



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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I N L A

I had a meeting in Belfast on 16 March with the journalist with whom I have periodic contact. Readers of this report are asked to keep its contents strictly confidential.

My contact met Jimmy Brown, a close associate of Gerard Steenson, and others of the Army Council faction on Sunday night last. They were obviously shocked by the murder of Steenson on the previous night but put a brave face on it for the benefit of my contact, announcing that the "struggle" will continue and that the GHQ faction will be "wiped out". Behind the rhetoric, however, my contact sensed considerable uncertainty as to how to proceed without Steenson, who had been the prime mover in the faction.

According to Brown, the person responsible for three of the recent INLA killings, and who is likely to have had an involvement in Steenson's death, is Dessie O'Hare. O'Hare, a Belfast INLA member who used to be linked with McGlinchey and was friendly with O'Reilly in Portlaoise prison, gravitated towards O'Reilly's "GHQ" faction when he was released from Portlaoise late last year. Brown contends that O'Hare has a record of involvement in no less than 27 murders over the past few years and that, prior to his term of imprisonment in Portlaoise, the RUC regarded him as their 'most wanted man'. He is alleged by Brown to have teamed up with O'Reilly and to be the principal figure in the GHQ faction since O'Reilly's demise. According to Brown, O'Hare murdered Tony McCluskey (an INLA member suspected by the GHQ faction of having "set up" O'Reilly and Power). Contrary to reports that McCluskey was taken entirely by surprise, McCluskey expected to receive a

"knock on the door". The caller was Clare O'Hare (Dessie's wife). Dropping his guard momentarily at the sight of this woman (whom he did not recognise), McCluskey let her in. She was, of course, followed immediately by her husband who abducted McCluskey, murdered him and dumped his body just north of the border on 5 February. Brown also alleges that O'Hare killed Thomas Conor Maguire and Fergus Conlon, two Newry youths who have been further victims of the INLA feud in recent days, and that he has been involved in recent bank robberies in the Cavan/Monaghan area (operating at will across the border like a "kind of scarlet pimpernel").

Brown confirmed to my contact that three West Belfast priests were endeavouring to mediate between the two factions prior to Steenson's death. The three are: Fr. Des Wilson, Fr. Seamus Enright (Superior at Clonard Monastery) and Fr. Alec Reid (another member of the Clonard community). While initially Steenson was against any mediation efforts, he agreed later on to "talk" to the priests. However, these contacts never amounted to substantive negotiations between the two sides. Nothing which my contact has heard to date would corroborate media reports that a ceasefire was in progress when Steenson was killed.

The man killed along with Steenson, Tony "Boot" McCarthy, was at one stage an INLA member but has not been active for the past ten years. His presence last Saturday night was coincidental - Steenson bumped into him in a pub and they left to go home together.

The Army Council faction has been led by a triumvirate in recent weeks: Tom McAllister (who continues to be O.C.), Gerry Roche (influential in the Southern group) and Steenson. The removal of Steenson leaves the other two in command. On the GHQ side, the most active figures are reported to be O'Hare, Bobby Tohill, Hugh Torney and Kevin McQuillan (despite the

injuries sustained by the latter three in recent assassination attempts). The feud is likely to continue for quite some time yet, though there are rumours that the Provos are becoming restive and may try to put an end to it themselves.

David Donoghue
David Donoghue,
18 March 1987.

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