

Minister 20/1/69  
SM.67

Subject:- "People's Democracy" March from Belfast to Londonderry  
from 1st January - 4th January 1968.

DISTRICT INSPECTOR'S  
OFFICE.  
11 JAN 1969  
R.U.C. MAGHERAFELT

County Inspector  
Londonderry.

Submitted. I have to submit the following report regarding the passage of the participants of the above march through this District.

At approximately 1.20pm on 2nd January 1969, the contingent entered this District at Toomebridge. The total contingent appeared to be about 200 strong preceded by the Civil Rights Banner. At the time of their arrival there was a group of approximately thirty youths and men assembled on the County Londonderry side of the Bridge but there was no incident save occasional booing and cat-calling. This latter group had been moving in the vicinity of the Bridge since approximately 12.45pm when they came to my notice. Close attention was given to them during which it was ascertained that the primary cause for their presence was because of an earlier threat by some unknown individual to hoist a Tricolour on the Bridge. This did not materialise. Upon arrival in County Londonderry the marchers stopped to have a meal. Whilst awaiting arrival of the vehicle carrying food several of the members of the People's Democracy addressed the assembled group. During this time several minor scuffles broke out between individuals. Police intervened with the desired result.

At approximately 2.15pm the marchers formed up and commenced their march towards Hillhead. They had proceeded approximately 100 yards towards Hillhead when a man bearing a "Lambeg Drum" appeared from the road-side. He commenced to beat the Drum but little notice was taken of him. An attempt by a number of individuals with him to obstruct the marchers did not succeed.

At this time I kept ahead of the procession in the District car and maintained contact with other vehicles traversing the Stated Route and Diversion Route. I had learned by then that a formidable assembly had been noted in Knockloughrim village and I knew the assembly was comprised of persons opposed to the march attempting to pass through Knockloughrim at McVeigh's shop (Map Reference 964/928) I stopped the Processionists. I was then accompanied by the County Inspector. I spoke to the leader, Michael Farrell and informed him that I was possessed of information which showed there was a hostile assembly of persons in Knockloughrim and that it would be unsafe for the Procession to proceed further towards Knockloughrim. I requested him to follow along the diversion towards Bellaghy and said the route would be set by the Police vehicle preceding the procession. Farrell asked me how long I had known about this assembly and I answered telling him I had learned of it within the previous half-hour. He requested information regarding numbers assembled at Knockloughrim and I informed him my information suggested several hundred. He then referred me to my "request" to divert and asked me what action I intended taking should the marchers decide to refuse my "request". I informed him then I would insist upon the march following the Diversionary Route I had pointed out and that, if necessary, I

would utilise/

would utilise Police then available to give effect to this. Farrell then asked me if I would attempt to get the march through Knockloughrim and I said I would not. He then requested information on whether I was giving the direction under I Common Law or II Public Order Act (N.I.) 1951. I answered telling him I was acting under the Public Order Act. Farrell then told me he intended putting the matter before the marchers and they held a meeting on the Road. After some ten minutes Farrell returned and informed me the decision arrived at was to accept my direction as to diversion. The march then proceeded towards Bellaghy. A number totalling about 80 had gathered at this junction and as the march moved off into the Bellaghy Road a number of men stretched across the roadway to impede its passage. These were swept aside by Police preceding the marchers.

Immediately prior to this slight confrontation at this location a male member of the Loyalist faction, now known as Nicholl from Tamnaran, Castledawson rushed a U.T.V. Camera crew of two men, striking at them and knocking the camera to the ground. The incident was witnessed by police personnel and the offender immediately arrested. No other incidents occurred at this time.

The march continued unimpeded for a distance of 2½ miles. At a point ¼ mile on the Toomebridge side of Ballydermot Cross I saw a number of men gathered holding a Union Flag - They numbered about 150 but when I spoke to them no person seemed to be in charge. I then relayed a message to have the marchers stopped. So far as was possible to make myself heard I addressed the assembly and asked the reason for their presence. Occasional utterances made it clear they intended to stop the People's Democracy March. I then asked them to clear the road and warned that if they persisted I would use force to move them. Just then Major Bunting arrived. He addressed the crowd and (at my request) exhorted them to move back to Ballydermott Cross Roads. Finally they did so and the People's Democracy March continued after a strong Force of Police formed a barrier between the assembly and the marchers. No incident save booing, jeering and cat-calling took place as the marchers passed.

No incident or difficulty arose until the March approached Drumlamph Cross Roads. Here I was approached by several men who objected to the marchers being allowed to use the direct road to Gulladuff. i.e. the diversion recommended. R.T. communication made it clear that there was no hostile assembly along the road. In view of this I directed the march through via the recommended diversionary route. At approximately 6.15pm the marchers reached Gulladuff where they stopped and entered the G.A.A. Hall for a meal and later a meeting. Prior to this I was approached by Mr. Hanna (Labour Lawyer) and Michael Farrell telling me they were now leaving for Maghera to investigate the position there in order to report back to the meeting. They returned some time later and informed me that there was a very large assembly of persons in the vicinity of the Orange Hall, Maghera, and some appeared to be moving in the direction of Knockmakilt i.e. Beagh Cross. After the meeting I was informed by Hanna and Farrell that the Marchers had decided to travel to Brackaghreilly Hall by Private cars but that it was their intention to re-commence the march from Gulladuff the following morning. Both said, however, that a further meeting would be held in Brackaghreilly Hall when they were settled in and the point of re-commencement would again be discussed. I arranged to contact them later at Brackaghreilly Hall. About 7.30pm the marchers left for Brackaghreilly in a convoy of private cars.

About this time I received information that there was a hostile gathering at Beagh Cross Roads and I left immediately with the County Inspector.

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I found a large crowd of about 200 milling about the cross roads. They appeared to be in a hostile mood and some were carrying sticks. No one appeared to be in charge. I saw Major Bunting there and he appeared to do his utmost to induce the crowd to return to the Orange Hall, Maghera, but to no avail. In the total darkness it was impossible to supervise the crowd so that the greater part of our efforts were directed at preventing any attempt by the crowd to move towards Gulladuff. A small section broke past the police and moved about 300 yards up towards Gulladuff but these were later moved back to the Cross by a Police Party who moved from Gulladuff. The crowd gradually returned towards the Orange Hall and I returned to Gulladuff where there was still a large crowd of bystanders. District Inspector Woods went to Maghera. At approximately 8.30pm I received instructions to return to Maghera where there were signs of a very large crowd assembling in the vicinity of the Orange Hall. I saw a crowd of approximately 700 in the vicinity of the Orange Hall. I also learned that a meeting was being held in the Hall by Major Bunting. There were a considerable number of persons, mainly men, standing about the footpath on Main Street but the carriageway was still free. There were also quite a few standing on the footpaths at the edge of the Nationalist Sector but there was nothing then to give cause for alarm. About 9.15pm word came through that Major Bunting did not intend to carry out the parade he had given notice of and it was believed then that the crowd would disperse gradually. Shortly after this I returned to Brackaghreilly Hall in order to learn of the marchers' plans for the following morning. I arranged too for the establishment of road checks on roads leading to Brackaghreilly Hall. At the Hall I made contact with Mr. Hanna (Labour Lawyer) who told me the marchers decided they would return to Gulladuff on the following morning to re-commence the march. I pointed out to him the dangers of following this course. He agreed with me and suggested that I should then impose a requirement upon them under the Public Order Act, but I considered it would have been imprudent to do so at that stage which in point of time was approximately 11 hours before the march was due to re-commence. I informed Mr. Hanna I would be guided by the circumstances prevailing on the following morning. He assured me he would prevail on the marchers not to return to Gulladuff.

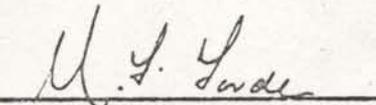
I returned to Maghera arriving there at approximately 10.30pm. I then saw a crowd of about 500 gathered at the junction of Lower Main Street and Coleraine Road. There was also a crowd of some three hundred assembled in Upper Main Street - the edge of the Nationalist Sector. District Inspectors Woods and Hood were present and the former informed me that the crowd then in the Lower Main Street sector had surged up from the Orange Hall evidently with the intention of marching and that he had stopped them. The two opposing crowds were kept approximately 50 yards apart and insults and verbal abuse were hurled in each direction. District Inspectors Woods and Hood remained to control the Unionist crowd whilst I, with Head Constable Pollock endeavoured to control the Nationalist crowd. I appealed to them to disperse but they refused to do so until the opposing party would. Bottle and stone throwing commenced from the back of each crowd in the opposite direction and I saw one break the upper pane of a window in a butcher shop - Tomill's. At approximately 11.30pm whilst attempting to persuade the Nationalist Section to disperse I was struck and injured on the left eye with a bottle and removed to hospital for treatment.

I can confirm that for a short period afterwards the tempo of each crowd became more hostile towards each other and the police cordon in Upper Main Street were subjected to a very heavy barrage of bottles and other missiles, from the People's Democracy supporters. Several police were injured and considerable damage caused to police vehicles. It was then considered necessary to move this crowd back along Upper Main Street with a view to dispersing it, and this manoeuvre was accomplished under the direction of District Inspectors Woods and Hood and Head Constable Pollock with local and Reserve Force personnel.

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During the time these supporters were being dispersed a large crowd of Loyalists, numbering approx. 250, came from the general direction of Belfast and was headed by two men each carrying a Loyalist flag on a pole. Small groups of Unionist supporters and the residue of the Loyalist crowd, which had been gathered all evening at the entrance to Coleraine Road, joined the upward marching crowd. The police cordon moved back some 20 yds. to entirely seal off Upper Main Street and to leave the entrance to Hall Street free. Although this crowd momentarily jostled against the police cordon no concerted effort was made to break it. The Loyalist parade, numbering about 400, then marched via Hall Street, Meeting House Avenue, Bank Square into Lower Main Street. The crowd was fairly hostile and considerable damage was being caused to shop windows. At this time police had successfully dispersed the People's Democracy supporters and immediately took similar action with regard to the Unionist Assembly, finally moving them completely out of the town. At approx. 1.30am 3.1.69 comparative peace prevailed. The following morning at 7.30am it was learned that the People's Democracy marchers intended to return in cars from Brackaghreilly Hall to Gulladuff, via Maghera. Head Constable Follock with police personnel went direct to Brackaghreilly and approximately half a mile from the hall met a section of the marchers. District Inspector Woods was present and spoke to the leader K. Boyle. He informed Mr. Boyle that he was requesting the marchers to continue their march to Londonderry without re-tracing their steps to Gulladuff. He advised him of the riot which had occurred in Maghera the previous night and the very real probability of similar outrages should the students attempt to go back towards Maghera. A meeting was held by the students in the hall and later they made a token effort to push past a police cordon. Various leaders of the movement commented on the police restrictions and the denial of their rights generally. Eventually at 9am approx. the parade marched off in the general direction of the Glenshane Pass. They processed the remainder of the route out of Maghera felt Police District without incident. However, from 8.45am onwards a steadily increasing crowd of Loyalists assembled outside Maghera Orange Hall with a view to ensuring that no section of the People's Democracy March passed into Maghera. They were exceedingly hostile. The crowd eventually numbered about 200. During this time an incident involving a car carrying several persons approaching from the general direction of Belfast was overturned. The occurrence was witnessed by local police and it is expected that three local men will be made amenable.

In connection with the People's Democracy March generally, some of the incidents which occurred were observed by police personnel, and a schedule of those in respect of which persons have been made amenable, is appended for information.

  
District Inspector.