



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

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*Mr B. J. [unclear]
12.3.90 [unclear]
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Note

Attached is a copy of the Minister's interview for the Panorama programme on the UDR which is due to be broadcast on 19.2.90. The Minister recorded the interview on 5 February. The interviewer was John Ware. The interview can be expected to be edited for the purposes of the programme.

[Handwritten signature]

M Collins

13.2

cc A/Sec Gallagher
Mr R O Brien

cc Mr Mulla; PPP
And Larkin; [unclear]
Caroline A 1

Q. The Commander of the UDR has told us that the Regiment deals with terrorism from whichever corner it comes, and at the same time he concedes that his patrols aren't briefed on protestant terrorists. What is your reaction to those statements?

A. Well, firstly, he's obviously confused. He tells you I gather that he tries to deal with terrorism from all sides and then immediately follows by saying that he only briefs his patrols on the one side of terrorist activity. Obviously, that's a recipe for disaster and it doesn't surprise me either.

Q. Why not?

A. Well you know in recent times you have very serious allegations of collusion between members of that particular force, the UDR, where confidential information, secret information, has been passed on to people engaged in subversive activities and people have been identified by the information passed on and have been murdered. And as you know a number of people have been arrested and are presently before the courts to answer charges.

Q. Will you take the Commander's statement that the Regiment only briefs itself on Republican, not protestant, terrorists up with the British Government?

A. I certainly will. As you know the situation right now is that Mr Stevens is conducting an inquiry into the allegations we are talking about, the allegations of collusion, and we had hoped to have the result of the Stevens inquiry available to us by the end of last month but as everybody knows there was a very determined effort to burn him out of existence, to sabotage his efforts and obviously this will delay the final report by Mr Stevens which I now gather will be available some time in mid-March.

Obviously at that stage then we will have to see where we go from there.

Q. Do you regard the UDR as an impartial peace-keeping force which tries to deal with terrorism in an even-handed way?

A. The very existence of the UDR has always been rejected by the minority population in Northern Ireland as a force engaged in law and order activities which never seemed to operate in an even-handed way. It was regarded by the minority population, the nationalist minority, as a force that was never acceptable to them in that it didn't ever operate fairly. That has been the position, that is the position. That is the position which wasn't faced up to in 1985 when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was being negotiated. At that particular time because of the very, very serious reservations which the Dublin Government had with regard to the existence of the UDR, their continuing role in security-related matters, they negotiated as best they could at the time for the accompaniment of the UDR in their policing activities by members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and at that time the British Government gave solemn assurances that save in very, very exceptional circumstances they would be accompanied by members of the RUC who are a professionally-trained police force operating in the community. But, of course, those solemn assurances were never lived up to, those solemn assurances have never been put into practice and I say that with very deep regret.

Q. Why do you think that is?

A. Because the political will wasn't there to so do. This is the reality of it. The assurances were given, they were accepted in good faith by the Dublin Government but, as I say in reality, they were never implemented. The fact that

the police force weren't in a position to accompany them always, you know, the reason given to us when we raised the matter, as we did on an ongoing basis, was that the police force didn't have sufficient manpower or resources to accompany the number of patrols going out. I might also say that in 1985 it was agreed solemnly between the two governments, Britain and Ireland, that the UDR would not operate in predominantly catholic areas, that they would be kept away from sensitive areas. It was believed by us at the time that the UDR would operate in areas where there would be little or no chance for confrontation with the general public, areas like security posts, protecting installations, and the like, but I'm afraid that hasn't happened.

Q. When you say that Britain's failure to deliver its promise on accompaniment shows Britain lacks political will do you mean that Britain lacks the political will to defeat terrorism, to defeat the IRA?

A. There is one very important aspect to all this that we are now talking about and that is that if the community generally in Northern Ireland do not have the confidence in those who are charged with the responsibility for maintaining law and order, for protecting the people, their lives, their property. If the people do not have confidence in the law enforcement agencies, well then we are in very serious trouble and, quite obviously, there is no confidence in the minority population, in the catholic nationalist population, in the UDR as a force that can operate in an even-handed way. Now if you don't have confidence in something, you have fear, and there is that fear present amongst the catholic nationalist people in Northern Ireland. And where you have fear, you have the best and the strongest breeding-ground for terrorist activities. And I feel that unless we can make a decision now, a politically courageous

decision, that can only be made, and that must be made, by the British Government, well then we are really seeing the IRA, and all those engaged in terrorist activities, benefitting from that lack of political courage which I am talking about.

Q. So at the end of the day are you saying that the British Government doesn't have the political will, by not delivering on its promise on accompaniment, to defeat terrorism?

A. I believe that the British Government is genuine in its desire and wish to defeat terrorism. I accept that. There is every reason why they should, and we are too. And I believe now that the time has come for the British government to recognise that to give effect to that political will which they have, to that determination, the wish they have for defeating terrorism, that they must now do what they did not do in 1985, and that is to deal with this particular problem.

Q. To what extent do you regard Britain's failure to deliver on its promise on accompaniment as a breach of faith?

A. Well, obviously it is a breach of faith. When two governments sit down and negotiate an agreement, an agreement that has been recognised internationally, an agreement that has been welcomed, an agreement that for our part is being followed diligently and supported along the way - at a very great cost, I might add. When we then see that solemn assurances given by the other side, the other party to that agreement, that's a matter of deep regret. And only recently when we reviewed the operations of the Anglo-

Irish Conference for the first four years of its existence,

we reaffirmed, both sides reaffirmed, our commitment to what was agreed in 1985, and those commitments included the principle of accompaniment. And the British Government must, if it is serious in restoring confidence in the law enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland, well then they must honour their commitments solemnly given in that agreement between two sovereign governments.

Q. Going back to this question of political will, when you say that Britain's failure to keep its promise on accompaniment shows it doesn't have political will, is it that Britain has traditionally believed that it can beat the IRA by military containment, and regarded the political will you are talking about as rather more long-term, a question that goes to the heart of the Irish problem - the Anglo-Irish problem?

A. I think we must understand that it's vital that we make political progress in Northern Ireland, and the more successful we are in making political progress, well then obviously, the less reason will there be for the existence of those engaged in terrorism. Now, if we do not make political progress, well then we are in a situation where the climate then will suit those engaged in terrorism. I believe we've got to make more progress there. We cannot make political progress, if we haven't confidence in the law enforcement agencies. We haven't right now any confidence in the UDR. The British Government will now have to make up its mind to try and deal with that problem and it is only they who can deal with that particular problem but they must understand that it's a matter for both governments to see to it that there is confidence in the law enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland. That's a matter for all of us - we too are concerned there because if there isn't that confidence, well then we are building up the type of people

who are going to become involved, we are going to build up

the subversive element, we are going to play into the hands of those engaged in terrorism, on both sides.

Q. To what extent is the term "protestant militia" a fair description of the UDR in your view?

A. Well the UDR is well and truly recognised as being a local force. In excess of 80 per cent of its make-up of its membership is of one particular side. People are operating in their own areas. They're not seen as a fair and even-handed force. That is a fact. I must readily confess that there are some very fine people in the UDR that have played a part in the security area in Northern Ireland, and it's regrettable that so many things have gone wrong in recent times. And it's not just good enough for someone to say that you get one or two apples, you know, rotten in some barrels. That's not so. I think the whole core of the thing has to be looked at in great depth right now and that is why the government here through me has asked that we have an in-depth inquiry into the whole existence of the UDR, into their role and how it affects the community, in the interests of restoring confidence in the security forces, so that we take away a reason for the existence of those engaged in terrorism.

Q. What is your view of the general level of competence with which the UDR has been administered and I am thinking here specifically of the screening and vetting regime.

A. I don't particularly want to get into that as of right now. I think that this is something I will have to talk about to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Stevens report is available, when we know where we go from there. The vetting and the screening, certainly up to now, has not been effective, and the fact that we have the

Stevens inquiry into allegations of collusion clearly shows that there was no vetting of any substance in effect with regard to people who wanted to become members of the security forces, none whatsoever.

Q. To what extent do you think UDR misconduct is a source of recruitment and support for Sinn Féin and the IRA?

A. It very obviously is, as I say. If it's seen as a force who are not even-handed in the way they administer the law, operate the law, well then as I say, there's no confidence in them. People aren't going to be protected by them, people will fear them. People will worry for their lives and their property and then people will turn to the IRA for protection, and that's why I say that it is now that political courage is required of the British to deal with this problem that they have fudged for so long because the problem will not go away.

Q. What are you asking the British Government to do? Do you feel that the UDR in the end will have to be disbanded?

A. I feel that the ideal solution - this has come from people other than I, people who are very knowledgeable about the security area in Northern Ireland - that if we have to have a police force whose responsibility it must be for the enforcement of law and order that that police force must have the respect of the community, must have the support and confidence of the community. I believe that it would be in the interest of that confidence which is so vital for political progress in Northern Ireland that then we would see a police force expanding, properly trained, which the UDR isn't - they are a militia - the RUC properly trained and becoming part of the community, operating within the community, with the support of the community which is vital

for the success of their operations. That would be part of the long term answer to it and of course it would be a police force then that would have the support of the military element in security, if called on and if needed by them.

Q. So you would like to see the UDR phased out?

A. I certainly must say it like this to you that they have no role to play as they are constituted at the present time and in the way they are operating

Q. Do you think that there will ever be peace in Northern Ireland with the UDR constituted in its present form?

A. I'm afraid I could not see that.

Q. Why not?

A. Because as I say the people do not regard them as a force, that they can depend on, as a force that they can have respect for, a force politically that they question more so now than ever before. As a matter of interest you do know that between 1986 and 1988, 27 members of the UDR have been charged with murder and other serious offences. Would it be an unfair question for me to ask you if you could have confidence in them as people who could protect you and your life? Or could I? Let your viewers ask that question.

Q. Why do you think the Government does not see the sense of what you are saying?

A. I would think that the Government on this occasion could see the sense of what I am saying and I would think the Government in its determination to help defeat terrorism in the only effective way that terrorism can be defeated in Northern Ireland will help the Irish Government in taking away one of the principle reasons for their existence.

Q. The UDR has been described by many nationalists as a protestant militia. Is that a description you agree with?

A. Well it is a local militia. They are not trained in community policing, they are part-timers on the whole and with regard to their composition, well, it is a fact that above 98% of them belong to one side of the politico-religious divide. That is fact, that cannot be denied.

Q. Do you regard the UDR as a sectarian regiment?

A. Well, as 98% of it comes from one political side and they are allowed to operate in their own area, if in the evening time they come in from the fields or their jobs and they don their uniforms and go out, well, obviously they are going to view the situation totally differently from that of a professional police force.

Q. Can the UDR ever be part, in your view, of reconciliation or a peaceful solution in Northern Ireland?

A. I doubt it very much indeed. I doubt it very, very much indeed. In actual fact, the nationalist minority community in Northern Ireland have no confidence in the fairness or the evenhandedness of the UDR, none whatsoever.

- Q. When you called last year for a comprehensive review of the role and basis of the regiment, were you effectively asking for the regiment to be phased out?
- A. I was asking that at this stage now, having regard to the consequences of the existence for the last four and a half years of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, having regard to the fact that their acceptability and credibility is probably at the lowest ever as far the nationalist minority is concerned, that it is now surely time that we have an indepth look at the reason for their existence and at the role that they play within the community generally in Northern Ireland, because if we can't have a police force, if we can't have the agents of law and order and security, operating in an evenhanded way, if we can't have an acceptance by the community of their police force operating for and on their behalf, well then we're not going anywhere, we're not making political progress, they are not helping in any way the confidence that is required for any police force to succeed and if we can't have confidence, well then we're going to have fear and where you have fear, you'll have those engaged in terrorism flourishing because there is a need there to fill that vacuum and the IRA or anybody else engaged in terrorism will surely fill that vacuum.
- Q. When you say that the UDR's credibility is now at its lowest ebb, what justification do you have for saying that?
- A. Well, we had the Stevens inquiry into the allegations of collusion. Between 1986 and 1988, according to figures given by way of an answer to a parliamentary question in the House of Commons, a Government spokesman said that 27 members of the UDR have been charged with murder, convicted of murder and other serious offences in two years. That's a fact. The minority and nationalist population of Northern

Ireland know that, they see that, and how then can you have confidence? Would you or I have confidence in that type of police force to protect our lives and our property? The answer must surely be no and every fair-minded person will readily agree that there is something extremely wrong and that must be addressed, and that the political courage required by the British Government be found straight away to deal with this very serious problem, if we are together to defeat terrorism, which is our aim and which we know we must do.

Q. Now what is the Irish Government looking for from the Stevens report?

A. When the Stevens report is available to us, obviously we will want to know what's in it, we will want to see how widespread this collusion is, and what has happened and at that stage then we will press ahead with the decision which the Government has already made known to the British Government, and that is that we want this indepth inquiry into the reason for the existence and role of the UDR.

Q. Effectively you sound as if you want the UDR disbanded or phased out?

A. Basically, effectively what we want is a situation in Northern Ireland where political progress will help to defeat terrorism. That's what we want. We would think that the British Government want that too. We are giving them the way out, we are giving them the formula that's required to be successful in this area. I hope that they take that on board.

Q. Well if you believe the UDR is an impediment to reconciliation, and you want the British Government to

review its role and its very basis surely then you should press for the disbandment of the UDR?

- A. This is the reason for the inquiry that we are suggesting. We want this indepth inquiry carried out with a view to addressing a very serious situation that exists at the present time.
- Q. If the Stevens report doesn't satisfy you and the British Government doesn't satisfy you with its response to the Stevens recommendations, what will you then do?
- A. I think that's a question that you'll have to ask me at a later date and I will be glad to answer for you when I see what's in the Stevens report, when I know what our assessment of the report is, and above and beyond all that, when I know what the reaction of the British Government is arising from that particular report, bearing in mind the serious problem which has to be addressed, which in the ultimate has to do with defeating terrorism.
- Q. Finally let me ask you this: Given all of the problems over the last 20 years and given all of the blows to the confidence that the catholic community has had in the security forces, how important is this affair in terms of the confidence of the Catholic community over the last few years?
- A. If any citizen, in any country cannot have confidence in the police force protecting that community, well then you can readily see how serious it is. If that confidence isn't there, it is replaced by fear. If that fear is there, well

then the vacuum created through that fear will be filled instantly by those who engage in terrorism. We want to ensure that the terrorists be sidelined and marginalised. We believe that the British Government wants that too. We say that there is only one way out, let the issue not be fudged any longer, let it be addressed, and it can only be so addressed by political, courageous decisions which are urgently required and should have been taken long ago.

Q. So finally is it now time to disband the UDR?

A. Let's see how the problem is addressed by those who have immediate responsibility for it and having regard to our responsibility and our commitment to defeat terrorism, we too have an input into that decision and at that particular time, we will make our recommendations to the British Government.

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