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Mr. O'Connor

To associate with other papers p.

Mr. Burke
Mr. O'Connor

With Mr. D. Nally I saw the Taoiseach at Leinster House on 16 April (18.00 hours). He spoke of the following matters:-

(a) A group of F.F. border deputies had seen the Taoiseach to express their view that there were at present on the northern side of the Border, in all sectors except Armagh and Down, a lot of young, inexperienced British soldiers on check-point and other duties who seemed very often to be acting without visible officer control. The Taoiseach had suggested that the Deputies get together to draft a document conveying their fears and dissatisfaction over the situation they had described. He asked me to arrange that a member of the Anglo-Irish Division meet and assist the Deputies in drafting the proposed document. The Deputies would be meeting next week for the purpose. Mr. O'Connor should perform this service.

(b) The shooting of a woman in a car at the Lifford bridge check-point in Strabane on Monday 14 April had been raised irregularly by Deputy Harte in the Dáil leading to his suspension. What might be done about this case? Mr. Nally said that no papers could so far be found to confirm his recollection that in the past the accidental death of a 17-year-old British soldier had led to the British ruling that only soldiers of 18 and over could have firearms. In any case the soldier responsible for the shooting at Strabane was 19.

I said that the case was different from some others in that a soldier had been arrested and charged without delay. In that sense the incident was less grave than others. However we were seeking factual information from the Garda to try to ascertain the exact position of the car and the accused soldier at the time the shooting occurred as it might be that the man was pointing his gun towards our territory from the check-point which, as the Taoiseach no doubt knew, is at the eastern or Strabane end of the bridge.

We might have specific cause for complaint about that. The dead woman resided not in the State, but in Strabane, though that was a relatively minor juridical point. The "yellow card" giving instructions to British troops on when and in what circumstances they might fire shots did not seem to relate at all to what had happened. We might find it justifiable to make representations to the British but we would not get public mileage out of this as details of our presentation would be kept confidential. The British for their part would, as Mr. Nally had earlier remarked to the Taoiseach, probably regard the case as sub judice and give no substantive reply.

Mr. O'Connor should investigate all aspects of this crime, opening a file on the subject and examining all preceding cases where we have complained of British military misdeeds and pursuing with D/Justice the possibility of getting factual information from the Gardai. We should come to a conclusion as rapidly as possible.

D.M. Neligan

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17 April, 1980

Note: After examining papers produced by Mr. O'Connor and discussing the case with him, I concluded that a separate raising of the incident with the British did not appear to be justified. However reference should be made to Mrs. Doherty's slaying when the document concerning inexperience and poor discipline on the part of British troops operating north of the border is drafted by border F.F. Deputies, as an example of what the local populace is afraid of. I conveyed this view to W.P. Keenan (D/Taoiseach) (- in the absence on 21/4 at 17.30 approx of Mr. Nally).

D.M. Neligan 21/4/80