

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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## POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

[Go to reports of earlier meetings - passages of functions and organisations of Joint Security Commission]

In these suggestions you have seemed to envisage the Joint Commission as one comprising the two police chiefs, starting to work together, but with the capacity and power to establish a third force or to take other similar major initiatives in the security area.

This raises two questions. One we have already addressed: the undesirability - clear undesirability as it appears to us - of introducing any gradualist element into the security process which would risk making it unacceptable to the minority at the outset as making little visible change, and giving time for the new Joint Commission to become the focus of undermining by extremists of the nationalist side and on the other the danger of this gradualism being seen by the unionists as an open-ended threat to what they perceive as their security.

But quite apart from this problem of gradualism, there is another quest on that has been addressed only very tentatively and sketchily in what you have said to us to date - viz the political authority under which the Joint Commission would work. This Commission, operating at Police Chief level, could not be left to act as a sovereign political authority, making its own decisions independently of political control. You have referred to it operating in some kind of a framework. But that framework would have to be clearly established; the lines of political authority must be clear. Obviously the Joint Commission would not operate to an exclusively British political authority - the Commissioner of our police would not become subordinate within a British political system while continuing to be head of the police of our State at the same time. How then would the Joint Commission operate? To whom would it be politically responsible? Both in

logic and in common sense it must surely be politically responsible to both governments jointly: most probably to the Irish and British Governments, through some joint incarnation of these two governments, though theoretically perhaps at some point to a joint administration within Northern Ireland, if that administration were to be a purely Northern Ireland body without British ministerial participation (or, again rather theoretically) with joint Irish and British ministerial participation in the administration itself).

This brings us back inevitably - there is no way of getting away from the logic of this whether in the security or the more purely political field - to the question of



jointness in that part of the political system that is dealing with matters within Northern Ireland, as distinct from matters reserved to the sovereign power.

There may be more than one way of providing this jointness; some combination of the AIIC and the presence of an Irish and a British Minister in Belfast could provide the answer or by some other *combination* consideration of the three options you mentioned at our last meeting. This needs to be teased out further.

But what seems clear is that quite apart from the obvious impossibility of getting acceptance in the South for a constitutional change in return for a purely consultative role in Northern Ireland - the limited character of which would be bound to become the chief focus of attention during a referendum - there is a more concrete practical reason why a form of joint authority rather than consultation is essential in order to provide the political back-up to the Joint Commission, which, in our view, must from the outset tackle the problem of security alienation.]