



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2019/101/2340

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.



**17, GROSVENOR PLACE,
SW1X 7HR**
Telephone: 01-235 2171
TELEX: 916104

cc Post, H.G.
Mr. Miller; PEE
Mr. Matthews Mr. Tanager
(C) Cancellation P
Mr. R.O. Smith
J. R.

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Assistant Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs

"Panorama" programme on the Ryan affair

Ware was a key figure on Granada TV's "World in Action" before he moved to the BBC. During his 15 years or so on that programme, he was responsible for numerous features of Irish interest, including a controversial profile of Gerry Adams in 1983. Since joining Panorama two years ago, he has been associated, in particular, with the Panorama investigations of the Spycatcher affair.

Ware has in mind an hour-long programme on the Ryan affair which would reconstruct the sequence of events as precisely as possible and would also try to throw some light on Fr. Ryan's earlier career. The programme would not be transmitted until after any proceedings against Fr. Ryan in Ireland have concluded.

The issue with which Ware is most concerned is: why did the British Government suddenly display such intense interest, from last summer onwards, in an individual who, though suspected for some time of terrorist involvement, had not previously received such close attention? From research which Ware has carried out in Brussels, it is clear that Ryan (whom the British initially wanted merely to be kept under surveillance) attracted steadily greater interest after his arrest (though, Ware understands, he provided no new evidence under interrogation). According to the Belgians, the British Embassy in Brussels, "from the Ambassador downwards", were in constant touch with Belgian officials to enquire about the prospects of extradition (a degree of activity at odds with the relatively long time it took for the extradition request to be presented in the first instance).

Their interest in Ryan struck one Belgian official as "obsessive". Ware does not yet know what to make of this but suspects that, for some reason (perhaps receipt of new information or alleged information about Ryan), the Prime Minister suddenly became seized of the case and assigned top priority to it.

How well-founded the case is against Ryan, however, is very much open to question. His reported involvement in 185 terrorist incidents, for example, does not stand up to scrutiny. This figure arose from a hasty reading of papers which Commander George Hucklesby, the former head of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist unit, passed to a journalist from the London Daily News after he retired recently. (Hucklesby reportedly received money for his papers from the journalist and there is a possibility that he may be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act). Ware's understanding is that the principal charges against Ryan relate to only four or five incidents, which include the attack on Sir Stewart Pringle and the Oxford Circus bombing several years ago but exclude the Hyde Park bombing. Nothing he has heard so far, he added, would suggest any link with the Brighton bombing.

In Ware's own judgement, Ryan (who, he understands, was known to the Irish Special Branch as far back as 1971) probably acted as an accessory to various IRA operations on the continent (moving funds, organising transport, etc.). Whatever about proving this, it will be considerably more difficult to produce evidence in support of the allegations about more direct involvement in terrorist activity (supply of timing devices). The British have indicated privately that they believe they can link him to specific bombings - via serial numbers and other markings on timers which have survived certain bombings intact and which, they hope to demonstrate, Ryan purchased. Ware is highly sceptical about this.

Ware also wishes to bring out in his programme the extent to which a high-handed and condescending attitude towards Ireland on the part of the British Government compromised the efforts to secure Ryan's extradition. If the British wanted Ryan so badly, they should have made preparations well in advance of his possible transfer to Ireland. Rather than submit draft warrants a couple of days ahead (which in the event proved to be seriously flawed), and try to bludgeon the Irish side into immediate compliance with their extradition request, they should have sent over draft warrants a couple of weeks in advance. They should have allowed sufficient time for consideration by the Irish Attorney General of what anybody could see would be a highly complex, indeed unprecedented, case, involving as it did offences allegedly committed by an Irish citizen in third countries and for which the Belgians had already found the evidence to be unconvincing.

The Irish Government's handling of the affair, in Ware's view, has been irreproachable. The Taoiseach's approach to his Rhodes meeting with the PM, furthermore, was a shrewd move in tactical terms. If the British request a CLJA prosecution and Ryan is found guilty and sentenced by the Irish courts, the whole affair will be seen as a major propaganda coup for the Irish Government. Ware sees a danger, however, that the credit and authority built up by the Irish side so far will evaporate if, in the event of the DPP responding favourably to a British request, the Gardai fail to locate and arrest Ryan within a very short time.

Ware also wishes to focus in his programme on the severely prejudicial effect of the PM's Commons remarks and of the coverage of the affair by the British tabloids. Another issue he will tackle is the British demand for a provisional arrest, something which he regards as a "complete red herring" because a warrant to this effect would have expired by midnight on Sunday and the British side must have known this.

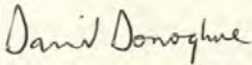
Ware also gave me a brief outline of the sequence of events in Brussels as he has been able to establish it so far. On 17 November the Belgian court secretly recommended extradition to the Belgian Minister for Justice. A day or so later, the British first became aware of possible difficulties at the political level. On 22 November the Minister for Justice decided to refer the matter to Cabinet. On 23 November contact of some kind took place between the Minister for Justice and the Irish Embassy (Ware does not know what was discussed). On the morning of Friday 25 November, the Cabinet discussed the matter. At 2.40 p.m., Prime Minister Martens told journalists that there would be an announcement later. At 3.30 p.m., Sir Geoffrey Howe rang his Belgian counterpart, Tindemans, to say that he understood (it is not clear how) that the Cabinet had decided against extradition. Tindemans confirmed this to him. (Howe then set the wheels in motion which led to warrants being obtained shortly afterwards from Bow Street). Contact took place during the afternoon between the Belgian authorities and the Irish Embassy on the modalities for Ryan's transfer to Ireland. As Martens had instructed that the plane should not leave until the decision had been notified officially to the British Government, Tindemans tried to contact the British Ambassador - but without success. Eventually, at 8.45 p.m. (local time), with the plane sitting on the tarmac, a representative of the British Embassy called to see Tindemans and - despite Mrs. Thatcher's claims to the contrary in Rhodes - the decision was conveyed officially.

Ware would like to include in his programme, preferably as a straight interview but otherwise for indirect attribution, a conversation with an Irish Government Minister or other highly-placed source on the Irish view of the case. He would particularly welcome observations on the British Government's handling of the matter, both in the Commons and in the media. I indicated to him that, subject to the proviso that the programme's transmission would be delayed until after any court proceedings in Ireland, it might be possible to accommodate his request in some fashion. Ware accepted this proviso but mentioned that, if Ryan were to go on a hunger-strike after his arrest and this resulted in his death, the programme would have to be broadcast at that point. On the assumption, however, that the programme's transmission would be delayed until after any court proceedings, he asked whether it would be possible to record the envisaged conversation in the next few weeks (while memories of the case are still fresh). I said I would pass on this request.

I would be grateful if this matter could be given early consideration. As all the indications are that Ware's programme will be sympathetic to our position on the Ryan case, this seems a valuable opportunity to convey general Irish Government concerns, without entering into the substance of the case, in an authoritative fashion and to a wide audience in Britain. Ware strikes me as a serious and conscientious journalist who will honour whatever agreement is reached with him in relation to any material he

records. (It is also worth mentioning that the likelihood of premature transmission of the programme is reduced still further by the noticeably cautious attitude which the BBC management has developed of late in relation to matters which are sub judice). An interview with a senior Government representative which reiterated Irish criticisms of the handling of the affair, while avoiding any substantive comment on the case itself, would be an extremely useful addition to this programme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "David Donoghue". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "David" and last name "Donoghue" clearly distinguishable.

David Donoghue
Press and Information Officer