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MR BURNS

IRA, A BACKGROUND STUDY

It is generally accepted that the tradition of Republican violence is deeply based in Irish history and conditioned by a number of special factors such as kinship, economics, topography, religion, political education etc. These are believed to explain the hydra-like ability of the IRA to recruit new members to replace its losses, and to survive from generation to generation. It is accepted that there is no way of defeating the IRA militarily or in the short-term, and it is sometimes said that it can not even be eliminated in the long-term because of its deep roots in Irish soil. Against this, other traditions of violence no less deep-rooted have been eliminated elsewhere, eg in the Balkans, in the Arabian peninsula, and to some extent nearer home in the Republic of Ireland.

2. It appears however that there has been no attempt at a scientific analysis of these various factors, some of which would no doubt be susceptible to change by Government action (for example, some of our work on tackling unemployment and alienation from the forces of law and order is based on the assumption that these are factors which contribute to political violence). I have discussed this with a number of people both inside and outside Government (among others, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, Dr Harbison, Mr Steele and Mr Knight) and all those I have spoken to are inclined to agree that such a study would be worth undertaking. How could it be done?

3. One method would be to assemble available information on a number of present or past members of the IRA, and having established some working hypothesis about common factors to go on to test them in depth against all the available information. The main sources of such information would be:

- (a) Published material on the IRA and on the history of the Republic.
- (b) Academic work being done in Ireland and elsewhere, and in principle available in the public domain.
- (c) Data available to PPRU.
- (d) RUC files.
- (e) Prisons Department files (possibly to be supplemented by interviews with prisoners).
- (f) Other information available [REDACTED].

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4. The nature of these sources suggest that a study could best be done by someone inside the Government system who would enjoy the confidence of the RUC and the intelligence community, and who would also have credibility in academic circles. He should also have enough knowledge of the Government to be able to orient his findings towards possible action. Since a serious study would take at least a number of months, this suggests a Civil Servant on detachment or sabbatical. It might be possible by carrying out a pilot study to determine whether a full study would be likely to be worthwhile.

5. Sir Kenneth Bloomfield suggested that you might think that a first step would be to discuss this proposal at PDG.

signed

R O MILES
13 June 1988