

## SECURITY OPERATIONS: PUBLIC ATTITUDES

1. The apparent lack of confidence on the part of the general public in the ability of the Government and the security forces to defeat the IRA may be due to some extent to the fact that present objectives and methods are not fully understood.
2. The IRA campaign is being conducted in the glare of publicity. People know a great deal through the news media about what is going on, especially in terms of attacks on life and property. Questions are being asked inside and outside Parliament about the conduct of operations, and in answering these questions a balance has to be struck between the needs of security and the importance of keeping the public properly informed.
3. Statements about measures being taken to remove the IRA threat appear to make little impact. The public are told that the enemy are being defeated by a process of attrition. They are losing men, weapons and morale, and this is proved by a running total of firearms captured, of casualties suffered and of persons convicted. The organization of the IRA is allegedly being broken up by unrelenting pressure; the security forces are operating a policy of deterrence and are reducing hostile initiative; there is a rapid and effective response to attack. Generalities of this kind appear frequently in speeches and communiques but fail to carry conviction.
4. One reason may well be that actual results are not observable. There are, it is true, exceptions. For example, searches are usually well publicized, the methods understood and the results shown in actual figures. The same applies to the control of crowds and processions: the security forces are seen in action and their success measured.
5. But other tasks are not so readily understood, or if they are understood their effectiveness is questioned. This is particularly true of road-checks, which, it should be remembered, bring large numbers of ordinary citizens directly into contact with the security forces. The fact that only a few show resentment at the inconvenience caused should not obscure the fact that the majority regard road checks as largely a waste of time. They would argue that an impressive

tally of vehicles stopped and searched proves nothing. A study of road check techniques is now under way, and this will be awaited with interest. In the meantime there is need for some public assurance that manpower is being effectively used on this type of security task.

6. Patrolling is another activity which is imperfectly understood. The constable on the beat performs the traditional role of deterring the ordinary criminal, and the mobile patrol is a recognized extension of this role. But the effectiveness of the mobile patrol as a means of combating the IRA is not widely accepted. To the casual observer it seems relatively easy for armed gunmen to escape the attention of the security forces when used in this way. But again, a good deal of ignorance prevails as to the precise tasks allotted to patrols, whether mounted or otherwise.

7. The control of the Border has been the subject of a special review. Many people are urging much stricter methods of control without fully appreciating the problems involved, the manpower requirements or the cost-effectiveness of any new measures. But again the balance of advantages as between the deployment of more forces on the Border and their use in other areas and on other tasks, has not been spelt out.

8. There is furthermore the vexed question of protecting buildings and target installations. The impression given is of a belated reaction to events on the part of the authorities.

This impression might be removed if it were possible not merely to show that extra protection was being provided but also to explain and justify the taking of risks where targets can only be protected at the expense of an unacceptable dispersion of effort.

9. What is being argued is the need for the public to be taken into confidence rather more than hitherto. This does not simply mean a greater use of mass media. It may mean a more enlightened attempt to reach informed opinion and to explain the "nuts and bolts" of Army and Police strategy. In particular

it poses the question whether Ministers and M.Ps ought not to be more fully briefed on the thinking behind present methods of counter-terrorism. And this in turn pre-supposes a somewhat closer interrelationship between civil, military and planning at the level between broad policies on the one hand and the conduct of tactical operations on the other.