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B/666/JKL46

FROM: J K LEDLIE  
23 September 1991

cc Mr Fellows 25/9  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Deverell  
Mr A Wilson  
Mr Leach  
Mr Cooke  
Mr Bell  
Director ARU

PUS (B&L)

**PAYMASTER-GENERAL'S VISIT TO SPAIN: 17-19 SEPTEMBER 1991**

As you know, I accompanied the Paymaster-General on a short visit to Spain last week. Lord Belstead will, I think, be making his own report on the visit to the Secretary of State; but I thought you and copy addressees might be interested in a short supplementary note recording the main points that struck me during two very interesting days.

2. The visit was at the invitation of the State Secretary for Security, Senor Rafael Vera, who himself visited the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland) last year. Senor Vera, though not at first sight the warmest of men, nevertheless proved to be a most attentive host; he entertained us to lunch on the first day and then came with us to the Basque country for our visit there. He is a key figure in the Spanish Government's fight against ETA terrorism. FCO telegram No 644 of 16 September (copy attached) gives a very good flavour of the man and his policies; my only comment would be that Vera 1991-version was dismissive of attempts to negotiate with terrorists and preferred instead to lay emphasis on their defeat by the police and their "re-insertion into society". Maybe the 1989 experience has left its mark.

3. The programme (copy attached) was a full and interesting one, which enabled us in the course of two very busy days to visit the 3 (yes, 3!) Spanish police forces engaged in the terrorist campaign:-

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(a) the National Police

(b) the Civil Guard ("Guardia Civil")

(c) the Basque Autonomous Police

We also had a most interesting hour or so with the Head of the Basque Regional Government, who found time to see us and give us a most lucid exposition of current security issues, notwithstanding his pre-occupation with forming a new local Government.

4. The main points and issues to strike me from the visit were:-

(a) The Spanish take terrorism (primarily, but not exclusively, ETA) very seriously. They have invested large sums of money in anti-terrorist forces and equipment during the past 10 years or so.

(b) They believe that they are winning in their campaign against ETA, as a result of:-

(i) intensive police activity

(ii) complementary political measures to provide the Basques with a greater degree of autonomy (eg their own Parliament and their own Police Force!).

(c) Notwithstanding their successes, they still have a considerable ETA terrorist campaign on their hands - a campaign which is concentrated in the Basque country, but which can be manifested in terrorist atrocities in any part of a very large country. (For example, the day before we arrived, a car was blown up outside a Civil Guard barracks in Alicante, killing two members of the Civil Guard and a civilian crane-driver.)

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- (d) ETA and the Provisional IRA have a considerable amount in common, ranging from equipment procurement to terrorist techniques. The extent of this commonality (and its provenance) is for debate; Vera, for example, laid emphasis on the way in which the two groups are coming together following the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. (I am not sure about the significance of this factor.) Like the IRA, ETA are by now well into extortion and blackmail; over the years, they have resorted to kidnapping quite frequently as a means of raising money, but this is now becoming more difficult for them (better security, families of kidnap victims refusing to pay etc).
- (e) The Spanish attach considerable importance to continuing co-operation with us in anti-terrorist work. As I understand it, they have been very helpful on a number of specific IRA-related measures in recent years. Professional relationships in police and intelligence fields are generally very good; the Spanish have, however, been disappointed by:
- (i) our refusal hitherto to transfer the latest EOD technology (the issue is being dealt with by the Ministry of Defence, but Vera raised it specifically with the Paymaster-General, who agreed to raise it again with the Secretary of State for Defence);
  - (ii) what is perceived as a lack of commitment by the RUC this summer to follow up in Northern Ireland on two ETA suspects ( );
- (f) The "Basque problem" does, of course, have certain similarities to the situation in Ireland (minority community with little real allegiance to a central state looking for greater autonomy - if not independence).

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But, difficult though it is, the Spanish situation is much less complex than ours; they do not, for example, have the hideous complication of sections of two communities at each other's throats.

(g) That said, Spanish remarks and comments in a number of areas did strike me as very relevant. For example, the difficulties the Civil Guard have in the Basque Country in living in the community (we were taken to a large barracks outside San Sebastian where over 1,000 Civil Guards live with their families) is not that different from many of the problems faced by the RUC; and great emphasis was laid throughout the visit on the importance of reducing social support for ETA and of implementing policies which took the wind out of their sails. There were strong SECRASP echoes in all this.

(h) The development of the Basque Autonomous Police was also a fascinating phenomenon which would well repay further study. The force was apparently established in 1979 and is now rather over 3,000 strong; it is intended to build it to a complement of around 6,000 over the next 4-5 years (with, allegedly, complementary reductions in the Civil Guard in the Basque region). The force benefited from a study in 1985/86 by a team of British experts headed by Sir Clive Rose (perhaps Control Risks?) and its special forces have been trained by ex-SAS and SBS personnel. Vera (I think genuinely) is a strong enthusiast for them and their role - even though the potential for confusion and tension between (a) the Basque Autonomous Police and (b) the National Police and the Civil Guard - both of which report to Vera - must be very considerable.

(i) The Franco-Spanish border is a major problem for them, with the HQ of ETA and many ETA ringleaders being based in France. Vera was generally complimentary about the attitude of the French government (he said with a smile that he was well aware of the difficulties we faced from

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having an "enemy government" south of our border!), but said that he was continually trying to persuade the French either to do more themselves or to let the Spanish police have more authority in French territory.

Tuesday 17 September

5. All in all, a very worthwhile and interesting two days, during which the Spanish looked after us extremely well indeed. (The Embassy was also very supportive, with Ivor Roberts, HM Minister, accompanying us throughout and Simon Butler-Madden acting as a superb interpreter.) Notwithstanding the two points of difficulty (para 4(e) above), the atmosphere was warm and friendly throughout - and there was no doubt that they were glad to share with us their concerns (and successes). I hope we will be able to be equally welcoming and positive as and when they next come to Belfast. Senor Vera said that he hoped he might be able to come next year; if he does not come himself, then we might think in terms of an official delegation of some kind. I am sure that, on both political and security grounds, it is worth maintaining and developing the Anglo-Spanish links that are now in place.

1140 Depart Police Headquarters

1200 Madrid Police Emergency Centre ("091")  
C/Dr Federico Rubio y Call 55

1240 Depart Emergency Centre

1300 Meeting at office of State Secretary for Security. Sr Rafael Vera  
C/Amador de Los Rios 2

1400 Lunch at Headquarters of State Secretary for Security (see attached guest list)

1545 Depart (on foot) for Embassy

1600 Depart Embassy for airport

J K LEDLIE  
Ext 3286

ID 29461 Private flight from Airport to Basque country (for members of party see attached list)

1715 Arrive Vitoria. Joined at Airport by Alister McKerrlie, HM Consul-General, Bilbao

1730 Office of Government Delegation in Basque country

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1800 Meeting with Head of Basque Regional Government (Lehendakari), Sr Jose Antonio Arriaza, at the Ajuria Enea Palace  
(putting together our regional gov)



**PROGRAMME FOR THE VISIT OF THE BRITISH DELEGATION LED  
BY LORD BELSTEAD, 17 - 19 SEPTEMBER 1991**

Tuesday 17 September

- 2215 British delegation arrive Barajas Airport,  
BA 462 VIP Lounge. Met by HMM and Sr Martin-  
Cinto, Ministry of the Interior
- 2245 Leave for British Ambassador's Residence  
in Embassy cars

Wednesday 18 September

- 0930 Depart Ambassador's Residence
- 1000 Embassy briefing
- 1050 Depart Embassy
- 1100 Police Headquarters (Directorate General)  
C/Miguel Angel 5
- 1140 Depart Police Headquarters
- 1200 Madrid Police Emergency Centre ("091")  
C/Dr Federico Rubio y Gali 55
- 1240 Depart Emergency Centre
- 1300 Meeting at office of State Secretary for  
Security, Sr Rafael Vera  
C/Amador de Los Rios 2
- 1400 Lunch at Headquarters of State Secretary  
for Security (see attached guest list)
- c. 1545 Depart (on foot) for Embassy
- 1600 Depart Embassy for airport
- 1630 Private flight from Barajas Airport to Basque  
country (for members of party see attached  
list)
- 1715 Arrive Vitoria. Joined at Airport by Alistair  
McKenzie, HM Consul-General, Bilbao
- 1730 Office of Government Delegate in Basque country
- 1800 Meeting with Head of Basque Regional Government  
(Lehendakhari), Sr Jose Antonio Ardanza,  
at the Ajuria Enea Palace

(putting together new regional govt)

1979

- 1900 Visit Arkaute barracks of Basque Autonomous Police. Received by Basque Interior Minister, Sr Juan Maria Atutxta
- 2030 Leave by helicopter for San Sebastian
- 2130 Dinner hosted by Government Delegate in Basque country, Jose Antonio Aguiriano, at Arzak restaurant
- 2300 Leave for overnight accommodation, Palacio de la Cumbre

Thursday 19 September

- 1000 Visit Civil Guard barracks in Inchaurreondo
- 1200 Demonstration of police controls — Briefing on ETA
- 1400 Lunch hosted by Government Delegate at Akelarre restaurant
- 1600 Leave Fuenterrabia Airport for Madrid
- 1700 Arrive Madrid Barajas
- (? Possible call on Minister of the Interior, — CANCELLED) Sr Jose Luis Corcuera
- 2040 Leave Madrid Barajas (VIP Lounge) for London on BA 467

National Police → DSE (Very)

Autonomous Police ↗

Civil Guard — frontiers + small towns (less than 20,000)

Municipal Police

Traffic Police

(Arab terrorists)

Very — plan for new central security forces

Prisons — deliberate spread round the country.

Spanish/French co-operation — hot pursuit (10-12 hrs for Spain + Italy)



**GUEST LIST FOR LUNCH AT INTERIOR MINISTRY,  
18 SEPTEMBER**

**Host :** Rafael Vera Fernandez-Huidobro  
State Secretary for Security

**Spanish Guests :** Nicolas Martin-Cinto  
Foreign Affairs Adviser to Interior  
Minister

Jesus Martinez Torres  
Commissioner for Information  
National Police Headquarters

Francisco Gimeno Domenech  
General, Civil Guard  
Special Units and Reserves

Augustin Linares Molina  
Subdirector General for Management  
National Police Headquarters

**British Guests :** Lord Belstead  
HM Ambassador  
Mr Ledlie  
Mr Kyle  
Mr Roberts, HM Minister, British  
Embassy  
Mr Butler-Madden, British Embassy  
Miss Jenkins, British Embassy



ARTICIPANTS IN VISIT TO BASQUE COUNTRY, 18 - 19 SEPTEMBER

Spanish Delegation:

Rafael Vera Fernandez-Huidobro  
State Secretary for Security  
Director of State Security

Nicolas Martin-Cinto  
Foreign Affairs Adviser to Interior Minister

Jesus Martinez Torres  
Commissioner for Information, National Police Headquarters

Francisco Gimeno Domenech  
General, Civil Guard  
Special Units and Reserves

( Augustin Linares Molina  
Subdirector General for Management  
National Police Headquarters )

British Delegation:

Lord Belstead

Mr Ledlie

Mr Kyle

Mr Ivor Roberts, HM Minister, British Embassy

Mr Simon-Butler-Madden, Interpreter, British Embassy