

Similarly, it is not formally laid down that where an applicant to join the UDR is found to be a member of the UDA, his application must automatically be rejected. But the screening process for UDR applicants has recently been tightened up so that due weight is given to extreme Protestant sympathies and although each application is considered on its merits a person who was known to be a member of the UDA would be most unlikely to be admitted.

Commander UDR has recently written to Battalion Commanders instructing them on the line to take with members of the force who are found to be involved in the UDA. I attach a copy. Officers are expected to resign if they take an active part in UDA activities, and other ranks are to be warned that such behaviour is inconsistent with their position in the force. If a soldier's involvement in the UDA constitutes a military offence, the UDR takes a hard line and dismisses the man under Regulation 0490 Serial 7. Such circumstances are:

- a. where a soldier has failed to meet an UDR commitment because he was taking part in UDA activities.
- b. where a soldier wears UDR uniform while taking part in UDA activities.
- c. where a man carries an Army Department firearm while taking part in UDA activities.
- d. Connivance with the UDA in providing military information or in the theft of Army weapons, or encouraging other soldiers to commit such acts.

I am sure that this moderate line towards UDA supporters is the right one in view of the role of the UDA as a safety valve. In my opinion it would be politically unwise to dismiss a member of the UDA from the UDR unless he had committed a military offence; the dismissal of a member of the UDR on lesser grounds could well lead to wide-spread morale problems particularly in certain areas.

I recognise the reasons why Ministers might wish to be able to say unequivocally, in reply to Parliamentary Questions, that membership of the UDA is not compatible with membership of the UDR and that we have no evidence that any UDR member is actively associated with the UDA. But I fear it would be wrong to offer categorical assurances on either point, and indeed it might be very damaging politically if Ministers were to make a public statement which implied that the UDA was an outlawed organisation. I suggest that the line to take is that the UDR is a non-sectarian force and that its members represent a wide range of political viewpoints; but that if a member's conduct, arising out of his membership of the UDA or any other organisation, constitutes a military offence or calls his future loyalties in question, action is taken. Any reported involvement of UDR members in extremist activities is a matter of concern to the military authorities and we would be grateful for details of cases so that they may be investigated.

*Yours ever,*

*John*