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Meeting with P. J. McGrory, Belfast, 25 May 1988

I called on him in his office. He was in the throes of drafting a letter to the Gibraltar Coroner concerning the postponement of the inquest. He told me that on the day the inquest was postponed, his legal associate in Gibraltar, Mr. Finch, had checked with the Coroner's office and received definite confirmation that the inquest would go ahead for 27 June. This assurance was received at 2 p.m. McGrory had asked him to obtain this assurance as a number of journalists were reporting to him that the inquest was to be postponed and indeed one of his contacts, Forde of the London Times, had told him that afternoon that his (Forde's) sources in the Ministry of Defence in London had told him definitely that they had scrubbed the inquest out of their diary for 27 June. In the event, the Coroner announced the postponement officially, 3 hours later at 5 p.m.

He had no information as to how the Coroner was got at. Finch speculates that the Attorney may have requested a postponement in order to look for more time to investigate possible criminal charges. McGrory was unsure what basis Finch had for this as he understood, as reported in the London Independent, that the soldiers are in fact immune from prosecution under the terms of the Foreign Jurisdiction Act 1890 as amended by the UK Forces orders of 1965 and 67. His own feeling is that the British are trying to drag out the affair in the hope that public interest will decline. The Coroner's clerk had mentioned to him on the phone the possibility of the inquest being scheduled for August. He has categorically rejected this proposal and Finch has assured him that just about everybody leaves Gibraltar for holidays in the month of August so that few if any of the police or witnesses would be available if the inquest were to be held in August. In the event, no date has yet been set by the Coroner.

Whatever, the reason for postponement, Finch told him it was definitely not the stated one - i.e., a music festival, which Finch described as being a minor annual affair. In any event, there is a tradition in Gibraltar that if they want extra police for any reason, they simply put an advertisement in the magazine of the London Metropolitan Police which usually triggers an enormous number of applications from London policemen looking for a subsidised holiday in the sun.

Finch told him that following the recent TV programmes, the Gibraltar police had got moving on the matter and more witnesses had been unearthed. So far as he knew, no witness had been found whose evidence contradicts in any way the evidence already presented on television by Carmen Proetta.

The general belief in Gibraltar legal circles is that the SAS team were based in a hanger at the airport and in radio contact with three men on foot who were following the three suspects. However, for whatever reason, Sean Savage slowly dropped behind the other two - possibly to check if they were being followed. He dropped a distance of 60 yards behind the other two with the result that the SAS team were between Savage and the other two - Farrell and McCann. The SAS team felt their cover had been blown and called in the other SAS group from the airport. Unfortunately, their radio message to "move in" was picked up by a Gibraltar police car peripherally involved in the matter which set off its siren which alerted the 3 IRA members. This happened at the same time the group arrived from the airport hanger. This group jumped from the car and shot Farrell and McCann (who had raised their hands in surrender) from the barrier in the middle of the road. Savage then tried to make a run for it but was shot in the back by one of the SAS men who had been part of the team on foot. The general assumption in Gibraltar is that if they were to have been shot, that it would have been more logical to do so at the point where the road crossed the airport runway where barriers can be lowered and there would have been few if any witnesses.

Bela 7.75

Brendan McMahon,
27 May 1988.

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