

CONFIDENTIAL

Copied to Ireland (Lynch Visit)
Are you content for the N. Ireland
Security to proceed as in the final sentence -
at least until your meeting on Thursday?
Prime Minister No - see
separate note
- 31/8 ant.

①



PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND: SECURITY DIRECTORATE

? I have reflected on the discussion you had with Peter Carrington, Francis Pym and myself on Thursday afternoon about the arrangements for heading up the Security Directorate which is to be set up under my command in the Northern Ireland Office in Belfast. I would like to put some further considerations to you and suggest a new solution.

? I was convinced by the general view of Cabinet yesterday that there is no significant public relations value in announcing the new Directorate: Francis Pym and I are agreed on the need for it to meet an existing inadequacy but the Government can hardly expect public acclaim for doing something as sensible as that. In my view the first priority is to set it up quickly and make it work effectively, as I am sure it will, under the direction of the Security Policy Group which I lead (the Chief Constable, the GOC, the Permanent Under-Secretary, and the Director and Co-ordinator of Intelligence).

? I do not believe that the case against dramatising this step is in any way altered by appointing a distinguished figure to head up the Directorate under my command. The more prominence given to this appointment (which could, incidentally, make the man himself a prominent terrorist target forthwith) the more questions will be asked about his powers and his relationship to the GOC and the Chief Constable, and the answers are bound to diminish, not enhance his standing. Francis Pym and I are agreed that we are not instituting a Director of Security Operations with authority to command and control the security operations in the Province, military, police and civil. That would be wrong in principle, contrary to our policy and, indeed it could only be brought about by recalling Parliament to pass legislation to strip the police of their independent status and make them subordinate to me as Secretary of State. As it is, the Directorate as proposed will need very careful presentation to the RUC, who will greatly resent it if it appears that they - as an independent and Ulster force - are in any way to be taken over. The maintenance of their morale and status is fundamental to the effectiveness of our security policy. As I have emphasised to you, it is only by holding fast to this policy and extending normal policing throughout the Province that we shall get the Army out of Northern Ireland.

The leader of the Directorate and his team will be subordinate to, under the direction of, and accountable to the Security Policy Group which I lead; and it is the essence of their task (as was made clear in paragraph 5 of the Annexe to our Cabinet Paper) that their work should result in a more effective use of security forces while operating through existing command structures. It is I hope clear from this why

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in our joint paper Francis Pym and I suggested that the leader of the team should be of a senior rank in the public service but not out-ranking the heads of the existing commands over whom he will have no authority.

This leads me to conclude that it is the quality of the man, not his eminence in another field, which we should be concentrating on - and I would certainly question the wisdom of putting someone into this as a post-retirement occupation.

Nevertheless, I recognise the concern you expressed on Thursday that the leader of this team should be a person of standing whose appointment would add to public confidence in Northern Ireland and in GB. I have to say that in my judgment an officer seconded from or retiring from the Diplomatic Service would signally fail to meet this requirement: a Foreign Office figure could and almost certainly would be spitefully attacked by Unionists as yet another indication of the GB mentality which treats Northern Ireland as a colony. If you conclude that a public figure is necessary then I would suggest that we should look in the direction of a distinguished policeman with experience in the deployment of large forces and in dealing with threats to security both by way of urban violence and terrorism. Such a person would be better qualified in my view to get the best out of the Security Directorate than someone new to this game. Some obvious names come to mind, including of course Sir Robert Mark. I suspect that, unfortunately, his appointment would not go down well in the Protestant community in the Province because of his membership of the Hunt Committee of 1969 which recommended the disbanding of the "B Specials" and the disarming of the RUC. I propose to consult further with Willie Whitelaw and Francis Pym to see whether someone of nearly equal standing, but perhaps younger, might be identified who could be seconded to my staff to head the Directorate.

I am copying this letter to the Home Secretary, the Foreign & Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Defence and Sir John Hunt.

Delivering

See memo - note.

Cabinet has decided

on behalf of Mr Atkins in Belfast

① that he set up a committee or jurisdiction to coordinate & combine the activities of the Army the Police.

② that the decision be not announced until the chief of the combined operations is ready

③ that he is responsible for 121 for N.I. P.S.A.

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The only question to be decided is who is to be the head of Combined Operations.

We cannot go back on Cabinet decisions.

2 names have been proposed

S & J for NI; asked for time to put up other names. We want those other names.

names.

There is no question of the appointed person being under the "command" of S & J.

Alexander was under Churchill's "command".

One was the military head the other the political head. The security chief is responsible to the political chief. He is not under his "command".



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

I find this memo somewhat confusing.

Cabinet has decided

1. that we set up a small organisation to co-ordinate and combine in the most effective way the activities of the Police and Army in the Province
2. that as a lot will depend on the personality of the man who heads this Combined Operation, the decision be not announced until he is found.
3. that he be responsible to (not under the "command of") the S. of S.

We cannot go back on these decisions.

After Cabinet and in furtherance of their decision two names were proposed one wholly military, and the other "diplomatic" with a lot of his service on the defence side. S. of S. for W. I. asked for him to bring forward further names. That is the only thing for which we are waiting.

I did not think a wholly military person was right and for the same reason I do not think a

Wholly police person would be right. But I
am prepared to consider any further names.

~~But~~ I am convinced we need a
strong personality. A weak one would not
do the job and his failure would be
disastrous not only to the J.I.I. but to those the
Security Forces are there to protect. From my
discussion on Wednesday it is clear that a lot
needs to be done and we cannot delay much longer.

M.S.