

GRFS 520  
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FM BRUSSELS 041432Z SEPTEMBER 61  
TO PRIORITY FCO  
TELNO 139 OF 04 SEPTEMBER  
INFO SAVING PARIS

MY TELNO 134 : IRA PROPAGANDA FILM

1. DE SCHOUTHEETE (FOREIGN MINISTER'S CHEF DE CABINET) TELEPHONED ME THIS MORNING. HE APOLOGISED FOR THE LONG DELAY IN PRODUCING A REPLY TO OUR DEMARCHE. IT HAD TAKEN TIME TO ESTABLISH CLEARLY WHICH MINISTRY BORE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MATTER. HE HAD NOW ELICITED THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET OF M HANSENNE, THE MINISTER OF THE FRENCH COMMUNITY.

2. A SUBSIDY, HE SAID, HAD INDEED BEEN GIVEN BY THE QUOTE CULTURE FRANCAISE UNQUOTE TOWARDS MAKING THE FILM. M HANSENNE'S MINISTRY WAS, HOWEVER, SURPRISED THAT WE HAD TAKEN UP THE MATTER FOPMALLY SINCE:

A) THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT PART OF THE FILM HAD BEEN SHOT IN NORTHERN IRELAND WITH THE HELP OR AT LEAST CONNIVANCE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: AND

B) THE FILM SENARIO, WHICH HAD BEEN SUBMITTED TO THEM BEFOREHAND, HAD NOT SEEMED IN ANY WAY ANTI-BRITISH, EVEN THOUGH THEY RECOGNISED THAT IT WAS ALWAYS POSSIBLE SUBSEQUENTLY TO INTRODUCE DISTORTIONS DURING THE SHOOTING.

I ASKED WHETHER THE QUOTE CULTURE FRANCAISE UNQUOTE HAD SEEN THE COMPLETED FILM OR HAD PLANS TO DO SO. DE SCHOUTHEETE SAID THAT HE WAS NOT SURE: BUT HE THOUGHT IT PROBABLE THAT, IN VIEW OF OUR REPRESENTATIONS, THEY WOULD NOW ASK THE FILM MAKERS FOR A VIEWING. I SAID THAT I WOULD WELCOME CONFIRMATION OF THIS POINT.

3. OUR HONORARY CONSUL IN LIEGE HAS ALSO PRODUCED MORE INFORMATION. WHEN THE LIEGE PRISON CEASED TO BE USED ABOUT A YEAR AGO IT WAS HANDED OVER BY THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE TO THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS. IT WAS FROM THE LATTER MINISTRY THAT BELGIAN TELEVISION (RTBF), ACTING ON BEHALF OF THE FILM MAKER, RECEIVED PERMISSION TO USE THE BUILDING. WHETHER THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS WERE AWARE OF THE PROPOSED NATURE OF THE FILM IS NOT CLEAR, BUT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY. RTBF THEN APPROACHED THE TOWN AUTHORITIES WITH A REQUEST TO HAVE CERTAIN REPAIRS DONE TO THE PRISON AND SOME OF IT REDECORATED. THIS REQUEST WAS REFUSED, OSTENSIBLY ON THE GROUNDS OF LACK OF FUNDS, BUT IN FACT BECAUSE THE TOWN AUTHORITIES HAD BY SOME MEANS BECOME AWARE OF THE SUBJECT OF THE FILM AND FORESAW THE POSSIBLE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IF THEY ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO BECOME INVOLVED. CLEARLY RTBF FOUND SOME WAY OF GETTING ROUND THIS OBSTACLE. BUT IT IS EVIDENT THAT AT LEAST SOME EFFORT WAS MADE BY THE TOWN AUTHORITIES TO DISCOURAGE RTBF FROM USING THE PRISON.

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4. ON THE FACE OF IT THE MINISTRY OF THE FRENCH COMMUNITY AND THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS APPEAR TO HAVE ACTED SOMEWHAT THOUGHTLESSLY. BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THERE WAS ANY POLITICAL ANIMUS AND IT SEEMS MORE PROBABLE THAT THE WHOLE THING RESULTED FROM DECISIONS TAKEN AT RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL. I AM DOUBTFUL, THEREFORE, WHETHER WE WOULD BE ON STRONG GROUNDS IN TRYING TO MAKE MORE OF THE INCIDENT, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE CLAIM THAT PART OF THE FILM HAD BEEN MADE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND AUTHORITIES (FOR WHICH I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR CONFIRMATION) AND THE FACT THAT WE HAVE NO FIRM EVIDENCE AS YET THAT THE FILM WILL TAKE A STRONGLY ANTI-BRITISH LINE. IT IS ALSO EVIDENT THAT THE BELGIANS HAVE REGISTERED THE POINT. I AM INCLINED THEREFORE TO THINK WE SHOULD LET THE MATTER REST, AT LEAST UNTIL WE ARE IN A POSITION TO JUDGE HOW DAMAGING TO OUR INTERESTS THE FILM IS REALLY LIKELY TO BE. WE SHALL KEEP IN TOUCH WITH RTBF IN ORDER TO TRY TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT ITS CONTENT AND WHAT THE PLANS ARE FOR ITS DISTRIBUTION.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING TO PARIS

HARTLAND SWANN

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