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4 June 1990

L/6/36/DMC



Mr Ledlie - M

cc MofS (L&B) - M
Sir K Bloomfield - M
Mr Burns
Mr Spence - M
Mr A Wilson - M
Mr Blackwell
Mr J McConnell - M
Mr Bell - M
Mr Hamilton - M cent sec
Mr R Wilson - M cent sec
186.

The Security Forces and Community Relations

I was grateful to you for circulating Brigadier Jackson's letter of 7 June. I hope you will not think it too carping if I say that I find the Brigadier's letter, in so far as it is stimulating, stimulating in the wrong way. That is because, over most of the time that I have been here the Army have seemed, to be frank, sometimes more anxious about what we say than what we do and that, in particular, what we say should always put the best light on the actions of the security forces, whether or not they always equally deserve it.

2. Thus I simply do not accept the implication in the second paragraph of the letter that a "deliberate and carefully designed information offensive" is central to changing perceptions. The best information offensive possible will get absolutely nowhere if police and soldiers behave badly and Government responds insensitively and lacking in intelligence. It may be that Brigadier Jackson fully accepts this: his letter leaves the matter a bit open. Further he seems to be writing in total ignorance of the very wide range of contacts that Government has, Ministerial and official, with the community and the skill with which, by and large, these contacts are used. It may be that something could be done further to systematise these contacts to ensure maximum cover and consistency of the message and if that can be devised well and good. His own "matrix" seems to be a little deficient as an approach to this.

14 June 1990

JA

JOHN BLELLOCH

CONFIDENTIAL



C O N F I D E N T I A L



FROM: P N BELL
SECURITY POLICY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION
DATE: 14 JUNE 1990

PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B cc PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir Kenneth Bloomfield - B
Mr Burns - B
Mr Ledlie - B
Mr Spence - B
Mr A P Wilson - B
Mr J McConnell - B
Mr N Hamilton - B
Mr R Wilson *AB*

THE SECURITY FORCES AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

I have just read your helpful minute of yesterday's date. I am sure the Minister would be doing West Belfast (and Northern Ireland) a great service by holding 'West Belfast' functions of the kind you suggest. I note that you will be looking for opportunities yourself in the Minister's programme to include functions on the lines you suggested. I do not seek to dampen your enterprise when I say that SPOB will do our best over the next few weeks, after consulting colleagues, also to provide you with suggestions.

2. My immediate thought, however, is that it is desirable that both arms of the security forces should be represented at all such gatherings if at all possible. The Army, at senior levels and, we hope, increasingly at all levels, is sensitive to our common problems. Developing relations with the community in which they operate is second nature to them, and, as some recent briefings have shown, their detailed knowledge of what is going on on the ground in West Belfast is high - higher, I suspect, in some respects than that of the RUC, who also, my sources suggest, in some sub-divisions regard community relations as less of an integral, and more of an 'add on' feature of their operations - attitudes which we should do whatever we can, slowly and tactfully, to change where change is necessary.

(signed)

P N BELL
(Ext SH 2201)

JI/11800

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