

RED TO

*Ms Bramley*

State

FROM: T SMYTH  
8 NOVEMBER 1994

TS/28533/94/AC

*DB 302/94*  
RECEIVED 10 NOV 1994

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
- PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- ~~PS/Mr Felt~~
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Legge
- Mr Williams
- Mr Steele
- Mr Shannon
- Mr Bell
- Mr Perry
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Bramley

UNCLAS 469/11  
SEC  
-9 NOV 1994  
CENT SEC

*Mrs Bloom*  
*as Mrs Watkins*

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

-8 NOV 1994  
16256  
*Mr O'...*

RELEASE OF IRISH PIRA PRISONERS

Further to Mr Legge's minute, I attach a transcript of what the Irish Minister for Justice said in response to questioning by an RTE reporter. The transcript also includes reaction to what she said from David Irvine and Andrew Hunter.

T SMYTH

THE FOLLOWING IS A TRANSCRIPT OF EXTRACT FROM :

NEWS -- 6.30P.M.

RTE RADIO 1

PROGRAMME.....  
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SUBJECT.....  
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STATION.....  
DATE & TIME.....  
OUR REF.....  
DURATION.....

NEWSCASTER - KEN HAMMOND

The Minister for Justice, Maire Geoghegan-Quinn announced today, that in view of the ceasefire, a number of Provisional IRA Prisoners are to be released before Christmas. In an RTE interview, she also said the IRA's weapons would have to be dismantled or destroyed. She said this was now being discussed with Sinn Fein.

From Galway, our Security Correspondent, Tom McCaughren, reports.

REPORTER - TOM McCAUGHREN

The Minister was speaking in Galway after the presentation of awards sponsored by Chubb Ireland, to winners of the Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Schemes. She said that of the eighty subversive prisoners in the Republic, fifty were Provisionals. The question of those serving forty years for the murder of Gardai, was a very sensitive one and was not being considered at the moment.

However, an examination of the files of the others, had been going on for the past three weeks.

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE - MAIRE GEOGHEGAN-QUINN

No I can't put a number at this stage, because obviously I haven't made final decisions, and the final decision will be mine. But certainly I can confirm that a number of prisoners will be released between now and Christmas.

TOM McCAUGHREN

It has been suggested that there might be some sort of a trade-off, prisoners for guns?

MAIRE GEOGHEGAN-QUINN

We're not talking about a trade-off for..one for the other. But what we are saying, and we've been very careful to repeat it on several occasions, that we do need a dismantlement of the arsenals, and we'll be pursuing that very actively, both at Government level and indeed at official level as well.

TOM McCAUGHREN

In the dispute that has split the Garda Representative Association, the Minister issued a strong warning to the Association and the breakaway Garda Federation, saying that if they didn't sort out their differences on the basis of the Mediator's report by the end of the year, she wouldn't hesitate to dissolve both organisations.

MAIRE GEOGHEGAN-QUINN

I can't wait forever. The people of the country can't be expected forever to watch this dispute growing and on-going. And at the end of the day, I don't want to be put in a position by either of the two organisations, that I have to take the last resort, which is to stand-down both organisations and to start from scratch.

I don't want to have to take action, but if it becomes necessary Tom, I haven't been slow to take action in the past. And if it becomes necessary to step in, and I hope that it won't, I'll have no difficulty in doing that.

TOM MCCAUGHREN

Overall winner of the Neighbourhood Watch Award, was the Liberties Look About Scheme in Dublin. While Castletownbere, Ross McKeown and Bere Island in Cork, were the overall winners of the Community Alert Scheme.

Tom McCaughren, RTE News, Galway.

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Mr. Nylke

THIS IS A TRANSCRIPT OF EXTRACT FROM :

NEWS  
PROGRAMME.....  
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SUBJECT.....  
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RTE RADIO 1  
STATION.....  
DATE & TIME..... 8/11/'94 - 08.00AM  
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OUR REF..... S.H. 8/11/'94  
.....  
DURATION..... 2 MINUTES  
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NEWSCASTER - AONGUS MCGRIANNA

There's been a mixed reaction in the North and in Britain to the Irish Government's decision to release a number of IRA prisoners before Christmas. The move was announced yesterday by the Minister for Justice, Maire Geoghegan Quinn, she also said the IRA's weapons would have to be dismantled or destroyed and that this issue was now being discussed with Sinn Fein. Michael Fisher of our Northern staff...I'm sorry, we'll come to that report later.

\* Continues with other topics.

Our main story this morning, there's been a mixed reaction in the North and in Britain to the Irish Government's decision to release a number of IRA prisoners before Christmas. Michael Fisher:-

REPORTER - MICHAEL FISHER

Ulster Unionist Security Spokesman, Ken McGuinness, said he was increasingly worried at what he said was the Republic's piecemeal approach to the ceasefire. The Fermanagh South Tyrone MP said it was in contrast to the British Prime Minister's more considered and structured attitude. His party colleague, Reverend Martin Smith, said he was disgusted and accused the Minister of playing politics with justice.

DUP Spokesman, Sammie Wilson, said the move showed the peace process was what he claimed, was a surrender process. Chairman of the Conservative Back Bench Northern Ireland

Committee, Andrew Hunter said, not for the first time they had good reason to be very concerned about the words and deeds of Dublin.

Downing Street and the Northern Secretary both said the issue was a matter for the Irish Government, Sir Patrick Mayhew said yesterday that when people were sentenced for what are very serious crimes, then the law must take its course.

The move however, has been welcomed by both Sinn Fein and the SDLP. Michael Fisher, RTE News, Belfast.

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THE FOLLOWING IS A TRANSCRIPT OF EXTRACT FROM :

PROGRAMME..... MORNING IRELAND

SUBJECT..... RELEASE OF IRA PRISONERS

STATION..... RTE RADIO 1  
DATE & TIME..... 8/11/94 - 08.10AM  
OUR REF..... S.H. 8/11/94  
DURATION..... 9 MINUTES 50 SECONDS

PRESENTER - DAVID HANLY

We move to that announcement by the Minister for Justice, Maire Geoghegan Quinn, that some of the IRA prisoners in Port Laoise prison will be released before Christmas. The Minister said there was no question of a trade off of arms for prisoners, but said that the Government was pressing for a dismantling of the IRA's arsenal. She explained the Government position to our Security Correspondent, Tom McCaughren:-

MAIRE GEOGHEGAN QUINN - MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

The position is that I've said from the very beginning and the Government have said that what we're talking about is looking at each individual prisoner that we have in our prisons here, looking at each of them individually and talking about early releases for them. I started that process several weeks ago, I've looked at each individual file and we will be making decisions in relation to early releases before Christmas.

TOM McCAUGHREN

So a number of Provisional IRA prisoners will be released before Christmas?

MAIRE GEOGHEGAN QUINN

Yes.

TOM McCAUGHREN

And can you put a number on that?

MAIRE GEOGHEGAN QUINN

No I can't put a number at this stage, because obviously I haven't made final decisions and the final decision will be mine, but certainly I can confirm that a number of prisoners will be released between now and Christmas.

TOM McCAUGHREN

What about the long term prisoners who have been in for the murder of Gardai?

MAIRE GEOGHEGAN QUINN

That's a very separate issue in that there are huge sensitivities involved which I'm very much aware of and the Government are. First of all among the Garda representative bodies themselves and the views that they have, and secondly and most particularly the widows and the children of those people who were...the members of the Gardai who were killed in those tragic circumstances. So I have to look at that issue quite separately, but just to confirm that in relation to all the other prisoners we're talking about early releases for them.

TOM McCAUGHREN

It has been suggested that there might be some sort of a trade off, prisoners for guns?



MAIRE GEOGHEGAN QUINN

Well we've said from the very beginning and in fact in the first meeting that the Taoiseach had with Gerry Adams and meeting that have been held since with officials and Sinn Fein, we've been talking about the total dismantlement of the arsenals of weapons, the semtex and so on that there are up and down the country and that is the position and I know that Sinn Fein have been very keen themselves that that should happen. We're not talking about a trade off for one for the other, but what we are saying and we've been very careful to repeat it on several occasions, that we do need a dismantlement of the arsenals and we've been pursuing that very actively, both at Government level and indeed at official level as well.

DAVID HANLY

Maire Geoghegan Quinn. Twenty five minutes past eight. Well reaction to the Minister's statement has been swift and critical in Britain and we'll hear some of that presently. But let's go to the North of Ireland first and David Irvine, Leader of the Progressive Unionist Party and his reaction:-

DAVID IRVINE - PROGRESSIVE UNIONIST PARTY

Well quite frankly it's one of mixed emotion, I'm on public record as saying that the prison situation in Northern Ireland and I suppose by geographical position therefore the prison position in the Irish Republic will have to be dealt with. But I'm mindful of the fears that this will create within unionism. It'll be seen as the Irish Republic trying to drive the agenda, trying to push the British behind the eight ball if you like, or trying to push the British into a difficult position.

It seems all very quick, but there are pluses in it, or at least there look to be pluses. One that Maire Geoghegan Quinn is obviously suggesting that these people will not become recidivist, in other words they'll not re-offend and that's got to be a plus, that if they believe that then that's good news for all of us. Because as you are aware, I'm sure there is the belief that there is a rump within Republicanism discontented with the idea of peace, discontented with politics and very possibly discontented with the politics that they know they cannot win.

NIALL MARTIN - REPORTER

Does that make it all the more important that the arms are got rid of and that the bombs are dismantled?

DAVID IRVINE

Oh I think so yes, I think so, but there is a great difficulty in that as well in that no one, as far as I'm aware, would have ever had the ability to keep an inventory of what weapons are available within the arsenals, which quite frankly are in embarrassing proportions with the Irish Republic and certainly within Northern Ireland as well. I have to say that I am certain that all of this society wants to see an end to the trauma and the tragedy of the last twenty five years.

NIALL MARTIN

Would your party too be willing to engage in this, what could loosely be termed, prisoners for arms swap?

DAVID IRVINE

Well my party would be very prepared to engage in anything

which will bring a lasting peace to a society so ravaged. But, I'm not sure that this is simply what we're talking about, I think there's a lot of politics in this and the British Government are being pushed and they're being pushed by an Irish Government. Now while some of the sentiment I appreciate and some of that sentiment I have already reiterated...or alluded to in that I believe that the issue will have to be dealt with. But the Irish Government cannot continually be seen to force the issue.

NIALL MARTIN

A lot of people both in Northern Ireland and in the South, would feel that people that committed awful crimes, both from the IRA side and also from the Loyalist side of things, deserve to be in prison for their full sentence and should not get out just because there is peace in the making?

DAVID IRVINE

Well in an equal and moral world, I would say they're absolutely correct. But I'm fearful to say that the truth as I see it, and the truth as many people have seen it with the prison culture and the gun culture that has existed within my society for so long, they are political victims of the troubles.

DAVID HANLY

And that was the Leader of the Progressive Unionist Party, David Irvine talking to Niall Martin. On the line from London now is the Chairman of the Conservative Party Northern Ireland Back Bench Committee, Andrew Hunter, Andrew Hunter good morning:-

ANDREW HUNTER - CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Good morning.

DAVID HANLY

I should mention that you're on a car phone. You say that the amnesty is a dreadful mistake, why?

ANDREW HUNTER

We think it's a serious mistake because.....peace process itself, the peace process can only maintain momentum,.....(transmission breaking up)...

DAVID HANLY

Mr Hunter I'm very sorry to interrupt you but I'm afraid it didn't work, the car phone is breaking down on us and we're not hearing you properly. We'll try to get back onto you, but thank you meanwhile for taking our call.

\* Continues with other topics.

DAVID HANLY

Back to the announcement of the selective release of prisoners from Port Laoise before Christmas, we heard from David Irvine of the PUP on his mixed emotions. No such mixed emotions from the Chairman of the Conservative Party, Northern Ireland Back Bench Committee, Andrew Hunter. We missed him earlier on on his car phone, now I gather he's in his office and on the line. Mr Hunter good morning again:-

DAVID HANLY

Well I'm sorry that you missed that, he said that his reaction was one of mixed emotions, that while there was something to be said against it, there were also as he put it, pluses?

ANDREW HUNTER

No I do not agree with that at all. We have not even had talks about talks yet, let alone meaningful negotiations, some people would say that the early release of IRA prisoners can be on the agenda at some point, it certainly isn't on the agenda today.

DAVID HANLY

Well it's not on the agenda of the Irish Government right now today either, I mean it's a selective release, but...

ANDREW HUNTER

With respect it is, insofar as they have made that announcement and it is a policy decision. The actual day of the release and names is relatively insignificant in the light of the broader political spectrum of things.

DAVID HANLY

Is your hostility to it one based on principle or the timing of it?

ANDREW HUNTER

My own is based on principle, for twenty five years the IRA murdered and maimed people of the United Kingdom, we will

never forget, we will never forgive, nor should we.

DAVID HANLY

Returning to the difference in reaction between yourself and David Irvine, does it not implicitly show that you and your committee perhaps are out of touch with grass roots Loyalist opinion in the North of Ireland?

ANDREW HUNTER

I would refute that intensely, we are fully supportive of the Prime Minister, our Prime Minister's cautious step by step approach, constantly evaluating the situation, moving the process forward, retaining the confidence of both sides of the community. I do not believe that the action of the Government of the Republic in making this announcement, is going to advance the peace process, because it will query people's confidence in that process.

DAVID HANLY

All right, Mr Hunter there we must leave it, thank you very much indeed for taking our call. Andrew Hunter, Chairman of the Conservative Party's Northern Ireland Back Bench Committee.

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1994-11-08

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OF 09.....Z NOV  
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*Mrs Murphy*

RECEIVED 18 NOV 1994

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*PS 4/11*  
*Mrs Brown*

SUBJECT: MY TELNO 406  
RELEASE OF IRA PRISONERS

SUMMARY

1. Media continue to report further reactions. Editorials reflect comments by Roy Magee and David Ervine in Dublin and call for HMG to follow Dublin's lead.

DETAIL

2. An Irish Times front page article headlined "up to 40 IRA prisoners could be released before Christmas", explains that the figure could be as low as 10. A piece in the Irish Independent which seems to reflect official Irish briefing says only about a dozen prisoners will be set free before Christmas, not (not) including Quinlivan, McAuley or McMahon.

3. Reports on HMG's reactions reflect the line that the decision is a matter for the Irish Government, except for a piece in the Irish Times from a London correspondent alleging that Whitehall sources were "unhappy" and expecting "tension" between the two governments.

4. By coincidence both the Rev Roy Magee and David Ervine were in Dublin on 8 November. Their comments on prisoners are widely reported. Magee said that HMG should now consider phased release of all prisoners on licence, beginning with all long term prisoners approaching time for review. He recognised this was a delicate issue for relatives of those murdered, but wanted to secure the peace. Ervine said releasing prisoners in the Republic would only have a "pin prick" effect on the peace process and dismissed freeing "20 odd" men here as making no difference. The release of prisoners in the North

ould "cement the peace" although it would face "mammoth emotive difficulties." Accordingly he would like to see movement on less contentious issues, like parole, before Christmas.

5. Focussing on Magee and Ervine's statements, an editorial in the Irish Press calls on the British Government to follow Dublin's lead and begin its own programme of phased releases. An Irish Independent editorial adopts a similar line, but in more moderate tone.