



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/44/150
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.

AN SAID NA hÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

17, GROSVENOR PLACE,
SW1X 7HR

Telephone: 01-235 2171

TELEX: 916104

Handwritten notes:
H. with [unclear]
H. with [unclear]
C. [unclear]
[unclear]

Confidential

7 February 1990

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Assistant Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division

Dear Assistant Secretary

Lunch with Simon O'Dwyer-Russell, The Sunday Telegraph

Formerly the Sunday Telegraph's Defence Editor, O'Dwyer-Russell has recently become the paper's Diplomatic Editor. Like a number of other Telegraph journalists recruited by Max Hastings, he has an Army background and has very good contacts in Army and MOD circles.

The following points of particular interest arose:

The Whiterock killings

- A senior MOD source told O'Dwyer-Russell some days ago that the soldier who killed the driver of the car in this incident is about to be prosecuted. The view has been taken that this killing was completely unjustified as the man kept his hands on his lap and gave no sign of having a gun.
- As regards the second soldier, however, the indications are that he will not be prosecuted. In his debriefing to the RUC, he claimed that he only opened fire as a consequence of his colleague having shot the driver. On hearing the latter shots, he assumed that the gang must be armed and, seeing the other members emerge with weapons, opened fire in order to protect himself and his colleague.
- This account, O'Dwyer-Russell observed to me, did not explain why the soldier continued to fire at the raiders on the pavement long after they would have been immobilised. The discovery of an empty magazine for the soldier's Heckler and Koch weapon suggests that, having

discharged the 25 rounds from that magazine, he then reloaded with a further magazine (from O'Dwyer-Russell's experience, a particularly laborious procedure in the case of this gun) and continued shooting.

- On the subject of "coup de grace" killings, O'Dwyer-Russell recalled that, after the Loughgall incident, SAS contacts told him that the SAS had been instructed to finish off their victims in this fashion in order to make the faces unrecognizable. This, it was hoped, would have a strong deterrent effect on the families. When O'Dwyer-Russell reported this in the Sunday Telegraph, the then Defence Secretary (George Younger) complained strongly to Peregrine Worsthorne (the paper's then Editor) and asked for O'Dwyer-Russell's dismissal. Worsthorne refused.
- O'Dwyer-Russell, who has friends in the SAS, said that he has often heard from the latter that, if a SAS soldier once opens fire at a target, his colleagues feel automatically obliged to keep firing at the same target until it has been definitively eliminated. There was a private complaint among the SAS soldiers involved in the Gibraltar killings that the precipitate action of one of their number in opening fire on the three automatically forced the rest of them to follow suit.
- As regards the background to the Whiterock killings, a friend who belongs to 14 Intelligence Company told O'Dwyer-Russell that the two soldiers were SAS-trained and had SAS weapons (the Heckler and Koch gun, not usually issued to the other security forces) but that they had never been involved in an incident of this kind before. They were going off duty at the time, handing over to two soldiers (one male, one female) who were in the other car. They had been cooped up on reconnaissance duty in various buildings in West Belfast for some time previously and may well have been in a restless frame of mind which lent itself to spur-of-the-moment decisions. There was probably also a large element of machismo in their decision to intervene.
- O'Dwyer-Russell also understands that, in the course of their debriefing, the soldiers claimed that senior Army officers had recently been urging units to "let them know who is boss" in West Belfast. Separately, O'Dwyer-Russell has heard that General Waters has been privately exhorting his officers to "keep worrying the Provos" in West Belfast, even if this means open confrontation with them, in order to assert the Army's control of the situation and to deprive the Provos of the initiative.

The Wallace affair

- A senior MOD source told O'Dwyer-Russell some days ago that the affair "has only just begun" and that "there is a lot more to come out".

- His own view is that, in addition to the diligence and integrity of officials like Sir Michael Quinlan, there must be some other factor to explain the Government's sudden action on this case. Some additional pressure (a further, more serious scandal as yet undisclosed?) must be weighing on Ministers.
- Quinlan, of course, is a potent factor in his own right. He is a committed Catholic of Irish background. (His grandfather came from Clonakilty and his mother came from Ardboe, Co. Tyrone - which, he observed wryly to a journalist recently, is "IRA territory"). He is known to believe firmly in "right and wrong" and to be determined that, under his administration, the MOD will not be accused of malpractice.
- (As related to another journalist this week by Nicholas Scott, who knows Quinlan well, Quinlan first examined the papers in the Wallace case in April of this year. He then instituted a search for further documents. In September, he contacted Sir Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary, and briefed him on the implications of the new discoveries, including the need to correct misinformation given to Parliament. Butler gave him the go-ahead to prepare Ministerial statements).
- It is also possible, O'Dwyer-Russell suggested, that Tom King has taken a personal interest in the matter. O'Dwyer-Russell's MOD source has told him that, even in his new job, King still spends an extraordinary amount of time on matters related to Northern Ireland (e.g., how the Army is performing there). The Wallace affair, O'Dwyer-Russell speculated, may well be a matter in which King took an interest as Secretary of State for NI and about which, as Defence Secretary, he is now able to do something.
- David Calcutt, QC, who is to conduct the inquiry into Wallace's dismissal, has also been examining, at the Government's request, the question of compensation for the Guildford Four. (Rumour has it that he will recommend payments of roughly £100,000 to each of the Four). He also conducted the inquiry into the Cyprus secrets case. What is less well-known is that, at the Government's request, he has also carried out a number of internal inquiries in the security services. He is therefore evidently considered "safe" on delicate matters of this kind and a cynic, O'Dwyer-Russell commented, might well conclude that Calcutt was deliberately chosen in order to ensure that the scope of the inquiry remains strictly limited.

Yours sincerely

David Donoghue.

David Donoghue
Press and Information Officer