



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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351C
IMMEDIATE
8.4.87

TO HQ FROM BELFAST

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PARAMILITARY FUNERALS

FOR O TUATHAIL FROM LILLIS
C.C. PSM, PSS, O'DONOVAN
PSE RETRANSMIT TO CHARGE, LONDON — Copied

8/4/87. QR 1312

I HAD TRANSMITTED A NUMBER OF POINTS ON BEHALF OF THE TANAISTE FOR COMMUNICATION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE AT 9.00 A.M. THIS MESSAGE HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND CIRCULATED TO SENIOR OFFICIALS IN THE NIO. THE RUC WERE ALSO AWARE OF IT AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

I SAW INNES AT 10.30. INNES IS UNDER-SECRETARY AT THE NIO AND HEAD OF THE LAW AND ORDER DIVISION.

I REPEATED THE TANAISTE'S CONCERNS TO INNES AND WENT INTO SOME DETAIL ABOUT EFFORTS WITH WHICH INNES HAD IN PARTICULAR BEEN ASSOCIATED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RUC AND THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY IN A NUMBER OF AREAS INCLUDING SPECIFICALLY WEST BELFAST. I SAID THAT IT SEEMED TO OUR AUTHORITIES THAT WHATEVER IMPROVEMENT HAD COME ABOUT HAD BEEN SERIOUSLY DAMAGED BY THE EVENTS OF THE PAST THREE DAYS. HE SAID SPECIFICALLY AND REPEATEDLY THAT CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE HAD BEEN DONE AND HE AGREED THAT EFFORTS WERE NOW NECESSARY TO UNDO IT.

INNES SAID THAT, WHILE ACCEPTING THAT THE PROVISIONAL IRA HAD PERHAPS SUSTAINED SOME POLITICAL DAMAGE ARISING FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND IMMEDIATE BACKGROUND (THE KILLING OF PRISON EDUCATIONAL OFFICER JARVIS AND TWO RUC OFFICERS AT MAGEE UNIVERSITY) TO THE FIRING OF REVOLVERS AT THE FUNERAL OF LOGUE IN DERRY LAST WEEK, THE RUC HAD TO TAKE PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF THE "EGG THAT WAS ON THEIR OWN FACES" ARISING FROM THE IRA ACTION AT THAT FUNERAL. HE HAD FELT THAT A "TRIAL OF STRENGTH" (ACCEPTING THAT THAT WAS AN INAPPROPRIATE TERM) WAS PROBABLY INEVITABLE ON THE NEXT OBVIOUS OCCASION I.E. THE MARLEY FUNERAL. AN IMPORTANT POINT IN THE RUC CALCULATION HAD BEEN THAT, HAD THE IRA MANAGED TO DOWNFACE THE POLICE AT THE MARLEY FUNERAL,

THERE WOULD BE POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONSEQUENCES FOR THE POSITION OF THE POLICE, NOT ALONE IN THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY BUT IN THE UNIONIST COMMUNITY AS WELL. IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT THE RUC ARE LIKELY TO BE FACING UNIONIST DEMONSTRATORS NEXT SATURDAY AND ON HUNDREDS OF OCCASIONS OVER THE SUMMER.

HE SAID THAT THE PARTICULAR OPERATIONAL DIFFICULTY ON THESE OCCASIONS AROSE FROM THE INTERVENTION OF IRA SUPPORTERS IN CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS IF, AS HAD HAPPENED BEFORE, A CONSIDERABLE SPACE IS LEFT BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE COFFIN. ONCE THAT HAPPENS THE POLICE HAVE EFFECTIVELY LOST CONTROL OF THE SITUATION, BECAUSE ANY SUBSEQUENT ATTEMPT TO PREVENT PARAMILITARY DISPLAYS WOULD INVOLVE AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK OF WIDESPREAD BLOODSHED ON BOTH THE POLICE AND THE COMMUNITY SIDES.

WHILE EMPHASISING THAT THE HANDLING OF THE AFFAIR WAS ENTIRELY AN OPERATIONAL MATTER ON WHICH HE COULD NOT VENTURE OPINIONS TO THE POLICE, HE SAID HE WAS ASKING HIMSELF WHETHER IT HAD BEEN WISE TO HAVE TWO STRONG LINES OF POLICE TOGETHER WITH A CROWD ON THE STREET AND WHETHER IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN WISER FOR THE POLICE TO HAVE CLEARED THE STREET IMMEDIATELY OUTSIDE THE HOUSE TO ENABLE THE TRANSPORT OF THE COFFIN TO GET UNDER WAY E.G. AS FAR AS THE STREET CORNER, BEFORE THE CROWD BECAME ENGAGED. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION: IT COULD HAVE BEEN THAT THE FAMILY WOULD NOT HAVE AGREED TO IT.

HE SAID THAT WHILE THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD TO TAKE A CERTAIN POSITION IN PUBLIC, WE COULD BE SURE THAT KING PRIVATELY AS WELL AS SCOTT AND THE RELEVANT OFFICIALS IN STORMONT HAD SEEN THE EVENTS AS A SETBACK TO EFFORTS TO CREATE A BETTER ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY.

HE SAID THAT HE WOULD USE HIS OWN INFLUENCE IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO TO ENSURE THAT SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE RUC WOULD FOR EXAMPLE BE WILLING TO HAVE SEMI-PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CLERGY IN THE ARDOYNE AND WEST BELFAST GENERALLY ON THE BEST WAY OF HANDLING SUCH FUNERALS WHILE MAINTAINING THE RULE OF LAW. HE SAID HE WOULD ALSO TRY TO ENSURE THAT THE POLICE WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR ANY APPROACH FROM SDLP LEADERS IN WEST BELFAST TO HAVE A SIMILAR DISCUSSION.

HE AND ELLIOTT (WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT) BOTH MADE THE POINT THAT THE SDLP HAD BEEN REMARKABLY INACTIVE VIS-A-VIS THE GOVERNMENT UNTIL THE AFFAIR HAD GONE ON FOR ABOUT 36 HOURS. THE SUGGESTION WAS MADE TO ME THAT HENDRON, ATTWOOD AND OTHERS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO GET ON DIRECTLY AND IF NECESSARY REPEATEDLY TO MINISTERS AND SENIOR OFFICIALS TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERN EARLY ON. I SAID I WOULD MENTION

THIS POINT TO MY AUTHORITIES.

AS WE WERE SPEAKING WORD WAS COMING IN FROM THE DEPUTY CHIEF CONSTABLE OF THE RUC MCATANEY AND THE DIVISIONAL COMMANDER STEENSON TO THE EFFECT THAT THINGS WERE GOING WELL. THEY SAID THAT THE CLERGY AND SOME FAMILY FRIENDS HAD FORMED A HUMAN CHAIN BETWEEN THE IRA SUPPORTERS AND THE POLICE AND THAT THIS WAS GREATLY APPRECIATED.

INNES COMMENTED TO ME THAT THIS SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND IN ANY FUTURE SIMILAR SITUATION. HE ACCEPTED THAT THERE WAS A NEED FOR THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE PREPARATORY CONTACT BETWEEN THE POLICE AND PERSONS OF GOODWILL IN THESE SITUATIONS. INNES SAID THAT, PARTLY AS A RESULT OF REPRESENTATIONS MADE FROM HERE, THERE HAD BEEN A DECISION NOT TO DEPLOY THE ARMED FORCES WITHIN SIGHT OF THE IMMEDIATE CORTEGE. HE SAID THAT ARMY COMMANDERS WERE IN FACT HAPPY TO HAVE THIS SUGGESTION MADE TO THEM. IN THE CASE OF THE MARLEY FUNERAL THE ARMY WERE DEPLOYED BUT ON SEPARATE STREETS.

FINALLY, INNES SAID THAT HE WAS AWARE THAT THE GARDA SIOCHANA HAD EXPERIENCE OF DIFFICULT PARAMILITARY FUNERALS AND HE WONDERED WHETHER THERE WAS ANYTHING IN THEIR EXPERIENCE WHICH MIGHT USEFULLY BE CONSIDERED BY THE RUC AND STORMONT FOR FUTURE OCCASION.

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