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*cc P.S. Taw...*  
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*Box*

29 January 1988

Dear Assistant Secretary

A meeting with Richard Needham, M.P., PUS/NIO.

1. Needham said King shared his strong view that the Mayhew statement got everything wrong and that non-consultation beforehand with Dublin was intolerable.
2. He acknowledged that the Birmingham Six judgement could not have come at a worse time. His own advice, however, for what it was worth, would be that we would get nowhere by directly impugning the Lord Chief Justice's integrity: that if Dublin sought a political row with London on the issue, London would close in around Lord Lane. He also mentioned (as did two other contacts) that Hurd himself has come round to the view that the Six are guilty (this would clearly have implications for the question of a possible decision in the future by Hurd to release them).
3. On Stalker/Sampson, he said that King will fully expect our Ministers "to come in very hard" next Tuesday. "You must work out very clearly what you want - make the list clear - and go for it!" He repeated several times his certainty that King sympathises with our position, understands the possible implications of what has happened, and would be very anxious to do what he can to put things right. I pressed him on the last point, setting out the obvious overall requirements as listed by the Taoiseach earlier in the day.
4. Needham said that he had one suggestion to make: that we should, inter alia, demand the proscription of the UDA. He felt that this should be helpful. I asked him

*No*

.../

- why don't they do this themselves if he is so keen on it? Why is pressure from us needed?
- Even if it were done, what would it achieve in terms of restoring confidence in the RUC which is, surely, what the present crisis centres on?

He said he felt it could be helpful, and could in present circumstances be attainable.

5. He said that King is in no doubt about the implications of Mayhew's statement for security co-operation. King and Stanley have been delighted with the high level of co-operation recently, and the Five Fingers find was a "godsend". King will be most anxious to do anything in his power to re-build the basis of that co-operation.
6. I permitted myself to suggest that Mayhew's statement was "slick" in its construction. Further, I said that his handling of the extradition matter raised a measure of doubt in my mind and I felt I had to say that this doubt - about whether overall Anglo-Irish relations and requirements are being borne positively in mind, or not - is being somewhat reinforced by this business. Needham looked me straight in eye and said: "I hear what you say and I have to agree. I'll tell you one thing, though: Mayhew has the lady behind him." (I took the last point to mean not so much that Mrs Thatcher positively agrees with the detail of Mayhew's position; rather that he enjoys her full confidence and knows that she will back him - as she did on extradition.)
7. Needham said that it would be reasonable for us to assume that all actions on the British side are fully co-ordinated, but this is simply not always the case: this latest problem reflects unilateral action by Mayhew without the sort of prior consultations with other Ministers concerned which might reasonably be expected to have taken place. I responded that if Dublin acted in this way the British side would hammer us without mercy. He agreed, and came back to what can best be done to retrieve the situation. He reiterated his conviction that King will be most concerned to be as helpful as possible, and he again urged us to consider demanding, inter alia, the prescription of the UDA.

Yours sincerely

*Richard Ryan*  
Richard Ryan  
Counsellor