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HEAD OF DIVISION
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FROM: CHRISTINE COLLINS
SPOB
5 April 1991

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
- PS/Paymaster General (L) - B
- PS/Minister of State (B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B
- Mr Ledlie - B
- Mr Wilson - B
- Mr Alston - B
- Mr Cooke - B
- Mr McNeill - B
- Mr Dodds - B
- Mr McClelland - B

1. Mr Bell (The draft attempts to make (very gently) the point that we all - including the Bishop - have a responsibility to bridge, not widen gaps between the police and the wider community. - signed 9/4/91)
2. PS/Paymaster General (B)

BISHOP EDWARD DALY : HOUSE SEARCHES IN COUNTY TYRONE AND CLOSURE OF BORDER CHECKPOINTS

Bishop Edward Daly complained on 15 February, publicly and bitterly, about the level of searches of houses of members of the Roman Catholic community, in the Castlederg area in recent months. He also wrote to the Secretary of State, the Chief Constable, the Divisional Commander in Londonderry, and the Taoiseach, making the same complaints of unjustifiable searches of homes and expressing no confidence - either on his own part or those of his people - in the police complaints procedures. He also complained of the nuisance and disruption caused by the closure of PVCP's - in particular, the protracted closure of the road at Coshquin, following the 'human bomb' attack on 24 October, and of the closure of Strabane/Lifford crossing at night. These concerns are operational matters, in which the police themselves have taken the lead. The ICPC took the view that the 'complaints' detailed by the Bishop arose from operational policy rather than from misconduct by police officers, and accordingly were not a matter for it.

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2. The police on the ground responded rapidly to his concerns, with the Divisional Commander arranging a meeting with the Bishop and some of his clergy on 25 February - the first date when the Bishop was available. At this meeting, the Bishop reiterated that very respectable Roman Catholic people had suffered the highly intrusive experience of having their homes searched and that this was counter productive and unacceptable. The police explained that they could not simply sit back and let the campaign of terrorism, which has seen some 20 people murdered in the Castlederg area over the past 20 years, continue without attempting to find those responsible.

3. They explained that, if they had the required "reasonable suspicion" that arms or explosives were concealed in a particular house, they could not neglect to search it, simply because the house holder was well respected locally - especially as such people are known to be forced to keep arms by terrorists. However, the police also explained their acute difficulties in obtaining any information from the community - both Protestant and Catholic - about terrorist or unusual activity in this particular area, and that this did considerably hamper their investigations and make their activities perhaps less well targetted than they would wish.

4. The position over the Coshquin PVCP (where work was still in progress, although it has now been re-opened to traffic) and the Strabane/Lifford PVCP was also discussed, and the Bishop seemed well satisfied with the meeting, which ended amicably.

5. The Bishop is in a difficult position as he tries to represent, and articulate the full range of opinion - some of it highly emotional - of his flock. That opinion includes the forthright denunciation of PIRA delivered at the funeral of Mr Patsy Gillespie, the civilian forced to drive the bomb to Coshquin. It also includes a level of distrust of the RUC and of lack of support for counter terrorist measures, particularly those seen as intrusive, apparently ineffectual and 'one sided', such is expressed in this episode. Such episodes also reinforce the feelings among unionists that there is ambivalence about PIRA terrorism among the nationalist community, even from its most respected leaders.

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6. Although the specific cases - and the operational policy producing them - are matters in which the police must, and indeed have, taken the lead, nevertheless the underlying issues are those of confidence and participation in, and support for, the basic institutions of a civilized society. It is appropriate to take the opportunity, in replying to the Bishop, not only to place some emphasis on the police role, and on the fact that in this instance his concerns were met with a rapid and genuine response - but also to range rather more widely over these 'confidence' issues. It is important to show that the Government is concerned about such issues; and also to make the point that 'confidence' is a two way process which requires effort from both sides if progress is to be made towards healing divisions and removing distrust.

7. A draft on these lines is attached for your consideration, which also deals with the factual position on the PVCs at Coshquin and Strabane.

(signed)

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DRAFT LETTER

FILE NUMBER 19/2/4

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE

<u>To</u>	<u>Enclosures</u>	<u>Copies to be sent to</u>
Bishop Edward Daly Bishop's House St Eugene's Cathedral LONDONDERRY BT48 9AP		

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY PAYMASTER GENERAL

Thank you very much for your letter of 15 February, addressed to the Secretary of State. I apologise for the delay in writing to reply.

As you know, the responsibility for security operations rests with the Chief Constable, and I understand that you have already met the Divisional Commander to discuss your concerns, and that the Chief Constable has also written to you. I do most sincerely hope that these contacts with the police have helped to reassure you, and will help to prevent or resolve any problems in future.

However you have also raised a number of very important, general issues about the need for confidence in the police from the whole community. It seems to me that terrorists fully intend to try and

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keep the community divided, and to foster distrust, suspicion and despair; and that owing to their horrific methods, they are often only too successful. Our task is to do everything we can to frustrate them.

In such an atmosphere, the all important relationship of mutual trust and respect between the police and community they serve can so easily be undermined, particularly in small, isolated and deeply divided communities, such as Castlederg. It is especially unfortunate that the activities which the police have to undertake in order to try to bring to justice those responsible for atrocious crimes, or to prevent the commission of others, can, in themselves, create further feelings of alienation and resentment even among the most respectable and law abiding of people. Sensitive, even-handed but nevertheless effective, policing is, and will remain of paramount importance. But so too, is the full engagement of the entire community in the rejection of terrorism, and the task of bringing all those responsible for it to justice. In bringing these conditions about we all of us (and I include the RUC themselves) have our roles to play, and you will know that the Government are fully committed to that process.

Turning to your comments about the lengthy closure of the Bunrana Road (which I was glad to see re-opened on 11 March), it is indeed to be regretted that it did take so long, not only to repair the very considerable damage done to the road by the explosion, but to re-build the checkpoint in a form more convenient for traffic, and to secure it to a sufficient standard to ensure that the

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consequences of the 24 October bomb would not be repeated. As you will recall, in the run up to Christmas, an alternative crossing was temporarily re-opened to assist the Londonderry and Donegal communities. I fear, however, that the extra effort this required from the security forces, and the risks to which it exposed them, could not be sustained until the main road could be reopened.

You also mentioned the Strabane/Lifford checkpoint, where the security forces operate, as at many other checkpoints, a barrier system at night. This system, here as elsewhere, simply prevents suspect vehicles or possible proxy bombs being driven right into its centre, with possibly devastating results. While the barriers themselves may, on occasions, be across the road, all traffic wishing to get through the checkpoint, and approaching the barriers will, I am assured, get through. I believe that local emergency services are well briefed on the position, though I do appreciate that to a stranger, or indeed an ordinary traveller unused to the procedure, the checkpoint may well appear to be formidably closed. But I hope, once again, that considerable improvements will be possible when the new road scheme, which I understand is currently under construction, is completed.

Finally, can I say how much I appreciate your writing with these concerns, raising as they do such important issues for us all. I very much look forward to meeting you in the not too distant future.

Yours sincerely

LORD BELSTEAD

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