

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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SECRETRecent Developments in the RUC

1. Despite attempts to improve the professionalism and discipline of the RUC, the fact is that the RUC is not seen as a normal or acceptable police force in the minority community. The relationship is epitomised by the fact that for understandable reasons of security, the RUC in its contact with the minority presents itself as a military rather than a police force. The RUC enters minority areas heavily armed, in large numbers with armoured vehicles as transport. It is forced to adopt the posture and behaviour of an army of occupation. Since the policy of Ulsterisation was implemented from the mid-seventies with the gradual withdrawal of the British Army this military aspect has increasingly dominated the relationship

2. While the policing situation had settled down to an unsatisfactory stalemate between the minority and the RUC, developments in recent months have made the RUC even less acceptable to the minority and it has become clear that there are major new problems about their behaviour and discipline. The British have informally and privately said they share our concern about the RUC and accept that in the events of 12 August in West Belfast and in the Chief Constable's rebuttal of the Secretary of State's public comments the RUC has dropped the mask and shown themselves to be the old sectarian force that they were.

3. The following is a very brief list of some of the events which have led the vast majority of moderate Northern nationalists into a position where they feel the RUC will never find acceptance within the minority community:-

- There has been an increase in harassment of nationalists by the police in recent years. There is reliable and consistent evidence for this from places as far apart as Belfast, Armagh and Derry and renewed evidence of a pattern of ill-treatment of people in RUC custody.
- Since the end of last year the police have consistently tried to remove any paramilitary insignia, berets etc. from the coffins of paramilitaries and have caused disruption at such funerals. This is a new policy. This practice is provocative and has created sympathy for the Provisionals quite unnecessarily in a large number of cases. Several of these incidents have been shown on TV and have given the impression of police harassment of a tribal/sectarian nature.
- The police have in recent years given in to DUP pressure and allowed Orange marches in strongly nationalist areas such as Downpatrick (80% plus Catholic), Warrenpoint (90% plus Catholic), and nationalist parts of Portadown etc. They have stood back while Orange mobs have attacked Catholic homes in e.g. Ballynahinch.
- Events in the past year have confirmed widespread fears in the minority community that RUC units (called Mobile Support Units - E4A) have been trained to shoot to kill and have been used for that purpose. It is believed that members of the E4A Units have been trained by the SAS in Hereford to use maximum force and aggression in their operations. The following two incidents are examples of their activities.
- Seamus Grew and Roderick Carroll, both members of the INLA, were shot dead in December 1982 by a Headquarters Mobile Support Unit (E4A) of the RUC. Grew and Carroll were unarmed. In March of this year Constable Robinson was acquitted of the murder of Grew. During the course of the trial Robinson claimed there had been a cover-up

by senior officers of the RUC and that the group had operated within our jurisdiction. The Crown did not deny these allegations. In a later statement Sir John Hermon sought to justify the cover-up. The affair is being investigated by a British police officer in response to our demands.

- Toman, Kerr and Burns, known Provisional IRA men, were shot dead by a Headquarters Mobile Support Unit (E4A) of the RUC near Lurgan in November 1982. They were unarmed. The RUC men charged with their murder were acquitted in May of this year. In the court a Deputy Chief Constable, Mr McAtamney, who has overall administrative control over the Mobile Support Units (5 at HQ and 12(?) at Divisional HQs) said that members of these units had been specially trained in "firepower, speed and aggression" and that when they use their weapons they do so in order "to take out" their opponents.
- When those accused were acquitted and, in one case, praised for their marksmanship by Judge Gibson whatever trust the minority had in the security forces and in the administration of justice was reduced still further.
- On 22 August 1984 the Armagh Coroner, who was conducting the inquests into the above killings, resigned saying he was not prepared to preside at inquests into these cases because of certain grave irregularities which he has discovered in police files and reports on the incidents.
- Finally the behaviour of the RUC on 12 August in West Belfast, the handling of the Cliftonville/Glasgow Celtic football match and the AOH parade in Magherafelt has confirmed the RUC in the eyes of the minority as a sectarian force "having a go" at the minority community. Independent observers are in no doubt that the RUC were unduly aggressive and brutal in each of these incidents. In the 12 August attack on the crowd

in West Belfast television film clearly shows the RUC firing plastic bullets indiscriminately in breach of all regulations governing their use.

4. Sir John Hermon, during his five years in command of the force has restructured and reorganised the RUC and has sought to ensure precedence for it over the British Army. This is in line with the "Ulsterisation" of the security forces, a policy followed by the British since the mid-seventies. Between the end of 1978 and the end of 1983 the number in the established RUC increased from 6,100 to 8,003. In addition, the strength of the Reserve RUC was 4,492 on 31 December last. Many of the latter are full-time non-established officers.

5. In October last year a major structural review was implemented giving enhanced responsibility and autonomy to commanders of the 38 sub-divisions throughout Northern Ireland. The number of Divisional Headquarters was reduced from 16 to 12 and Divisional Commanders were given a wider executive role.

6. As the "Ulsterisation" policy has proceeded the military role of the RUC has increased. An important element in Sir John Hermon's activities has related to the procurement of equipment and training for the force. This relates especially to weapons procurement and training. One example of this is that in 1983, 5,300 members attended the various courses organised by the Operational Training Unit for members of Divisional Mobile Support Units and divisional personnel in public order duties.

7. Sir John Hermon sought, since he was appointed Chief Constable, to avoid contact with Northern Ireland politicians. This policy changed after the Darkley killings last year, probably as a result of pressure from Prior. Many moderate nationalists believe that the obvious changes which took place in the behaviour of the RUC towards the minority since then - the petty harassment, attacks on funerals etc. - have occurred

at least in part because of pressure from Paisley and the DUP. (A further example of DUP pressure was that which led to the banning of Martin Galvin).

8. The belief that the DUP have influence in the RUC is given further weight in the eyes of the minority by the increasing number of DUP types entering the ranks of the force. Many moderate nationalists in contact with the police (solicitors, clergymen) have remarked on this. Paisley is said to have considerable and growing influence with the middle and lower ranks of the RUC. The number of Catholics in the force continues to decrease and is believed at present to amount to no more than 3% of the total as against slightly over 10% in the early seventies. Most of the Catholics in the RUC are middle-aged and a number hold fairly senior positions.

9. The mounting dissillusionment within the minority community with the RUC has reached a stage where the most moderate and restrained nationalists in Northern Ireland cannot conceive of any circumstances in which the RUC would find acceptance as an ordinary police force within the nationalist community. Bishop Cahal Daly has privately said to officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs that he sees no future role for the RUC in nationalist areas and no conditions in which Sir John Hermon would again obtain credibility within the nationalist community. Bishop Daly's views on the RUC are held by every responsible nationalist politician, clergyman and journalist that the Department of Foreign Affairs has been in contact with in recent times.