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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 September 1979

Sean Roy,

Northern Ireland : Security Directorate

The Prime Minister has seen the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's minute, dated 31 August, on this subject. She has commented that she finds the minute somewhat confusing.

In the Prime Minister's view, Cabinet has decided (a) that a small organisation should be set up to coordinate in the most effective possible manner the activities of the RUC and the Army in Northern Ireland; (b) that much will depend on the personality of the individual chosen to head the Security Directorate; (c) that the head of the Security Directorate will be responsible to rather than under the "command" of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; and (d) that the decision to establish a Security Directorate will not be announced until its head has been chosen.

The Prime Minister notes that in discussion after Cabinet two candidates were proposed for the new post, one a military man and the other a diplomat who had extensive experience of defence issues. The Prime Minister does not consider that a man of exclusively military experience would be suitable. Equally, she is not convinced that a policeman would be right. She is convinced that in any case a strong personality is needed. A weak one would not do the job and his failure would be damaging not only to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland but also to the security effort in general. The Prime Minister drew from her visit to Northern Ireland last Wednesday the conclusion that much needs to be done and that we cannot delay much longer. She is prepared to consider other names than those already mentioned but hopes that proposals will be forthcoming very soon and will reflect the points made above.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Chilcot (Home Office), George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Roger Facer (Ministry of Defence) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

Michael Alexander

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Northern Ireland Office.

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