaning woman: her husband happened to be in the RUC and she passed on the classified papers to him. Wallace later claimed that the real reason for the threat of disciplinary action was because he "knew too much" and was about to reveal details of MI5's "dirty tricks" operations.'

The unnamed journalist was Robert Fisk. The 'cleaning woman' reference is a piece of fiction. I was being followed. The envelope I put under Robert Fisk's door was seized by the RUC. I was set up by those worried about the misgivings I expressed about tasks assigned to me. I was accused of violating security policy by giving the restricted document mentioned above to Robert Fisk. The accusation was bizarre because, in the PsyOps role for which I was repeatedly commended, I was employed to provide sensitive and classified information to the press.

Contrary to what Mr Bake Knox wrote, my resignation was the *outcome* of disciplinary action. It was my punishment. A civil service appeal board, through which I sought to reverse my dismissal, found against me. That board was deliberately made unaware that the civil service job description, under which I was charged, was a fake one. It was created by the MoD to hide my PsyOps role within the Army Information Services. I was given the option of resignation or the sack.

Following the discovery in 1989 of some documents within the Ministry of Defence relating to my case, a confidential internal investigation was initiated by Sir Michael Quinlan, the Permanent Under Secretary at the Ministry. That investigation found that the Ministry had: (a) disciplined me in 1975 under the terms of my fake job specification which was designed to provide me with a cover for my PsyOps role; (b) lied to Parliament, the press and the public about my role in Psychological Operations, in which I had discretion when deciding what information I could provide to the press; and (c) made improper secret contact with the chair of the disciplinary appeal panel, in order to subvert the fair hearing to which I was entitled.

The findings led to Mrs Thatcher being forced to admit in Parliament that, as Prime Minister, she and her Ministers had 'inadvertently' misled Parliament about my role in Northern Ireland. As a result of the Prime Minister's admission, Parliament set up an Inquiry by Sir David Calcutt QC to determine what happened. In his report, Sir David concluded:

'I am satisfied that shortly before the [Appeal Board] hearing took place representatives of the Ministry of Defence were in private communication with the chairman of the hearing with regard to Mr Wallace's appeal. Such communications should not have happened; and I believe that what occurred probably affected the outcome of the appeal.

Secondly, Mr Wallace's work, as an information officer, was wide-ranging in its nature. I am satisfied that the full range of Mr Wallace's work was not made plain to the Appeal Board. In my view the Appeal Board needed to know the full range of his work if it was to adjudicate justly on his appeal.'

In Sir David Calcutt's view I was unfairly forced to resign from the MoD and he recommended that I be awarded compensation. His report into the MoD's handling of my disciplinary hearing was regarded by the Metropolitan Police as prima facie evidence of a conspiracy to defraud, but the DPP advised the police that the evidence did not merit an investigation! I was, however, compensated by the MoD.

I was, therefore, unfairly dismissed. Mr Blake Knox fails to report my exoneration. His is a fantasy official version that, over time, the actual official record discredited.

My resignation was arranged for a variety of reasons. Following the success of the Ulster Workers Strike in bringing down the Power Sharing Executive, the incoming Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, was annoyed by what he regarded as a failure by the security forces to confront the loyalist paramilitaries. He felt the authorities had also lost the propaganda initiative and he wanted to wrest control of PsyOps from the Army and put it under the control of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). There is little doubt that I was regarded as a potential 'threat' by various, sometimes competing, actors for three reasons.

First, because I had refused to spread disinformation supplied to me by the NIO about political figures such as Ian Paisley and William Craig. I have explained in that regard, the origin of the October 1974 Niedermayer smear. I was, however, under instruction from my Army superior, with which I complied, to interest journalists like David McKittrick in the activities of William McGrath, leader of the Loyalist paramilitary organisation Tara, and 'Housefather' of the Kincora Boys Hostel.

Second, I was, in addition, critical of what appeared to be official collusion with loyalist violence.

Third, my solicitor is on public record as saying that, at the time of my disciplinary hearing in 1975, I confirmed to him personally the existence of a campaign, from which I had distanced myself, within the intelligence services

against British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and others. The loss of the February 1974 general election by Edward Heath's Conservatives to Labour was of great concern to right-wing ideologues within the security services. They decided to use the Northern Ireland intelligence apparatus to smear Wilson and others. That was 12 years before the former MI5 officer, Peter Wright, made similar allegations.

Mr Blake Knox's depiction of me as a 'professional fantasist' is a contemporary example of disinformation, an attempt to discredit my initial and subsequently accepted revelations about security services gone rogue. Much like dissidents in the old Soviet Union, both myself and Fred Holroyd, who independently revealed official collusion with illegal paramilitary violence, as well as extrajudicial killings, are portrayed as not merely bad, but almost certainly certifiably quite mad.

In 1980, a few months after the Kincora sex abuse scandal was exposed in the press, I was arrested and charged with the murder of a friend, Jonathan Lewis. Mr Blake Knox engages in yet more character assassination on this point in the bibliography and acknowledgements section of his book. (pp. 293-4) In an attempt to undermine Paul Foot's *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* (London: Macmillan, 1989, 1990), he cites the journalist Duncan Campbell to the effect that I 'might very well' have killed Jonathan Lewis in Arundel in 1980. He fails to state that Campbell wrote that in the *New Statesman* on 21 July 1989, seven years before my conviction for the manslaughter of Jonathan Lewis was overturned. Following Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's admission that ministers had 'inadvertently' misled Parliament about my role in Northern Ireland, my case was referred back to the Court of Criminal Appeal. At the appeal hearing, it was demonstrated that not only could I not have carried out the killing as the Prosecution claimed, but also that the forensic evidence had been faked.

Prior to my trial in 1980, Home Office pathologist Dr Iain West was asked to perform a second autopsy on Jonathan Lewis, having found no evidence of foul play in his first. He gave evidence in 1981 of how I supposedly killed the victim with 'an upward blow to the base of the nose' with 'the heel of the hand', causing a 'piledriver' effect. During the 1996 appeal hearing three leading medical experts dismissed the claim, not least as this alleged fatal injury failed to dislodge the victim's nose or even cause bruising. Dr West then admitted that, contrary to his original testimony, he had no previous experience of this supposed injury. A US secret service agent he could not identify told him about it. The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, said of Dr West's evidence:

'If the trial jury were allowed to accept the karate chop explanation of the

deceased's skull fracture as a simple and wholly satisfactory explanation of that injury, they were plainly misled.'

Dr West escaped prosecution for perverting the course of justice because, reportedly, he was terminally ill.

Like the Birmingham Six, the Maguire Seven, the Guildford Four and Judith Ward, I was falsely convicted. For Mr Blake Knox to insinuate that I am anything other than an innocent victim demonstrates a significant ethical failing.

In the same 1989 article, in a passage Mr Blake Knox ignored, Duncan Campbell wrote:

'The government has assiduously ignored what Wallace says, while critics say he is a "Walter Mitty" fabricator who merits no attention at all. Not so. Wallace does merit attention. [*In Who framed Colin Wallace?*] Paul Foot has done a careful job of analyzing the documents and information Wallace has provided, in particular notes he made for the work he called *Clockwork Orange*. Foot has spent a lot of time meticulously analysing the textual and political significance of these manuscript notes. Like Foot, I am quite sure that neither these documents nor the claims Wallace makes about [sexual assaults in] Kincora [Boys Hostel] are fabricated. They are an important part of the secret history of intelligence and Northern Ireland.'

Did Mr Blake Knox deliberately ignore this part of Duncan Campbell's analysis because it did not suit his thesis? It is another example of his selective reporting of my story.

In addition to the examples of wrongdoing listed by Duncan Campbell, I also became uneasy when it became clear in 1973-4 that elements of the security services, in Army intelligence, MI5 and RUC Special Branch, were colluding with loyalist paramilitary organisations. There is good evidence that the May 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bombings, which Mr Blake Knox does not mention in his account of the collapse of Sunningdale, were a product of this arrangement. There are continuing efforts to discredit surviving documentation in which I wrote about these matters, though they have been demonstrated scientifically to originate at that time.

However, these are not solely my views. During a debate on The Draft Detention of Terrorist Suspects (Temporary Extension) Bills (published on 14 June 2011) Lord Stevens of Kirkwhelpington (formerly John Stevens, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police) told Parliament in relation to collusion with loyalists:

'There was the RUC [plus RUC Special Branch], MI5 and the army doing

different things. When you talk about intelligence, of the 210 people we arrested, only three were not agents. Some of them were agents for all four of those particular organisations, fighting against each other, doing things and making a large sum of money, which was all against the public interest and creating mayhem in Northern Ireland. Any system that is created in relation to this country and Northern Ireland has to have a proper controlling mechanism. It has to have a mechanism where someone is accountable for what the actions are and that has to be transparent, especially in the new processes and the new country which, thank the Lord, Northern Ireland is becoming and, God willing, will continue to be.'

In his *Ghost Force: the Secret History of the SAS*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), former SAS Warrant Officer Ken Connor, who was involved in the creation of what later became known as '14 Int', noted:

'MI5 and MI6 had only one thing in common: a shared contempt for the RUC Special Branch, which they regarded as staffed by incompetents.'

He also reported that MI5 and MI6 had diametrically opposed agendas for the conflict. While MI6 pursued a political solution through secret contacts with the Dublin government and the Provisional leadership, MI5 sabotaged their efforts. The judicious spin put by MI5 upon a Provisional IRA document discovered during a raid on their Belfast HQ convinced Harold Wilson's government that the IRA were about to launch terror attacks on whole Protestant communities.

Are we to believe that Lord Stevens and Ken Connor are also 'fantasists'?

While it can be argued that Intelligence played a major part in achieving the relative peace Ireland currently enjoys, the counter activities referred to by Lord Stevens and others exacerbated the situation and prolonged the violence.

Mr Blake Knox does not appear to understand that one reason he is in a position to comment (albeit amateurishly and unprofessionally) on misinformation emanating from official sources, is because I revealed what was going on. My intelligence role up to early 1975, under cover as an information officer in Army headquarters in Lisburn, was to use factual information where possible and, where deemed necessary, misinformation about those who encouraged or used illegal violence. I was involved in producing propaganda that was most effective when it was accurate. It was less effective when inaccurate.

Some journalists are understandably touchy about the psy-ops role I played as part of my official duties. They imply that lying is habit-forming: I lied then and therefore I continue to lie, they suggest, including about the extent to which the British state lied and continues to lie. The abiding fact is,

though, that arguments I confront in opposition to my evidence-based assertions are replete with lies and deception.

Those who throw up their hands in despair and argue that all is confusion, that there is no truth, do deceit a service. Belief in the power of lies over all else demoralises a healthy and invigorated public interest. The reader is left with no choice but to evaluate the evidence, to discuss and to debate it, and to form a considered opinion. My view, my experience and my evidence is part of that debate. Declaring it a fantasy is simply a means of obscuring the extant and the means of manipulation.

Admittedly, working out what is going on is no easy task. Newspaper reporting, in addition to the content of books, must also be scrutinised. David McKittrick, one-time *Irish Times* reporter and Northern Editor, later the London *Independent's* Ireland correspondent, popped into my life twice since my 1975 departure from Northern Ireland and, once beforehand, late in 1974. I suffered negative consequences on each occasion.

In 1980 McKittrick contacted me at a point when I was forging a new life as information officer for Arun District Council. I had not given up all hope of bringing into the open such matters as official involvement with the later convicted paedophile William McGrath. I was considering defeat and leaving behind Northern Ireland and its troubles. Subsequent events, that came very close to defeating me in a catastrophic manner, rendered that course impossible. I was a victim of the powerful forces I once was employed to defend and also to vindicate.

McKittrick met me twice in 1980, in Arundel and in London. We engaged in lengthy discussions, after which McKittrick wrote a three-part *Irish Times* series of articles, published on 22-24 April 1980. In the third article, I am referred to variously as 'Intelligence sources' (sic), 'a high placed source' and 'a former intelligence officer'. The article noted MI5's objections to, and their smear campaign against, Harold Wilson. It mentioned also the use of invented 'intelligence traces' against individuals, so as to secure their internment without trial. I was concerned momentarily that it would have been clear to those in the intelligence community that I was McKittrick's source, a continuing troublemaker. Some months afterwards, August 1980, I was framed for the death of Jonathan Lewis, was convicted of manslaughter and was imprisoned for 10 years.

Nevertheless, in April 1980 I was, for McKittrick, a highly creditable source for sensitive and important security information, which he published without personal or any other apparent difficulty. As late as 21 March 1981, he wrote in the *Irish Times*:

'It was clear that [Colin Wallace] had access to the highest levels of intelligence data. He had an encyclopaedic memory which he occasionally refreshed with calls made on his personal scrambler telephone to the headquarters intelligence section a few floors above his office. He was astonishingly frank. He would freely give the names, addresses, phone numbers and names of mistresses of paramilitary figures, both Republican and Loyalist. He was also ready to admit mistakes made by the British Army and to acknowledge that the Provisionals or any other group were doing well.'

McKittrick's opinion of my credibility in addressing the same 1970s period altered after my 1987 release from Lewes Prison.

Whilst in prison, as well as writing to the Prime Minister and others, I began to speak openly, to the extent possible, about what had happened in Northern Ireland in the 1970s. Investigative journalists like Duncan Campbell visited me. He thoroughly checked out and, if satisfied, published what I had to say. After I was released, I was determined to clear my name and hoped for additional interest from journalists like David McKittrick. All was going well, with significant coverage, until McKittrick and a BBC journalist called John Ware wrote notorious articles on 2 September 1987 for the London *Independent*, containing proven falsehoods. They reinvigorated a smear, criticised by Duncan Campbell, that I am not to be believed, a 'Walter Mitty' character. After a Press Council finding in March 1990, the *Independent* apologised for publishing these untruths and misrepresentations. A detailed account is in Paul Foot's *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* pages 366-88.

The 'Walter Mitty' smear first appeared after my manslaughter conviction. Some journalists who attended my trial later told me that much of this material was given to them by the Sussex police while the trial was in progress. It is also clear that some of that information must have been fed to the police from security sources in Northern Ireland. Following publication of the *Independent* story, Paul Foot, who was then writing *Who Framed Colin Wallace?*, was told independently by two journalists that they had been offered very similar information by a senior RUC officer who had been involved in the Terry Inquiry into sexual abuse at Kincora Boys Hostel. It is important to note that George Terry was Chief Constable of Sussex Police, the force whose investigation led to my wrongful conviction. One of the senior officers involved in that investigation was subsequently involved in the Terry Inquiry. It not only failed to interview key witnesses, the Inquiry also failed to tell Parliament that a senior MI5 officer, who refused to be interviewed by the police, had instructed an Army Intelligence Officer to cease investigating allegations about possible sexual abuses at Kincora.

Of all the police forces in the UK to be chosen as suitable to carry out an 'independent' investigation of allegations of an RUC cover-up of the Kincora scandal, the NI Secretary of State chose Sussex. I find that, like a lot else, very curious. A report written by a senior official at the NIO described Sir George Terry's draft report on Kincora as 'remarkably inept' and suggested asking a senior civil servant to rewrite the material into one 'condensed publishable version'.⁵

A former Conservative MP told me he had been informed personally that the RUC had also been circulating similar information to deter MPs from demanding an investigation into the allegations that Fred Holroyd and I were making about collusion between the Security Forces and Loyalist paramilitaries.

The *Independent* story by John Ware and David McKittrick was, therefore, not original. It was officially planted. I wrote to the editor on 31 October 1987:

'As you know, it is highly misleading to portray the story as an investigation by The Independent when in reality a senior RUC officer had made two earlier attempts to have the photographs [The Independent published] and a similar story published in two of the Sunday newspapers.

Those newspapers, which had already investigated our allegations and satisfied themselves as to the veracity of what Fred and I were saying, refused to print the RUC account. It was seen as a blatant attempt to stem the growing demand for a judicial enquiry into the whole affair.'

That a senior RUC officer had attempted to plant on other journalists the material eventually used by the *Independent* is significant. Bernard Sheldon, former Legal Adviser to MI5, recorded in his notes (as disclosed to the HIA Inquiry), a meeting which he attended with Sir George Terry at the Sussex Police HQ at Lewes on 27 January 1983. At it, one Sussex Police officer reported that an identified senior RUC officer involved in the Terry Inquiry had leaked to the *Sunday Times* sensitive information about how,

'British intelligence officers in Ulster used homosexual loyalist politicians in the early Seventies to gather information about extreme Protestant groups because they did not trust the integrity of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Special Branch.'

The *Sunday Times* story, which the Sussex police believed was based on the leak and published on 5 December 1982, stated:

'At that time male homosexuality was still a criminal offence in the Province and the politicians were easily compromised. One politician used in this way was William McGrath, founder and leader of an extreme loyalist

⁵ NIO file: Sp (B) 291/360/01B, disclosed to the HIA Inquiry.

group called Tara.'

Such an unauthorised leak, by a police officer involved in the Inquiry, was potentially a serious breach of the Official Secret Acts and of police discipline. Yet, there is no record of any disciplinary action being taken against the named officer, nor is there any mention of the incident in Sir George Terry's report to Parliament.

These incidents provide compelling evidence that, unlike Alan Simpson and Johnston Brown, some members of the RUC were less than impartial in their investigations. There is an overwhelming need for an official investigation into these matters, including the Terry Inquiry's decision to withhold key information from Parliament.

The RUC were concerned primarily with revelations about collusion. A key claim of the RUC-sponsored story in the *Independent* was that, contrary to what Fred Holroyd and I had claimed,

'No credible first hand evidence of security force complicity, of the type alleged by Mr Wallace and Mr Holroyd has emerged in 18 years of violence. On the contrary, Loyalist paramilitary sources have never, either publicly or privately, claimed to have worked with the security forces in assassinations.'

However writing in the *Independent* on 23 October 2013, one of the authors, David McKittrick, quoted a member of the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) as saying:

'It is difficult to believe that such widespread evidence of collusion was not a significant concern at the highest levels of the security forces and government. It may be that there was apprehension about confirming the suspicions of collusion and involvement, particularly of RUC personnel.'

McKittrick went on to cite an internal military document estimating that between 5 and 15 per cent of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment were also members of loyalist groups, some of which were involved in many murders.

As he did not claim that his 2013 sources were 'Walter Mitty' fantasists, McKittrick's conversion, 26 years later, to acceptance that collusion did exist, appears greater than that of Saint Paul on the road to Damascus.

The collusion cover-up continued for the 32 years after the discredited *Independent* story was first published. On 5 July 2019, Northern Ireland's Lord Chief Justice, Sir Declan Morgan, ordered the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to conduct an independent probe into alleged state collusion with Loyalist paramilitaries. The independent Historic Enquiries Team (HET) had partially completed an investigation of the activities of the Loyalist

paramilitary groups before police commanders halted its work. In other words, nothing had changed during those 32 years.

The *Independent's* spurious misinformation almost scuttled the 1989 publication of *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* If it had not been for the professionalism, dedication, and the tenacity of the late Paul Foot, it is likely that the campaign to clear my name would have expired ignominiously. I am immensely grateful to truly independent journalists like Foot, in particular to him. The *Independent* reviewer of *Who Framed*, Godfrey Hodgson, remarked that Foot's rebuttal of *The Independent's* 'rubbishing' of myself and Fred Holroyd was 'wholly devastating'. As Foot remarked in the paperback edition, this was 'a rare assault by an independent reviewer on the paper he was writing in'. (1990, p. 401) The book was universally praised. Apologists for the system remained silent for a period. They re-emerge occasionally, on this occasion in the naive form presented by Mr Blake Knox.

A document disclosed to me in 2016 indicated the enthusiasm with which David McKittrick set about his task in 1987. On 4 August 1987, Brian Blackwell, head of the 'Law and Order Division' at the Northern Ireland Office, distributed the following memo:

E.R. CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Wood cc [MI5 officer] Info Services (b) Mr Marsh - (SIL)

DAVID MCKITTRICK: ARTICLE ON HOLROYD AND WALLACE

1. You and copy recipients will be interested to know that I had one of my regular meetings yesterday with David McKittrick. He tells me he has written a major piece rubbishing the revelations of Wallace and [Fred] Holroyd. He hopes that it will be published in the [London] *Independent* on Wednesday 14 August.
2. Brian Blackwell [signature] Law and Order Division
4 August 1987

It is not clear in what professional capacity McKittrick attended the 'regular meetings', or how often he divulged what he intended to publish. In a previous session with Blackwell, circulated on that occasion to two MI5 operatives, McKittrick reportedly offered the view that, as 'a Walter Mitty fantasist', I was 'clearly telling lies'. How ironic that the *Independent* articles repeated lies, smears and fantasies directed at and not from me. It may be worth noting that prior to joining the NIO, Brian Blackwell was a Lt Colonel in the Army and in 1972 had commanded 233 Signal Squadron at Lisburn.

In his acknowledgements and bibliography section, Mr Blake Knox, having dismissed Paul Foot, recommends the 'all-too-prescient . . . arguments' of the late Paul Wilkinson, from Aberdeen University. (p. 283) In 1988 Channel Four

News terminated Wilkinson's services as a consultant on terrorism. He had to apologise publicly for 'totally untrue' allegations about me in a July 1987 letter sent privately, on university notepaper, to Channel Four News. The programme had broadcast five hard-hitting items based largely on my allegations and those of Fred Holroyd. Wilkinson alleged, inter alia, that the 'charlatan' Wallace attempted in 1974 to set up for assassination a former supposed 'love rival'. That bizarre and entirely fictitious story arose from a potentially highly sinister sequence of events, precipitated by McKittrick, that occurred before I left Northern Ireland. In his attempt to substantiate the allegation, Wilkinson offered, though in a private capacity, corroboration from the same David McKittrick. That episode is also detailed in *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* (1990, pp. 359-62, also pp. 150-8). Soon after the Wilkinson letter was dispatched, McKittrick and Ware published their 2 September 1987 'exposé', that repeated the 1974 love rival smear.

It is unfortunate that David Blake Knox, though sufficiently sensible not to rely explicitly on McKittrick and Ware's views, repeats their fantasist smear. The treatment of me, and of other matters peripheral to the Niedermayer family tragedy, demonstrates that Mr Blake Knox has used the latter as a vehicle for getting numerous political matters, about which he nurtures deep feelings, off his chest. Katie Binns' 21 July 2019 *Sunday Times* review captures quite well this aspect of the book.

Conclusion

On page 193 Mr Blake Knox refers to journalists writing on the Niedermayer kidnap 'publishing and disseminating what was essentially idle gossip and a series of unsubstantiated rumours'. He refers also to 'an underlying and disturbing sense of moral judgement in the narrative fashioned by these journalists'. Mr Blake Knox might gaze into a mirror and read those words back to himself.

A celebratory *Irish Times* review on 24 July by Ed O'Loughlin, which endorses the book's view of 'the notorious Colin Wallace', refers to the author as 'quietly angry'. To which I can only respond, *moi aussi*.

In the *Sunday Times* Katie Binns suggested that Mr Blake Knox required a good editor. A fact checker and an ethics tutorial would not go amiss, either.