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Brighton Bombing Trial

1. The explosion at the Conservative Party Conference in Brighton on October 12th 1984 killed 5 people and injured many others. An eight month investigation culminated in a wave of arrests, in June 1985. 21 people were detained, of whom 14 were charged. Charges against three of these were subsequently withdrawn.

2. The eleven remaining defendants are

Patrick Joseph Magee

Charged with murder

Gerard Patrick McDonnell

Peter John Sherry

Sean McShane

Charged with conspiracy
to explosions between
January and June 1985.

Martin Anderson

Ella O'Dwyer

Donal Dominic Craig

John Gerard Boyle

Thomas Maguire

Joseph Calvey

James Murray

Charged with withholding
information.

3. The last three (Maguire, Calvey & Murray) are to be tried separately at a later date. Craig and McShane have pleaded guilty. The trial of the remaining six began on 6 May 1986, after almost a year of remands. With the exception of Magee, McDonnell and Sherry, who have never sought assistance, the Embassy has had contact with all of the accused and their families over various questions as to their conditions, visiting rights and so on. Strong and continuing representations have also been received here concerning Calvey and Murray, relatives of Boyle and McShane who were initially charged but subsequently released, and Anderson and O'Dwyer (see separate note).

4. The Embassy has been in attendance at the hearings in the Old Bailey. Thus far the case has been developed against Patrick Magee, who the prosecution allege to be the man who actually planted the bomb some three weeks before the explosion. Once this case has been established in the jury's minds, it can be presumed that the prosecution will try to build up links between Magee and the other five co-defendants, all of whom are charged with involvement in a plot subsequent to the Brighton bombing, to detonate a series of bombs in seaside hotels around Britain.

5. Magee, McDonnell and Sherry have all been associated with the IRA before now. Magee was the subject of an unsuccessful extradition attempt by the British from Holland in 1980. McDonnell was one of the escapers in the mass breakout from the Maze in September 1983. Sherry was a Sinn Fein candidate in the 1984 Northern Ireland district council elections. The other defendants are people who know one of these three or formed part of a chain of acquaintances with one of these three men in it.

15 May 1986.

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