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John Coles Esq
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Prime Minister

*My 3rd ...
... to ...*

10 June 1982

*MW
11/11
MF*

Dear Tom,

SECURITY OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND BORDER

I understand that Lord Brookeborough may have expressed to Mr Ian Gow the same concern as he has recently expressed to my Secretary of State about withdrawal of Garda personnel along the border, and we thought you might therefore find it useful to have our assessment of the position.

You will not be surprised to know that we have been watching very carefully for any signs that Mr Haughey is carrying his current unhelpfulness to this extent. There were reports in the media some two weeks ago about withdrawal of Garda personnel from the border to Dublin. There have undoubtedly been some changes of personnel at low level, and the result may have been an overall but small reduction in the numbers available at particular places, not only in the border area. It is, however, well acknowledged that Dublin presently has an appalling crime rate and the coincidence of these reports with the closing stages of the recent by-election may not have been accidental. The moves were criticised by Irish politicians in border areas, worried about the policing of their constituencies. The removal of Garda officers, if only a few of them, who were familiar with the area is certainly regrettable from our point of view and could have an observable effect in a particularly small area. But the RUC are firm that this is having no significant effect, ^{overall} on security co-operation between the two police forces. Day to day contact between officers on the ground, as well as at more senior level, is well established and continues to operate very satisfactorily. We are well placed to identify any withdrawal of co-operation very quickly, and there is no evidence of it.

There are some indications that the aggregate effect of these moves was intended to be a small shift of resources to Dublin, but that in practice supervising officers have removed some "dead-wood". We believe that the changes have affected the uniform branch and not the Special Branch element which is of crucial importance.

In present circumstances we are not complacent about what Mr Haughey might do. We think it possible that the recent flurry of publicity about moves which are apparently no more than routine may have been deliberately occasioned by the Irish Government as a warning to us not to take security co-operation for granted. If

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so, it is unprincipled; but it is also a warning that we should let current Irish unhelpfulness speak for itself, and avoid comment going beyond the line taken hitherto about the present state of relations, and security cooperation in particular, unless there is some material change in the level of cooperation that really matters, between the RUC and the Garda.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Francis Richards (FCO).

Yours sincerely

Stephen Boys Smith

PP

STEPHEN BOYS SMITH

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25 JUN 1952

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