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① Mr Bell 11/3/12
② POL 7/14

PAB/2393/RE

cc: PS/S of S (I&B)
PS/PUS (I&B)
Mr Bell ✓
Mr Blelloch
Mr Marshall
Mr Gilliland Mr Buxton
Mr Chesterton
Miss MacGlashan
Mr Davenport

Mr Wyatt

THE THIRD FORCE

1. An increasing number of Protestants, as well as Catholics, are complaining that the Government is not standing up to the Third Force. Everyone knows that laws are being broken. Parallels are being drawn with alleged Government failure to confront the ULWC strike in 1974, and the Secretary of State's declarations that private armies will not be tolerated are being made to look empty. Allegations of sympathy if not complicity between the Third Force and the RUC and UDR are causing especial indignation - again not only among Catholics.

2. There are several dangers in this. First, the Government's credibility among the community has already been weakened over the Anglo Irish talks and security policy against PIRA. The fact that people think the Third Force is "getting away with it" is sapping credibility further. Secondly, the Provisionals' propagandists are being given a useful new theme. Some Catholics are no doubt again beginning to take out insurance with PIRA. It will become more difficult for Catholic leaders to rally support against PIRA. Thirdly, we cannot hope that the population as a whole will reject the Third Force if the authorities are believed to be ambivalent towards it.

3. There are obvious difficulties in taking firm action against the Third Force. The RUC have referred a number of cases to the DPP, and when these cases come to court they may have some effect on public opinion. But I doubt whether the effect will be deep enough, or quick enough. What people want to see is decisive action against a show of force.

D E S BLATHERWICK
Political Affairs Division

7 December 1981

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① Mr Bell 155/12
② POL [signature] 10/12

Mr. Blatherwick

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c.c. PS/Secretary of State(L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
- Mr. W.E. Bell
Mr. Blelloch
Mr. Marshall (L)
Mr. Buxton
Mr. Gilliland
Mr. Chesterton
Miss MacGlashan
Mr. Davenport

THE THIRD FORCE

I am grateful for your minute of 7 December which strikes a timely warning about the damage which could be done to the Government's cause if the feeling that the Third Force is "getting away with it" gets out of hand. We should not lose sight of this.

2. At the same time we need to recognise that Third Force agitation and anti-Third Force agitation are each composed of two elements. There are those in the Protestant community who are upset by the Security Forces inability to prevent IRA acts of terrorism and who desire nothing more than the arrest and conviction of the terrorists. Most of those involved in Third Force activities however wish to see draconian measures applied against the whole Catholic community. There are Catholics (and as you say some Protestants) who are disturbed by the Third Force development and wish for no more than to see it brought to an end. Those who are making most public noise (e.g. Mr Samways in today's Irish News) would like to see conflict between the Security Forces and the Protestants for its own sake.

3. It is not for the Government to satisfy the atavistic urges of one side of the community any more than ^{of} the other side.

4. What we must do is to make up our minds about precisely how we will treat this threat to law and order and stick to it. If we have got the policy right then we must not lose our nerve and change the policy to a worse one because one section of the community here dissents. The right policy for the Third Force manifestation is exactly the same as that adopted for the H-Block demonstrations. Marches, parades and processions are best allowed

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to proceed as long as they do not cross into "enemy" territory. Those who break the law (e.g. wearing uniform in contravention of the Public Order Act) should be summoned to appear in Court. Those who cause a breach of the peace should be arrested. This gradation of response strikes the best balance between provoking the Catholics by doing nothing and provoking the Protestants by picking a fight.

5. Of course it is essential that there should be no less zeal on the part of the Police in dealing with offences against the law committed by Paisleyites than was shown against H-Block supporters committing identical offences. I do not think that we are yet in a position to direct that accusation against the Police. But this will need watching.



D.J. WYATT

7 December 1981

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