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Sit back and enjoy Britain being made to squirm

(Brian Feeney, [Irish News](#))

You can hardly lift a British newspaper these days or turn on the TV without some reference to Alexander Litvinenko, the former Soviet spy poisoned in London last month.

On Monday British police flew to Moscow to pursue their investigations. British home secretary John Reid said the police would "follow the evidence wherever it goes".

Last week Irish newspapers, TV and radio were full of the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights to the Dail about the activities of loyalist-cum-security-force gangs in the mid-seventies.

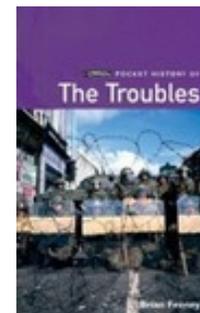
There was nothing new in the report. It restated what Mr Justice Henry Barron had first concluded almost exactly three years ago when he dealt with the Dublin and Monaghan bombings of 1974, namely that there was widespread, systematic and endemic collusion between British security forces and loyalist terrorist groups in mounting these attacks.

What was different about the joint committee's report was that, aside from the Dublin and Monaghan attacks, it pulled together a series of bombings and killings, north and south from 1974 to 1976, which left 18 people dead and scores injured.

The report showed convincingly that there was an extensive network of RUC, UDR, UVF and regular British military personnel engaged in planning and carrying out these attacks; that in those gangs there was substantial overlap between RUC and UVF membership and between UDR and UVF membership.

Again there is nothing new about this information, nor about the fact that many attacks were planned, bombs constructed and weapons stored at a farm near Glennane in Co Armagh.

In short we are exactly where we were three years ago. Referring Mr Justice Barron's report to the joint committee for another report to the Oireachtas was as much use as emptying a bucket of water into Lough Neagh.



[Pocket History of the Troubles](#)
by Brian Feeney

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The taoiseach has made all the right noises, as he did in 2003 and indeed in 1999 when he met the families of people killed in some of the attacks. He will ask Tony Blair for his assistance and for information. Our proconsul has said he will do what he can to assist Dublin.

On past evidence neither of them will lift a finger. The proconsul when Mr Justice Barron was conducting his inquiry was John Reid. Despite promises of help and providing relevant documentation Barron got nothing of value. Pleas to Blair fell on deaf ears.

Why wouldn't they? Did Blair move a muscle to stop the Ministry of Defence obstructing the Saville tribunal? One flick of his hand to compel his own government to cooperate could have shaved millions of pounds off the cost of the Bloody Sunday inquiry.

Instead, nothing.

No-one seems to have spotted the curious symmetry between Britain's position with regard to the Litvinenko case and Ireland's position in the case of the British government's agents bombing and killing Irish citizens.

John Reid, as we have seen, has promised to follow the evidence wherever it goes. He won't.

He can't.

Russia is a big powerful state which could make things very unpleasant for any British government, including increasing the price of gas at the drop of a hat or throwing British oil companies out of Siberia after they've spent zillions making oil fields ready to exploit.

The Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, has already warned that British speculation about Litvinenko's death is harming relations between Russia and Britain. Watch Reid pulling his horns in.

Similarly Ireland can do nothing about the illegal activities of the British government 30 years ago.

Oh yes, Dublin could take the cases to the European Court, could make things awkward for Britain in various ways in Brussels but so what? What would the outcome be? Nothing.

No British government would provide any evidence that would help and Barron's conclusions are not proof because no British government provided him with any useful

evidence.

The truth is that the British government couldn't care less what the taoiseach says about 1974-76 any more than the Russian government cares about what John Reid says about anything.

Still, there are some consolations. Sit back and enjoy the British government being treated by the Russian government with exactly the same contempt as the British government treats the Irish government.

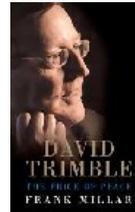
December 7, 2006

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