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NOTE OF A MEETING HELD ON 7TH DECEMBER 1978
TO DISCUSS TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SPECIAL BRANCH

I would be grateful if you would amend the note of this meeting, which I circulated on 12th December, as follows:-

- a. paragraph 4: in lines 2 and 3 delete "terms of the letter of 1974" and substitute "Terms of Reference of June 1970 issued to Chief Police Officers by the CID Committee of ACPO;"
- b. paragraph 5:
 - i. in line 2 delete "1974" and substitute "1970";
 - ii. in line 8 substitute a full-stop for the semicolon and delete the word "and" and insert a new sentence as follows:
"He drew attention to a letter issued by Sir Michael Hanley in 1974 with Home Office approval to Chief Constables about the investigation of subversive activities in Trade Unions";
 - iii. in line 14 delete "1974" and substitute "1970";
- c. paragraph 7: in line 4 delete "1974" and substitute "1970".

[redacted]

5th January 1979
Secretariat

c Mr Andrew
Mr Heaton ✓
Sir Colin Woods

[redacted]

} Box 500



NOTE OF A MEETING HELD ON 7TH DECEMBER 1978 TO DISCUSS
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SPECIAL BRANCH

Present: Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr Andrew
Mr Heaton
Sir Colin Woods



Sir Robert Armstrong discussed with Police Department officials, HMCIC, and senior officials of Box 500 the question of what should be said about Special Branch in the annual reports of chief police officers and, secondly, the work which Special Branches do for the Security Service.

2. So far as what should be said about Special Branches in annual reports was concerned, Sir Colin Woods reported that ACPO had commended to chief constables the practice of making some disclosure about Special Branch; the Inspectorate was following this up, and no resistance had so far been encountered. Results would be reported in HMCI's next annual report. This would help to regularise the present disparity of practice between various chief constables.

3. Most of the meeting was devoted to consideration of the work Special Branches do for the Security Service. Sir Colin Woods thought it important to mention the concern which some chief constables express about their responsibility for work carried out at the request of the Security Service. Questions of accountability arose, often involving the issue whether the work police forces did in this respect had Ministerial authority. It was pointed out that a chief officer remained responsible for the operational control of his men, whatever the circumstances in which they were officially acting; and the work they did for the Security Service came under their broad responsibilities in relation to public order.

4. Consideration was given to whether it was either necessary or desirable to look again at the Terms of the letter of 1974 which explained what the responsibilities of the police were in terms of assistance to the Security Service. It

Reference of June 1970 issued to Chief Police Officers by the CID Committee of ACPO



[REDACTED]

was agreed that, within the Metropolitan area, the Security Service were able to do a great deal of the work they wished to do themselves; there was much less need for them to ask the police for assistance. In the provinces, however, the Security Service would continue to rely upon the assistance of the police. Difficulties sometimes arose in the Metropolitan area, if confusion arose between the police and the Security Service at the operational level over the respective responsibilities of each service; and wider difficulties sometimes arose when there was doubt, more especially in the minds of the police, as to the nature of the targets for surveillance. The police were sometimes anxious that they should not get drawn into matters which were, in their view, not strictly relevant to the maintenance of law and order and which could, moreover, create difficulties for them in the matter of their ordinary police work.

5. [REDACTED] **sys** [REDACTED] did not believe that there was any need to re-open the terms of reference agreed in 1970. He believed that the areas to be covered followed logically from the Attlee doctrine on Communism, which still held good. It was not necessary to re-open the question with ACPO. It was recognised however, that this was an area of such exceptional delicacy that no room for misunderstanding could be allowed. ~~It was~~ It was thought that the climate of public opinion about the operation of the Security Service and Special Branches might have changed since 1974, even if there was no difficulty about deciding which targets should be covered. Sir Robert Armstrong believed that, although we should be in no hurry to re-open the question of the terms of reference agreed in 1970 (especially in advance of a general election) it might be necessary to look at it again in the light of a possible change of Home Secretary following a general election, so that we were in the position to put to a new Home Secretary a note which represented an agreed and up-to-date statement of what was both feasible and acceptable to the Security Service and the police.

6. It was possible that part of the difficulties arose because of a conflict between an assessment of the potential value of any operation and an assessment of its potential risk; it was agreed that more consideration might need to be given towards identifying these points clearly for the benefit of the police, so that any particular delicacies on the likelihood of any particular operation being disclosed were drawn to the attention of the police at an appropriate stage.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

7. It was also agreed that at the next meeting of the ACPO General Committee there would be some advantage if [REDACTED] sys [REDACTED] were to attend so as to answer any questions senior police officers might have on policies outlined in the 1970 guidance. This might go some way towards meeting the difficulties encountered with some of the more newly appointed chief constables.

8. Sir Robert Armstrong concluded the meeting by expressing the thought that, in anticipation of the outcome of a general election leading to a change of Home Secretary, we might need to give some thought to the advantages and disadvantages of a re-assessment of the scope for coverage of subversive activities, especially in the light of the increasing activities of investigative journalists and developments in the industrial relations field since 1974.

12th December 1978
Secretariat

[REDACTED]

Distribution: those present

[REDACTED]

* He drew attention to a letter issued by Sir Michael Hanley in 1974 with Home Office approval to Chief Constables about the investigation of subversive activities in Trade Unions.