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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BELFAST

30 January, 1987

Mr. Eamonn O Tuathail,
Assistant Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs.

Dear Eamonn,

I am sending you a report of the meeting we had last night with the GOC Northern Ireland. In view of the social encounter between him and General O'Neill next Saturday February 7, you might consider whether our GOC should see a copy.

Yours sincerely,

Michael

M. J. Lillis
Joint Secretary

cc *Taoiseach*
Tánaiste
Minister for Justice

Secretary
Mr. Nally
Mr. Ward
A-I Section
Amb. London

SECRET

30 January, 1987

Mr. Eamonn O Tuathail,
Assistant Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs.

Dear Eamonn,

We had dinner last night at the Secretariat with the GOC Northern Ireland, General Pascoe (C.V. attached). He was accompanied by his Chief of Staff, Col. Colin Kaye and Brian Blackwell, Assistant Secretary in the Law and Order Division of the Northern Ireland Office. Hewitt of the British side of the Secretariat was present as were O'Ceallaigh, Ryan and I.

The discussion continued over 10 hours and covered Anglo-Irish relations, the political situation in Northern Ireland and a number of issues specifically within Pascoe's professional interest which are the subject of this report.

Pascoe is a quiet-spoken, low profile type who contrasts sharply in style with Hermon. He eschews publicity deliberately. He told us that his style of command involves him in spending the bulk of his time visiting units around Northern Ireland, talking to his commanders and, on return to his headquarters at Lisburn, analysing for himself the results of each of his inspections and communicating his commands for improvements etc. later in writing to the personnel concerned. He leaves operational matters almost entirely to commanders in local situations and, if I understood him rightly, devolves overall day-to-day army matters to his Chief of Staff or his Commander Land Forces.

He emphasised repeatedly the difference in role between himself and his predecessors here in the period before "Ulsterisation". He said that a major part of his job was to consult closely with Hermon with whom, he says, he has an excellent working relationship. He has restructured the system of coordination with the RUC so as to ensure that decisions could be made by both Forces at local operational levels to the maximum possible degree. He fully accepts the fact that the police now have the lead role in security matters here.

Note: Pascoe is regarded by the NIO as being one of the most intelligent soldiers in the British Army. This impression may be based partly on the fact that Pascoe was Maurice Oldfield's principal military adviser when Oldfield was in Belfast.

Incursions

I discussed separately with Pascoe a particularly serious recent deliberate incursion - this will be the subject of a separate note.

The atmosphere over dinner was very informal and both sides spoke bluntly and frankly. Pascoe and Kaye both spoke passionately of the type of resentment felt by their junior officers and men in border areas at the way in which they perceived the attitude of the Irish Government to Security Cooperation, particularly as manifested in Irish public reactions including Government reactions to accidental incursions.

Pascoe described several instances in detail where his men have come under attack right on the border. He said that his people felt that there was no appreciation by Irish Ministers, officials and, to a certain extent, security personnel of the fact that British soldiers in the border area were literally taking their lives in their hands every minute. His men feel that if a mistake was made in relation to the border itself this should be understood and not the subject of protests and public recrimination.

He said that, speaking frankly, his officers and men believe that the commitment on the Southern side of the border to security cooperation was minimal. His men would not understand why it was not possible to communicate with the Garda Siochana. Indeed, although some of them understood that there was an arrangement for this to be done in extreme emergency, they regularly despair of receiving any acknowledgement and do not, therefore, depend on it or use it. He complained of attitudes of unhelpfulness and of soldiers on our side displaying hostility and unfriendliness. He gave a number of instances of all of these complaints.

For our part, we argued at considerable length and with some vehemence for the need - if only for the purpose of maintaining an atmosphere on the ground conducive to good security cooperation - for incursions to be avoided and for the need to ensure that, when they take place, they are properly investigated. He said that this procedure had recently been tightened up by the Northern Ireland Office to which the army now reported the details of incursions directly, and not, as had been the case until recently, through the RUC.

Pascoe said that a number of incursions had taken place from the South to the North and it was clear that our personnel also had difficulty, especially in certain operational situations, in identifying the border line.

The discussion on incursions went on for quite some time and I think it is fair to say that we got the seriousness and validity of the Government's concern about the incursions across

to our visitors. They said, however, that there was no possibility in their minds that this could ever be explained to ordinary soldiers whose lives were in danger. The matter, therefore, had to be dealt with on a disciplinary basis.

The Irish Army

Pascoe spoke respectfully of the Army and particularly of its peacekeeping work in Cyprus where he had himself served. He knows and greatly respects General O'Callaghan. He also spoke with considerable respect of General O'Neill whom he hopes to meet socially at Lansdowne Road on tomorrow week.

Pascoe himself outlined, I think accurately, the difference in the roles of the two armies, North and South, and accepted that there was a fundamental difference in the two situations they respectively faced. He said he was not trying to suggest that the Irish Government should seek to create a role for our Defence Forces similar to that of the British Army in Northern Ireland e.g. in relation to powers on stopping, questioning and arrest. He said that he accepted that it would be "crazy" for the Irish Government to seek to create a situation for our security forces similar to that faced by the British Army and the RUC of Northern Ireland.

Security Cooperation

Both Pascoe and Kaye spoke of their impression that the level of security cooperation was very low indeed. They illustrated this anecdotedly at some length.

It quickly emerged that Pascoe was almost entirely unbriefed about the developments in security cooperation since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We mentioned some of these and both Blackwell and Hewitt developed the picture, claiming that developments in security cooperation had been very positive indeed. Pascoe said that Hermon had spoken positively in recent times about this. He accepted that he could not fairly judge the level of security cooperation himself and said he would insist with the RUC on being fully brought up to date.

Both Pascoe and Kaye as well as Blackwell said that the new arrangements for the handling of cross border explosives were a highly positive development.

Pascoe himself volunteered that it would not be realistic at this stage for him to seek to have army-to-army communications across the border. He would, however, warmly welcome occasional exchanges with senior officers on our side. He mentioned the contact that takes place on an East-West basis but said it would be more useful if it were on a North-South ~~axis~~ so far as border matters were concerned. He said that the difficulty faced by British soldiers was that they felt very little reassurance about the commitment of the security forces on our side. I got the impression from several things that he said that a clear reassurance about the use of communications to the

Garda in emergency situations would help to stabilise this. I should stress, however, that there was no negotiation on this point in any sense of the word.

Army Relations with the Catholic Community

There was a long discussion on this on which we made a great deal of the running, particularly about the patterns of bad relations between certain Regiments (notably the Marines) and those sections of the Catholic community in which they patrol (notably West Belfast). Pascoe dwelt on the extreme threat to which his men are exposed in those situations.

After some discussion he expressed a warm willingness to arrange that senior and middle level officers in these regiments would meet with responsible representatives of the local Catholic community who would explain to them the types of problems that can arise and the sorts of situations that should be avoided. He added that he would like his two Brigadiers in charge respectively of Belfast and the Derry-Strabane areas to come in and hear from us about any problems that we may be aware of in these two areas.

(Note: It would be useful if soundings could be made urgently as to the viability of the first idea and if we could be advised through some contact on the ground both in West Belfast and in the Derry-Strabane area of general patterns of problems and any current particular problems.)

On this point I think it is fair to say that we found a very open and willing attitude on Pascoe's side and an acceptance that problems can very easily arise.

We said that when serious shooting incidents occurred involving the security forces, it was vital that the helpful precedent after the Kildress Inn shooting where by the personnel involved were, pending the investigation, not on operational duties, be strictly adhered to. While he could not commit himself on this, we got the impression that he would consider it very seriously. We also stressed the need to get information out extremely quickly in such instances. He spoke very frankly and said that his difficulty in this case was that he was not prepared to believe the first report he had from the men on the spot.

UDR

This was the issue discussed at greatest length of the night's exchanges. Pascoe spoke in detail of the improved training of the permanent cadre of the UDR and the continually improving level of involvement of the regular army in the officer corps. He said that, as a direct result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the career inducement structures had been changed in the British Army so that it was now in the career interest of middle level officers of the highest calibre to spend tours commanding the UDR. He said the current Brigadier commanding the Regiment was an exceptionally bright man.

We described at length the difficulties which the UDR face and stressed that there was no possibility in our view, that Catholics would ever regard it as anything other than a dangerous militia. Pascoe said that we might find it hard to believe, but it was a fact that, since the Anglo-Irish Agreement, there had been a slight increase in the number of Catholic recruits to the UDR, the global percentage having gone from 2¹/₂% to 4% in one year.

He said that the UDR was operationally necessary in the current financial and administrative situations and that there was no administrative possibility whatever of it being disbanded. He accepted that there were difficult problems involving the part-time UDR and he said that his policy on recruitment was intended to expand the permanent UDR at the expense of the part-time UDR. He said this was happening and he asked us to keep it confidential as he had been forced to deny that it was the case in response to an assertion to that effect from Paisley.

We laid our main stress on the need to improve the rate of accompaniment of the UDR by the police as a major priority. Pascoe said he was strongly in favour of this and he more or less told us that the only difficulty he had here arises from the RUC side. He said, however, that RUC problems in terms of manpower deployment were very real. He undertook to ensure that a number of instances which we (and Blackwell) stressed were attended to, notably in the interface between A and B Divisions in South West Belfast (Stockman's Lane - Lisburn) as well as roads surrounding Portadown.

We said that the statement made about 2 months ago by the Brigadier commanding the UDR to the effect that he welcomed the policy of police accompaniment had been very useful indeed. We asked him to see that this was repeated publicly as often as possible. He undertook to do this.

South Armagh Observation Posts

We said that this had been handled badly and contrary to the intent of security cooperation. There had been no consultation with our side before their construction and the British side must understand the resentment felt at a request for security cover on our side, which would involve a very costly deployment of resources.

Pascoe said he had told the police, who have no role in this area whatever, about his intention to construct the posts, but he had not "consulted" them. He accepted that in this area the cooperation structures were not at present adapted for the sorts of discussions which would take place between the Garda Siochana and the RUC on border crossings and observation posts in other areas. (He seemed, in other words, to be saying that the RUC were not well informed of army policy in South Armagh and could not therefore, usefully discuss it with the Garda Siochana). He felt that something should be done about this and he said that

perhaps pending a new structure he could notify us in the Secretariat of any future developments. He said there was a possibility of the construction of one further post but he was not yet ready to make a decision on this.

He said that the Army had, in the South Armagh area, reported over the past months an improvement for the first time in many years in their relations with the local community. For this he gave the credit to the Agreement. We said we were also appreciative of the efforts of the Army Civil Representatives to deal with the compensation issues under the instruction of Blackwell (there was an element of deliberate flattery in this on our side, I admit).

INLA Funerals

Kaye in particular complained about the toleration by the Guards of paramilitary display in Dundalk in the case of the recent INLA funerals. We said that this was exceptional and due to a difficult operation~~ed~~ decision on the need to maintain order. We instanced a similar toleration of the security forces here in the case of the Bingham funeral recently (UVF). Nevertheless I should report that they both said that the photographs and television pictures had made a damaging impression on the security forces in the North.

HME

The last hour was taken up with a discussion of this. The matter is technical and I am not in a position to report on it in detail (Noel Ryan will find an opportunity to do this soon). Nevertheless it is very clear that there are two quite different understandings of what the present situation is: Kaye, who follows the issue for the Army, understands that the agrinomic, economic and detonability tests have all been completed and that a product has been identified which is viable although slightly more expensive. The view on our side is that these tests have not been completed. It also appears that different "fillers" are being used in the experiments on the two sides.

Pascoe spoke with considerable heat on this matter and stressed that his concern was for the saving of many lives.

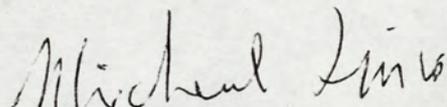
This discussion was inconclusive and frankly somewhat unhappy.

Overall

My colleagues and I felt that the long discussions were useful and worthwhile. In particular, even if we put no new proposals to Pascoe in relation to the UDR and other problems involving the Catholic community and the Army as well as incursions, for the first time the GOC Northern Ireland heard, not through the mediation of Northern Ireland Office officials, but directly from people speaking for the Irish Government a lengthy and full exposition of our case.

Both Pascoe and Kaye repeatedly expressed surprise at what they were being told and enormous appreciation of the value of the evening. They were very keen to keep in contact. It may be an indication of the interest which the experience had for them that Hewitt told me this morning that, when he was bringing Pascoe in last night, the latter had indicated that he would like to leave by 11.00 p.m. at the latest; he left, in fact, at 5.30 a.m.

Yours sincerely,



M. J. Lillis
Joint Secretary

cc. With
Noel.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIR ROBERT PASCOE KCB MBE, GOC

Lieutenant General Robert (Bob) Pascoe was born in 1932. He joined the Army as a National Serviceman in 1950 and, after attending the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, he was commissioned in 1952 into the Regular Army and joined his regiment, The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (43rd and 52nd) serving near Suez in the Canal Zone. In 1953 he was temporarily transferred to the 1st Battalion of the Durban Light Infantry then serving in Korea.

On returning to his own Regiment in 1954 he served in BAOR for the first time. In 1956, when the battalion was sent to Cyprus he was employed as Intelligence Officer. This was followed by a period as Adjutant of a Territorial Army battalion based in Oxford.

In 1958 he attended the Middle East Centre for Arabic Studies in Lebanon and, after qualifying as an interpreter in Arabic he was appointed GSO2 (Intelligence) in the Headquarters of Land Forces Persian Gulf based in Bahrain. This tour of duty was followed by staff training at RMCS Shrivenham and the Staff College Camberley.

In 1957 the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry joined the King's Royal Rifle Corps and the Rifle Brigade to form what has now become the Royal Green Jackets and, in 1964, on completion of his staff training, Major Pascoe was appointed to command a company in 2nd Battalion of the Royal Green Jackets serving in UK. In 1965 the battalion moved to Malaysia and was soon engaged on operations in Borneo where he was Mentioned-in-Despatches.

During 1966-67 he served as GSO2 (Operations) of Headquarters 2nd Division in BAOR. Returning to regimental duty once again in late 1967, he commanded a company of 1st Battalion The Royal Green Jackets during its period of duty as the UK contribution to the UK Force in Cyprus for which he was awarded the MBE.

After a short spell as Second-in-Command of 2nd Battalion The Royal Green Jackets in BAOR he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel to become Military Assistant to the Quarter Master General in the Ministry of Defence. He returned to BAOR once more in late 1971 to command 1st Battalion The Royal Green Jackets, a post he held until mid-1974. During this time the Battalion carried out two operational tours in Belfast, Northern Ireland and he was again Mentioned-in-Despatches.

On promotion to Colonel he served as Colonel Staff Duties at Headquarters United Kingdom Land Forces from 1974-1976. This was followed by another tour of duty in BAOR, this time in the rank of Brigadier in command of 5 Field Force.

In 1979 Brigadier Pascoe attended the RCDS. He spent most of 1980 with Headquarters Northern Ireland and was then appointed ACGS (Operational Requirements) on 29 December 1980.

In April 1983 he was appointed as Chief of Staff Headquarters United Kingdom Land Force and assumed his present appointment as General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland in May 1985.

Lieutenant General Pascoe is married and he and his wife (Pauline) have four children.

Col. Kays. Ch. of Staff. ~~2nd~~ in Command.

SECRET

cc : Taoiseach
Tánaiste
Minister for Justice
Secretary

Mr Nally
Mr Ward
Mr O Tuathail
Mr Matthews
3/3

I had a brief word with Sir Robert Pascoe, GOC Northern Ireland before dinner at Maryfield on 29 January about the device discovered in Glasslough.

Pascoe said insistently and repeatedly that the placing of the device was contrary to Standing Orders and a disciplinary offence in the British Army.

He stressed repeatedly that the action was done without any awareness of it or any approval at any time by the superiors of the officer concerned.

Pascoe confirmed that the officer was of Major rank.

He said that the officer concerned had said, when questioned, that he took personal responsibility for the matter. His action was intended exclusively to save the lives of his own men and the RUC from a repeat attack by mortar from the vantage point of the particular field.

I stressed to Pascoe the enormity of the incident: the deliberate infringement of sovereignty; the placing of a monitoring device without authority and contrary to law; the major political damage that could result from the matter becoming public. I underlined the necessity that a full report be provided and that the man/men concerned be disciplined severely and this reported to us.

I said that, if the security authorities in the North had a serious concern about a particular field or area in our jurisdiction for use by subversives to launch mortar attacks on themselves, surely that matter should be discussed by the Guards and the RUC and a practical solution found for controlling the problem.

Pascoe, speaking I believe in a personal sense, said that his officers in that area had no confidence in the willingness of our security forces to co-operate in these matters.

He accepted that the RUC in the area seemed to have every confidence in the Garda Siochana.

By agreement, we did not continue to discuss this matter as it was pending a report from the Secretary of State to our Minister and further information to be supplied through the Secretariat.

M.L.

for M. Lillis
3 February 1987

*Dictated by Mr Lillis in the Dept. and
circulated as indicated with original to Mr Lillis*

Michael O'Donovan

3/2/87