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Mr. Seán O hUiginn
 Assistant Secretary
 Anglo-Irish Division
 Department of Foreign Affairs

PSS ✓
 Mr Nally ✓
 Mr Brennan ✓
 Mr Small ✓
 Counsellor AI ✓
 PCH
 21/4

Dear Assistant Secretary,

Dinner with the Chief Constable

The Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Annesley, came to dinner last evening. At his own suggestion, one of his Assistant Chief Constables, Ken Masterson, who is now in charge of the RUC Inspectorate and Management Support Division, accompanied him. Annesley was in a relaxed and communicative mood and we were able to obtain his views and make points to him on quite a number of matters although not everything on our agenda.

Ministerial appointments

You will not be surprised to hear that Annesley showed every sign of satisfaction with the return of the Conservative Government and the appointment of Sir Patrick Mayhew and Mr Michael Mates. When we said to him a little provokingly that the new security Minister, Mr Mates, would be an army man, he responded instantly "that's alright, he will balance the Secretary of State!"

Police Authority

We were struck by Annesley's preoccupation with management matters. Almost immediately on his arrival, he spoke in critical terms of the Police Authority, a subject to which he returned more than once. In previous conversation here, he has made it clear that he takes a dim view of police authorities, not least the one in Northern Ireland. Picking up comments reported in the press yesterday by Sergeant O'Brien of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors, he urged us on no account to set one up in the South. Nonetheless, he could not resist making the semi-humorous observation that, perhaps, in the South a buffer between the police and government was more genuinely needed than in the North. Mr Dalton challenged the proposition very effectively. (Comment: Annesley certainly believes there is political interference in the affairs of the Garda Síochána and gave much stronger expression to the view in previous private conversation here than he did on this occasion.)

Annesley thought that once established, it would be natural to a police authority to expand; and its empire could only grow at the expense of government or police or both. In his view there is no function of a police authority that could not or should not be operated by government although he accepted the point that, whatever the merits, such bodies tend to be established where there is a public perception that they are needed.

We had the impression that the RUC gives high priority to matching the Police Authority's ability to scrutinise management systems and prosaic things such as the proper standard of dress and equipment for policemen, the right specifications for buildings and so on. In other words, where the Police Authority employs accountants, architects and other professionals, the police will do likewise, all at the expense of the taxpayer and at the cost of diverting the attention of senior officers from operational tasks.

Intelligence

Annesley was naturally reticent on this delicate matter (as it happens, at about the time he left us the UDA killed a former member, Ned McCreery, on the grounds that he was an informer). He made it clear - wistfully - that the palmy days when Andy Tyrie was in charge of the UDA and the organisation leaked like a colander to the RUC were gone, and it would take considerable time, in fact years, to build up the same informer network that existed. He stuck to his publicly expressed view, with which we have taken issue here for a number of reasons, that loyalist violence is "reactive" but he did say a bit defensively that he had never said it was wholly reactive, it was "largely reactive".

He described his intelligence on Sinn Féin/IRA as "excellent" but "static". (Comment: We had not quite expected this observation. Normally the Chief Constable and other security people here express concern about the quality and quantity of intelligence on Sinn Féin/IRA). He adverted to the view he has expressed publicly that the security forces interdict four out of five terrorist operations. This is not a claim that has won universal praise: granted the level of IRA terrorism that actually occurs, the notion that it could be four times greater predicates an organisation of much greater capacity than the public imagines or wants to imagine. Nonetheless, Annesley has stuck to his view and he added the dramatic thought last evening that were it not for the success of the security forces the IRA would have "driven Northern Ireland into the ground".

In light of the INLA claim to have killed an army sergeant in Derby this week, we asked about their strength and that of the IPLO. Annesley minimised the threat posed by either organisation at present.

Northern Election Results

British Army Generals told us last week (see Mr. Dalton's letter of 9 April) that they hoped Sinn Féin would retain the West Belfast seat on the grounds that they should have a political voice. Annesley took a more nuanced view. He made it clear that he regarded Adams and McGuinness as main players in both the political and armed wings of Sinn Féin/IRA. He added the names of Gillen, Arthurs and McAuley to their company but not Danny Morrison whom he judged in a minor league ("can be bought") and not a force in the prisons.

He believed Adams had suffered a major loss of prestige and potential loss of influence following his failure in the elections and thought Adams' reaction would be to say to the IRA: "well now you can do what you want, but see where it will get you". There would be a short term reaction from the IRA on foot of the election results. Annesley believed, however, that it could be contained, as was their assault on Belfast at the end of last year; and that further questioning about the military operations would inevitably set in. Like the British Army, he saw a further disadvantage in the weakening of Adams on the grounds that he would be less able to pull the organisation towards a purely political path and less plausible as an eventual interlocutor in talks. However, he believed that in the longer term, the result in West Belfast and the diminution of the Sinn Féin vote from 13-14% down to 10% in Northern Ireland as a whole was extremely important and beneficial.

Warming to this thesis, the Chief Constable said the movement had been jolted and there might be a split, in fact "the more splits the better". He imagined himself in the position of Sinn Féin leaders looking at a Dublin Government and Parliament very hostile to them, a level of political support in the South reduced to insignificance, a close relationship between the two Governments and, in particular, between the Taoiseach and the re-elected Mr Major which was capable of undertaking new initiatives against them, and a community in the North which was heartily sick of violence and giving them less and less support. Recalling days in the London Met tackling the Kray Brothers, he said there was a critical point when people believed the malefactors were not invulnerable and began to desert them, no longer providing safe areas or safe houses and all the other ancillary things that amount to a system of moral tolerance or support. Annesley saw this process under way in the North although he was careful not to claim any expectation of immediate results.

Harassment/Complaints

Annesley is highly sceptical of the capacity of any outside organisation to investigate the misdeeds of policemen. His philosophy is "set a policeman to catch a policeman" and he

stressed the increasing success as he saw it of the informal resolution procedure in the complaints process. (Comment: In our presentations to the British side, we have stressed that in the majority of non-criminal complaints of harassment, what the complainant wants is an early apology and not a lengthy bureaucratic procedure which can rarely find in their favour.) He believed that the Independent Police Complaints Commission was prone, perhaps in frustration, to bring charges where it did not have adequate evidence and he had found in his experience as chairman of appeal tribunals that the ICPC case was rarely (if ever) borne out. In substitution, he stressed the importance of internal management and discipline.

In a side conversation, it was informally acknowledged to Mr. Dalton that the police had been giving public attention to Danny Cassidy who was murdered recently by loyalists after he had been made an ostentatious target by the Mobile Divisional Support Unit of the RUC.

Security Cooperation

Annesley was full of praise for Commissioner Culligan but in response to our question about how he assessed his experience in the Conference, he referred to the restricted security sessions as disappointing and "nitpicking" on our side. What he seemed to have in mind here was that the Conference had not produced, in his view, the initiatives in cross-border security cooperation that had been hoped for on the British side and that we were unduly zealous in trammelling the Northern forces and taking them to task, but he made a number of important qualifications. In the first of these, he believed that the relationship between Mr. Major and Mr. Reynolds could produce results of which the relationship between their predecessors would not have been capable. Secondly, he expressed himself very satisfied with the cooperation he has with the Garda Siochana and especially with the Commissioner. He acknowledged quite frankly that there was a "clique" within the RUC which was cynical about our cooperation and which would sometimes make its views known to the media - although nothing like on the scale that was prevalent seven or eight years ago. To these people and also to political critics in the DUP and UUP, he could say "look at the arms finds, look at the support we are getting on the border - 450 security personnel deployed on the Southern side for Op Loren - and tell me that security cooperation is no good" (note: Operation Loren involves the refurbishment and/or relocation of permanent checkpoints near the border). He had also found the last restricted session very encouraging and he highlighted remarks by our Ministers to the effect that attacks could take place from either side of the border (he seemed to think that we would have been defensive on this point in previous times). He also believed that the excellent relations between himself and the Commissioner were recognised by the rank and file of police on both sides and had an important influence on them. Both he and Masterson accepted the point that the frequent reference to security cooperation

in the Conference Communiques had also had a beneficial impact on police and wider public opinion North and South.

Parades

We stressed the importance of continued attention to the problem of loyalist parades and to the further curtailment of the more objectionable routes and practices. Hitherto, we have not found him very sympathetic to our point of view but not so this evening. He made the point that the great majority of parades do not cause a problem, that it is a basic right of people to march and demonstrate, that there are Catholic publicans and other business men who want the police to let the Orangemen into their areas and that it is a delicate matter for the police to say that conditions amount to a possible or likely threat to the peace and to ban parades altogether or specific aspects of them. He observed that it could happen that a police ban would draw 5,000 instead of 500 marchers and present the police with an impossible task. He also noted the point that these days the courts were more prepared to grant judicial review and that police had to be careful about the grounds on which they banned or curtailed public demonstrations.

However, he was committed to the policy of curbing parades and he had devoted considerable time to an analysis of the parade through Pomeroy last year (about which there was considerable controversy) and very recently to the proposed Apprentice Boys parade in Belfast on Easter Monday (this parade is also a concern to the Department). He said he had seized on the point that the parade was to go down the now mainly Catholic Lower Ormeau Road and pass by the bookie's shop which was the scene of a mass killing by loyalists recently; and he had given instructions that the parade is to be prevented from going down that route. We let him know that we would be putting views on particular parades to the British side of the Secretariat shortly.

RUC progress?

At one point, we asked our police guests where they thought the RUC had made progress in recent years and what ground they felt they had to make up vis-a-vis the Nationalist community. Surprisingly, the question left both Annesley and Masterson struggling to give a response. The response they did give spoke of management support systems, information technology, community relations, liaison groups, extra resources for the police and such matters. It simply did not immediately occur to them to think in wider terms about their image in the Nationalist community. We stressed that that should be an ever-present litmus test for the RUC's policies and operations. Annesley did say, of course, that he wanted recruits and support from the Nationalist side and that the "SDLP and other opinion-formers should get off the fence and support the only police force they have got".

In response to some prompting, Annesley and Masterson (who was until recently in charge of the South Division of the RUC) argued that they had improved their ordinary policing in Nationalist areas, particularly Belfast, and they instanced cases where police had received very strong support from both communities for their investigations into serious but ordinary crime. We made it clear that we are still getting the view from Nationalist clergy and politicians that the RUC response to ordinary requests for assistance is poor. Annesley tended to think of the issue in UK rather than local terms. While he and Masterson (more obviously) regretted the fact that it was no longer possible to have a Sergeant in, say, Cullyhanna, they did believe that compared to other Government services, the police offered a constant availability and an ability to deliver that was unmatched.

Video taping

The Chief Constable's response to the argument for video taping interrogations is well established but we brought the matter up with him again, pointing to recent progress in thinking favourable to the idea. I put it to him, slightly tongue-in-cheek, that a retired Hugh Annesley might find it profitable to give his services, say, to the Sony Corporation, which would be keen to sell its ever-improving video equipment to police forces all over the world. I suggested that the innovation would come inevitably and that even at present the police would find it advantageous to have a record of a suspect's answers and demeanour in preparing cases for prosecution. For the first time that I have seen, Annesley was defensive and it was interesting that Masterson who otherwise presented a "yes boss" (literally) attitude all evening, was inclined to see merit in our view.

Masterson

You will be aware from Mr. Nason's letter of 28 November 1991 and subsequent contacts that it is the intention to create another post of Deputy Chief Constable in charge of operations as part of the re-organisation of the RUC. It has been clear to me from private conversation with Annesley that he regards Masterson as the best candidate for a Deputy post and, perhaps, the right person to succeed him in time. The appointment is not in his gift, however, but rather in the gift of the Police Authority which may take a different view. Masterson struck us as almost excessively supportive of his Chief - in this respect we found the Army Generals far less coordinated when they visited here last week. He is a Northerner but he has experience in Britain and has been to the requisite staff college courses. He is a barrister. He knows the management as well as the police/legal jargon and may well impress interview boards.

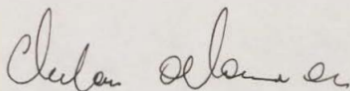
As somebody whom Annesley is grooming, we found him a bit disappointing although in private conversation he had some interesting remarks to make about his recent experience in the

South Division of the RUC. One of my colleagues remarked that when the time comes to lift his skirts, Masterson may prove a more formidable proposition, but for the moment his skirts are demure.

The Department (Mr Kelleher) has learnt that relations between Annesley and several of his senior officers are stormy which is all the more reason for Masterson to stay close by his boss. Annesley is clearly determined to reorganise and shake up the management of the RUC before he leaves it although what the full effect will be remains to be seen. He made the point with feeling and a shade of defiance that he would complete this task at "whatever the cost to himself".

It may not be relevant to the last observation, but he smiled at our suggestion that the Commissionership of the London Met might beckon and averred that this was very unlikely although he remarked jokingly that he would not mind the exercise of our influence on his behalf.

Yours sincerely,



Declan O'Donovan
Joint Secretary