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Derry violence featured in 'useful' anti-accord file

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14:07 11:11 Wednesday 31 August 2016

A top political advisor at the NIO suggested a pamphlet focusing heavily on intense IRA operations in Derry 30 years ago, might become a “useful directory of information for unionists to use in speeches and interviews.”

Details of the NIO's views of 'The Anglo-Irish Agreement - A Legacy of Violence,' a document endorsed by Harry McCusker and Peter Robinson and other members of the Unionist Joint Working Party, which was organising against the accord in 1987, have been newly-published by the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN).

Whilst Mr McCusker and Mr Robinson said the pamphlet wasn't meant to be a “diatribe against republican violence” but rather was meant to show the deterioration in relationships between Protestants and Catholics in the community,” JR Alford from the NIO's Political Affairs Division pointed out that “the text slants much more towards republican violence but this is only to be expected since they have posed much the greater threat during the year in question.”

Much of the violence detailed is focused in the Derry area.

The document, for example, refers to the intimidation of an electrical contractor based in Spencer Road, who stopped working for the security forces after he was threatened by the INLA.

It also refers to an IRA rocket and gun attack on the Strand Road barracks on September 11, 1986,

“Two bombs exploded inside heavily-fortified barracks and another fired from entry off Clarendon Street failed to explode.

“Thirty shots were fired at the base by eight gunmen who had taken over a nearby building in Great James’ Street, where workmen were ordered into a toilet.”

Bomb-making components, CB radios and khaki-style jackets were also seized by the RUC during raids in Creggan on the same day.

The dossier also refers to the murder of Waterside man Ken Robinson on September 12, 1986.

“Mr Ken Robinson, a 30-year-old Protestant, son of a part-time UDR soldier, blasted to death when he stepped on an IRA booby-trap device meant for his father in an alleyway close to his home at Clonmarkane Court in The Nelson Drive district of the Waterside.

“His legs were badly mutilated and the upper part of his body burnt. 46th murder victim in the Province this year. Troubles since 1969 have now claimed 2,510 lives,” the pamphlet states.

A fierce gun battle in the Bogside, the following day, Saturday, September 13, 1986, was also cited.

“IRA engage police in Bogside, Londonderry in 10 minute gun battle firing from the Rossville Flats complex. Police fired back at gunmen but were later attacked by stone throwing mobs when carrying out a follow-up search,” the file shows.

Elsewhere, the apparent explosion of an IRA bomb in a Derry school was also detailed.

“Greenhaw Primary School in Londonderry sealed off and 20 houses evacuated while Army experts examine a small IRA explosion in a wall at the school.”

This is said to have occurred on Wednesday, June 18, 1986.

A few days later, Wednesday, June 25, 1986: “Sinn Féin leader and Assemblyman Martin McGuinness claims the IRA gun is the only way to unite Ireland in a speech at Wolfe Tone commemoration rally in Co. Kildare,” said the Unionist Joint Working Party file.

Writing to a Mr Hill at the NIO Security and International Liaison (SIL) Division, Mr Alford suggested the dossier could be used by unionists as an information directory.

“It will be for you of course to decide how best to deal with the document but because it largely avoids comment and simply catalogues events it may be unwise at this point for Ministers to give much, if any, response.

“However this is not to say that it might not become a useful directory of information for unionists to use in speeches and interviews.”

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