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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

BÉAL FEIRSTE

27.4.90
ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BELFAST

23 April 1990

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

Dear Assistant Secretary

Stevens Inquiry

As you know, the discussion at the restricted session of the Conference on 19 April touched on the Stevens Inquiry. I enclose a note of that discussion, abstracted from my report on security issues. The position on Stevens could be summarised as follows:

- (1) The Chief Constable is still examining the report, which is long and detailed, and he will be submitting his recommendations to the Secretary of State in due course. (No indication was given of how long this will take.)
- (2) Mr. Stevens himself will prepare a summary of the report for publication by the end of May. On its publication, Mr. Annesley envisages that Stevens and he will hold a press conference and answer questions. (That is how Annesley personally sees it; he is discussing presentation at present with NIO officials.)
- (3) The Secretary of State is committed to making a statement on the report to the House of Commons and the British side confirmed this is the intention.
- (4) Irish Ministers stressed the importance they attached to being told as much as possible about what was happening in advance so that they could properly consider their response. They will be especially concerned with lessons for the future and what steps will be taken to prevent repetition.
- (5) In response to a question from Irish Ministers, Annesley dismissed a recent Sunday Times report to the effect that Stevens had concluded that collusion could not be stopped and was bound to continue as speculation and "ill-advised" journalism. What Stevens is likely to say (Annesley said he had not yet reached that part of the report) was that one can never be 100% certain that leaks of this kind will not occur again.

- (6) Stevens has taken the arrests and prosecutions - 58 in all - as far as he can at this stage. He has left a small team in Belfast to pick up any more that might emerge.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'NR' or 'Noel Ryan' in a stylized, cursive script.

Noel Ryan
Assistant Secretary

Note on discussion of Stevens Inquiry Report
at restricted session of Anglo-Irish Conference,
London, 19 April 1990

Mr. Brooke: Should we deal with the Stevens inquiry now?

Mr. Collins: Yes.

Chief Constable: Well, the position is that I have a report from Mr. Stevens. It is a very long and detailed report and I am at present working through it. When I have completed my work on it, I will pass it with my recommendations to the Secretary of State. It is Mr. Stevens' intention, however, to prepare a summary of his report which could be published and dished out. On the timing of that, he is away at the moment in Australia and won't be back until the end of this month, so I think we are talking in terms of having that ready by the end of May. It may seem that that is a very long time-frame but I think you have to bear in mind that there are quite a number of other agencies, including the Ministry of Defence, Security Services and various others, involved. We want to be sure that we have covered everyone's interests before I put my recommendations to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Collins: Could I mention one issue in this context. There was a report in one of the London papers recently purporting to be a leak from the Stevens report. That had attributed to Stevens the conclusion that, as far as he was concerned, collusion was bound to continue.

Chief Constable: I really don't know how this could possibly have any basis. There are only four copies of that report in existence and I have one of them and Mr. Stevens still has the other three. Each copy is marked so that if there is any question of it getting out it will be possible to trace it back to the marked copy. All I can say is that he is most unlikely to come out with that. I think what he is likely to say, and I haven't reached on this yet, is that, with the best will in the world and making all appropriate arrangements, one can never be 100% certain that leaks of this kind of confidential material won't happen in the future. I think there has already been one very ill-advised piece in one of the London papers. It was, I think, a long and detailed article, written by O Gorman in the Sunday Times, but, as I say, it was a very ill-advised piece indeed.

Mr. Burke: And the prosecutions are proceeding?

Chief Constable: Yes. I think 58 have been initiated so far and Mr. Stevens has left a small part of his team in Northern Ireland to pick up any more that may emerge. I think you will appreciate that he had to bring his enquiries to a conclusion at this stage, otherwise it could go on and on. But I should say that, of course, he got every facility he could get from us. I know that in some quarters people are not pleased that RUC heads have not been seen to have rolled but, I stress, that Mr. Stevens has, throughout his enquiry, concerned himself only with matters about which there was evidence and that has been particularly the case with both the UDR and the RUC.

Mr. Collins: Could I ask how you envisage the public presentation of his findings?

Chief Constable: I am currently discussing this particular issue with the Secretary of State's officials. I would personally envisage a press conference as soon as we possibly can have one. At that press conference, I think both Mr. Stevens and I would each make a statement and then there would be a question and answer session. Of course, when the Secretary of State gets my report he may wish to make a broader statement addressing other issues and what should be done for the future etc. It is not for me to prejudge what the Secretary of State may decide.

Mr. Collins: Well, we will have to consider, of course, what our response should be and for that reason we will need to know as much as we can about the situation and in particular we will want to see what steps will be taken to prevent further incidents of collusion in the future.

Chief Constable: My initial reaction is to handle that aspect of it through the Secretariat at Maryfield.

Mr. Cope: We will, of course, have to make a statement in the House of Commons on the issue.

Mr. Brooke: Yes, I am already committed to doing that.



Noel Ryan

24 April 1990