



NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

28 January 1990

West Belfast Shootings

MINISTER OF STATE'S LETTER TO BISHOP CAHAL DALY

The Minister of State, Rt Hon John Cope MP, has written to Dr Cahal Daly, Bishop of Down and Connor, responding to the statement issued by the Bishop on 17 January.

The full text of John Cope's letter is as follows:-

"As the Secretary of State is away overseas for a few days I thought I should write to you in response to your statement, published on 17 January, following the shooting in Belfast on 13 January.

"My colleagues and I are giving careful thought to what you have said including the relationship between what you call 'the military aspect' of security and community confidence in the role and conduct of the security forces. We are equally concerned with the social, economic, environmental and human factors which affect the community and we are always looking for improvements in all of these fields.

"You ask about Government policy and the job of the police and the Army. The job of the police is to seek out suspected terrorists and bring them to justice before the courts. The job of the Army is to help the police to do this. Neither the police nor the Army set out to find suspected terrorists and kill them. That might seem to some to be the easy way, but it would not be right, it is not the proper way to enforce the law and rather than bring peace it would intensify violence.

"But sadly policemen and soldiers in Northern Ireland have to do their duty knowing that they are facing evil, ruthless men and women who will kill and maim anyone without compassion and who take special satisfaction in killing policemen and soldiers. As you will know, in the last two years terrorists have killed 64 members of the security forces and 98 other people and therefore policemen and soldiers have to be prepared to protect

the public and themselves with lethal weapons at any moment.

"Over the last two years, however, about 900 suspected terrorists have been arrested and charged with offences by the security forces and nine have been shot.

"With specific regard to the events on 13 January, I enclose the Hansard text of the full exchange in Parliament on 15 January and also reports of Mr Brooke's remarks in Antrim in immediate response to questions about your statements. It is for the police to inquire into these events. I have every confidence that they will carry out their investigations effectively and fairly. When the police complete their work, it will be for the Director of Public Prosecutions, acting independently, to decide whether there are matters which should be brought before the courts. Until that process is complete, it seems to me that it helps no-one to speculate further on what happened and why."