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Ireland. 7

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Appointment of Security Coordinator
in Northern Ireland

The following is a summary record of the events leading up to the appointment of Sir Maurice Oldfield as Security Coordinator in Northern Ireland.

Thursday 30 August

Cabinet decided in a discussion on Northern Ireland generally that a new Security Directorate should be set up in Northern Ireland in order to improve cooperation between the various elements of the security forces. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was to find someone suitable to head the Directorate.

Tuesday 18 September

The Defence Secretary came to see the Prime Minister to complain of the lack of progress in finding a Security Coordinator. The Prime Minister agreed to see him, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as soon as possible to try and settle upon a name. She said that she thought that Sir John Killick was the best candidate. Another possibility was the appointment of an additional Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office who would be responsible for security.

Later that day Mr. Atkins indicated that he would be ready to accept a Minister of State to provide greater coordination of the security effort.

Wednesday 19 September

The Prime Minister saw the Home Secretary and discussed the names of various serving and retired officials who might be suitable for the new post. The possibility of appointing a new Minister of State was also discussed, but it was recognised that there were difficulties about this solution. First, because the quota of Minister of State appointments was completely taken up, a new appointment would have to be created by transferring an existing post from elsewhere. Second, a sixth Ministerial post at the NIO would give the Department too many Ministers. Finally, there was no obvious candidate.

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Later that day Sir John Hunt chaired a meeting with Sir Michael Palliser, Sir Frank Cooper, Sir Brian Cubbon and me in preparation for the Ministerial meeting the following day.

Thursday 20 September

The Prime Minister met Lord Carrington, Mr. Pym and Mr. Atkins at 0900. They agreed that there was no suitable Minister of State readily available for the appointment and that the best candidate amongst the various officials who had been mentioned, including Sir Oliver Wright, Sir Donald Maitland, and Mr. Donald (HM Ambassador Kinshasa), was Sir John Killick.

The Prime Minister saw Sir John Killick at 1700 and offered him the appointment of Security Coordinator.

Friday 21 September

Sir John Killick 'phoned me to say that, after a great deal of reflection, he had decided not to accept the job. He was writing to give his reasons in detail.

The Prime Minister met the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary later that evening to discuss other candidates, and the name that emerged was that of Sir Arthur Hockaday. It was left that I would discuss this possibility further with Sir Frank Cooper and let the Prime Minister have a view before she had lunch the following day with Mr. Whitelaw and Lord Carrington.

I duly spoke to Sir Frank Cooper who said that he would like to consult the CGS.

Saturday 22 September

In a series of telephone conversations between Sir Frank Cooper, Sir John Hunt, Sir Brian Cubbon, Sir Michael Palliser and me the name of Sir Maurice Oldfield emerged as the leading runner with Sir Arthur Hockaday as a fall-back candidate. I subsequently passed this on to the Prime Minister who telephoned me later to say that she had agreed with Mr. Whitelaw and Lord Carrington that Sir Maurice Oldfield would be a good candidate.

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Monday 24 September

The Prime Minister saw Mr. Pym and Mr. Atkins at 0930 and obtained their agreement that the post should be offered to Sir Maurice Oldfield.

Tuesday 25 September

The Prime Minister saw Sir Maurice Oldfield at 1730 and offered him the appointment. He asked for 36 hours to think about it.

Wednesday 26 September

Sir John Hunt held a meeting with Permanent Secretaries, the heads of the Security Service and the SIS and me to discuss with Sir Maurice Oldfield various aspects of the job.

Thursday 27 September

Sir Maurice Oldfield telephoned me at 1200 to say that he was ready to accept the post.

The Prime Minister, accompanied by Mr. Atkins and Mr. Stowe, saw Sir Maurice Oldfield at 1645. She thanked him for taking on the job, and most of the subsequent discussion dealt with the announcement of his appointment. It was decided that the best day would be Wednesday 3 October. By then the Pope's visit would be over and the foreign journalists accompanying him would have left Ireland. In addition, an announcement then could be coupled with the announcement of the name of the new Chief Constable in Northern Ireland.

Immediately following the Prime Minister's meeting, Sir John Hunt held a meeting of Permanent Secretaries together with Sir Maurice Oldfield to discuss further the terms of the announcement and the approaches to be made to the American and Irish governments to let them know what was being done. It was agreed that the NIO should submit a draft announcement and guidance to the Prime Minister before the weekend.

Friday 28 September

The NIO explained that the drafts would be delayed because the FCO, with the agreement of the other Departments concerned, wished to consult HM Ambassador in Dublin who was to be in London the following Monday.

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Monday 1 October

The Prime Minister approved the draft press announcement and the accompanying attributable guidance and defensive brief.

Tuesday 2 October

The news of Sir Maurice Oldfield's appointment began to leak in the course of the day and, with the agreement of the Prime Minister, the announcement was brought forward from Wednesday, 3 October and made at 1700.

JWS.

9 October 1979**SECRET**