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Mr Sean O Huiginn
Assistant Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division

11 November 1991

Dear Assistant Secretary

Counsellor A1
Mr M. Collins
John
13/11

Conversation with John Ware, BBC Panorama.

As you know, Ware was responsible for the recent Panorama programme on Northern Ireland.

He discussed the outline of the programme with me in early September (my C212 to Michael Collins of 4 September refers) and the final product screened on 21 October largely followed that outline. The major exception was that it did not include an analysis of the future direction of Sinn Féin. Ware had been anxious to cover this aspect but felt that its inclusion would have diluted the overall thrust of the programme which focused on the negative role played by the unionists in the talks process.

Interview with Gerry Adams:

In preparing the programme, he conducted a lengthy on-the-record interview with Adams. This had been difficult, as Adams was still smarting from a very unflattering portrait of him which Ware produced some years ago which, tongue in cheek, Ware had entitled "The Honourable Member for West Belfast". In it he impugned Adams' physical courage when active in the IRA some years ago and portrayed him as a moral hypocrite in his attitude to violence.

Before agreeing to an interview on this occasion, Adams insisted on subjecting Ware to a 45 minute "grilling" which went into considerable detail on the contents of his earlier programme. Ware concluded that this grilling, while it provided an interesting insight into Adams' sensitivity to

certain types of criticism, was essentially designed to intimidate him.

Adams has since complained to Ware at the non-inclusion of this material in the programme. However, Panorama are not interested in another Irish story in the immediate future and Ware is trying to interest Newsnight and/or BBC Northern Ireland in using the interview (with the usual voiceover) as a backdrop for a programme on Sinn Fein. (Ware has let me have a copy of a transcript of the interview on a confidential basis and I have forwarded this under separate cover to the Department.)

Ware's impression of Adams is of a cold, calculating individual; he used the word "reptilian" to describe Adams' manner. The on-the-record interview was a robust affair and focused on the conflict in republican strategy between the armalite and the ballot-box, where IRA military strategy appears to cut across the political strategy of Sinn Fein. Ware's conclusion is that to describe Adams in relative terms as a "dove" would be inaccurate; it would be more accurate to describe Adams as preferring more "intelligent" targeting by the IRA -ie: a military campaign more focused on British military targets as opposed to the more politically damaging targets being chosen by the current IRA leadership.

Reactions to the Panorama Programme:

He has had a number of reactions to his recent programme, though, somewhat to his surprise, none from Paisley who was clearly fingered in the programme as the villain of the piece. In fact the only serious criticism from a political figure in Northern Ireland came from John Alderdice, who was apparently very miffed that he had not been interviewed for the programme. Ware speculated as to whether Alderdice might be reflecting a developing paranoia on the part of the Alliance Party at moves (notably on the part of the Unionists) to exclude them from any future talks.

Apparently both McGimpsey and Empey were pleased that they had featured as the moderate voice of unionism and that the Official Unionists as a whole had been characterised as moderate in their approach to the talks. There was some satisfaction in UUP circles that the programme pointed the finger exclusively at the DUP as the source of unionist intransigence. While Ware admitted that such an analysis was simplistic, I gathered that he had been happy to use it as a simple shorthand in order to highlight what he sees as the malevolent role of Paisley, who he described as "a congenital liar". He had also been appalled by his meeting with Willie McCrea who, off the record, indicated that, notwithstanding whatever might have been agreed in the run-up to the talks, there was never any intention on his part that the DUP would ever be involved in any kind of meeting with the Dublin Government. Ware became quite heated at this point in our conversation, saying "these people can never be trusted".

Ware's own thesis is that unionism will only move if pressured. His own feeling is that the failure of the talks should have been followed by an intensification in the working of the Anglo-Irish Agreement though he commented that "Brooke is obviously not of that persuasion".

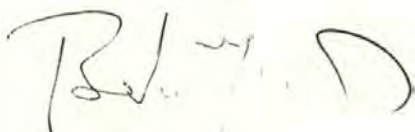
Future Programmes:

While Panorama are not interested in another Irish story in the short term, he told me that he hopes to compile a programme some months hence on the RUC. He has made arrangements to discuss the outline of such a programme with Annesley, though he is frankly not optimistic that Annesley will agree to give him the kind of access he will need to do an in-depth report on the force. (From Ware's comments I gathered that his own inclination at this early stage would be to contrast unfavourably the performance of Annesley with his predecessor, Jack Hermon, for whom he appears to have a high regard.)

Havers Libel Case:

Ware's immediate problem is the likelihood of a libel writ from the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Havers, in relation to a Panorama programme which Ware presented last year on the Guildford Four case. The programme alleged that the prosecution team, led by Havers, had failed to brief the defence team about evidence relevant to the defence case - notably witness statements supporting Gerry Conlan's alibi; and statements by RARDE forensically linking the Guildford explosions with a series of other explosions which occurred both before and after the Guildford case.

Apparently, Havers' solicitors have written to the BBC indicating that "as soon as their client has been exonerated by the May Inquiry", they will sue for exemplary damages. Ware was confident that any action could be defended successfully though he commented ruefully that a case of that kind will effectively tie him up for months collecting evidence and again cross-checking his original sources.



Brendan McMahon
Press & Information Officer