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RJA/753/92/SH

FROM: R J ALSTON
US(POL)

15 January 1991

cc PS/PUS (L&B) - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Wilson - B
Mr Lyon - B
Mr Steele (personal) - B
Mr Wood - B
Mr Cooke - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr McNeill - B
Mr McConnell - B
Mr Maxwell - B
Mr Templeton - B
Mr Woods - B
Mr May - B

PS/MR FELL - B

SECURITY INFORMATION STRATEGY

I said that I would give some thought on how we might most
effectively carry forward discussion in this area in the light of
the Minister of State's meeting last week and the discussion at SPM
on 13 January. There is a need to clear our minds within the NIO,
and then to decide how we want to carry forward those aspects
involving the security forces at the ISG(M) meeting now scheduled
for 29 January.

2. Reading your note and that of Mr Woods from last week as well as
reviewing the papers taken in ISG(M) over the past eighteen months,
I have concluded that the most useful first step may be the
production of a discussion paper for NIO use at a meeting to be
chaired by the Minister of State, or you, or by both in turn. A
first shot at such a paper is attached, on which I would be grateful

for any initial reactions. Alternatively it could serve as a basis
for an initial discussion with refinement and amplification to
follow.

3. I think that it addresses, though not always explicitly, all of
the concerns which both Mr Woods and you put forward as well as
ideas already raised in ISG, but I shall be happy to hear if you see
any continuing major gaps. As you will see I have attempted to
arrange it in a way from which we could, if that seemed appropriate,
devise a work programme which I believe would, albeit incrementally,
stand a real chance of significantly improving our overall effort.
I have to repeat however that I do not think that this could be
achieved without the provision of some dedicated resources both to
put the work programme into place in the first place and then to
follow it through.

[signed]

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RJA/753/92/sh

DISCUSSION PAPER - SECURITY INFORMATION STRATEGY

This paper takes as its basis analyses by others of current failings
in our information strategy. It attempts to provide an
operationally oriented framework for discussion of the issues which
arise in trying to improve our performance.

2.   What follows is guided by three underlying factors.

(a)   there will continue to be three distinct information
       efforts which should nonetheless be co-ordinated as closely
       as possible;

(b)   no amount of information activity will make much head way
       unless it is based on convincing policy and operational
       decisions;

(c)   much security information work will remain responsive but
       there is scope for tying this into a broader and more
       proactive strategic framework.

Information Strategy

3. What is information strategy? The objectives of information
strategy are largely those of the policy of defeating terrorism more
broadly. Information strategy is also governed as to content by
policy decisions taken on their own merits. Public impact is
however an important element of many policy decisions. Information
Strategy is essentially the complex of means by which we seek to
influence opinion outside government in pursuit of our strategies
for defeating terrorism, and to secure support for the means by
which we are pursuing them.

-1-

id.22765

Building Blocks

4. <u>An effective information strategy requires definition of the audiences at which it is aimed, and the distinctive characteristics of each.</u> Our primary focus is on Northern Ireland. Opinion in the Province can be sub-divided in many ways. At an initial level there are four main headings:

   (a) **Opinion in general.** This is the level at which we seek to get across the Government's general commitment to the Province and determination to bring terrorism to an end. It is also the level at which we seek to demonstrate the will and resources to achieve this. In support of this we seek to demonstrate the continuing level of activity, the principles upon which it is based, and the successes achieved including convictions in the courts. There are areas of policy, such as prison management, where we have a good story to tell which is applicable to both communities. There are services relating to the security situation which are available to both communities, such as compensation, which we want to set in a positive light. In addition we seek to secure public support (or at least understanding) for actions we have to take because of the security situation, and encourage the community to play its part;

   (b) **The Provisional movement.** This is largely impervious to criticism and thrives on publicity. There are however doubts within the Movement as to where their campaign is going. This provides scope for review to see how (both privately and publicly) we can reinforce this trend in terms of the movements internal psychology;

(c) **The broader nationalist community.** The aim here is to maximise support for security policy and for constitutional approaches, and to minimise that for the IRA and (so long as it openly supports violence) Sinn Fein. Important elements of this are to increase awareness of the extent to which the nationalist agenda has been addressed over the past decade, to emphasise our respect for human rights, to underline the various ways in which confidence is a major factor in security policy, and to increase awareness of other ways (Making Belfast Work, Targetting Social Need) in which the interests of the Border nationalist community are being met. We should co-opt the Irish Government in this process to the maximum extent;

(d) **The Protestant community.** The key notes here may be described as reassurance, realism, responsibility and self-confidence. We need to get across the Government's commitment to the present constitutional position, to persuade Protestants that the present balanced approach to security policy is right, to encourage full support for it and to increase awareness that measures (such as those under the Anglo-Irish Agreement) which address nationalist concerns are not a zero sum game.

5. We also have to have concern for a number of broader audiences. These include:

(a) **Great Britain.** This is an integral part of the overall policy of defeating the IRA, and was discussed at the November 1991 Downing Street meeting. It is not however an area in which NIO Ministers are in the lead. Some thought has been given at ISG(M) at ways of improving co-ordination in the presentational field with the other Departments

-3-

id.22765

involved. Cabinet Office committees exist at both Ministerial and official level but have rarely been used. There may be scope for including presentational issues in discussion between the various agencies involved in counter-terrorism;

(b) **Ireland.** Paradoxically, this is more in our hands than those of the Embassy because the Irish media take most of their coverage from their own correspondence in the Province. The Secretary of State has in recent months made one major speech in Dublin, given an interview to the Irish Times and appeared on Irish TV. A number of lesser measures have also been put in hand. The need now is less to secure broad support for Government policies than to arouse more positive interest in Irish political and public opinion in the problems of Northern Ireland and how to resolve them;

(c) **Elsewhere.** Attitudes in Europe and, above all, the United States are of major importance in the fight against terrorism. They are the province of NIOIC which is about to have its annual review under the Minister of State's chairmanship. They are not further considered here.

Techniques

6. Most people will derive their views and opinions from the media. A significant proportion of the Information Service's overall efforts go into dealings with the media on security issues, though a dedicated security Press Officer has only recently been appointed. The optimum use of the various ways open to us of securing positive media coverage - speeches, doorstep interviews, background briefings, encouragement of sympathetic radio and TV programmes, and the placing of articles in the printed press - need to be kept under constant review.

-4-

id.22765

7. <u>We can also seek to form peoples opinions directly and through opinion formers</u>. Speeches to organisations, receiving deputations, contacts around the Province, and social events and briefings for key opinion formers can all contribute to this process. Much of this work is necessarily ad hoc but is still capable of being more carefully planned and tied into the key set of issues of the moment than is the case at present.

8. <u>It is also open to us to buy advertising space either in the Press or on radio/TV</u>. This tends to be done more in support of ordinary civilian government than of security policy. An effective series of advertisements has however been run to publicise the Confidential Telephone. There may be other specific security related policy areas such as compensation where more effective use of this approach could be made.

9. <u>We can produce publications and radio and TV material of our own</u>. This has been done in the past, but primarily in the context of seeking to promote Northern Ireland outside the Province. Audiences in the Province are more likely to be sceptical of material produced directly by government. It may however be worth asking specifically whether there are some issues in which material could be cost effectively produced.

<u>The Message</u>

10. There is a strong sense that the points we are seeking to get across should be more systematically prepared and co-ordinated. This is not the place to go into great detail. One clear need is however to continue the process, initiated in ISG(M) of identifying specific messages for specific target audiences. The ISG machinery has already produced a number of hymn sheets covering specific topics such as "Themes to Hurt PIRA". A set of basic messages on security policy was drawn up and circulated widely during the Autumn

-5-

id.22765

both in the NIO and NICS. There may be scope for additional
exercises of this kind, and for combining them together into a
single "hymn book" which should be kept under constant review.
There may also be a case for a centralised compilation of helpful
quotations from religious leaders and other opinion formers which
could be drawn on by those preparing speeches and other material.

Background Information

11. To make more targetted information policies effective, and to
underpin the preparation of appropriate messages, there are a number
of areas in which there is scope to refine our own information and
understanding. A critical tool will be the new public opinion poll
to be run on a regular basis using a questionnaire drawn up by the
law and order community in Northern Ireland. This will hopefully
get under way in 1992. Surprisingly little work has been done to
analyse the attitudes of key target audiences and what kind of
arguments and messages are likely to appeal to them. There is an
identified need for guidelines for handling specific terrorist
related incidents (as distinct from incidents directly involving the
security forces which are covered by OP LEVY). There is a need for
a single and consistent series of statistics on security activity.
There is a case for a compilation of vocabulary to use and to avoid
(perhaps on the lines of the note prepared for incoming Ministers as
part of the first day pack).

12. We should be open to relevant outside expertise. We clearly
have no monopoly of wisdom and understanding, though the three
organisations involved have an unparalleled wealth of expertise.
There are a number of sources of potential external advice ranging
from experts on the IRA and counter-terrorism more generally,
through opinion formers in key sectors of the community, to media
practitioners, and people with expertise in the public relations
area. We should seek to tap such expertise as systematically as we

-6-

id.22765

can. Proposals have been drawn up for a closed seminar to be managed for the NIO by the Royal United Services Institute on the presentation of our security policies which will be put to Ministers shortly. Contacts have also been establish with a number of individual experts and these should be expanded and developed.

Office Machinery

13. One clear gap which has been identified is the absence of any regular office machinery at either Ministerial or official level to focus discussion on the whole range of issues raised in this note. The Minister of State has recently brought together informally a number of those involved. There is a good case for a regular piece of machinery complimentary to the ISG(O) and ISG(M) machinery which involves the security forces, to improve the co-ordination and direction of the NIO's own information work. It has already been decided that the NIO members of ISG(O) should meet.

14. Co-ordination with the security forces is as much a matter of will as of machinery. The OP LEVY machinery now works effectively in respect of the immediate demands of incidents involving the security forces. Recent experience has however shown up gaps in co-ordinating public responses to other types of security incident. Whilst the ISG(O) and ISG(M) machinery works quite effectively its rhythm of meetings (monthly at official level and quarterly at Ministerial level) makes it of limited use as an operational tool. Proposals have been put forward in ISG(O) for a smaller group concerned with the day to day interface between operational and information matters to meet more frequently. There may also be a need for some more responsive way of ensuring that public interventions by Ministers, the Chief Constable and the GOC are as mutually reinforcing as possible.

15. Within the NIO the issue has been raised as to whether the whole

-7-

id.22765

range of issues discussed in this note should become the responsibility of one person. Given existing lines of responsibility it is not easy to see how this can effectively be done at below Permanent Secretary level. It may be preferable to focus first on more effective co-ordinating machinery to bring together the political, security and information parts of the office.

16. We shall not much improve matters however unless we are prepared to devote more resources to this area of activity. Many of the issues raised in recent analyses have been diagnosed in the past, and approaches to improve their handling mapped out. The problem has been that, when it comes to staffing of work on analysing needs, devising messages, and developing and pursuing a proactive plan for their use, all the parts of the office involved are under great pressure. No one single officer has this kind of more strategic function as part of his present Job Description. If we are to make any headway there will be a need for additional resources both to develop a plan of activity and to carry them out. Ministers, particularly the Secretary of State and the Minister responsible for security, will remain the spearhead of our activity. If our presentational performance is to be perceived to strengthen it will be necessary to plan proactive programmes of presentational activities into their forward diary commitments.

Action Programme

17. From the elements above a number of elements of potential action programme can be derived. These include:

/ clearer definition of what security information strategy is;

/ sustained public presentation of our basic security policy and the reasons why it should gain public support;

-8-

id.22765

/ consideration of a larger security element in Ministerial Speech programmes;

/ analysis of the psychology of the Provisional movement and how to influence it;

/ development of a set of arguments for deployment with the nationalist community;

/ development of a set of arguments for use with unionist community;

/ development of a set of arguments for use with the business community;

/ co-ordination with others involved in Whitehall of presentational approaches to the Provisional movement in Northern Ireland and GB;

/ development of further "hymn sheets" on specific topics and their compilation into a "hymn book" to be kept under regular review;

/ compilation of a set of useful quotations;

/ compilation of a set of points defining security force and other law and order successes;

/ review of the use currently made of each of the ways of influencing media coverage and opinion formers;

/ preparation of a rolling plan for optimising use of each of these, including role of Secretary of State and Security Minister;

id.22765

/   consideration of a consultancy to see whether we should make more use of outside public relations techniques;

/   vigorous pursuit of the development of the new opinion poll;

/   co-ordination of a single universially used set of security statistics;

/   development of a note covering vocabulary to avoid and encourage;

/   development of contacts with outside experts in the field, beginning with the proposed RUSI Seminar;

/   strengthened co-ordinating machinery in the NIO at both Ministerial and official level;

/   strengthened mechanism for working level coordination of the presentational/operational responses to terrorist incidents not at present covered by OP LEVY procedures;

/   identification of the staff resources needed effectively to implement a programme of this kind.

-10-

id.22765