

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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I heard the account of the attack at Sinn Fein Headquarters by the RUC on the 6.00 p.m. BBC News on my car radio yesterday evening as I was driving in South Wicklow. I drove to Dublin immediately and managed to get an account of events from an Irish News reporter. It was clear from that account as well as from the BBC News that the RUC had behaved in an unacceptable way.

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I spoke to the Minister who was in Oughterard. On his instructions I checked with some further eye witnesses and sought to contact the British Ambassador. The information I received from Fionnuala O'Connor and Mary Kelly of the Irish Times tallied with the earlier report I had been given by the Irish News. They added the information that a second demonstrator had died.

I was then contacted by the Taoiseach who had arrived in Dublin. The Taoiseach confirmed the Minister's instructions.

I could not contact the British Ambassador as the number at Glencairn failed, despite several attempts, to ring out. I was also unsuccessful in contacting the Counsellor, Mr. Stimpson who, I later learned, was on leave. I finally contacted Mr. Holt the First Secretary who came to the Department at 9.45 p.m.

I reminded Mr. Holt that the Secretary of State had twice told the Minister of the new and most stringent conditions which had been attached to the use of plastic bullets. I added that we had been encouraged by the drop in the use of plastic bullets over several months. We were very concerned at the apparent rise in their use and the apparent decrease in care in their use over the past four days. It was evident that they had been used in an uncontrolled way earlier in the afternoon at Connolly House. It was also clear from television that the demonstration that had been attacked at Connolly House was not itself attacking the police at the time the RUC assault took place. The use of plastic bullets on that occasion had resulted in two deaths. (Note: My information on this point had not been

correct when I was speaking to Mr. Holt). The Minister's information on the event was based on the account of a number of eye witnesses. Clearly a dangerous situation has been created which would consolidate and increase alienation in Northern Ireland and would be very unhelpful in terms of nationalist public opinion in the South. I said that my instructions were to enquire as to what disciplinary action was being taken.

I told Mr. Holt that a statement would be issued later in the evening along the lines of the eventual statement.

I added that our statement and the form in which we were making our views known were deliberately restrained. It was important that the British should understand that it was impossible for us to ignore events such as those of the afternoon. Should we do so we would be playing into the hands of the IRA. Our indication of concern would help to rally the response of nationalist opinion and contain some of the damage arising from the confrontation with the RUC.

I said it was possible that we would have to see the British Ambassador later, either today or during the week.

Mr. Holt who took notes as I spoke said that he would convey what I had said to the Ambassador immediately. Later in the evening following further consultation with the Taoiseach, Minister and Government Press Secretary the following statement was issued:

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Barry, has received reports from responsible sources, including responsible eye witnesses, of events in Belfast this afternoon which resulted in loss of life.

The Minister is seriously concerned at the manner in which plastic bullets were fired by the security forces on a crowd of demonstrators.

On the instructions of the Minister the Department of Foreign Affairs has expressed to a representative of the British

Embassy his serious concern about the manner in which one person lost his life and others were injured by plastic bullets and has requested that appropriate action be taken.

*M. J. Lillis*

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13 August 1984

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