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Confidential

May 1st 1970

Secretary
Department of External Affairs

I made a courtesy call this morning on Sir Alec Douglas-Horne. His original intention was to receive me at 10.30 at his London apartment but his secretary telephoned yesterday evening to say that it may be necessary at the last minute to change the venue to the House of Commons as Sir Alec may be speaking on the Cambodian situation around 11 o'clock or shortly after. As it happened, no call came to the Embassy from Sir Alec's secretary but this was due to the fact that the lines here were completely jammed with Press inquiries about today's Daily Mirror report. In the circumstances, I decided to proceed on time to Sir Alec's apartment only to find that he had already left for the House of Commons. By the time I reached his office there I was a little late for my appointment which meant that our conversation had to be shorter than either of us wanted.

He received me in a most friendly manner and started off by saying that he sincerely hoped there was no substance in the report relating to me which he understood appeared in one of this morning's papers. I told him of the incident at the Embassy on Wednesday and said that since then we have been taking the necessary precautions and have been receiving the fullest possible co-operation from Scotland Yard.

From this we moved to a general discussion of the North of Ireland situation. Sir Alec said that the arrival in Stormont of Paisley and Beattie creates, in his view, quite a new situation in the area. He described Paisley as "a most sinister man" and said that his presence in Stormont can only lead to further trouble. When I remarked that the situation there is probably now a good deal more menacing than at any time since August last, he told me that this is strongly his own personal view and that he is quite convinced that the extreme elements will be out on the streets again in the near future. He thought that London may have no alternative to "adopting a more far reaching approach" in the near future to the management of the Northern situation because the success of Paisley and Beattie, in his view, is bound to encourage quite a swing to the Right at constituency level and this may have to be reflected in the attitude of the Government at Stormont.

He said he wished me to know that the Conservative Party is very strongly behind the Government here in the action which the Government has taken in relation to the North. Above all, the Conservatives would like to see the maximum progress made in the implementation of reforms but he would not exclude the possibility of some slowing down in this because of pressure from Rightist elements in the Stormont Government. Any slackening in the pace of reform would be disastrous as it would be the surest means of bringing "reactionary elements" on to the streets again.

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We touched briefly on the question of the build-up of arms in private hands. He said his information is that this has become a very serious problem, particularly over the past six months, and he had, in fact, been wondering of late whether the Army and the Police Authorities in the North had been doing enough to check the arms situation and to ensure the handing over of weapons in private hands. His Party had reason to believe that arms were getting into the North from a central European source both to the IRA and to the UVF. This was an interesting comment from Sir Alec in that it corresponded with information given to us here yesterday by a certain journalist who has been our informant on a somewhat related matter.

Sir Alec also made an oblique reference to the necessity to ensure that the Army in the North "has its heart in the job". He said he had heard disturbing rumours to the effect that morale in certain parts of the Army there is quite low and that discipline may be not as easily enforceable now in the Army as it was ^{some} months ago. If this were the case, it would be very sad indeed insofar as the overall situation is concerned.

At this point, he changed very abruptly to the Common Market and I am sending a separate note on his remarks in that regard.

BONAL O'SULLIVAN

Ambassador