

Sybil



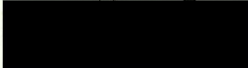
NOTE OF A MEETING: 22 APRIL 1983

SPECIAL BRANCHES



Present:

- Sir Brian Cubbon
- Mr Andrew
- Mr Phillips
- Mr Pilling



The meeting had before it Mr Phillips' minute of 31 March to Sir Brian Cubbon.

(i) Timing Considerations

2. It was confirmed in discussion that there was no particular timetable in mind for the further discussions which were proposed or for the issue of revised terms of reference for Special Branches. There was no public pressure at present and the Opposition had shown relatively little interest in Special Branches as compared with their interest in the Security Service etc. In practice, because of other preoccupations there would be nothing which would need to be put to Ministers until after the Election. It might, however, be politic to arrange a three-way discussion before Mr Oxford's Presidency ended, although there would be no particular difficulty in his participating as a past President.

(ii) Views of the Security Service

3. It would be necessary first to discover whether, as Mr Oxford claimed, the Director General had resiled from his earlier view that the terms of reference should not be revised. It was thought that this reluctance had stemmed partly from a feeling that it would be better if the Home Office did not interpose themselves between the Security Service and Special Branches in respect of the interpretation of the present terms of reference and partly from a feeling that no major difficulties had been encountered and that it was better to 'let sleeping dogs lie'. The attraction of a clearer statement, from





the Security Service point of view, was that it might make clearer the role of Special Branches as their agents. There were some dangers on the police side. The recent discussion had revealed some incomprehension and ignorance among senior police officers about the role of Special Branches. There was also a concern on the part of the MPSB to enlarge the part it played.

(iii) The case for a review and its substance

4. It was agreed that there was a good case for carrying this work forward, although there might be some reservations about the priority it should be given. In particular, there would be advantage in having a document, produced by the Home Office and not by ACPO, which would be made public. It was pointed out, however, that the proposal at this stage was simply for a discussion. It was possible that the outcome might be a consensus that it was better to leave matters as they were.

5. On the substance of the existing terms of reference it was noted that it was very questionable whether work on aliens and naturalisation should continue to be undertaken by Special Branches. But such a change would involve difficulties. In some areas it must constitute a high proportion of Special Branch work. In addition, if these duties were removed, only those relating to terrorism would be left among those presently mentioned in the public statement.

6. It was agreed that it would be desirable to aim at terms of reference which would be publishable in full, although this might be difficult to achieve. It was noted that this point was relevant to Lord Bridge's comments about the lack of anything comparable to the Security Service's charter.

(iv) Next Steps

7. It seemed desirable to arrange a small meeting to explore the issues. There would need to be at least two police representatives, someone from HMIC and a Security Service representative (who would presumably be SyS Officer).

8. The first step would be for Sir Brian Cubbon to write to the Director General. This could refer to the need to respond to Mr Oxford's initiative and invite him to send someone to an exploratory meeting which Sir Brian Cubbon /asked Mr Pilling to chair. Mr Pilling agreed to submit a revised draft.

/had



Secretariat
26 April 1983

cc Those present

