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Anthony Sloan
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FROM: D McMULLAN
PRISON DEPARTMENT
3 MAY 1990

cc: Mr Steele
Mr Maccabé
Mr McVeagh
Mr Ginn
Mr McNeill
Mr Gilmore

Mr Cornick

ANTHONY SLOAN

In response to your request for a factual account of the Belfast escape in 1981, I am attaching the relevant extract from the Pearce Report as it details the sequence of events on the day.

The reference in paragraph 30 of the affidavit to Sloan escaping "in circumstances of some violence" presumably refers to the injuries the escaping prisoners inflicted on prison staff, the details of which are as follows:-

Officer Kennedy:

WITHHELD UNDER
F.O.I.A SECTION 40.

SO Killen:

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The Archives for Family and Local History

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Officer Batchelor:

WITHHELD UNDER
F.O.I.A. SECTION 40.

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D. McMullan

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DH EXT 4486

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CHAPTER 3: THE ESCAPE ON 10th JUNE 1981

3.01 During the afternoon of Wednesday 10th June 1981, four prisoners, Paul Magee, Gerard Sloan, Robert Campbell, and Joseph Doherty, unconvicted prisoners held in HMP Belfast for trial in the so-called "M60 Machine gun case", were interviewed by their legal advisers, Mr. Kelly and Mr. Steele in the "professional visits" area. At about 16.00 hrs the interview came to an end, and the prisoners were escorted from their interview cubicle towards the 3 temporary holding rooms nearby, by Officer Tweed and Senior Officer Bell. As they reached the holding rooms, Magee and Doherty produced weapons and the two staff were themselves forced into one of the holding rooms. A third member of staff, Officer Muir, was in the same corridor close to the connecting door to the adjacent visiting room for short term prisoners. He was seized at gun point by Campbell and placed in the same holding room. There were then two members of staff still at large within the visiting complex; Officer Peachey, not suspecting that anything was amiss, was supervising visits to 3 prisoners from friends and relatives in the short term visits room; and Officer Kennedy was behind a locked door in a searching lock at the entrance to the room. Needing assistance, Officer Peachey walked through the connecting door to the professional visits corridor, and found himself held at gun point by Campbell; he joined his colleagues in the holding room.

3.02 With the professional and short-term visiting complex now under their control, the four prisoners released three co-defendants in the M60 trial, Anthony Sloan, Michael McKee and Angelo Fusco, from an adjacent holding room where they had been waiting their turn to see Mr. Kelly. They were also joined by Michael Ryan, on remand for murder, whose interview with his legal adviser, Mr. Rice, had been going on at the same time. Mr. Rice was taken to a holding room as were two other solicitors, Mr. Ford and Mr. McNulty, and their clients.

3.03 Shortly afterwards, two officers let themselves back into the visiting complex, having escorted prisoners back to their Divisions, and were met by armed prisoners: they were placed in the holding rooms. The prisoners then turned their attention to the searching lock in which Officer Kennedy was on duty. Officer Kennedy had allowed into the searching lock Officer Worby, who was escorting two prisoners coming down for visits. As the door to the visiting room was opened for these prisoners to pass through, Campbell and another escaper burst into the lock and seized the two officers. In the ensuing fracas Officer Kennedy received a head wound which subsequently required 28 stitches. The officer, and all the short term prisoners and their visitors, were taken to the holding rooms, which then held 8 members of staff, 5 legal advisers, 4 members of the public and 14 prisoners. Less than ten minutes had elapsed since the incident started.

3.04 The next stage of the escape now began. Having taken the officers' batons, keys, whistles and some items of uniform, the prisoners bolted the holding room doors, and warned against attempting to raise the alarm. They let themselves out of the visiting area by unlocking a gate opening into a short passageway, which in turn led into the prison forecourt. Once at the end of that passageway, the

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escapers were within twenty yards of the main gate. Doherty and Ryan, in prison officers' tunics and caps, walked across the forecourt with A. Sloan, who was wearing a solicitor's jacket and carrying a briefcase. These three approached Officer Perritt, who was stationed in the forecourt, controlling pedestrian access to the gate lock through a wicket gate set into the main inner gate. Sloan maintained the pretence of being a solicitor, and proffered the necessary brass identity tally, but Officer Perritt recognised him as a prisoner and pushed him away. A gun was produced, and Officer Perritt was forced to open the wicket gate; he was then taken into the gate lock. As soon as the gate was open the remaining 5 escapers ran across the forecourt and into the gate lock.

3.05 Once inside the gate lock the prisoners smashed the glass in the door of the gate office and threatened the occupant, Senior Officer Killen, to prevent him from operating the alarm. However, Officer Lightbody in the tally lodge opposite succeeded in pressing his alarm button. Meanwhile staff in the forecourt who had seen the escapers were kept outside the gate lock at gunpoint. As soon as Officer Coffey, on duty at the outer main gate, had been obliged at gunpoint to open his wicket gate, the escapers ran through. They were then outside the main perimeter wall of the prison, and had only a low screening wall to contend with. The gate in this wall was manned by Officer Batchelor, alone. He offered resistance and was struck to the ground, his gate opened, and all eight prisoners ran across the Crumlin Road pursued by several members of the prison staff. As the distance between pursuers and pursued narrowed, shots were fired at the staff, who took cover. Fire was returned by a patrol of the Security Forces who were outside the courthouse opposite the prison, and the Army Quick Reaction Force from inside the prison came on the scene, but the eight prisoners disengaged and were able to complete their escape using two cars waiting on land close to the courthouse.