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DG/224/85



PS/Secretary of State (B&L)

CC PS/Mr Scott (B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L) 27/7
Mr Bloomfield
Mr Innes
Mr Wood
Mr Templeton

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... I attach a transcript of the BBC's Radio Ulster News which is quite helpful in relation to the Hermon affair.

I have had a word with the RUC Press Office and they have sent the transcript to the Belfast Telegraph by hand in case it had escaped their attention.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D Gilliland".

D GILLILAND
22nd October 1985

"The controversy over what Sir John Hermon actually said to his audience in Texas, may have been caused needlessly. One of the two reporters who sat in on his workshop with police chiefs there and who then wrote a column in the Toronto Sun, which has been heavily quoted over the last few days, now says that much of the column was his, the reporter's own opinion and that he did not quote the RUC Chief Constable accurately, word for word. I spoke to Ian Harvey who is chief crime correspondent on the Toronto Sun, first I asked him to clearly state what Sir John had talked about -

Ian Harvey - "The workshop was entitled "Border Surveillance" and he gave his talk on the problems of policing the Northern Ireland border. He in fact followed a lecture by an American Naturalization and Immigration Agent who talked about the Mexican Border, but Sir John certainly had a greater impact on the audience; he brought along a slide show which showed mangled bodies, twisted metal, bomb attacks and various other types of heavy weaponry and stuff that had been seized and also brought along a show that illustrated the types of surveillance they used, the lengths that they go to, to police the border and in fact fight terrorist attacks".

REPORTER "Some of the quotes from Sir John written by yourself and one other reporter who were at the workshop, have caused a lot of controversy here, one in particular that the security forces in the South are paying less attention than they should, to defeating terrorism; now is that an accurate report of what he said?"

Ian Harvey - "Exactly, it is suggested that he said that they had "no interest", well he didn't exactly say "no interest" but he did say that it had become less of a priority, which means they have less interest, he indicated that, for example, that the threat of terrorism is not so great in the South, that the targets are all in the North or in Britain or elsewhere and that as a result the Garda or the Irish Government, or whoever controls the money, has reallocated, redirected, personnel, money and funds to more pressing local problems such as the Drug Problem in Dublin".

REPORTER "Most of the reports of what Sir John said have been quoted from your column in the Toronto paper you work for."

Ian Harvey - "Exactly".

REPORTER "Would it be true to say that you used a rather free hand in quoting him?"

Ian Harvey - "I write an opinion column, so don't forget there is a lot of opinion there. Opinion that I have based my opinion on the facts as he presented in the lecture there; and also my background in covering terrorism in international stories and local stories for ten or eleven years now".

REPORTER - "So, it is your interpretation of what he said".

Ian Harvey - "Some of it is, and some of it isn't, some of the stuff is dead on as he said it, for example the lack of interest or lack of priority is the way he presented it. I think the quote attributed to me in 'The Irish Times', would suggest that the IRA were thieves, or thugs, that's my ~~interpretation~~ those were my words. I think it would be unfortunate if Sir John was tabbed as saying that directly, and as far as having no interest, or turning their backs completely on the problem, I don't think he used those exact words. He was very oblique, very subtle and took what we would call a back-handed swipe".

REPORTER - "When you were listening to what he was saying and then writing your piece afterwards, did you realise the delicate state of relations between the RUC in the North and the Garda - the Irish police in the South?"

Ian Harvey - "I had no idea - it wasn't much of a story for us, we didn't play it as a big story in Canada. I had certainly had a general awareness of the conflict and the political problem but as far as day to day relationships and the nitty gritty of it I had absolutely no idea. I don't think that anything I reported or has been reported is inaccurate or unfair, I think. It was a fair report, it certainly represented the mood of Sir John and the nature of his presentation".

REPORTER - "Perhapes not his exact words".

Ian Harvey - "Not saying exact words, but I don't pretend to be representing his exact words in that the column I write is an opinion column, that runs with my picture rather than just a byline."