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SECURE FAX NO 489

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22 June, 1994

PAGES : 2

TO : HQ

FROM : BELFAST

FOR : A/Sec O hUiginn

Joint Secretary

SEEN BY

27 JUN 1994

Conversation with Assistant Chief
Constable Flanagan

1. The Assistant Chief Constable for the Belfast area, Ronnie Flanagan, was here at lunch today with Michael Mellett and myself. We had a very helpful brief from the Department (Declan Kelleher) on a number of issues, including forthcoming parades.

2. Ronnie Flanagan describes himself as of working-class NILP background. He is proud of his knowledge of Belfast on both sides of the divide and we know he is highly thought of, as far as RUC officers can be highly thought of, within the Nationalist community. He has made very determined efforts to improve the RUC's relations with them. This was seen notably in his liaison with Joe Austin of Sinn Fein late last year in regard to the Begley funeral.

3. Michael Mellett will be reporting on the full conversation but I think the following account of his views will be of immediate interest:-

- The Loughinisland atrocity was a direct response to a very effective attack by the INLA (with IRA sanction) in the Shankill last week which killed not only Craig and Hamilton but also effectively removed King from the scene. King, who suffered permanent brain damage in the attack, was the main player in the group attacked;

Taswell
This is of
interest

- He does not expect a clear-cut announcement of a ceasefire from Sinn Fein but he is hopeful that, however their statement is couched, there will be a further rundown of IRA activity in coming months (July to September); he sees IRA activity as already diminished this year in the sense that it is now directed principally against the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries;

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Dnr. by
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- Notwithstanding Loughinisland and other grim events, the loyalists will reciprocate anything approaching an IRA ceasefire;

- He admires Molyneaux and regards him as both sincere and astute. He believes that Molyneaux has obtained assurances from the Prime Minister that British citizenship is not in question in the intergovernmental talks and that the UUP leader is prepared to be constructive on that basis.

- Molyneaux was badly advised by his UUP colleagues in relation to the call on loyalists to cease fire.

Molyneux should not have issued his statement and/or his colleagues should not have spoken to the press about an understanding with the loyalists. They resented the UUP's press line and reacted to prove the point that they were not the UUP's poodles. Flanagan firmly believes nonetheless that the prospect of a loyalist ceasefire or reciprocation of an IRA de-escalation is real.

- The most common security force estimate of the timeframe for a permanent cessation of violence that we have heard over the last six months, is about two/three years. Hesitating a bit and hoping that he is not regarded as very naive, Flanagan said he thinks the timeframe will be shorter, perhaps much shorter.
- One or two of Flanagan's colleagues have predicted a dire escalation of violence rather than a ceasefire. He does not share that opinion but stresses that things could go disastrously wrong. He hoped that on our side we will manage the situation very carefully (reference here to the current story about an "executive" role for All-Ireland institutions which Flanagan said the man on the street would interpret as an All-Ireland Government).
- He sees an element of talking-up of the loyalist threat on the Unionist side for tactical purposes, what he calls "the black dog" syndrome which he encounters himself in such matters as the policing of parades.
- In response to our question, he said there is some, but not a significant amount, of middle-class financial support for the loyalists. He doubts whether the "gin and Volvo set", including Roy Bradford who was very strong on this subject with us on Monday evening (my SF 483) know very much about the real situation.

4. Ronnie Flanagan's views are encouraging but I should say that he was very optimistic about the prospects for the peace process in conversation with me immediately after the Joint Declaration last December. He is conscious himself, as I mention above, that his colleagues may regard him as soft-headed. We found him thoughtful and impressive in his analysis of the current position. Let's hope he is right.

4 Pgs

Immediate

SECURE FAX

22 June 1994

At Sen Oulligin,
M. Mellett called at 29/1
mid-morning to say that Ronnie
Flanagan was coming in for lunch
(today) with the Jt. Sec and himself. Was
there anything we wanted to raise? *At Sen*
A few specific operational points are

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TO: Belfast
FOR: Joint Secretary/
M. Mellett

FROM: H. Q. *herewith.*

FROM: D. Kelleher *22/6/94*

Lunch with Ronnie Flanagan

1. Ref. your phone call this morning. Flanagan, who succeeded Robin McLoughlin as ACC Belfast, is one of the senior RUC officers increasingly seen as approachable by politicians and members of the nationalist community in Belfast (cf. Monitoring Survey). He is seen as a good communicator and self-presenter. One of his recent PR decisions, for example, which seems to be purely presentational in scope, was to have an officer of Superintendent level attend every shooting and be accessible to camera, in order to demonstrate RUC concern and engagement. (You will have seen this from TV coverage). Flanagan is also seen as highly able within the force.

Some Specific Points

- Whiterock Orange Hall Parade. Last year's parade saw the death of UVF member Herbie McCallum. This year's parade is scheduled for 25 June. We would like to see, at a minimum, last year's routing followed; i.e. cut along Workman Avenue. (Eventually, the obvious route would be along West Circular Road). Last year, unfortunately, the RUC retreated on the feeder parade for the 12th itself (see attached note). We want to see no repetition this year. (For your info, I understand that Flanagan

yesterday told an SDLP delegation that both marches this year would be along Workman Avenue (this is encouraging) and that the policing on the nationalist side would not be as oppressive as last year);

- Orange Parades in general.

I am sending separately details of flashpoints. As far as Belfast is concerned (a) we continue to urge that Loyalist parades be routed away from Duncairn Gardens; (b) we want to see no retreat on the Lower Ormeau.

- Flanagan met SDLP members yesterday. Interestingly, he told them he was on leave but appeared totally in control of his brief. Points of interest:

- he talked up the RUC's performance in dealing with Loyalist paramilitaries, and emphasised that the UDA are in some disarray in West Belfast because of the arrest of Adair. The UVF have attracted a younger element (we know this) and there is a phenomenon of UVF emulation/imitation of the UDA's exploits (we know this too);

- he said that he believes that matters are closer to the end than the beginning as far as Loyalist violence is concerned and mentioned several specific points of local interest in relation to recent acts of Loyalist violence;

- on a separate point, you may wish to query him on Loyalist lists of nationalists. I understand that one individual from the Newtownabbey area who was shot at yesterday on the Shore Road (his name is Rainey) had been told several weeks ago by the RUC that his details were in the hands of Loyalists. These lists appear to be compilations of e.g. car numbers. How does Flanagan assess Loyalist

intelligence-gathering capacities?

- The Lewsley affair could be mentioned, as could a series of house searches by the Army which we understood took place in New Barnsly last Friday afternoon. The point, to which Flanagan has said he is sympathetic, is that doors should not be forced;
- Flanagan's assessment of the general security situation in North and West Belfast would be of interest;

Springfield Park

- We are encouraged by the decision to build the wall without delay. I have been told that Flanagan has referred the circumstances leading up to the murder of Paul Thompson (including it is assumed, allegations of RUC inactivity) to the ICPC - very interesting if true. (By the way, Flanagan continues to stick to the line that the hole in the fence was not a primary factor in the killing of Thompson).

Accompaniment

- We continue to receive sightings of unaccompanied patrols, mainly RIR, in the city centre.

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