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11 January 1990

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

Ms per RUC, ✓

Stevens

Manding Season 89

Accompaniment ✓

✓
 per Mr. [unclear]
 H. Keating

Dear Assistant Secretary

I called on Mr. Hugh Annesley the Chief Constable on 11 January. Our conversation touched in general terms on the Stevens Report, the current situation in Northern Ireland and the issue of UDR accompaniment.

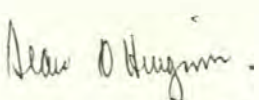
Stevens Report: Mr. Annesley said that he had been subject to much criticism for his decision to call in Mr. Stevens and for the subsequent interrogation of UDR members. However, he was confident that the decisions would ultimately be seen to be right. Stevens was a person of high calibre, even if he had to learn on the job that Northern Ireland could not be dealt with through the straightforward methods one might apply, in, say, South London. The motives behind the enquiry - independence and impartiality of the RUC - would be seen to be right. The Stevens enquiry would achieve its goal, but it was important to appreciate that it was not a panacea which would set right three hundred, or even fifty, years of history. (I understood him to imply that there were three or four further arrests likely, but I did not press him on this). I asked him about the fire the previous night in Stevens headquarters in Carrickfergus. He said there was a forensic investigation underway. He thought it unlikely it was arson, if only because it would be such an incompetent attack if it were. In any case, all material was duplicated elsewhere in the computer system. However, it could set back the date for delivery of the Report. He had expected it about mid-February. Now it could be up to a month later.

I asked him also about the recent London Independent story, to the effect that details of proposed arrests had been leaked to loyalists. He was less forthcoming on this point, expressing his confidence that no member of the Stevens team would have leaked anything and that the team would achieve its objectives. He did not, however, refute the idea of a leak. (I heard from another source that members of the Stevens team are hinting that the leaks in question were part of a trap to catch a suspected "mole". Some remarks from the British side of the Secretariat seemed to imply that, whatever the circumstances, the culprit may be a member of the regular British Army. British officials here also argue that if a leak had taken place the RUC would not have been able to find nine of the ten suspects they say they wished to arrest and who might have been expected to go into hiding).

Current situation: Mr. Annesley expressed a guarded optimism about a shift in public attitudes. For example, he instanced a small station in Tyrone which had been reopened with difficulty, but now that it was open there were encouraging signs of growing acceptance of the RUC. This did not extend to public gestures in the town itself, but once inside peoples houses officers were often offered tea and in the country areas around the station good relationships were more open still. He recalled representations we had made about the Orange march in Keady last July. He had recently revisited the town and had been told that some parishioners had subsequently complained to the parish priest that his condemnation of the march had been excessive. His greatest wish was to increase this ordinary policing dimension, to improve response times etc, but the terrorist campaign made this very difficult. He stressed repeatedly his commitment to securing greater acceptability for the RUC and winning the "hearts and minds" campaign. He had instructed that a thorough review should be made of each border crossing and had made it clear that closure should only be resorted to only where it was absolutely essential. He was working on a major statement to be published at the end of January which would again stress as one of three key points the commitment of the RUC to serving the entire community.

UDR accompaniment: I asked him how he saw this issue. He said that full accompaniment was simply not possible for numerical reasons. His force needed the UDR and the regiment was here to stay. He thought the Government's interest in the issue had led to enhanced attention to it in both forces, but even if he had all the extra resources which would be necessary there would remain many cases where assigning a policeman to the task would be a wrong use of resources. The real priority was greater emphasis on normal policing, normal in the sense of the police supplying the ordinary services people expected of them in normal societies. The GOC and the Army generally were highly committed to improvements on training, vetting etc. which had been introduced and this would bear fruit. However, the real key to the UDR was greater recruitment of Catholics to the security forces. As regards the RUC, he had had private contact with Cardinal O Fiaich and hoped to follow up with other key figures, including John Hume and Bishop Cahal Daly. He would leave it to them to judge how they could be of help. His dream eventually would be a statement read at Masses. On accompaniment in general he felt there would be some qualitative and quantitative improvement but cautioned against expecting anything like a full rate of accompaniment.

Yours sincerely


Sean O hUiginn
Joint Secretary