

CONFIDENTIAL

F.R.

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① In Court

WJ 22/11

② Mr Marshall

③ POC

4-2-83/11

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND A DELEGATION OF OFFICIAL UNIONISTS IN STORMONT CASTLE ON 22 NOVEMBER 1983

The Secretary of State met a delegation from the Official Unionist Party on 22 November to discuss security following the Darkley shooting. Those present were:

Secretary of State  
Mr Scott  
Mr Buxton  
Mr Merifield  
Mr Gilliland  
Mr Bickham  
Mr Lyon

Mr Nicholson  
Mr Maginnis  
Mrs Simpson  
Mr Speers

The Secretary of State said that he naturally shared the revulsion to the Darkley murders on 20 November and wished to extend his sincere condolences. They were clearly the work of pathological murderers. He had seen the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding the previous evening; and this was the first meeting he had had since then with political representatives.

Mr Maginnis said that he resented that the Chief Constable made statements on television and attended conferences in England, but was not prepared to meet the elected representatives of the Province. The Chief Constable had promised no new initiatives. As a result, the Official Unionists had no option but either to advise the community that they must protect themselves, or leave the field to the DUP, who were being given favourable treatment by the Government. It was unreasonable that the Secretary of State should have seen Dr Paisley on 21 November, but refused until now to see this delegation. Mr Maginnis considered that the Chief Constable and the GOC should heed his advice. He had more professional knowledge than the average policeman and neither he nor the whole community had any confidence in the professionalism of the Chief Constable. The answer lay in providing 3,500 regular troops on roulement along the border. They should be located in permanent patrol bases. The RUC and the UDR could then operate within the Province. But he did not agree that the UDR were properly employed on static bases, such as in Middletown. They were not able to use their detailed local knowledge on such duties; they were at risk travelling to and from the static post; and there was an increased/risk to their families. He wished specifically to ask whether the GOC and the Chief Constable had decided that no further permanent patrol bases should be set up along the border; whether the Secretary of State had considered a form of selective internment; and whether the Secretary of State was prepared to instruct the media not to give access to Mr Adams and Mr Carron under its emergency powers. Neither the majority nor the minority community believed the Government were serious about defeating the IRA; that was why the minority did not support the forces of law and order. There was no evidence that

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there would be any change in security policy; and as a result of the advice of the GOC and Chief Constable people in border areas were no safer. He wanted the Chief Constable to hear his views direct. If the Chief Constable was not willing to meet him personally, he suggested that the Chief Constable and the GOC should be invited to sit in on a meeting between himself and another Official Unionist and the Secretary of State.

Mr Nicholson said that since the Darkley murders, there was a higher level of open hostility, frustration and anger than at any time since 1975. The people of South Armagh were at the end of their tether. It was deplorable that the Chief Constable would not meet them. He did not wish to ask for saturation of the area by the security forces, or the intervention of the Spearhead Battalion. That was not the answer since this would only be a short term measure and would take forces from other parts of the Province where the need was equally great. What was needed was determined pre-emptive action to put an end to terrorism. The SAS should be deployed in the area. There was no evidence of increased security force presence in South Armagh over recent weeks. The Chief Constable had lost the support of his men (he received telephone calls from many officers criticising the Chief Constable) and of the community: he should be told to resign. The policies of the Chief Constable and the GOC had failed to work; they had not even been able adequately to protect Mr Armstrong. It was time for law-abiding people who now feared for their life even when they attended church, to be given the right to life, and for that right to be taken away from the terrorists. This fear was shared by both communities. Mr Nicholson said that he regretted that he was not allowed to meet local UDR Commanders. For example, there had been about a dozen resignations from the UDR because of the decision to deploy them in Middletown. He had wished quietly and in confidence to discuss this with the UDR Commander, but he had been refused a meeting.

Mr Speers said that people living along a wide area of the border were at risk. There was no evidence of any increased level of patrolling in the last year. The answer did not lie in a short-term increase of security force activity in the Darkley area, nor in providing special protection to the seven Protestant churches in that area. Such action could not prevent attacks in many isolated areas. What was needed was a permanent border guard to prevent terrorists such as Dominic McGlinchey operating out of the Republic.

Mrs Simpson confirmed that there was a feeling of hopelessness among the communities living in South Armagh. They felt forsaken. They feared further attacks. Their fears needed to be allayed.

The Secretary of State said that he understood the feeling of anger and frustration among those who had suffered as a result of terrorist action. On the security side, it was necessary to deploy the security forces in the most effective way possible. Often this required covert action which was not noticed by the general public. But he accepted there was a need also for reassurance. He had to take the advice of his professional security advisers, the Chief Constable and the GOC. He resented the attempts of politicians and some of their subordinates to undermine their position. They had an extremely difficult job which they carried out professionally. Security force activity had recently been stepped up in the South Armagh area. Since the beginning of October there had been 25 individual company operations. A UDR patrol had been active in the Darkley area on 20 November. Since the murders, an additional company had been deployed from Aldergrove to Armagh. This did not affect operational coverage in other parts of the Province. He had asked the Chief Constable and the GOC to consider whether any further protection could be provided to congregations of the seven churches in the area which at present felt itself at risk. Security operations were kept under constant review; they were amended in the light of the current security situation, as had happened recently with force deployments, the amalgamation of the UDR, and RUC organisation. Just under 10,000 troops were at present in the Province. It was open to the GOC to ask for more, but he did not at present consider it necessary to do so. The GOC and the Chief Constable did not consider it practical, however, to seal the border in the way Mr Maginnis had proposed, and he was not aware of any current proposal from them that further permanent patrol bases should be provided along the border.

The Secretary of State said that he regularly considered the possibility of internment but had rejected it. It was not the answer. Nor did he have the power to instruct the media on the content of their programmes or articles. But he was as determined as anyone to do everything possible to overcome the threat of terrorism. The security forces had done a great deal and few gave them credit for it. The level of violence was lower than in earlier years; but it would never be eradicated until the minority community had confidence in the forces of law and order. The solution did not lie in force of arms but in political progress. That required people in both communities to seek to find common ground. The political settlement was essential. That was why he had proposed democratic institutions which he hoped that in time could provide a form of democratic control for the people of Northern Ireland that would be acceptable to all. There was a good deal that Unionist politicians could do in this area to achieve progress and defeat terrorism.

Concluding the meeting, the Secretary of State said that he was surprised that there was only one Official Unionist present to hear his statement

in Parliament on the Darkley shootings. Westminster was the most appropriate place for such a statement, and he had been fully prepared to meet any Unionist member who wished to see him afterwards, as he had met Dr Paisley. He had been very ready to see Mr Nicholson, but he had wished to be clear in what capacity Mr Maginnis was in the deputation, in view of the difficulties there had been in arranging meetings following the Maze escape. He had noted Mr Nicholson's concern about resignations from 2UDR in Middletown. He would make enquiries and would write to him.

*Handwritten signature: M Lyon*

M LYON  
Private Secretary

22 November 1983

CC PS/SOS (B&L)-M  
PS/Mr Scott (B&L)-M  
PS/PUS (B&L)-M  
~~PS/Sir Ewart Bell~~  
Mr Bourn  
Mr Brennan -M  
Mr Buxton - for draft letter please  
Mr Merifield  
Mr Angel -M  
Mr Gilliland  
Mr Doyne-Ditmas  
Mr Coulson  
Mr Reeve  
Mr Boys Smith -M  
Mr Bickham -M