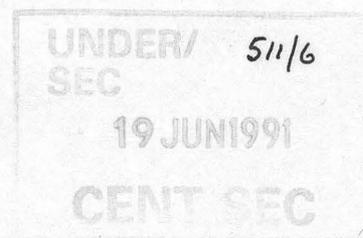


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DUCB/418/18.58

FROM: J K LEDLIE
18 June 1991

cc PS/PUS (B&L)
Mr Fell
Mr Hamilton
Mr McNeill
Mr Bell
Mr Lindsay

19/6

PS/PAYMASTER GENERAL (B&L)
PS/MINISTER OF STATE (B&L)

FUNERAL OF TONY DORIS, COALISLAND

I think your Ministers will be interested to see the attached copy of a letter addressed to the Chief Constable (but copied also to me - and the DFA in Dublin) from the Parish Priest at Coalisland regarding his disquiet at the RUC's handling of Tony Doris' funeral in Coalisland a week or two ago.

2. Ministers will see that the letter argues, in a very calm and moderate fashion, that the "take-over" of Coalisland by the RUC for the Doris funeral has damaged the slowly increasing support for the RUC in the community and has promoted sympathy (if not worse) for the IRA. There is, of course, another side to all this (which Ministers will recall we discussed briefly with the Secretary of State after the funeral); but Canon McEntegart's letter is well-argued and presents an interesting point of view, in a SECRASP context, of someone who believes that, on this occasion, the RUC got the balance wrong.

3. I am, of course, at your Ministers' disposal if they would like to have a word about what, if any, follow-up action they feel we might take.

Signed JKL

J K LEDLIE

Ext 3286

ID 27442

CONFIDENTIAL

Telephone:
(08687) 40221

Parochial House,
31 Brackaville Road,
Coalisland,
Co. Tyrone,
BT71 4NH.

11th June, 1991.

Mr. Hugh Annesley
RUC Headquarters
Brooklyn,
Rock Road,
BELFAST.

Mr. John Ledlie,
Northern Ireland Office,
Parliament Buildings,
Stormont.

Dear Sir,

Dear Sir,

I enclose a copy of a letter which I today sent to the Chief Constable, Mr. Hugh Annesley.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Canon L. McEntegart
REV. CANON L. McENTEGART,
PARISH PRIEST, COALISLAND.

Encs.

I was therefore deeply disturbed to learn on Wednesday evening at about 7.15 p.m. before the body of Tony Doris was released from the mortuary, that six RUC Land-rovers filed into Coalisland, seven took up their position in the narrow cul-de-sac in which the Doris home is situated, and six took up their position behind the house in another narrow street.

Phone: Coalisland 40221

Parochial House,

Coalisland,

Co. Tyrone.

11th June, 1991.

Mr. Hugh Annesley, Chief Constable,
RUC Headquarters,
Brooklyn,
Knock Road,
BELFAST.

Dear Sir,

I am writing as Parish Priest of Coalisland to express my disquiet at the effects on my people of the RUC/Security Forces operations in connection with the funeral of Tony Doris who died on Monday, 3rd June.

I myself was disturbed and many of my people were distressed at the operations. I must stress that the perceptions of many peace loving people, who gave no support to the IRA, and who gave at least passive support to the RUC, have been changed for the worse by the strategies adopted.

Firstly may I say that I am not blaming the local RUC Commanders namely: Mr. Elliott of Cookstown and Mr. Busby of Dungannon. On Monday afternoon, June 3rd, I had a consultation with Chief Superintendent Busby and Chief Inspector Kerr. I was accompanied by Councillor Jim Canning and Father Denis Faul of Dungannon. We were discussing the behaviour of the soldiers who are protecting the building work in Coalisland but we spent some time discussing the funeral. We thought that the best policy would be a low profile presence as we were confident that neither the Doris family nor the local Sinn Fein representative wanted any "take-over" actions by the IRA or Sinn Fein.

I would like to stress particularly that the attitude of the Doris family has always been disapproving of the IRA and of their son's alleged involvement which brought him to a tragic and controversial death in Coagh on Monday, June 3rd.

I feel it is important to mention this meeting as it represented a consensus of local persons in very close touch with the currents of opinion in the Coalisland area, and these people were also very concerned about the possible long term effects of a heavy Police/Military presence.

I was therefore deeply disturbed to learn on Wednesday evening at about 7.15 p.m. before the body of Tony Doris was released from the mortuary, that thirteen RUC land-rovers filed into Coalisland, seven took up their position in the narrow cul-de-sac in which the Doris home is situated, and six took up their position behind the house in another narrow street.

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Mr. Hugh Annesley.

11th June, 1991

On Thursday, June 6th, Father Faul and Mr. Jim Canning, acting with my consent and approval, attended another meeting in Dungannon RUC station where they were granted an interview with Assistant Chief Constable Cushley. They discussed at considerable length the bad effects which the heavy police presence was having on the population and their fears concerning the funeral. Father Faul and Mr. Canning gave their considered opinion that local people were being alienated. They learned that the commands for the heavy presence had come from police headquarters in Belfast, thereby over-ruling the local police commanders.

I must record also that Father Faul and Mr. Canning had to record a complaint of assault by RUC on behalf of Martin Doris, (brother of Tony Doris), at the home of Michael Ryan. I mention this because Martin Doris is a parishioner of mine and the record of his assault had a bad effect on the people of Coalisland.

The reports generally of the police "take-over" at Meenagh Park meant that a much larger number of persons turned up at the funeral than would have been the case. Many people have said that they would not have been there at all if it had not been for the intimidating presence of the RUC on the family. I stress and repeat the word "family", because a peace loving family who had no sympathies with the IRA, and whose son had been recruited against their wishes by the IRA, was subjected to additional stress during five days of agony. This thought of the family being oppressed brought out the people in very large numbers.

In the event it can be said that were no shots and no masked men seen in Coalisland. The perception of the people of Coalisland who are 95% Catholic people, and deeply opposed to the IRA, was that a possibility of a para-military take-over had been prevented by a take-over by para-military police.

I am worried that the long term effects of the police "take-over" of the town for three days will damage the slowly increasing support for the RUC in the community, and will promote a certain degree of sympathy, if not worse, with the Provisionals. I would urge you, therefore, to reflect calmly on the strategies involved, and ask yourselves if the operation could not have been carried out in another way relying more deeply on the opinions of the informed local people.

We are both agreed on the need to support peace and respect for the rights of all persons in the community. We are obliged to consider sincerely and carefully if the objectives of peace and mutual respect are fulfilled by "take-overs" of any kind which restrict the rights of the local people, which disturb the daily peaceful progress in

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Mr. Hugh Annesley.

11th June, 1991.

their own town, and which heighten feelings and cause suspense and foreboding to grow among them. I know you will agree that an operation of this kind is necessarily a balancing act, but I am putting it to you for your consideration that the RUC got the balance wrong last Monday - Friday.

I am very worried that both the short term and long term effects of the operational strategy will prove this judgement to be correct.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Canon L. McEntegart,
Parish Priest, Coalisland.

Copies to: B. McMahon,
Dept. of Foreign Affairs,
Stephen Green,
Dublin.

John Ledlie,
Northern Ireland Office,
Parliament Buildings,
Stormont.