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Mr. Kilginn

Corrected version

7 June 1979

To HQ

From CGNY

For Walsh and Swift

From Smyth

Following is text of article in today's OP.ED page of the Daily News written by Michael Allison, M.O.P., Minister of State for Northern Ireland.

It is headed "The Guns of Ulster, a reply to Jimmy Breslin and the 'British connection'":

"I have read with a sense of shock and incredulity the Jimmy Breslin article of last Thursday, "Our Northern Ireland gun policy and British connection". Mr. Breslin's theme - that by supplying arms to the legally constituted police force of the Province, U.S. arms manufacturers are assisting Protestant terrorist gangs - is contrary to all fact.

Terrorists from whatever side are pursued by the Northern Ireland Police Force with vigor and patient persistence - witness the successful prosecution and conviction this year of the 1975-77 Protestant Loyalist gang known as the "Shankill Butchers". Each of its 11 members received a full life sentence. Of the 7,500 terrorist weapons recovered since 1969, almost 40 per cent were seized, by the Police and other security forces, from Protestant paramilitaries - which hardly accords with Mr. Breslin's suggestion that the Police were secretly arming the Protestant terrorists. Of the more than 2,800 terrorists who have been caught, charged, brought to court and convicted in the past seven years, 1,100 have been so-called Loyalists.

Equally wrong is the implication that children are likely to be casualties as a result of the sale of U.S. weapons to the Police. Over the past two and a half years, 33 Policemen have been killed in Northern Ireland by terrorists. Of 37 deaths this year, all have been by terrorist action.

Let me quote from Dublin's Irish Times of February 14, 1978. Discussing IRA terrorism, it said: "having limbered up in December with bombing attacks which destroyed a number of hotels scattered throughout the North, (the Provisionals) stepped up their incendiary attacks in Belfast and elsewhere ... in all there were 71 explosions in January ... at the same time ... 17 policemen and 27 British soldiers and Ulster Defence Regiment members were wounded, in addition to 27 civilians ... Provisionals were responsible for most of this year's deaths. They killed January's single victim ... this month they killed 69-year-old Mrs. Martha McAlpine as they shot at an RUC Constable on duty outside a football ground in north Belfast. The Provisionals next killed UDR Sgt. Jack Eaglesham in Co. Tyrone on February 7th. The next day, at Maghera, in Co. Derry, a Provisional booby-trap killed another UDR man in his car. It also killed his 10-year-old daughter and badly hurt his 7-year-old son".

Presumably the terrorists would regard injuries to these children in the same light as the death of a 17-month-old baby girl hit by an IRA bullet.

Provisional Sinn Fein leader Rory O'Brady shrugged that incident aside as "one of the hazards of urban guerrilla warfare".

As a legally constituted civilian police force charged with the duty of protecting all the people of Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary must have modern weapons both to protect the public and to defend their own officers. This is increasingly important as the police in Northern Ireland are gradually taking over from the British Army the task of defending the Province against terrorism. Contrary to Mr. Breslin's assertion, there was never any pretence that the sturm, ruger handguns were on order for anyone else, this was an order by and on behalf of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the British Home Office was not involved.

Since the start of the terrorist campaign, the RUC and reserve have had 126 of their members murdered by the IRA and have sustained 3,500 casualties. The weapons in the possession of the IRA - an illegal terrorist organisation proscribed in the Republic of Ireland as in the North - are considerably more lethal than the .357 magnum - which it may be categorically stated here will not be loaded with dum-dums. Among the IRA's weapons are Soviet-designed RPG-7 rocket launchers, the Garand armour-piercing rifle high velocity self-loading armalites and M60 machineguns.