



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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ADJOURNMENT DEBATE IN DAIL EIREANN ON 19 APRIL
ON THE CONTINUED ATTACKS AND DESTRUCTION OF THE
DUBLIN/BELFAST RAILWAY LINE AND
THE DANGER TO STAFF AND PASSENGERS

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR STATE
AT THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TAOISEACH
MRS MAIRE GEOGHAN-QUINN TD

I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN, A CHEANN COMHAIRLE, BY ASSURING DEPUTIES THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES ON THE MATTER OF THE BOMBING CAMPAIGN ON THE DUBLIN TO BELFAST RAILWAY LINE. DELAYS IN RE-OPENING THE LINE HAVE BEEN DUE TO THE SUSPECTED PRESENCE OF SECONDARY DEVICES. ONE SUCH DEVICE IN FACT EXPLODED, CAUSING INJURY TO A BRITISH ARMY EXPLOSIVES OFFICER ON 17 FEBRUARY. I CAN ASSURE THE HOUSE THAT THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THE LINE OPEN AND SAFE FOR TRAVEL.

I AM SURE THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE WILL JOIN ME IN CONDEMNING IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS THE SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS ON THE DUBLIN TO BELFAST RAILWAY WHICH HAVE OCCURRED RECENTLY. THOSE WHO CARRY OUT SUCH ATTACKS WOULD SEEM TO HAVE LITTLE OR NO CONCERN FOR THE APPALLING LOSS OF LIFE WHICH COULD SO EASILY RESULT FROM THEIR ACTIVITIES. I PARTICULARLY CONDEMN THE STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE IRA ON 16 APRIL "ADVISING" EMPLOYEES AND OFFICIALS OF NORTHERN IRELAND RAILWAYS TO STAY AWAY FROM THE RAILWAY LINE IN ORDER TO AVOID DEATH OR INJURY IN AN IRA ATTACK.

THE RECENT CAMPAIGN BEGAN ON 16 DECEMBER LAST WHEN A DEVICE WAS DETONATED ON THE RAILWAY LINE 150 METRES SOUTH OF KILNASAGGART BRIDGE. FORTUNATELY, NO INJURY WAS CAUSED AND THE CLEARANCE OPERATION BEGAN.

ON 28 DECEMBER, A 400 LB RADIO CONTROLLED BOMB CONTAINING HOME-MADE EXPLOSIVES WAS FOUND HIDDEN IN A STONE WALL SOME 25 TO 30 METRES FROM THE LINE. IT WAS DEFUSED. THE CLEARANCE OPERATION ENDED ON 29 DECEMBER AND THE LINE WAS OPENED THE FOLLOWING DAY.

ON 3 FEBRUARY, NORTHERN IRELAND RAILWAYS REPORTED THAT TWO BOMBS WERE HIDDEN ON THE LINE AT KILNASAGGART BRIDGE. THESE BOMBS EXPLODED THE FOLLOWING DAY AND DAMAGED THE BRIDGE. THE CLEARANCE OPERATION BEGAN ON 5 FEBRUARY AND ON 17 FEBRUARY A SECONDARY DEVICE EXPLODED CAUSING INJURY TO AN EXPLOSIVES OFFICER. ON 18 FEBRUARY ANOTHER BOMB CONTAINING BETWEEN 2 AND 5 KILOS OF SEMTEX WAS FOUND AND DEFUSED. ON 19 FEBRUARY YET ANOTHER BOMB, THIS TIME CONTAINING 100 KILOS OF A HOME-MADE EXPLOSIVES WAS FOUND AND DEFUSED. THE CLEARANCE OPERATION WAS CONCLUDED ON 21 FEBRUARY AND THE LINE RE-OPENED.

ON 23 FEBRUARY, A BOMB EXPLODED AS SILVERWOOD BRIDGE. IT CONTAINED 5 KILOS OF SEMTEX. A CLEARANCE OPERATION WAS MOUNTED WHICH CONCLUDED ON 27 FEBRUARY.

THE FOLLOWING DAY, THERE WERE TWO TELEPHONE CALLS SAYING THAT THERE WERE TWO DEVICES ON THE PORTADOWN/NEWRY STRETCH OF THE LINE. A CLEARANCE OPERATION WAS MOUNTED. NO BOMB WAS FOUND. THE

LINE WAS RE-OPENED ON 1 MARCH.

ON 2 MARCH, A BOMB EXPLODED AT THE CRAIGMORE VIADUCT. AGAIN, FORTUNATELY, THERE WERE NO INJURIES. A CLEARANCE OPERATION HAD TO BE MOUNTED AND THE LINE WAS CLOSED YET AGAIN. IT WAS RE-OPENED ON 8 MARCH.

ON 12/13 MARCH, THERE WAS A BOMB SCARE AND THE LINE WAS CLOSED FOR 22 HOURS.

ON 1 APRIL, THERE WAS ANOTHER BOMB SCARE AND THE LINE WAS CLOSED FOR 3 HOURS.

ON 5 APRIL, THERE WAS A FURTHER HOAX CALL AND THE LINE WAS CLOSED FOR 4 HOURS.

ON 10 APRIL, THERE WAS A TELEPHONE CALL SAYING THAT A BOMB ON THE LINE WAS TIMED TO EXPLODE WITHIN 20 MINUTES. AN EXPLOSION WAS HEARD AND IT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY FOUND TO HAVE OCCURRED SOUTH OF NEWRY STATION.

ON 11 APRIL, TWO DEVICES WERE DISCOVERED AT MEIGH, SOUTH OF NEWRY. ON THE SAME DAY, A FURTHER DEVICE WAS FOUND SOUTH OF NEWRY STATION. THAT DEVICE WAS DEFUSED ON 17 APRIL.

THE DEVICES AT MEIGH REMAIN TO BE DEALT WITH AND PASSENGERS ARE BEING BUSSED BETWEEN NEWRY AND DUNDALK.

IN ALL THE LINE HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR SOME 45 DAYS SINCE 16 DECEMBER 1988. AS I SAID IN MY OPENING COMMENTS, THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES ARE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THE LINE OPEN AND SAFE FOR TRAVEL. DEPUTIES WILL APPRECIATE THAT DUE REGARD MUST BE HAD FOR THE NECESSITY TO ENSURE THAT LIVES WILL NOT BE PUT AT RISK BY A HURRIED RE-OPENING.

IT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THOSE WHO ENDANGER THE LIVES OF CIVILIAN TRAIN PASSENGERS EXPECT TO GAIN FROM A BOMBING CAMPAIGN AGAINST A RAILWAY LINE WHICH BRINGS PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT TO AND FROM BOTH PARTS OF OUR ISLAND. THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS CAMPAIGN APPEARS TO BE TO CLOSE DOWN THIS LINK. HOW CAN ACTION WHICH DIVIDES BE RECONCILED WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF UNIFYING AND BRINGING TOGETHER?

THE DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE BY THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS CAMPAIGN WAS CHILLINGLY DEMONSTRATED YET AGAIN BY THE APPALLING KILLING OF MS JOANNE REILLY IN WARRENPOINT, CO DOWN. I AM SURE THAT ALL DEPUTIES WILL WANT TO JOIN ME IN CONDEMNING THIS KILLING OF AN INNOCENT YOUNG GIRL.

IT IS IRONIC THAT, AS WE APPROACH 1992 AND THE PROGRESSIVE ELIMINATION OF BARRIERS BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, THE CONTINUING CAMPAIGNS OF VIOLENCE, AS REFLECTED IN THE ATTACKS ON THE NORTH/SOUTH RAIL LINKS, ARE DEEPENING THE DIVISION BETWEEN THE TWO PARTS OF THE ISLAND AND SERIOUSLY DAMAGING ON-GOING BUSINESS, TRADE AND PERSONAL LINKS BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, AND THEIR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.

THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF PARTITION ON THE ECONOMIES OF BOTH PARTS OF THE ISLAND ARE WELL KNOWN. AS THE TANAISTE SAID IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT HE ISSUED ON 13 MARCH LAST, UNION REPRESENTATIVES HAVE ESTIMATED THAT THE JOBS OF SOME 400 PERSONS WORKING EITHER WITH IARNROD EIREANN OR THE NORTHERN IRELAND RAILWAYS ARE IN JEOPARDY. THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BOMBING CAMPAIGN AND ANYONE WHO HAS INFLUENCE UPON THEM SHOULD THINK ABOUT THE EFFECT OF THESE ACTIONS IN PLACING THE LIVELIHOOD OF THESE WORKERS IN JEOPARDY.

IN CONCLUSION, A CHEANN COMHAIRLE, I WOULD APPEAL AGAIN TO ALL ENGAGED IN VIOLENCE TO CONSIDER THE APPALLING EFFECT OF THEIR CAMPAIGNS AND TO DESIST FROM ACTIVITIES WHICH CAN HAVE NO PLACE IN THE IRELAND WE ARE TRYING TO BUILD.