



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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N O T E

1. Adrian O'Neill from the Embassy in Madrid telephoned to say that he had spoken to Terry Farrell, a brother of Máiread Farrell. Farrell, who was very reasonable, said he lived in Belfast, was married and was apolitical. He wanted to get the funeral over as quickly and as effectively as possible and to "avoid a circus and as much publicity as possible". At present, he was being besieged by the press in his hotel in La Linea (the town on the Spanish side of the Gibraltar frontier).
2. While accepting Farrell's good faith, he is probably somewhat naive as it seems clear that Sinn Féin will take over the organisation of the funerals once they arrive in Ireland. Moreover, he is being accompanied in Spain by a senior Sinn Féin figure, Joe Austin.
3. Farrell did not pursue his earlier request for Embassy assistance in having the remains allowed into Spain. In the circumstances, I told the Embassy not to make contact with the Spanish authorities at this stage. Farrell, in fact, said that the undertaker had advised that going through Spain was very complicated.
4. He asked O'Neill about the possibility of chartering a plane, which would suggest that this is not an easy option in Gibraltar. He also said that the undertaker had suggested a Tangiers/Amsterdam/Dublin route but he was doubtful if the Gibraltar/Tangiers plane could take three heavy lead-lined coffins. In addition, the attitude of the Moroccans could not be taken for granted.

5. Most importantly from our point of view, Farrell said that there was no question of flying into Aldergrove. He argued that "every Union Jack in the country" would be around the airport and they would never get near the coffins. The most direct, logical route was the London/Dublin one.
5. He then specifically referred to the BBC report about a possible handling problem at Gatwick. He mentioned in this regard a problem some years ago with the McDaid funeral at Heathrow when he said that, due to the staff refusing to handle the coffin, Aer Lingus had to send in a special plane to fly the body back. We are checking this out at the moment. (file. see attached)
6. Farrell finally mentioned that his brother Ciaran and his uncle Joe (the former T.D. for Louth) had an appointment with the Taoiseach at 9.00am tomorrow. He gave the Embassy the impression that they would ask the Taoiseach that, in the event the coffins were left stranded in Gatwick, could a plane be sent to take them back. The Embassy's view is that the families will not take any decision about the repatriation of the remains until after this meeting tomorrow morning.
7. I wonder if there would be any possibility of using the city airport in Belfast, rather than Aldergrove. This is something we might perhaps tease out with the British. *(This may, on reflection, be too dangerous as it is very close to Shortts).*

DAG
Dermot Gallagher,
10 March, 1988.

PS Tony Farrell telephoned the Embassy again and asked for help in shortcircuiting the Spanish bureaucracy. He also said that the bodies would not be ready for repatriation (Columbus, etc) before tomorrow evening.