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Conversation with British Ambassador

At my request the British Ambassador came to the Department yesterday afternoon. I raised a number of issues with him.

UDR

I drew the article in the Sunday Times by Patrick Bishop (copy attached) on the UDR as an issue in Anglo-Irish negotiations to his attention. I said we would see this as being unhelpful. He said that speaking personally it seemed to him to confirm in the first instance a British leak followed by a rehash of recent speculation. (Note: In later conversation he made what I thought was a helpful suggestion that Ambassador Dorr should invite Clive Whitmore Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence to lunch at the Embassy on his own: Goodison is convinced that the blockage on the UDR issue lies in the MOD and will have a bigger say than the GOC Northern Ireland).

British Policy on Sinn Fein

I also drew to his attention articles in the Observer and the Guardian containing speculation about a possible British move either to require Sinn Fein candidates/members formally to reject violence or to exclude elected Sinn Fein members of local councils from regional boards. I said that we probably would have a view on this and that on the whole I guessed that we would not be enthusiastic about such a move at this stage. The Ambassador took note of what I said and said he would communicate our interest to London.

Constable Robinson affair

I reminded the Ambassador of his meetings with the Taoiseach on this matter in April 1984 and the undertakings then given in an

unclassified Note from his Embassy in relation both to incursions by members of the RUC on duty and the investigation of the issues arising in the trial of Constable Robinson. I said that Robinson had said in evidence that the object of the "cover up" had been to conceal:

the existence of a "special unit" which used intensive fire power and was trained, as Deputy Commissioner McAtamney said, "to take out the target permanently";

and the fact of the incursion into our jurisdiction by two members of the RUC.

I drew the attention of the Ambassador to Ryder's story in the Sunday Times and the investigation of the police involvement in the Robinson affair by Manchester police. I said it would be necessary for our Government to be able to say that we were fully informed on the progress of the investigation and its results and moreover that we believe it is necessary, following the investigation, for clear consequential action to be taken in relation to those involved.

The Ambassador said that, as he read the Ryder story, it would seem that this would become a matter for the DPP. I said I shared that impression but that there also seemed to be important disciplinary implications. He agreed.

RUC incursion of 30 April

I gave the Ambassador a general account of our information on this alleged extremely serious incursion (copy of Garda report attached). I said that if the information we now had was true the actions of the RUC were completely unacceptable and in direct conflict with the guarantee the Ambassador had given to the Taoiseach on 5 April. I said that if the matter should prove to be true it would be necessary that the people concerned should be disciplined appropriately. As a separate

Point I said that the incident was one in which the lives of men involved had been put at hazard in a foolish and irresponsible way; had these men been attacked or killed our two Governments would be confronted with an appalling situation which could seriously damage our main current enterprise. I asked for his help in ensuring that existing policy was reinforced very strongly to all members of the RUC.

By way of reply, the Ambassador said that his Minister's policy was contained in the note handed to the Taoiseach of 5 April 1984. That policy had not been modified. There was no question of the RUC being involved in an operational way in the jurisdiction of the Republic. On a personal basis he said he shared our concern about this incident and he undertook to take it up urgently with his authorities.

Security of certain northern visitors

I said that the Garda Siochana had through the Department of Justice brought to our attention a number of instances where they were concerned about the security of certain personalities e.g. a member of the UDR, Mr. Alan Brook (son of Lord Brookeborough) and Mr. John Graham who is a member of the RUC. I suggested that in all such cases it would be wise that they should alert the Garda Siochana about their plans (Note: The particular cases which are of concern to the Garda Siochana seemed to involve private fishing expeditions to the Drowes River in North Leitrim). The Ambassador undertook to pass this on.



M.J. Lillis
13 August 1985

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