



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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IMMEDIATE (THURSDAY MORNING)
20.5.87

TO HQ FROM BELFAST

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LETTER

FOR O TUATHAIL FROM O CEALLAIGH

THE SUBSTANTIVE TEXT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S REPLY TO THE TANAISTE'S LETTER OF 11 MAY FOLLOWS. THE SIGNED LETTER WITH THE CUSTOMARY OPENING AND CLOSING LINES WILL FOLLOW BY BAG. IN HANDLING OVER THE LETTER ELLIOTT DREW ATTENTION TO THE PARAGRAPHS CONVEYING INFORMATION ABOUT THE LOUGHGALL ATTACK. MY EARLIER TELEX INDICATES A GREAT NERVOUSNESS ON THE PART OF THE BRITISH ABOUT IMPARTING ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING THAT INCIDENT PENDING THE COMPLETION OF POLICE ENQUIRIES AND THE CONSIDERATION OF THE DPP. SPEAKING PERSONALLY AND CONFIDENTIALLY ELLIOTT SAID KING IN HIS REPLY WAS GOING AS FAR AS HE DARE TO INDICATE THAT THE FIRST PEOPLE TO FIRE WERE THE IRA. THE TEXT IS AS FOLLOWS:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF 11 MAY AND I CERTAINLY FEEL OUR MEETINGS HAVE BEEN MOST HELPFUL. I BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE SERVED TO REINFORCE THE COMMITMENT OF BOTH OUR GOVERNMENTS TO OPERATE THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT IN A WAY THAT STANDS TO BENEFIT EVERYONE IN THE ISLAND OF IRELAND, AND, AS YOU RIGHTLY SAY, TO HELP REASSURE NATIONALISTS IN THE NORTH THAT THE WAY FORWARD IN NORTHERN IRELAND DOES NOT LIE THROUGH THE KIND OF MAYHEM YOU SO POWERFULLY AND EFFECTIVELY CONDEMNED IN YOUR RECENT SPEECH IN THE DAIL.

THAT IS WHY I AM VERY MUCH IN SYMPATHY WITH THE THINKING THAT UNDERLIES THE DETAILED POINTS WHICH YOU HAVE RAISED, EVEN IF THE GENERAL ELECTION PERIOD PREVENTS US FROM MAKING PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT THE KIND OF INITIATIVES YOU HAVE IN MIND.

BUT THAT OF COURSE DOES NOT MEAN THAT NOTHING CAN BE DONE WHILE THE ELECTION IS GOING ON. WORK IS WELL ADVANCED ON MOST OF THE ISSUES

YOU MENTION, AND I HAVE GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS THAT THE MOMENTUM IS NOT TO BE LOST. IN PARTICULAR, I AGREE THAT OUR OFFICIALS IN THE SECRETARIAT SHOULD START EXAMINING THE SORT OF CROSS-BORDER ECONOMIC ISSUES YOU MENTION IN YOUR LETTER, SO THAT SOME OF THIS GROUND WILL HAVE BEEN EXPLORED BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE. APART FROM THIS AND CONTINUING TO TRANSACT DAY TO DAY BUSINESS THROUGH THE SECRETARIAT, AND WHATEVER OTHER CHANNELS MAY BE APPROPRIATE, I HOPE THAT MY OFFICIALS MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO MEET YOURS TO DISCUSS THE AREAS TO WHICH YOU REFER, INCLUDING THE IRISH LANGUAGE, WITH A VIEW TO THIS BEING FOLLOWED UP AFTER THE ELECTION IS OUT OF THE WAY.

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I SHALL ALSO MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE KEPT FULLY INFORMED, AS YOU ASKED, ABOUT ANY SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS FOLLOWING THE EVENTS AT LOUGHGALL, WHILE ALSO AGREEING THAT IT WOULD INDEED BE USEFUL TO CONTINUE OURSELVES TO KEEP IN TOUCH, WHEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE IT, INFORMALLY ON THE TELEPHONE.

IN CONNECTION WITH THE FUNERALS POST LOUGHGALL, I FELT THAT THEIR HANDLING BY THE RUC WAS GOOD AND I HOPE YOU FELT THIS TOO. IT CLEARLY REFLECTED THE POLICY STATEMENT PUT OUT BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE, WHICH IN TURN CLEARLY OWED MUCH TO HIS TALK TO BISHOP CAHAL DALY.

IN RESPECT OF LOUGHGALL ITSELF, YOU WILL HAVE SEEN THAT BALLISTIC TESTS HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THE WEAPONS RECOVERED WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY SINGLE MURDER AND ATTEMPTED MURDER IN FERRANAGH AND TYRONE THIS

YEAR, AND INDEED FURTHER AFIELD AS WELL. YOU WILL RECALL THAT THE MURDERS IN THIS AREA HAVE INCLUDED THREE CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS AS WELL AS THE UDR AND RUC VICTIMS.

SINCE THE IRA GENERALLY PREFER A PARTICULAR WEAPON TO BE USED BY THE SAME PERSON, AND TAKING ACCOUNT OF OTHER EARLIER INTELLIGENCE, MY ADVICE IS THAT THAT GROUP HAD AT LEAST 40-50 MURDERS TO THEIR SCORE OVER THE YEARS. AND, I SHOULD ADD, IT WAS VERY FORTUNATE THAT THEY DID NOT ADD TO IT AT LOUGHGALL WHEN THEY LAUNCHED THEIR ATTACK, IN WHICH FIVE MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY FORCES WHO WERE IN THE STATION ONLY NARROWLY SURVIVED BOTH THE BOMB AND THE MACHINE GUN ATTACK ON THE BUILDING.

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