



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2016/52/102
<b>Creation Dates:</b>	10 July 1986
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	3 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
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SECRET



10 July 1986

Mr. E. O Tuathail  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs

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as Tánaiste  
Tánaiste  
Minister  
Minister for Justice  
Attorney General

Secretary  
Mr. Ralley  
Mr. Ward  
Mr. Russell  
A-I Section  
Amb. London

Dear Eamonn

Elliott has been involved in the various meetings preparing for the events in Portadown and elsewhere over the weekend. In discussion today we covered the following points.

Portadown

The British are a bit mystified by Paisley's very extreme behaviour in recent days. A rumour is going around, which draws a certain colour (if that is the right word) from his appearance, that he is exhausted and on edge; "a little mad" in fact.

Whatever the truth of that, they have difficulty in seeing how his current performance is likely to gain him any enduring advantage. Among the factors they have considered is his need to insert himself into the centre of the situation against a background where a perception has been stirring that he was becoming peripheral and losing out to Robinson.

It may also be that he sees in this initiative a chance to upstage the Official Unionists yet again and to force them to follow his lead. He may also, as the "creator of events", wish to re-establish himself with the loyalist paramilitaries,

although the intelligence available to the British suggests that the command structure of the UDA does not wish to move just yet.

The British fear that events could take a turn in a very serious direction over the weekend and that the trouble could spread well outside Portadown and become difficult to contain.

Considerable preparation is being undertaken by the RUC and the Army. The Army are becoming progressively more visible and more involved since their deployment on Easter Monday. This trend will be maintained over the weekend.

For the record: I spoke strongly of the Minister's desire to see the Catholic community protected and his concern about the attacks on Catholic homes last night, especially those in mixed areas. Elliott says the police are very keenly aware of the danger to such households and especially to the homes of couples of mixed religion in loyalist estates. They face considerable difficulty in spreading the line sufficiently to maintain resources to deal with the major challenges.

We have arranged for uninterrupted communication in the Secretariat through this weekend. The British would prefer to service this side of the operation by responding to queries that we would raise.

Comment: It is up to us, therefore, to raise particular points of concern so as to ensure that these are dealt with on the ground.

May I say that I am gathering from the traffic here as well as from Scott's request to the Minister that something be seen to be done in the next day or two on cross-border co-operation that there is very considerable anxiety about how events will go, even a hint of panic.

The Conference

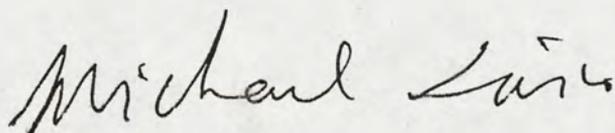
I reminded Elliott of several conversations we have had arising from King's remarks to the Minister at the end of the last meeting of the Conference which the Minister told us amounted to a willingness to have a meeting in July in Dublin. Elliott said that he had reminded King of this on Tuesday and King had confirmed that such an exchange had taken place, although King thought that the commitment related to July or August. He was not thinking of it at this moment and Elliott undertook to remind him again on Tuesday next.

Speaking personally, Elliott said he found it difficult to see what issues could be put on the agenda at this time. He suggested that this time there were no issues "ripe" for a discussion at that level - including the security co-operation issues which are yet to come to the Conference.

I said we would review our own bag of issues and no doubt have some suggestions. There was, however, no reason why the Conference should not devote a session to the political and the security situations - without papers. Elliott seemed to see some merit in this.

Comment: I would be grateful, if you have any suggestions for the agenda, if you would pass them on as a matter of urgency. I have to confess that I am personally attracted by my own off-the-cuff suggestion to Elliott. Such a broad ranging discussion, if we thought out our own approach in detail beforehand, might be good for atmosphere and the substantive issues.

Yours sincerely

  
Michael Lillis