

TO: Brigadier M D Jackson MBE STAFF-IN-CONFIDENCE



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COMD/2

Mr J K Ledlie
Deputy Under Secretary
Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle
Belfast

7 June 1990

Dear John,

Here at last are my thoughts on the defeat of terrorism in general, and on the part to be played by community relations (I can't think of a better term!) in particular. It seems to me that a successful campaign to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland (or indeed, anywhere) - not merely to manage or contain it - must comprise several dimensions: a sufficient and well-directed security policy which achieves the right balance of, and interaction between, overt and covert operations; an economic policy designed to improve the general standard of prosperity, and particularly that of the deprived areas; a social policy aimed at equal opportunities and the removal of sectarianism; the encouragement and support of a political régime which offers hope to all the community and which devolves as much responsibility as possible on to that community; and a legal framework which achieves a judicious balance between democratic freedoms and the ability to inflict damage on the terrorists. It is hardly necessary to add that the whole requires single-mindedness of purpose with close direction and coordination of effort.

In all this the aim must be to isolate the terrorist from those on whose behalf he purports to wage the "armed struggle". We must achieve a situation in which the terrorist is devoid of support, is spurned by his co-religionists, and cannot see any future other than failure, death or imprisonment. To achieve this, it is essential to change the perceptions - in the old-fashioned phrase, the "hearts and minds" - of those who may overtly or tacitly support terrorism. This requires, in turn, a deliberate and carefully designed information offensive to win the bloodless but vital battle for the mind. The enemy understands this well enough and displays considerable skill in his campaign. For him this is a propaganda battle, for he is not constrained by concerns of truth or credibility; for us, it cannot be propaganda, because we are rightly so constrained. It therefore requires us consciously to promote our point of view, certainly truthfully and factually, but robustly and with great determination. We have to match, and better, the enemy's skill: the high ground, including the moral high ground, is the place to be!

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So much for grand design, except to say there is nothing original here; the principles have all been fashioned by hard-won experience. The trick, of course, is to devise the method of gaining that high ground. Our main target in Belfast is clearly the perceptions of the nationalist community of West Belfast. Two approaches come to mind: a campaign directed at this community as a whole, and one directed at opinion-formers and leaders. Both, but particularly the first, require a public information policy far more robust, timely, responsive and positive than the diffident, unconfident and, frankly, untrusting effort we currently produce. However, as you remarked, that subject requires another lunch...

I think I can now address the exam question you posed: how to direct the second campaign, directed at the leaders - the one which can be based on private information, if I can draw the distinction in that way. Clearly, the key is communication, but who should be the transmitters and receivers, and what should be the means of transmission? Transmitter candidates are obviously the arms of government as represented by the civil power (the NIO), the Police and the Army. Each can, and to some extent does, transmit separately but I suspect individual signals are not as strong as they might be and that a coordinated combination might prove more powerful than the simple sum.

The receivers must be people who can in turn re-transmit our signals and so influence the wider audience. The difficulty here is to identify appropriate receivers - pushing my analogy almost to absurdity, to distinguish legitimate from pirate stations. Sinn Fein councillors et al are obviously non-starters, for many reasons; this, however, poses the problem of by-passing elected representatives. Other areas of leadership come to mind, none of them, I suspect, original: the Roman Catholic Church, business leaders, and the teaching, legal and medical professions; perhaps one might add the SDLP where possible, DHSS social workers and housing associations - I am less certain here.

The method of transmission should be akin to the microwave link - point-to-point - rather than the 360° output of the public broadcasting transmitter. It must be both discrete and discreet, to avoid compromise of the receiver who can then appear to be the primary broadcaster.

Where do we stand against my analogy? I cannot speak for the NIO, but I am aware that the RUC in late 1988 introduced a scheme of Community and Police Liaison Committees. I believe the scheme met with only limited success, not least because it was designed to link in with the local government structure; we go back to the problem of Sinn Fein. The Army, as represented mainly by the Belfast Roulement Battalion, has made a conscious, albeit low-key, effort to open channels of communication with the RC Church and, very tentatively, with the SDLP. Any success is better than none, but I would not wish to exaggerate what has been achieved so far. We should not forget, in addition, the day-to-day contribution made by the Civil Representatives.

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I cannot but agree with you that we could, and should, do better. Some degree of formality is inevitable, I fear, but no committees, agenda, minutes or whatever! A suitable label is difficult; perhaps "Open Forum" is what we need. Mr Cope's lunch for Eddie McGrady on 5 June is perhaps one example of an informal starting point: all 3 arms of government represented at various levels, with the targets being elected representatives. The latter are non-starters where West Belfast is concerned, but something on these lines may provide a catalyst. Whatever the style of meeting(s), membership of it should include some or all of my transmitters and receivers. There is then the question of level: meetings could be organised at different levels, or set up to include more than one level, or the various levels combined.

There is a suggested matrix at Annex A. It has some gaps, and may be too formal and hierarchical in structure, but it might be a starting point. And, as I have already indicated, some aspects of the matrix are already working in a somewhat uncoordinated fashion.

I have probably written at far too great a length, but it has been a useful mind-clearing exercise. I fear I have not found the Holy Grail, but if it exists at all, it is probably as elusive as King Arthur's! I hope that there is something of value here; if not, File 13 is the obvious destination. Peter Bell mentioned to me at lunch yesterday that it would be helpful to have this letter by lunch-time on the 7th - I will fax a copy.

Yours mpe,

Mike

ANNEX A TO
COMD/2
DATED 7 JUNE 1990

A COMMUNITY RELATIONS MATRIX

	<u>BELFAST</u>	<u>WEST BELFAST</u>	<u>LOCAL</u>
NIO	?	?	?
RUC	ACC	Div Comd(s)	Sub-Div Comds
Army*	Bde Comd	Bn Comd	Coy Comds
RC Church	Bishop Daly	Vicars-General	Parish priests
Professionals	?	?	Local headmasters solicitors, doctors
Other	?	SDLP candidate?	Social Workers? Housing associations

* With Civil Representatives at each level

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