

Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet Security Committee
held in Stormont Castle on Tuesday, 15th July, 1969, at 2.30 p.m.

PRESENT: The Prime Minister
The Minister in the Senate
The Minister of Home Affairs
The Minister of Education
The Minister of Development

ALSO PRESENT: The Inspector General
The Deputy Inspector General

The Secretary to the Cabinet
The Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet

Mr. H. Coote

The Minister of Home Affairs and the Inspector General reported as follows on the previous night's activities:

Londonderry

There had been a confrontation in the Bishop Street/Long Tower area which Mr. Hume and Mr. McAteer had endeavoured to control. Water wagons which had to be used eventually had succeeded in confining the mob to that area and things had quietened down about 3.30 a.m. The attacks had not been as vicious as the previous night and the indications were that the Derry situation was cooling down. The Prime Minister mentioned a telegram from the Waterside Unionists which suggested that trouble-makers were crossing into Londonderry from the Republic but the Inspector General thought that the evidence was against this. If it were true it would be almost impossible to apprehend such persons unless they carried weapons.

Dungiven

Rival crowds were in evidence but there had been no further incidents. Orangemen were boarding up the Orange Hall and it was possible that an attempt would be made to raze it to the ground. It was, therefore, being guarded and would continue to be watched for some time to come.

Hooker Street, Belfast

The Inspector General said that the troubles here were local in character and that he was not, therefore, too worried about the situation. Much of the trouble had stemmed from the Edenderry Inn at the corner of Hooker Street

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which was a meeting place for the Shankill Unionist Defence Committee. The police had agreed to defend the premises against attack, subject to the removal of a Union Jack which was being flown and to the departure of the Defence Committee members. Police arrangements for dealing with the situation in the area had not gone according to plan due to the fact that one squad of police detailed for duty there had been unable to locate Hooker Street. This was regrettable and there seemed, therefore, to be a case for the squad being led by a police officer who was familiar with the locality. Plans were, however, in hand to cope with any similar situation which might arise tonight.

In reply to the Prime Minister, who asked about the house which had been burned during the night, the Inspector General said that this was located in Disraeli Street, a Protestant area on the other side of the Cruelin Road, and belonged to a Roman Catholic family who were on holiday. The fire had been discovered by an R.U.C. patrol and the premises were badly damaged. The police were regarding the fire as malicious.

Death of Mr. Francis McCloskey

The Prime Minister expressed his concern at the reporting of this death by the Irish News and thought that this could not do other than exacerbate the situation in Dungiven. The Secretary to the Cabinet said that the incident had been headlined "No. 1 riot death". The Inspector General said that the police knew nothing of the circumstances of this death but there were a number of discrepancies surrounding it and the case was now the subject of a criminal investigation by the Crime Ordinary Branch. A post-mortem was being carried out at Altnagelvin Hospital but it might not be possible to establish with certainty whether Mr. McCloskey's injury was due to a blow or a fall. The Prime Minister considered the issue of a statement to the Press an urgent necessity as the death could well be taken as a justification for attacks on the police tonight. The Minister of Home Affairs warned that the issue of a statement at this time could give rise to certain legal complications and, following discussion of the matter, it was agreed that the most that could be said would be that "investigations into the circumstances surrounding the death were continuing".

Police Equipment

The Prime Minister intimated that he had learned, through his brother, that members of the R.U.C. were critical of their helmets in that they were not considered strong enough and that they were asking whether anything could be done to strengthen police tenders. The Inspector General agreed that police helmets had a weakness in that they had insufficient protection at the back but this was currently being remedied by the fitting of a special pad.

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The top of the helmet was very strong, however, and was in fact up to No. 1 B.S.S. standard for motor-cyclists. As to police tenders, the Inspector General said that he did not envisage ordinary tenders entering the trouble spots; this was the job of the Land Rovers which had special grille protection. In his view it would be going rather far to have all tenders fitted with special protective materials. The Inspector General also reported that protective visors on helmets had not stood up to rough treatment and that it was the intention to replace all existing visors with a much stronger type as soon as supplies came to hand. A total of 1,200 shields were on order and were due to be delivered after the holidays. Two new water wagons of improved design were also on order. The Inspector General mentioned his difficulties in obtaining radio equipment from Fye and the Minister of Development suggested that the Ministry of Commerce might contact the firm with a view to expediting matters. The Minister of Education undertook to contact the Ards Metal Company who were handling the order for 1,200 shields with a view to speeding delivery.

Police Recruiting Drive - Belfast Telegraph leader

In reply to the Minister of Development who deplored the tone of a leader article in the Belfast Telegraph of 14th July which called for a stepping up of the Government's campaign to reinforce the police, the Inspector General said this was somewhat surprising in that he had had a talk with the editor only fairly recently when he had spelt out what was being done in this direction. The Minister of Home Affairs considered that a counter article was called for.

Withdrawal of the Army

In reply to the Prime Minister, the Inspector General stated that the Army withdrawal would go ahead as planned. He also reported that it had been considered unwise to publicise the fact and that the press release considered at the meeting of 8th July had been withdrawn. The Deputy Inspector General indicated that responsibility for static guard duty (during the hours of darkness only) at Category A key points (those vacated by the Army) would be taken over by the Special Constabulary; static guards at Category B points would be replaced by mobile patrols and guards at Category C points withdrawn altogether.

Future demonstrations

The Inspector General reported the possibility of two marches in Fermanagh on 19th July - by the Fermanagh People's Democracy and C.R. Association - one from Belleek and the other from Newtownbutler - converging on Enniskillen. He also mentioned the possibility of a Civil Rights parade in Armagh on 26th July or 2nd August and that a decision about the parade was likely to be reached at a meeting of the Armagh branch of the C.R.A. on 21st July. It was considered that an approach should be made to Senator Lennon with a view to persuading the organisers not to proceed with the Armagh march. The Inspector General also intimated that the Rev. Ian Paisley had announced at Loughgall on 13th July that

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he had put back his proposed march in Newry until 16th August. The Prime Minister said that in his talks with Mr. Paisley he had gained the impression that he was anxious to get out of it; he appeared, in fact, to be ready to contemplate the possibility that the Government would impose a ban on the march.

Police strength

In reply to the Minister in the Senate who asked about police numbers, the Inspector General said that a further 200 police were required to bring the force up to strength. The mobile classrooms to which reference had been made previously were due in October and these would help in speeding up the training process. Seventy-two recruits were in training at present. A new batch of 25 would be taken in next week and if recruitment at the present level and the five-month training period were maintained the end result should be 250 new police by next year. Taking into account wastage of one sort or another the overall result would be a nett increase of about 100 men.

In reply to the Minister in the Senate, who suggested that the police was no longer attractive as a career, the Inspector General thought that the increase in pay of some £2. 1s. 6d. per week arising out of the introduction of the 40-hour week should go some way towards helping matters. The question of attracting more Roman Catholics into the force was again considered. The Prime Minister said that the Home Secretary was interested in this aspect of police recruitment and that he would like to be in a position to tell him that steps had been taken to increase press advertising in Nationalist newspapers. The Inspector General explained that the police now had a Press Officer with advertising expertise and that the B.B.C. had agreed to allow programme time for R.U.C. recruiting publicity. The problem here, however, was one of finding sufficient material to fill the periods allotted. In so far as advertising in the Nationalist press was concerned, the Inspector General said that this was already being done. Coverage in the provincial papers had also been extended.

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