



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2018/68/62
Creation Dates:	6 July 1988
Extent and medium:	5 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
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Conversation with Mr. Chris Ryder

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1. Mr. Chris Ryder, advisor with Channel 4 TV, called recently to the Department. Ryder is at present researching a feature on the bloodstock industry and is also preparing a piece for Channel 4 on the International Fund. He again strongly criticised the absence of an effective publicity campaign in support of the Fund in the North and contrasted the criticisms of the Fund there with the overall favourable view in the South.

2. Ryder said that he understands that there are major changes underway at the most senior levels of the RUC. Eleven of the fourteen most senior officers (including the Chief Constable) will leave in the next twelve to eighteen months. Of the three remaining, David Mellor and Blair Wallace will become Senior Assistance Chief Constables. Both McAtamney and Forbes will depart ahead of the Chief Constable, whom the NIO are keen should go as soon as possible - although he may hold on until November 1989. An important reason why the NIO are now anxious to see the back of Hermon is that they believe that the Irish Government, although nobody in Dublin has said so explicitly, would welcome his departure. According to Ryder, Tom King is also anxious on a personal basis to have a new Chief Constable.

3. Ryder said that he had not been surprised by Hermon's apparently unplanned announcement of his decision to retire at his recent press conference. Ryder was convinced that Hermon would want to put down an early marker so as to claim that his decisions had nothing to do with the results of the Kelly inquiry. Ryder suspects, but without any firm basis, that Hermon may have come to some understanding about his resignation with some members of the Police Authority in the context of their consideration of the Stalker/Sampson Report. Ryder understands that Hermon plans to marry in the

near future and although there has been gossip of a relationship between him and Lady Faulkner, Ryder heard that he is likely to marry Mrs. Ead, whose husband, an RUC Inspector, was killed by the IRA in Newcastle some years ago. In any event, Hermon will leave Northern Ireland after his retirement.

4. Ryder said that speculation is already underway about Hermon's successor. Most speculation is now focussed on Des O'Brien, the Deputy Chief Constable of Kent, who comes from the Northern Catholic community and left the RUC to join the Manchester Police in 1980 after a number of clashes with Hermon. However, O'Brien's wife, who is an English solicitor, is reluctant to move to the North because of the restrictions imposed on the family of a Chief Constable - and their family is still very young. Ryder said that, despite widespread media speculation, it is unlikely that Geoffrey Deer, the Chief Constable of the West Midlands, will move to Belfast. The Home Office are opposed to his appointment since it is their view that he has not completed the task he was appointed to accomplish (a comprehensive restructuring of the West Midlands force) and in any event is being groomed to take over the London Metropolitan Police.
5. Ryder is aware that Tom Rainey, the Chairman of the Police Authority, has visited Sir Kenneth Newman to discuss a successor for Hermon. This has apparently particularly annoyed Hermon but Ryder thought it an excellent idea for Rainey to meet Newman since Newman, in addition to his Northern Ireland experience, had at one time been head of the Police Training College and would have a particular good insight into a number of the likely candidates. However Rainey's discussions with Newman have led to speculation within the RUC that the new appointment could be a surprise

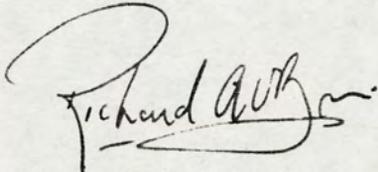
one and has extended the range of names mentioned to include "outsiders" like Paul Whitehouse, the Assistant Chief Constable for greater Manchester, and Trevor Morris, the Chief Constable of the Hertfordshire Police, who is regarded as affable with a good public relations sense although probably "too jolly English" in Ryder's view. Ryder also thought it likely that Masterson, who is serving with an English Police Force, will succeed Whiteside and be appointed Deputy Chief Constable when McAtamney retires. Masterson, who was born in County Fermanagh, has recently become a Catholic.

6. Ryder believes that King will go from the North in the next British Cabinet reshuffle, which he believes will take place before the end of the year. There is a strong view in the NIO that if Sir Patrick Mayhew wants the Northern Ireland post, the Prime Minister will give it to him. However, Ryder doubts that Mayhew really wants it since he is finding his position as Attorney General more central to his political ambitions than he had originally thought would be the case. Ryder believes that Chris Patten, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, must be a strong contender whose chances would be enhanced because of his good relationship with the SDLP - which could be crucial if they continue to be "shy" of entering into a devolved administration.
7. Ryder said that he has told a number of NIO officials that they are wrong to continue to criticise the SDLP/Sinn Fein talks which he believes could have the most far-reaching implications in the longer term. Ryder suspects that Sinn Fein will not want to be seen to move in a more political direction in response to the arguments and persuasiveness of John Hume. Nonetheless, it is clear that Hume's presentations in the talks have made a major impact on Sinn

Fein. This impact has led to serious fears among some within Sinn Fein that the dialogue could compromise their leadership or even lead to a further division within the organisation. Ryder said that at the meeting organised in West Belfast at the end of June for Sinn Fein activists from across the North, two interesting developments had occurred:

- (i) the presentation of a closely argued paper in favour of the Adams strategy by Mairtín O Muilleoir, who is emerging as an important figure in the movement; and
 - (ii) the suggestion by Mitchel McLoughlin that Sinn Fein should take the political struggle "into the enemy's heartland", which Ryder interpreted as the beginning of the campaign to persuade the organisation to permit elected members to take their seats at Westminster.
8. At the same time, Ryder said that his RUC contacts are adamant that Martin McGuinness is determined that the military campaign should not take second place to the political strategy. In particular, McGuinness is adamant that there should be no concessions to Hume along the lines of a "reduction in the level of violence" which would send any signals about political progress in the SDLP/Sinn Fein dialogue. The RUC are convinced, for example, that the Lisburn operation was planned and implemented by the Derry Brigade. Ryder also mentioned that while the RUC were downplaying the recent helicopter incident near Crossmaglen, they were deeply worried by it and by the delay of their "Quick Reaction Force" (QRF) in reaching the location where the helicopter was forced to land.

9. Towards the end of our conversation, Ryder said that there was general concern about the marching season within the RUC. In most areas, they hoped for as good a result as last year. However, there is particular concern this year about North Belfast as well as Ballinahinch and Portadown. He understood that there were some changes to the arrangements in Portadown this year which could make the policing of the occasion more difficult than last year.



Richard A. O'Brien

Press Counsellor

6th July 1988

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