

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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AN GARDA SIOCHANA

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OIFIG AN CHOIMISINEARA,  
BAILE ATHA CLIATH.

and the following number quoted:

3C/15/75 (Gen.)

**SECRET**



The Secretary,  
Department of Justice.

*Seen by Minister  
w/ft. 8/7/75*

I submit, hereunder, digest of reports collated from sources which have in the past proved reliable; and which, though widely diverse in origin, tend to sustain each other in the general trend of the conclusions arrived at. I shall endeavour to deal with the material to hand under the following heads: (1) Ceasefire and British Withdrawal; (2) U.D.I. and the role of the different organisations, and (3) Situation Estimate.

CEASEFIRE AND WITHDRAWAL:

It would appear that by and large, and despite moments of tension, the ceasefire rests securely enough on some kind of undertaking by the British Government that their troops will be withdrawn from Northern Ireland. The understanding is that the withdrawal will be effected as time and opportunity allow, in return for which the PIRA are pledged not to resume hostilities in the event of a "broadly acceptable form of Government" being established in the North - a contingency in which, as will be seen later, neither side has any real faith.

The withdrawal would be a phased one. There is some evidence that it has, in fact, already commenced in as much as the actual strength of the British Army in the Province is now little more than 50% of what it was in the pre-truce era. In theory the strength remains fairly constant - pretexts such as "temporary postings", "transfers for courses", and so on are used to camouflage the effective diminution while maintaining the paper establishment. In this connection there is, of course, the consideration that troops "withdrawn to Barracks" in order to lower the Army profile would, in any case, have to be accommodated in barracks outside Northern Ireland, since the accommodation within Northern Ireland is insufficient.

It is quite evident that the role of the British Army in Northern Ireland is a rapidly diminishing one.

U.D.I.

Should the Convention prove a failure, there is a very real likelihood of U.D.I., the ensuing situation being dominated by the paramilitary loyalist groups in association with the U.D.R. (from whose strength a 75% commitment to the new order could be expected), and with the R.U.C. (half of whose membership would willingly acquiesce). It is

*x 50% of what figure?*



said that the different loyalist groupings - Harry West and his supporters excepted - are in fact watching each other keenly, each anxious to be "first in" with U.D.I. when the time comes; and that the rival followings of Paisley, Glen Barr and Craig are especially vigilant in this regard. So far, of course, as the stated position of the British Government goes, the alternative to a failure of the Convention is Direct Rule. In practice, however, since the British Government is firmly resolved that its troops will never again be involved in a war situation in Ireland, there could be no effective enforcement of Direct Rule. Hence a political vacuum, which would be filled by U.D.I., and a military vacuum which would be filled by the U.D.R. and the other organisations. There is, to hand, information which strongly suggests that there is an element in the British Administration in Northern Ireland which would regard this development as a blessing in disguise - a sure way of ridding Britain of the whole problem while making the mandatory empty protests.

The role assigned, as a matter of top secrecy, to the elements of the British Army still remaining in Northern Ireland, sheds a sombre light on the British estimate of the immediate consequences of U.D.I. For the mission of the British Army would then be not the protection, on the ground, of any section of the population, but the keeping open of certain main arteries linking the rest of the province with Belfast, in order to facilitate large-scale movements of refugees - Protestants eastwards towards Belfast, Catholics in the opposite direction.

#### SITUATION ESTIMATE:

In the U.D.I. context the PIRA would intensify their activities in the hope of that increase of recruitment from the Republic which the doomsday plight of such beleaguered Catholic enclaves as that of Short Strand could be expected to induce. Retaliatory incursions south of the Border by loyalists would only serve the interests of the PIRA by increasing the tension and by giving to their activities the overtones of a fullscale "patriotic war".

It is, perhaps, at this point that shrinking PIRA options would constitute a threat to the Status Quo in the Republic. The full-scale military action which they desire would necessitate a power base and the direction of resources on a nationwide scale; the very credibility of their "patriotic war" would be open to question while the control of national institutions was seen to remain in other hands. That is why, I respectfully submit, our first concern must be the security of the organs and processes of Government in our own State. Therefore the progressive expansion and modernisation of the Armed Forces, whose first priority, no matter what the circumstances, will be the maintenance of the authority of the lawful Government here, must constitute the surest deterrent against PIRA designs.

By way of conclusion it is scarcely necessary to add that in a situation which changes from hour to hour a report such as this may very well have become outdated before it has even been typed.



Hence the kind of speculation which I have ventured in the situation estimate may well prove irrelevant. However the quality of the factual information which I have here passed on is something which in the light of experience I think I can safely stand by.

*E. P. Sawyer*  
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER.

1/15

PROCESSES AND WITHDRAWALS

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