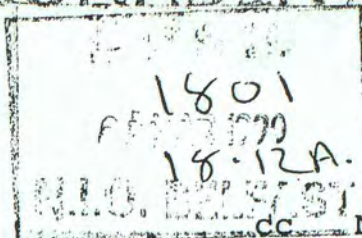


From PUS
2 March 1990

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L/3/5/DMC

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Sir K Bloomfield

NI Permanent Secretaries

Mr Burns

Mr Ledlie

Mr Spence

DUS(B) dist

Mr. Wilson

Mr. Steele

Mr. Bell

Mr. Mclelland

Miss Miller

Jan 73



DEFEATING TERRORISM

I am most grateful for the responses from Permanent Secretaries to my minute of 23 January to you inviting comments on the Defeating Terrorism papers. All those responding had clearly understood that the NI Departments can contribute to security policy by reinforcing and complementing the work of the Police and Army. This alone would have justified our 'Defeating Terrorism' exercise. The logical next step is to see how the work of Government as a whole can be further mobilised in support of our strategic goal. We agreed, therefore, to discuss both papers at the meeting of the NI Permanent Secretaries planned for 8 March. To assist that discussion, I offer a few comments as well as some themes for next week's discussion.

Some Comments

2. Most responses usefully elaborated for specific areas the broad themes set out in the original papers. They need no gloss from me. I was, however, struck by some of Mr Fell's wider observations. It is, indeed, depressing that there seems no early prospect of an end to violence. My only response, which he recognises, is that after some 20 years of the present troubles, there are no short cuts, and that we will only win in the end if we continue on our present course as long as it takes, giving the opposition no grounds whatsoever to believe that, under any political dispensation in the United Kingdom, they can hope to achieve their fundamental political goals by violence. Happily, there are growing signs of self-doubt within the Provisional movement. All the more reason, therefore, to keep up unremitting pressure on all fronts.

3. Mr Fell also felt a tension between the fundamental argument of the second paper that successful economic and social policies would strike at PIRA/Sinn Fein's motivation and the argument in the first paper (and elsewhere) that, with its cellular structure and readiness to resort to intimidation, PIRA is less dependent on support from the general community than it was a year ago. Any contradiction is, as I hope our discussion will bring out, more apparent than real: economic and social policies will not in themselves 'break' PIRA. Hence remorseless attrition, under the

law, of terrorist organisations is, and will continue to be of the highest importance. What our economic and social policies can do, apart from their intrinsic desirability, is prevent those who espouse violence ever consolidating the political base they need for their wider political goals. They will be ever more firmly marginalised, continually ground down by the security forces, and, in the end, conclude that the 'armed struggle' has simply ceased to be worth the costs. That is why it is so important, as the Secretary of State and Ministers have also come to recognise, not just that the work of civil government reinforces the work of the police and Army - but that the reverse is equally true.

4. Last, I accept Mr Spence's contention that eradicating terrorism requires more than effective security policies (in the restricted sense of police and Army operations) and fair and good government, and that we must also address the underlying causes of, and motivation for republican violence. Not all of these are directly susceptible to Government action, certainly in the short run. But I certainly hope that we shall see more of the kind of approaches he advocates, which cut across traditional departmental boundaries.

Questions for Discussion

6. The number of potential themes is large, affecting all Departments intimately. However, I suspect that, given the time constraints above all, a more austere approach would be the more fruitful. My own suggestion, therefore, would be to split up the discussion into four parts, as follows:

- i. Exploring the Problem. I envisage a short presentation by Liaison Staff based on the first DT paper followed by a discussion of the fundamental character of the problems posed by terrorism in Northern Ireland, Loyalist as well as Republican. The aim would be to pool the collective wisdom of those present, and to invite, either on the spot or, within a fairly tight deadline, in writing, any modifications whether to the analysis in the first paper or to the policy consequentials set out in the second;
- ii. Priority areas of work. In theory, we could discuss all the issues in the attached checklist. But we might do better to start by focussing on those areas, geographical or functional, where there seems the greatest scope for mutually reinforcing action on the part of the security forces and the civil departments. This suggests we concentrate on:
 - a. areas of special need: West Belfast; Londonderry; rural Northern Ireland - where an interdepartmental

approach is already accepted as essential, but where we might usefully explore how work already in hand can be geared most effectively into the fight against terrorism;

- b. cutting paramilitary finance: the need for energetic and concerted action in attacking fraud and various forms of racketeering is well recognised so that extended discussion should be unnecessary. But its importance means we should not overlook the possibility of further action;
- c. unemployment: given the high correlation between high unemployment and paramilitary recruitment and support, we should examine how sufficient weight can be given in targetting job creation measures in ways that will most hurt the paramilitaries.
- iii. Machinery of Government. If we conclude that more work is required in these areas (or others) we have to satisfy ourselves whether changes are needed to ensure that the mechanisms exist to target and co-ordinate effectively our efforts against terrorism between not just the Northern Ireland departments, but between them and the NIO, and between civil government as a whole and the police and Armed Forces. (We might, at this point, address the specific question of what we believe the police and Army could do to reinforce the objectives of the NI Departments themselves.)
- iv. Future Work Programme. In the light of our answers to (ii) and (iii), what action, in terms both of policy and of machinery, are necessary to ensure that the whole of government is effectively mobilised against terrorism?

The Next Steps

7. My hope is that, after our 8 March discussion, we can amend the original papers in the light of all comments received. I will then put a final version to the Secretary of State for discussion with the Chief Constable and the GOC. The aim would be not only to secure a statement of security policy to which the NIO, the RUC and the Army were all signed up, but also to demonstrate to the latter that the whole of Government in Northern Ireland understands our security policy, and that all the various branches of civil government are mobilised in its support. Just as important, however, would be to register with the security forces that their operations impact on the activities of the NI Departments; and that they also have a duty to reinforce civil government as well as vice versa.

8. The end product would, therefore, be:
 - a. a coherent set of documents which we could draw on to explain and justify our strategy for defeating terrorism more widely in Whitehall, but also, possibly, outside Government whether in Northern Ireland or more widely; and,
 - b. a programme of further work designed to give better effect to our security strategy (including, if necessary, machinery for its execution) and which would reinforce and cross-fertilise that being carried on for the moment separately in seeking to create and maintain confidence in the Army and police ;
9. I look forward greatly to our discussions next week.

signed

JOHN BLELLOCH

2 March 1990

The Next Stage

7. My hope is that, after our 2 March discussion, we can agree the original papers in the light of all comments received. I will then put a final version to the Secretary of State for discussion with the Chief Executive and the GOC. The aim would be to agree to secure a statement of principles setting out the way in which the Army will be supported by the Government in Northern Ireland underpinning our security policy, and that all the various branches of civil government are involved in its support. Such a statement, however, would be in keeping with the security forces that their operations should be the activities of the Government, and that they also have a duty to support civil government as well as vice versa.

ANNEX

CHECKLIST OF POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Assuming broad agreement to the basic analysis and strategy set out in the DT papers, what modifications seem necessary to either:
 - (a) the analysis in paper 1; or
 - (b) the policy in paper 2?
2. How could NI Departments more effectively contribute to the goal of defeating terrorism in such key functional areas as:
 - (a) education/cultural matters;
 - (b) reducing unemployment;
 - (c) provision of better housing;
 - (d) the better delivery of local services generally?
3. How could NI Departments more effectively contribute to defeating terrorism in key geographical areas such as:
 - (a) West Belfast;
 - (b) Londonderry;
 - (c) Rural areas of particular difficulty such as East and West Tyrone; South Armagh; South East Fermanagh?
4. What further action can individual departments take to make life harder for terrorists and their supporters eg in combatting social security fraud; racketeering in housing and construction; smuggling?

5. Can Government make more effective use in defeating terrorism of:

- (a) district councils and other local government type agencies;
- (b) constitutional political parties;
- (c) the churches?

6. Are public expenditure priorities formulated with sufficient regard to policies likely to reinforce efforts against terrorism?

7. Is the machinery of government such as to bring security policy considerations most effectively to bear on the formulation of socio-economic policies? If not, what improvements are necessary within departments; between NI departments; between NI departments and the NIO; between civil government as a whole and the security forces?

8. How, and in what areas - functional or geographical - can the police and Army:

- (a) better reinforce the work of civil government;
- (b) best be educated/briefed on the policy objectives and operations of NI Departments so as the better to assist the latter?

9. What further work needs to be done, in the light of the answers to questions 2-8 above, in terms of:

- (a) government policy or activity; or
- (b) new machinery,

in order to mobilise Government as a whole in support of the strategic goal of defeating terrorism?