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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BELFAST

Confidential

6 July 1989

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

Dear Assistant Secretary

The new Chief Constable of the RUC, Mr. Hugh Annesley, and his wife Elizabeth came to dinner in the Secretariat last evening. Present on the Irish side were Joint Secretary Sean O hUiginn, Padraic Collins, Michael Gaffey and the undersigned. Mr. Oliver Miles, the British Joint Secretary, was also present.

Mr. Annesley spoke in very positive terms about his recent meeting with Garda Commissioner Crowley and paid a warm tribute to the Commissioner and his team of senior officers, particularly Deputy Commissioner Culligan and Assistant Commissioner O'Dea. He was looking forward to developing his relationship with them in the course of future contacts on cross-border security cooperation.

We discussed the subject of the up-coming marching season and the inevitable tensions that it created in the nationalist community at this time of year. Mr. Annesley said that, while he took a close personal interest in what was happening on the ground, his policy was to leave decisions about individual parades to his local commanders and to interfere only if he felt that there was justification in doing so. He was conscious that all eyes would be on him at this time and he was determined not to be manipulated into any precipitate action which could be counter-productive. It would be very easy, he thought, for the police to get it wrong and to precipitate public disorder. In general, he believed in the right of people on both sides of the community to march peacefully in the traditional manner. He had some concerns about the forthcoming parade in Keady where he said the situation was being manipulated by outsiders and 'hyped up' by the press. He would be watching developments there and in Portadown carefully but the parades would be going ahead as usual. We said that, while we remained concerned about particular locations, we were generally satisfied with the manner in which the policing of parades had been handled in the past couple of years.

We discussed at some length the political dimension to the role of the Chief Constable, during which we laid particular emphasis on the need, as we saw it, for the RUC to be conscious of the political importance of policing decisions in terms of their impact on the nationalist community.

This was most clearly illustrated in the area of West Belfast where there was an acute need for a better response from the RUC to ordinary community policing. Mr. Annesley said that he found it disturbing that the level of support for the police in West Belfast still remained so low despite all the improvements that had been brought about in the conditions of nationalists in Northern Ireland. Given the level of violence and the support for terrorism in West Belfast, it was impossible, he thought, to make any serious improvement in the situation in relation to ordinary policing. There was no question of asking the police to assume greater risks at present and that inevitably ruled out the possibility of unarmed patrolling. Although the situation remained generally difficult in West Belfast, he thought that the lack of support for the police was to some extent due to the intimidating tactics of the Provos and the resultant fear engendered in the local population. He compared the situation there to that brought about by the Kray brothers in East London. If a few of the big-time operators in West Belfast could be taken out of circulation the situation would improve and people would begin to come forward again.

We said that it was important not to ignore the impact public opinion had on the terrorists and spoke of the importance of avoiding a purely security-orientated approach to terrorism which played into the hands of the Provos. Although Mr. Annesley was not convinced that the Provos had any worthwhile political constituency, he accepted the validity of our view that there were serious dangers in over-reacting to the violence of the terrorists. He favoured a gradual, 'incremental', approach on the twin track of continuing to counter the violence by means of good intelligence while at the same time doing as much as possible to get people to see that the activities of the terrorists were inimical to their interests.

Mr. Annesley expressed concern about the level of arms and munitions in the hands of the IRA and said that there was no comparison between that and the situation on the loyalist side. On the issue of recent loyalist paramilitary activities in general, especially in relation to arms importation, he did not accept that there was any real cause for concern. He thought that the reason the Provos had not yet brought their heavy arsenal into use was due to a shortage of trained operatives. The younger people were not coming forward to join in anything like the numbers of the past.

Mr. Annesley did not share our concerns about the implications that the establishment or the Border Brigade had for police supremacy. The nature of the threat in the border regions dictated that the response had to be essentially a military one. There was serious concern about the ease with which the Provos had been able to develop their supply lines from the South and this could not be countered by the police acting alone. In any event, the situation was being closely monitored by an Assistant Chief Constable who had been specially appointed for the task and Mr. Annesley thought that there was no cause for concern about the military role at present.

We took the opportunity in the course of the discussion to voice our concerns about the deployment of the UDR, especially in nationalist areas and, about the recent decision to equip them with plastic baton rounds.

When asked whether there were any particular initiatives he would like to see in relation to security cooperation, Mr. Annesley said, somewhat tongue in cheek, that he looked forward to the eventual development of an all-Ireland anti-terrorist squad which could move freely in both parts of Ireland. On a more serious note, he said he wanted to record formally his appreciation of the assistance of the Garda and spoke of the importance of ensuring that the resources of the Force were maintained at a level which enabled them to continue to meet the threat from terrorism effectively.

On a personal level, Mr. Annesley came across as a highly intelligent person, and though he is clearly very ambitious he has a relaxed, easy manner and is personally affable and likeable. He is clearly going to make his own of the job. He is likely to pay much more attention to management matters within the Force than his predecessor and his style will be much less autocratic, though he will be cautious and conservative. While it is much too soon to make a definite assessment, there were certain reassuring tones on some issues that concern us with perhaps a slightly worrying note here and there on issues such as political sensitivity, especially on West Belfast and perhaps also on the delicate issue of the police/military relationship which is central to security policy.

Yours sincerely



Noel Ryan
Assistant Secretary