

COVERING SECRET

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cc secret: Prevention of International Terrorism
Foreign and Commonwealth Office



London SW1A 2AH

1 December 1988

Dear Charles,

Ryan: Briefing for Rhodes for use with Belgians

I attach self-explanatory points to make, together with a background note, on the Ryan case which the Prime Minister may wish to use when speaking to the Belgians in the margins of the European Council meeting in Rhodes.

Yours ever,

L Parker

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Private Secretary

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EUROPEAN COUNCIL: RHODES, 1-2 DECEMBER

RYAN: FOR USE WITH BELGIANS

Points to make

- Charges against Ryan very serious (conspiracy to murder and explosive offences). He is known to both our Security Services as a terrorist. For some time he played a significant role in PIRA's links with Libya.
- Belgian legal arguments unconvincing. Extradition documents prepared in the closest consultation with relevant Belgian authorities.
- Indeed, request for extradition originally came from the Belgians.
- Reports in media, not denied by Belgian officials, that court's recommendation was in favour of extradition deeply worrying.
- Decision to inform us only after Ryan's departure and the use of military aircraft particularly offensive.
- Outcome is a serious blow to EC cooperation against terrorism. Decision can only encourage PIRA to believe they can carry out attacks on the continent with impunity.
- Cooperation not an abstract concept - it involves real mutual assistance where required, especially where there may be a price to pay.

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EUROPEAN COUNCIL: RHODES, 1-2 DECEMBER

RYAN: FOR USE WITH BELGIANS

Background

1. Ryan is a well-known Irish terrorist of longstanding. For some years he was their main link with Libya.
2. In June 1988, we asked the Belgians to place him under surveillance. Concerned at activity in the house where he was staying and given the Queen's impending visit to Holland, the Belgians decided to arrest Ryan. The only evidence they found against him was a false passport.
3. They thereafter pressed us strongly to apply for extradition. The application was made in the closest cooperation with the Belgian authorities.
4. The Belgian authorities dropped their own charges to facilitate Ryan's departure. The Belgian Commissioner for Refugees rejected Ryan's request for political asylum (but recommended that he be deported to Ireland). The court which considered the extradition request gave an advisory opinion to the Minister of Justice. This is secret but we believe it to have been favourable. (The Belgian media have reported it as such without any official denial.) The Minister of Justice took the decision to Cabinet.
5. Despite indications from the Belgians that the outcome would be favourable, we learnt, informally and at the last minute, that it was going wrong. When Sir Geoffrey Howe telephoned Tindemans, the latter admitted that the Cabinet had decided to fly Ryan to Ireland and tell us afterwards.

30 November 1988