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Reference Code:	2021/51/582
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ON BEHALF OF	THAR CEANN
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Dublin and Monaghan Bombings 1974

The Minister for Justice, Nora Owen, T.D., today (17 May) met with members of the families of the victims of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings of 1974. She expressed her sympathy and that of the Government to the families on the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary of the bombings in the course of lengthy meetings which took place in Leinster House. The Minister advised the families of the victims that the outcome of the latest Garda investigation into the atrocities had produced no evidence that would enable any person to be charged. She stressed that the Garda investigation files remain open and that any new evidence, which would enable the culprits to be brought to justice, would be rigorously pursued.

Following those meetings, the Minister has issued the following statement in regard to the Garda investigation.

17 May 1995.

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Dublin and Monaghan Bombings 1974

Background

1. The bombings which took place in Dublin and Monaghan on Friday 17 May, 1974 were among the most appalling outrages in the history of this island. Three car bombs exploded without prior warning within a few minutes of each other at around 5.30 p.m. in the centre of Dublin. The bombs, which had been placed in Parnell Street, Talbot Street, and South Leinster Street, resulted in 26 persons being killed. Later at 6.58 p.m., a fourth no-warning car bomb exploded outside Greacen's Pub on the North Road in Monaghan Town resulting in a further 7 persons being killed. More than 240 persons required hospital treatment as a result of the four bombs. Not only did the bombings result in thirty-three lives being lost but a great many more lives - of the injured, of friends and of relatives - were scarred forever.

2. The bombings were the subject of an intensive Garda investigation over a protracted period of time. Those investigations involved extensive interviewing of potential witnesses, forensic examination of the scenes of the explosions and of items recovered, and contact with the RUC. Confidential information available to the Gardai at the time also led the investigation team to examine evidence against a number of loyalist suspects. Unfortunately, despite those intensive inquiries, it was not possible to bring charges against any person at that time, or subsequently, due to lack of sufficient evidence to bring the matter to court.

The "First Tuesday" Programme

3. On 6 July, 1993 a "First Tuesday" television documentary on the bombings, prepared by Yorkshire Television, was broadcast which purported amongst other things to identify the culprits.

4. The "First Tuesday" documentary contained a large number of assertions and allegations in relation to the events leading up to and following the Dublin and Monaghan bombings. The more significant of those assertions and allegations related to events which took place preparatory to the bombings, the subsequent Garda actions and investigation into the bombings, the identification of suspects, allegations of a lack of cooperation

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on the part of the RUC and security force collusion with loyalist paramilitary groups. Moreover those assertions and allegations were presented in a manner intended to suggest that the programme makers had access to evidence to back them up.

Garda Inquiry following the "First Tuesday" Broadcast

5. A review of the investigation carried out in 1974 was undertaken as part of new Garda inquiries into the events of May 1974 following the broadcast of the "First Tuesday" programme. Those inquiries also involved interviewing the programme makers, persons who appeared on the programme and other persons who the Gardai believed might be able to assist with the new investigation with the assistance of police forces in other jurisdictions where necessary.

6. The cooperation of the programme makers was sought as part of that investigation because the documentary makers had indicated in the broadcast itself that "First Tuesday" would cooperate with any properly constituted public inquiry. The researcher on the programme and the co-producers were therefore interviewed as part of the Garda investigation. The interviewing Garda officer stated that the programme makers did not provide any evidence of those who committed the crimes and they did not indicate any persons who could provide evidence or information which would lead to a breakthrough in the investigation. The overall outcome of the interviews therefore was that no new evidence came to light and no information was received which would lead to any person being made amenable for the crimes in question despite the tenor of the assertions made on the programme.

7. Also interviewed as part of the Garda investigation were persons who had appeared on the programme. Mr. F. Holroyd was interviewed and questioned closely on the comments made by him during the course of the "First Tuesday" progamme insinuating that security force personnel were in some way involved in the bombings. Mr. Holroyd informed the Gardai conducting the interview that he did not have any facts or evidence to support the matters alleged by him during the course of his TV interview and declined to produce note books which had been relied on in the programme.

8. Mr. C. Wallace was also interviewed but declined to make a written statement concerning his comments on the TV programme. Details of his TV interview were, however, discussed with him. Mr. Wallace stated that any matter mentioned by him on the programme was based on personal belief, suspicion and innuendo by other Army officers. He was not in possession of any facts or evidence which could substantiate the matters alleged i.e. involvement of security force personnel in the bombings.

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9. Interviews were conducted with other persons who the Garda authorities believed might be able to assist with the new investigation. They likewise revealed no new evidence which would enable the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Reference of Files to the Director of Public Prosecutions

10. The views of the Director of Public Prosecutions, whose function it would be to institute criminal proceedings and who is independent in the discharge of those functions, were also sought on the case in the course of the new investigation by the Garda authorities. The Director, having fully considered the file relating to that investigation, stated that there was not then or at any other time any evidence available upon which a criminal prosecution could be initiated against any person. He further stated, in response to a specific query, that there was no further line of enquiry which occurred to him which might alter that situation.

The Garda Commissioner's Conclusions

11. The Garda Commissioner is satisfied that the new Garda investigation has been extensive and exhaustive. He stated that the conclusions were as follows:

- interviews with the programme makers and others, including participants in the programme and suspects, did not indicate any persons who could provide evidence, or information, which would lead to the closing of the investigation;
- investigations carried out in 1974 were pursued as far as was then possible;
- there was no lack of co-operation between the police forces involved;
- on the balance of probability, the bombings were the work of loyalists from Northern Ireland but there was not sufficient evidence at the time to bring anyone before the courts, and no new evidence has materialised.

12. The Commissioner added that the programme makers failed to substantiate any of the assumptions or conclusions which had been included in the programme. He is satisfied that the matter has been taken as far as it could go and that no useful purpose could be served by any further enquiries.

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13. The Commissioner has also indicated that the crimes will, of course, remain an open case subject at any time to re-activation if any realistic developments occur.

Final Comments

14. The "First Tuesday" programme contained very serious allegations and presented these allegations in such a manner that members of the public could reasonably assume that the programme makers had access to evidence to back up their assertions. The Garda authorities are satisfied that neither the programme makers nor those interviewed on the programme were in a position to furnish any evidence which would further the Garda investigation.

15. The decision to issue this statement - which goes further than would be usual in such matters - has been prompted by the desire to ensure that the continuing suffering of the victims of the 1974 outrages and their families might in some way be lessened and the public disquiet created by the broadcast of the "First Tuesday" programme.

16. The Garda files on these murders remain open, and if any lead should emerge which might bring the culprits to justice, it will be pursued rigorously.

17 May, 1995.

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