



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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C415

1/8/89

URGENT

TO BELFAST FROM DUBLIN

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PX

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CEIAQ FSOBU

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FBWQC

0732C

TO HQ FROM BELFAST

1 AUGUST 1989

IMMEDIATE

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FOR ASST. SEC. GALLAGHER

FROM N. RYAN

COMMUNICATIONS WITH CIE TRAINS

AS YOU ARE AWARE, A BOMB EXPLODED ON THE MAIN DUBLIN TO BELFAST RAILWAY LINE AT LURGAN YESTERDAY EVENING, 31 JULY. THE BRITISH SIDE HAVE INFORMED US, IN RELATION TO THIS INCIDENT, THAT AN ANONYMOUS TELEPHONE CALL WAS RECEIVED BY THE SAMARITANS AT 22.10 HRS GIVING A 30 MINUTE WARNING. A SEARCH OPERATION WAS MOUNTED AND A PACKAGE CONTAINING THE BOMB WAS FOUND ON THE SOUTHBOUND TRACK IN LURGAN STATION AT 22.38 HRS. THE LINE WAS CLEARED AND AT 22.57 HRS THE BOMB DETONATED. FORTUNATELY THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES.

THE DUBLIN TO BELFAST TRAIN, WHICH WAS AN NIR EXPRESS, WAS TRAVELLING APPROX. 35 MINUTES BEHIND SCHEDULE AND WAS STOPPED AT PORTADOWN. THE BRITISH SIDE SAY, HOWEVER, THAT IF THE TRAIN HAD BEEN A CIE OWNED LOCOMOTIVE AND HAD BEEN TRAVELLING ON TIME, A POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS SITUATION WOULD HAVE ARISEN. THE TRAIN WOULD HAVE BEEN DUE IN LURGAN AT 22.10 HRS, THE PRECISE TIME AT WHICH THE WARNING WAS RECEIVED. BUT EVEN IF THERE HAD BEEN A FEW MINUTES IN HAND, IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE, BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF RADIO CONTACT WITH CIE TRAINS, TO RELAY A WARNING TO THE TRAIN AND STOP IT. THE BOMB HAD BEEN PLACED DIRECTLY ON THE TRACK AND THE TRAIN ITSELF WOULD HAVE DETONATED IT.

AS YOU KNOW, THE ISSUE OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH CIE TRAINS WAS RAISED IN THE CONFERENCE BY THE BRITISH SIDE ON 5 APRIL. AT THAT MEETING, THE IRISH SIDE UNDERTOOK TO TAKE THE MATTER UP WITH CIE. IN JUNE, NIR WROTE TO DOE (NI) SETTING OUT THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM AND A COPY OF THIS LETTER WAS TRANSMITTED BY THE SECRETARIAT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (COPY TO D. O'DONOVAN). THE PROBLEM IS THAT

Copy given
to J. Dillon 1/8

No 15

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CIE TRAINS ARE EQUIPPED WITH RADIOS THAT OPERATE ON THE UHF FREQUENCY ONLY AND CONTACT FROM THE CENTRALISED TRAIN CONTROL IN DUBLIN IS LOST NORTH OF TANDRAGEE WHICH IS 6 MILES SOUTH OF PORTADOWN. NIR, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE, IN ADDITION TO THE UHF EQUIPMENT, SEPARATE VHF RADIOS THAT ENABLE THEIR CONTROL IN BELFAST TO CONTACT THEM AS FAR SOUTH AS MALAHIDE. BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE DUAL SYSTEM, THEY CAN BE CONTACTED ANYWHERE ON THE LINE.

THE POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS SITUATION THAT COULD HAVE ARISEN LAST EVENING ADDS CONSIDERABLE URGENCY TO SOLVING THIS PROBLEM AND THE BRITISH SIDE HAVE ASKED US HERE ABOUT PROGRESS IN THE MATTER. GIVEN THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH BOMBS ARE NOW BEING PLACED ON THE LINE, THE ISSUE IS OBVIOUSLY ONE WHICH MERITS IMMEDIATE ACTION ON THE PART OF CIE. PERHAPS YOU WOULD ASCERTAIN FROM DOJ WHAT THE PRESENT POSITION IS.

ENDS

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