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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BÉAL FEIRSTE

BELFAST

24 May 1988

*M. W.*  
*27/5*

cc *P. S. Teasdale*  
*M. Walsh*  
*P. C.*  
*M. McIlwain/McIlwain*  
*Connelly A/*  
*B. J.*

Mr. Dermot Gallagher  
Assistant Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

*L. Lohman*  
*31/5*

Dear Assistant Secretary

Mr. Ryan and I had lunch at Stormont House today with Mr. John Stanley, Minister of State at the NIO. Mr. Oliver Miles and Mr. Robin Masefield of the Secretariat were also present.

Mr. Stanley spoke at some length to us on cross border security cooperation. He emphasised in particular the importance the British side attached to the issue of communications. He said that there was a growing impatience, which extended up to the Prime Minister herself, that more than two years after the signature of the Anglo-Irish Agreement there were still such evident gaps and weaknesses in the communications network on the border. This had offered an undoubted advantage to the terrorists. Its effects had been seen during "Operation Mallard" when communications problems had resulted in patrols of the British Army remaining in static positions for much longer than would otherwise have been the case, leading to casualties in one instance. These defects offered ammunition to critics of the Agreement in Britain. He elaborated his views on how communications could be improved (on lines which will be already familiar to the Minister for Justice) saying expansively that he saw this network extending eventually to land, air and even naval forces. He saw this step as providing a basis for improved joint planning of various operations. He spoke also of the need for a greater degree of compatibility between the "interfaces" on both sides of the border. We said that the Minister for Justice would, in due course, be giving his reaction to the ideas put to him but referred in general terms to the difficulties which could arise from a legal or procedural point of view. It was a concern of successive Irish Governments to ensure that the Irish Army should be clearly seen at all times to be in aid of the civil power. We spoke also of a general worry that the British tended instinctively to think in terms of a predominantly military approach while Irish Governments were sensitive to political

dimensions, which, if mishandled, would render any security initiative ineffective or counterproductive. The problems of establishing the best basis for effective cooperation were greatly aggravated if any perception arose that British forces were acting outside the law. Mr. Stanley said he agreed completely on the importance of a proper political context. Indeed the Anglo-Irish Agreement itself was an explicit recognition by the British of this factor. He accepted also the damage done by issues such as Stalker/Sampson which he acknowledged represented a frustrating setback for improved security cooperation and the growth of confidence in the security forces.

He spoke briefly about the new border brigade which would come into operation on 1 July with headquarters in Armagh. The new brigade would not impair in any way the primacy of the police. He considered that this development added to the urgency of finding a solution to the communications issue.

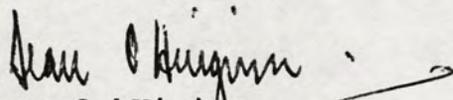
We had some discussion of confidence in the security forces and the administration of justice. He asked what was the salient issue in this area. We responded that the question of harassment was the one which generally came highest in the concerns of Nationalists we spoke to. We gave a general account of this issue instancing a number of recent cases including that of Councillor Ramsey in Derry. Mr. Stanley said that there was a high level of subjectivity in these allegations. Instances which came to his attention were vigorously investigated but generally found to be unsubstantiated. There was now a well developed and independent police complaints machinery to which people could turn. We pointed out that while it was too soon to assess the impact of the new Commission it was limited in that the police were still responsible for investigating the complaint. We drew attention to the danger that policemen or soldiers could distort or fabricate evidence in defence of themselves or their friends, instancing a recent case where two people in a confrontation with the Army had, according to the evidence of several soldiers, made detailed provo-type statements and the case had collapsed only when it had been shown that they were, in fact, strong Loyalists. We urged the importance of determined action to counter harassment, by giving detailed attention to complaints and by action to demonstrate to the security forces that it would not be tolerated. We also drew attention to the dangers that certain regiments could espouse partisan or sectarian attitudes in relation to the Northern conflict, mentioning the Scots Guards in particular. This was, of course, also our basic concern in relation to the UDR. The current court cases of UDR and Scottish personnel passing information to Loyalist terrorists showed that Nationalist concerns in this respect were not fanciful. We drew attention also to the danger that deployment of the Royal Irish Rangers could add a further worrying dimension to this problem. Mr. Stanley expressed disappointment that after all the efforts

which had been deployed to improve the UDR these bad apples should, nevertheless, have got through. He did not confirm or deny that the Rangers were to be deployed.

We touched briefly on prisons issues in relation to Magilligan. Mr. Stanley said that the maintenance of a separate facility at Magilligan did, undoubtedly, represent a serious extra expense and in that sense closing it down would be an attractive option. However while it was true there was some spare capacity since the opening of the new Maghaberry prison there was in fact less of a surplus than might first appear, particularly since there were to be extensive repair works shortly in Belfast prison.

At the end of the lunch we spoke about West Belfast. Mr. Stanley had had lunch recently with Sr. Genevieve who had impressed upon him the importance of providing employment as a means of improving social conditions and diminishing support for violence in the area. We said that the Irish Government very much shared this analysis of the contributory effect of social deprivation to support for violence and this underlay the importance we attached to effective action in this area.

Yours sincerely,

  
Sean O hUiginn  
Joint Secretary