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PRIME MINISTERNorthern Ireland: Security

(C(79)34)

BACKGROUND

1. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Defence Secretary are meeting at about 8.00 p.m. this evening to finalise this joint paper. An advance copy will then be sent to No. 10. The paper will be circulated to-morrow, but only in the Cabinet Room, from which colleagues have been asked not to remove it.
2. This brief is based on the paper which officials expect to emerge from the Secretaries' of State meeting, which I shall attend. If important new points emerge there, I will provide a supplementary brief later to-night.
3. The paper is likely to set out the two Secretaries' of State agreed views
 - (a) that our firm policy should be to eliminate terrorism and restore normal policing;
 - (b) that to support the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland there should be established at Stormont a new Security Directorate bringing together the NIO, the Army and the RUC to monitor and plan operations on a continuous basis;
 - (c) that in the light of world reactions to last week-end's murders a new attempt should be made to enlist the Irish Government's greater co-operation over border operations and intelligence in particular;
 - (d) that if colleagues agree an early statement should be made by yourself covering (a) and (b) and the fact that Mr Lynch is being invited to London for early talks on deepening co-operation.



4. The paper is unlikely to resolve - and may therefore gloss over - one major difference between Mr Pym, who wants the Security Directorate headed by a person of some public standing, and Mr Atkins who does not. In Mr Pym's view, someone of stature is needed to ensure that the appointment makes a public impact and that the incumbent is able to knock NIO, RUC and Army heads together; his officials have mentioned names such as Sir Anthony Duff, Sir John Killick or (after his impending retirement) Sir Neil Cameron. Mr Atkins would prefer a routine NIO appointment. He does not want anyone who might undercut his own authority as Northern Ireland supremo; and his officials believe he would consider resigning on the issue.

5. This row is the latest manifestation of the MOD (and particularly Army) view that security operations are not being properly co-ordinated, which you will remember from the OD discussion on 10 July (OD(79)4th meeting). But the protagonists have moved some way towards each other since then: Mr Atkins in agreeing to a Security Directorate and Mr Pym in abandoning the idea of a Resident Minister.

HANDLING

6. This will be the first time that Cabinet have considered Northern Ireland. After inviting the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Defence Secretary to introduce their joint paper, you may wish to ask the Foreign Secretary (or Lord Privy Seal) to comment on the references to the Republic. He is not expected to quarrel with them, beyond underlining the fact that the Dublin Government is short on resources and long on political inhibitions.

7. Some general discussion may then be appropriate. ~~But~~ There would be little advantage in allowing the point which still divides the two Secretaries of State to surface for discussion. But there may be comments on other issues which bear on the security problem: e.g. the Pope's non-visit, the antics of Governor Carey and the problem over the RUC's American weapons. There may also be views on how we might bring pressure to bear on the Republic; but you will not want any decisions in advance of your proposed meeting with Mr. Lynch.



CONCLUSION

8. You will wish to secure colleagues' agreement to the general lines of your proposed statement.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Wade-Gery'.

R L WADE-GERY

29 August 1979