



NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

28 MARCH 1991

STATEMENT BY THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

The Government welcomes Archbishop Daly's recognition of the difficult task the Ulster Defence Regiment perform, in such dangerous circumstances. This of course applies to all members of the security forces in Northern Ireland.

2. As the Archbishop said, the Ulster Defence Regiment has suffered terrible losses since its formation almost exactly 21 years ago. Over 190 serving members have been brutally murdered, many while they were off duty, and 45 former members killed, often several years after leaving the Regiment.

3. The Government, like the Archbishop, has also stressed the vital importance of securing the confidence of the community. It has explicitly said so, most recently in the Statement of Security Policy last November. Security force commanders attach great importance to these matters, and will always try to meet concerns expressed to them.

4. The UDR, which is an integral part of the Army, plays a vital role in supporting the police in the battle against terrorism, from whatever quarter. Its skills make it an extremely important part of the counter-terrorist effort, and the security situation makes it necessary for its members to operate across as wide an area as possible.

5. As the Archbishop rightly says, but for the evil and destructive campaigns of terrorism, there would be no need to deploy the armed forces in Northern Ireland. It is terrorism which has brought nothing but suffering to the whole community.

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STATEMENT BY ARCHBISHOP DALY

The recent murder by loyalist gunmen of four young men in Cappagh, County Tyrone, has left the whole community of Galbally in shock, grief and apprehension. This multiple murder is only one example, even though a particularly horrifying one, of a continuous murder campaign conducted by loyalists in this general area of Tyrone and Armagh and in other areas like North Belfast and elsewhere. Throughout the whole community of Galbally there is fear of still further murders of this kind. There is a sense of isolation and abandonment. The role of the security forces in such areas is of crucial importance.

CONFIDENCE IN SECURITY FORCES

It must always be a primary aim of security policy that the security forces secure and retain the confidence of the community. Credibility, confidence, impartiality, service to the community, good relations with the public, these are the key elements in every exercise of good and successful policing and security policy. The RUC's statement of Professional Policing Ethics puts it admirably:

The Royal Ulster Constabulary will uphold the law and enforce it to the best of its professional ability, honestly and justly, without favour or affection, malice or ill will, without regard to status, sex, religion or political beliefs or aspirations while understanding and recognising the sensitivities involved.

It must be the constant and unremitting endeavour of the RUC and of all elements of the security forces to translate these estimable ideals into actual experience at all times on the ground, on the beat, on patrol, at vehicle checkpoints, at all points of interaction between police and security units and the public.

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To comment on the operations of the security forces is a delicate undertaking. Perceptions of the security forces are often a reflection of a community's political attitudes. For many unionists, any criticism of the security forces is tantamount to support for terrorism. For many nationalists, any favourable comment about the security forces, however qualified, is equivalent to betrayal of nationalist principles and to turning one's back on the nationalist community. Almost any comment about the role of the security forces in the present "troubles" is bound to prove controversial.

ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT

Discussion of the role of the Ulster Defence Regiment is particularly sensitive. I am well aware that comment on the UDR is peculiarly liable to be seen as divisive. A churchman must reflect seriously on his responsibilities before saying anything which might be seen as contributing to further polarisation in an already sharply divided community.

The Ulster Defence Regiment has to operate in very difficult and dangerous conditions. It has suffered heavy casualties. Its members are exposed to the risk of violent death even when off duty and even when going peacefully about their civilian chores or in places of recreation or at home with their wives watching television or playing with their children.

Nevertheless, truth and honesty and a deep desire for peace and for community reconciliation compel me to say that I believe that the deployment of the UDR in nationalist areas like Galbally is unwise and should be reviewed. The members of this Regiment are drawn almost exclusively from the unionist and loyalist community. As a result, their encounter in a security role with a nationalist community is seen and cannot but be seen as pitting one community against the other. For peaceful and peace-loving nationalist

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civilians, and particularly for young people, going about their daily work and play or even going to their places of worship. It is humiliating, it is vexatious, it is provocative, to be repeatedly and often several times a day stopped, interrogated, searched, delayed, kept late for appointments, sometimes verbally or even physically abused, by part-time soldiers, sometimes known to them personally and coming for the most part from some loyalist village or area, usually not too many miles away.

The behaviour of units of the regular British Army in many of these areas also too frequently gives cause for great resentment, especially among young men and women. The proper primacy of the police and of the civil arm in many cases is by no means evident.

I have discussed this whole matter with many responsible and impartial people, clergy and laity, who know these areas intimately, and who desperately want an end to violence and who tirelessly and fearlessly work for peace in the community. It is their unanimous view that people's experience with the military forces in such districts is significant part of the problem, rather than contributing to the solution. It produces results which are the opposite of those intended by a proper security policy. It is more a help than a deterrent to the IRA. My anxious concern for an end to the violence of the IRA constrain me to plead that security policy in these respects be urgently reviewed.

HEARTS AND MINDS

I have to plead further that security policy in general should pay more attention to community feelings and sensitivities and should give priority to the need to win hearts and minds rather than to purely military considerations. Overcoming paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland is a completely different problem from that of military operations in the Gulf. Comparisons between the two are totally unhelpful.

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Security policies and practices which make it more difficult for peace-loving parents to keep their growing children away from the influence of paramilitary propaganda and recruitment must surely be acknowledged as counter-productive.

THE IRA CAMPAIGN

Truth and honesty equally oblige me to point out that were it not for the violent activities of the IRA there would be no military patrols on our roads or streets, no military or police roadblocks or vehicle checkpoints, no interrogation of civilians, no house searches. I plead with the leadership of the IRA and with those who have influence over them: let them call off their campaign of violence and pursue their republican aims by the only means whereby they can ever be advanced, through the peaceful political process.

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