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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST

Secure Fax: 926

DATE : 12 August 1998 **NO. OF PAGES (including this one):** 1+4

TO: Eamonn McKee
Anglo-Irish Division

FROM: Pat Folan

SUBJ: **1976 murder of Seamus Ludlow**

1. The British side have received the attached representations to Tony Benn, MP, regarding the above. They have asked whether we can offer them any information from our perspective in relation to the case.

2. I have faxed a copy of this note direct to Security Division in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

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13 Saint Patrick's Park,
Dromintee,
Newry.
County Down.
BT35 8SX.

Mr. Tony Benn, MP,
House of Commons.

11-July-1998.

Dear Mr. Benn,

I write to you on behalf of the entire Ludlow family circle to request your support for our call for a full and public enquiry into the murder, in the Irish Republic, of our late relative, Mr. Seamus Ludlow, of Thistle Cross, Mountpleasant, County Louth, on 2nd May 1976. My uncle is survived by one brother and three sisters and their families, and they have waited for some 22 years for the truth of his vile murder and the subsequent cover-up to emerge. The family feels that it is necessary to hold public enquiries on both sides of the border so that justice can finally be seen to be done.

Seamus Ludlow, a forestry worker, aged 47 years, was a single man, living with his aged mother, who was not involved in any way in the political affairs of the Six Counties nor was he a republican. He was an innocent man whose only mistake was to encounter those who would murder him one night as he made his way home from the pub in Dundalk. He was found the next day, shot thee times and thrown onto a high bank, a short distance from his home.

He was a random victim of a loyalist sectarian murder gang within the UDR which was operating in the Irish Republic. One of those involved, and who claims to be a witness rather than a participant, suggests a drinking spree to account for their presence in County Louth. They could not have known him but it was sufficient that he could be recognised as a Catholic.

Our family demands a full investigation into both the murder and the failure of police on both sides of the border to bring the murderers to justice. Indeed, there are many aspects of the murder investigation (and its lack of progress) and the manner in which the victim and his family were treated which raise important questions which raise disquiet.

The journalist Ed Moloney, writing in the Dublin *Sunday Tribune*, 8 March 1998, has quoted a witness, a Mr. Paul Hosking, a loyalist from Comber, County Down, who was present when the crime was committed. Mr. Hosking had accompanied three others, all armed, whom he knew to be members of the loyalist murder gang Red Hand Commando. These three men, whose names are known to us, were also members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and one held the rank of captain in that mainly Protestant regiment in the British Army.

It pains us that these men have not only escaped justice for 22 years, but may also have been protected through the smearing of the character of their innocent victim. Was this to protect the image of the UDR or was it instead to protect an informer in the death squad? In any case it is clear that these men went free, perhaps to kill again, while the family had to listen to the lies that were being said about Seamus.

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Mr Hosking's admission conflicts with the cruel lies and innuendo which branded our deceased relative as an informer who was murdered by the IRA. These lies, without a shred of supporting evidence, were spread by the Gardai for 22 years and they have been cited in various books written by British writers. Thus the victim of loyalist terrorists became a pawn in the propaganda war against republicans.

The Ludlow family circle has no knowledge of any attempt by the RUC to refute these disgraceful slanders. Our only contact with the British forces in this context was the British Army's airlifting of my late father Kevin Donegan from Forkhill to Bessbrook where he was quizzed at length by a British officer about the line of enquiry being taken by the Gardai. Perhaps this incident is also ripe for investigation.

The Ludlow family circle particularly requests an enquiry into the activities of the RUC Special Branch in this sad affair. Mr. Hosking has alleged that he was first interviewed about the murder of Seamus Ludlow in 1987 and that he was told "Forget it. It's political". He asserts that the Special Branch officer "seemed to know all the story". It saddens us therefore that one of the killers may have been an agent for the Special Branch or another unit of the British security services. This raises questions of who knew what and when. We can also ask is the life of an innocent person like Seamus Ludlow secondary to the safety of his killer who may have been an intelligence asset within the loyalist murder gang.

Given Mr. Hosking's claims it is outrageous that no arrests were made on either side of the border until February 1998 when the four loyalists were taken into custody, fully eleven years after Mr. Hosking gave his evidence to the Special Branch, and 22 years after the crime was committed. All were released without charge, though papers are being submitted to the DPP.

Given the sensitivity of this case Mr. Benn, we feel that it is important that influential figures like yourself should take an interest in it so that the authorities do not attempt to avoid prosecutions. We fear that vital evidence will be suppressed and that the killers will once again return to the obscurity that they have enjoyed for 22 years. There are many questions which should be asked and no doubt there will be great reluctance on the behalf of the RUC and British Army to face such questions.

What were these men doing in the Republic of Ireland on the 1st/2nd May 1976? Were they in the habit of operating there? Who did the alleged intelligence asset report to? Were such agents permitted by their handlers to participate in violent crime, even murder? At what stage did the RUC and Gardai know the identities of the killers? Who supplied the various authors with false information about Seamus Ludlow? Did Seamus Ludlow's murderers kill again? Who were the faceless figures who conspired to smear Seamus Ludlow and protect the guilty? What does the death and subsequent smearing of Seamus Ludlow say about due process and the sanctity of human life in British law?

One thing is certain Mr. Benn, the Ludlow family will not accept any attempt to quietly drop this case. We will not stand aside and allow the authorities to argue that this was too far into the past, that nothing good can come of raising it now, and besides it would not be conducive to the reconciliation in the post-Agreement era. Murder does not diminish after 22 years and we will not permit Seamus Ludlow's murder to be forgotten and neglected as it was in the past.

The Ludlow family will not rest until justice is finally seen to be done. We will accept nothing less than the full unvarnished truth about Seamus Ludlow's death to

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restore the good name of an innocent man whose integrity should never have been questioned. His memory remains dear to us and we will not rest until the truth is finally told and justice done.

Mr. Benn, if you are prepared to support our call for a public enquiry into the circumstances of Seamus Ludlow's death and the subsequent cover-up, you will receive the full cooperation of the entire Ludlow family circle. We would be very grateful to you if you will raise this matter with your party and in parliament.

If you have any comments to make, I can be contacted at the address above.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Donegan

Michael Donegan.

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