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ROM/578/88/SH

20 November 1988

IRA BACKGROUND STUDY

Thank you for your letter of 9 November following our discussion the previous Friday.

Having had time to reflect and make one or two tentative and discreet inquiries, I would state that I am willing to assist in a pilot study of this subject provided that help was available and that there was the keenest appreciation of the sensitive nature of my official position as well as of the dangerous nature of the task involved.

A preliminary observation concerns the sources on which to draw.

I am of the view that contacts outside Government could be unsafe, unreliable and untrustworthy and therefore would be generally inclined to discount them. Contacts inside Government, where informed, are likely to be guarded. However, information that could be relevant is held in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and I have it on the authority of the Director that he would make this material available to me without reservation. Of course it would need to be analysed but at least being in the possession of such data might assist in giving a basis for a general survey.

I have not attempted to probe the position elsewhere in Government, nor have I thought it worthwhile at this stage to produce any published material on what appears to make the IRA attractive to recruits. In this context I wonder if Professor Paul Wilkinson of the University of Aberdeen has ever designated anyone to answer questions similar to yours.

Having given you this brief response, perhaps you might like to consider exploring the matter further with me. If so, please ring so that we might arrange a meeting to contemplate the next step.

J A D KENNEDY

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ROM/578/88/SH

9 November 1988

Dear Mr Kennedy,

IRA BACKGROUND STUDY

When we spoke last week I promised to write to you about this project, to give you a chance to consider whether you felt able to undertake it.

What is suggested is that someone should carry out a study to address the following questions:

- (1) What are the main factors which influence people to join the IRA?
- (2) How effective are Government's policies in minimising these factors?
- (3) What additional information should be collected and how far can existing information held by Government and the security forces be utilised in any further study?
- (4) What are the lessons for existing Government policies and what aspects require further examination?

It is recognised that this is a difficult task, and it would be perfectly acceptable to think in terms of a pilot study in the first instance, with the possibility of the same researcher carrying out a further study or alternative arrangements to be made.

Those who have considered this idea in the Government service are keen that any work done should be directed towards policy, and not towards an academic study which would only gather dust.

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It would be for the researcher to decide how to tackle the job. We thought that, apart from published material and any academic work which may already be in hand, a practical approach would be on the lines used by Brian Blackwell in a recent paper on Confidence in the Security Forces, that is simply to begin by talking to those he thought might be useful and could point towards sources of information. Prison files seem likely to present less problems than files of other Government agencies hedged about with legal or security restrictions.

*Yours sincerely
Rover Miles*

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