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Title: Report by John Swift, Department of Foreign Affairs, of a meeting with Mr Blatherwick of the Embassy of Great Britain to Ireland, regarding incursions by British Army forces, including members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, into the Republic of Ireland, and some other political matters.

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Memo

Mr. Blatherwick of the British Embassy called to the Department at my request on the afternoon of Friday 2nd February. I handed over twelve notes, as per the attached packet. I referred to the further incursion at Cloghore (subject of my previous conversations with him of the 12th January; I also mentioned that there had been a number of incursions in the Clones area over the period of the 20th/21st November.

I drew Mr. Blatherwick's attention in a special way to the incidents involving U.D.R. men at Uragh Cross and R.U.C. members at Clonnagore. I mentioned that our authorities were seriously perturbed about both of these incidents; neither incident could have been anything other than deliberate and since a reasonable amount of hard information was being provided, I mentioned that we anticipated a detailed reply. In response, Mr. Blatherwick mentioned as he had done before that it was more difficult to check on the facts of a particular incident if a long delay had occurred, due to the reporting of personnel, etc.. He enquired whether our authorities checked in detail all stories before they were made the subject of notes. I also handed over our reply to the allegations contained in the British Embassy note of the 12th January. Mr. Blatherwick accepted this without any detailed comment.

I took the opportunity of Mr. Blatherwick's presence to ask some general questions regarding Mr. Whitelaw's statement in the House of Commons last Thursday, as well as the forthcoming border plebiscite. On the question of Mr. Whitelaw's attitude to the U.D.A. he was not able to give much new information or insight. He did say that in the British view, the U.D.A. as an organisation was not directly concerned with killings and that, in effect, it was a controlling and restraining influence. He also pointed out that it was very difficult for the security authority in the North to face up to the loyalist extremists when, on the other side, there was an armed force which aimed at maximising deaths of security officials, and which sought as much publicity as possible for their efforts. On the border poll, he confirmed that it was Prime Minister Heath rather than Mr. Whitelaw who was its principal supporter; in the longer term, he pointed out that a means which was being used now to record unionist intransigence could eventually be the accepted means of recording changes of opinion in our favour.

Incidentally, Mr. Blatherwick mentioned that the British security authorities were quite convinced that the death of Ernest Elliott in early December was the work of Protestant extremists. They were also very worried about the emergence of the Red Hand group. It appeared to be more "activist" than other groups and was probably based on John McKeague's Shankill Defence Association.

John Swift

5 February 1973

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