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cc PS/SofS (L&B) - M
PS/Ministers (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
PS/Mr Bell - M
Mr Blelloch - M
Mr Marshall
Mr Buxton - M

Mr Doyne Dittmar
Mr Wyatt - M
Mr Gilliland - M
Mr Blatherwick - M
Mr Davenport - M

15

MR SCOTT'S MEETING WITH A UNIONIST DEPUTATION - 14 NOVEMBER 1981

Those present

Mr Scott
Mr Blelloch
Mr Gilliland
Mr Pope

RECEIVED
1130
18 NOV 1981
MUFAX ROOM
STORMONT HOUSE ANNEX

James Molyneux MP
Harold McCusker MP
Councillor Bleakes
Councillor Maginnis
Michael Armstrong

① Mr Bell
② POL 20/11

Mr Molyneux led a group of Unionists to Stormont House on the afternoon of 14 November to discuss with Mr Scott the murder of the Reverend Robert Bradford MP and security generally. He claimed that Northern Ireland had experienced "seven to ten days of butchery" of which Reverend Bradford's killing was merely the culmination. There was a strong feeling of discontent amongst loyalists in Northern Ireland and a widely held view that security policy just was not working. Mr McCusker agreed and said that the general lack of confidence was such that public representatives such as himself had been speculating about who would be next to be killed. Councillor Maginnis said that he had seen the Chief Constable during the week but had received no assurances that action would be taken to bring the present wave of killings to a halt. For his own part, he had been a member of the security forces since 1958 and was sure that he knew how the killings could be stopped. He warned that if nothing was done or was seen to be done by the Chief Constable and GOC, then Protestants would be forced to look to their own defences.

Councillor Bleakes said that public representatives felt betrayed, and as a result law abiding citizens were being turned into rebels. The councillors whom he represented were dissatisfied with the activities of the Chief Constable and GOC and were now looking to their own devices to protect themselves. He was adamant that no political movement could or should take place while the current situation persisted.

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Replying, Mr Scott pointed out that over-reaction was exactly what the Provisional IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army were seeking to achieve by their current actions. The interests of the law abiding people of Northern Ireland could best be served by remaining calm during these difficult times - otherwise people would merely be playing into the hands of the terrorists. He did not share the view which had been expressed in some quarters that the Provisionals had embarked on this current wave of killings because they felt themselves to be on the verge of victory. On the contrary he was sure that they saw the recent discussions between the Prime Minister and Taoiseach as a serious threat to their position and were clearly hoping by their actions to frustrate any political movement.

Mr Armstrong was not disposed to accept this line of argument. He felt that the terrorists had identified weakness in the Government, and were playing on it. The Government had neglected its responsibilities and as a result was introducing fatuous excuses to explain its "inaction" on the security front. He felt it essential that the Government mobilised the local community in its own defence - otherwise the community would mobilise itself. The security forces were far too small in number and were hamstrung by absurd restrictions (he did not go so far as to detail what these restrictions might be). Clergymen, bishops and Moderators, were all condemning the present administration - this was a clear indication that the policies of that administration had to be wrong. He likened the Government's behaviour to that of the Conservative government at the time of Munich and demanded to know what steps the Government intended to take to meet the present threat. He was not disposed to see the attack on the home of Sir Michael Bavers as an indication that the Provisionals were trying to strike at symbols of co-operation between the UK and the Republic. Indeed he described the attack on Sir Michael as isolated and insignificant.

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Mr Scott countered by saying that it was totally unfair and very wide of the mark to accuse the Secretary of State of not caring about the security situation and not wanting to master it. This was very far from the truth. While the security situation was the Secretary of State's declared first priority it had to be accepted that at the same time the Government had a responsibility to rescue Northern Ireland from economic decline and to foster political movement. Continued co-operation between Dublin and the United Kingdom on the security and economic fronts was vital.

Mr McCusker claimed to be tired of being told that operations to counter security situation were the direct responsibility of the Chief Constable and GOC. The Secretary of State had a duty to ask these officers why, if the security situation was under their control, so many people were still being killed and injured. If his future and the future of Northern Ireland were dependent on the policies that the Chief Constable and the GOC were putting to effect, then he did not want to know. For his own part, he accepted that "friendly" co-operation between neighbouring states was acceptable and would not want to jeopardise this in any way. He could not, however, see the point of formal structures to achieve this end. At this stage Mr Armstrong and Councillor Maginnis turned their attack to the proposed structures between Dublin and London. Both felt that relationships between the United Kingdom and other countries had prospered for long enough without formal structures and queried the need for such structures to maintain relationships with the Republic of Ireland. They were convinced that the structures were nothing more than a camouflage to allow the Republic of Ireland to interfere in the affairs of Northern Ireland. Mr Armstrong also took the opportunity to attack HMG for their failure to station a seventh garrison unit in the Province as had been originally planned. He felt that this was a further example of the Government's uncaring attitude towards Northern Ireland and the protection of its citizens.

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McCusker and Councillor Bleakes felt that it was important that the Secretary of State should return to Northern Ireland as quickly as possible. Mr McCusker said that while they did not want Mr Prior as their leader, they had to accept that he was the Secretary of State. He in turn should accept that his place at this time was with the people of Northern Ireland. Councillor Bleakes said that the Secretary of State would be treating the people of Northern Ireland with disrespect if he did not return immediately. He warned that the mood of many Unionists was moving toward throwing out Stormont Ministers by whom the population felt they had been badly served.

With a rather calmer approach than that of his colleagues, Mr Molyneaux explained that he felt it important to point out to the Minister that he should not consider the views expressed on security and politics as having a sectarian basis. Both Protestants and those Roman Catholics who were in favour of the maintenance of the Union felt let down and saw that terrorists had been given a boost by the London/Dublin summit. He too questioned the need for special arrangements with a "tinpot Republic with nothing to offer". Councillor Bleakes then returned to the attack. He said that the people of Northern Ireland believed that they were rapidly approaching a civil war situation. His fellow councillors, including even former moderates, were actively thinking of forming defence committees in some areas. He would be seeking early meetings with the Secretary of State and the Chief Constable and he felt that both ought to see him and the local councillors. Much emotion had been stirred by the "negative" reaction from the Secretary of State and the Chief Constable during the meeting that Councillor Maginnis had had with them in the past week. Councillor Maginnis said that he was rapidly approaching the stage where he could not control the people in his area - he could only do so if he were seen to be working for their good. The Government had denied him

however, the opportunity to work as well as he might for his people's good. He pointed out that the Protestant community had handed over to the forces of law and order the killers and sectarian murders who had sprung from that community. They now felt completely let down by the Government since their support for law and order had not been matched by the Republican community. Mr McCusker said that people had hung on to their beliefs for as long as they possibly could. They were now disillusioned. The whole community was against further discussion with the government of the Republic and against the Government's security policy. Even the moderator of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church had rung him to say that he would do whatever McCusker wanted him to do and to imply his opposition to Government policy.

On the question of personal security, both Members of Parliament explained that they were not in favour of having police protection because they felt that they should be seen to be sharing the risks with their own people. However Mr McCusker had reinstated protection for sake of wife and children. Councillor Bleakes felt that those individuals who were concerned with protecting the community from terrorists, deserved greater protection themselves. The issue of .22 calibre Walther pistols to members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and other part-time members of the security forces was just not good enough - 'effective' weapons were needed.

Mr Molyneux criticised the withdrawal in August 1979 of what he described as "special units" which had been trained by and operated with the Special Air Service Regiment. It was important that the Special Air Service's strength in Northern Ireland should be increased and that the special units brought back to the Province.

Mr Armstrong then set out the measures he would like to see employed to improve security in Northern Ireland. He wanted to see a reverse

of what he called the process of reduction of strength of the UDR. Ulster Defence Regiment bases had he claimed been closed for reasons of economy and this was weakening the security effort in many areas. There were long waiting lists of people who wish to join full time Ulster Defence Regiment and he felt that the bases should be re-opened to accommodate these. He criticised the situation in Fermanagh where the local Ulster Defence Regiment, he said, were mounting only static guards and not patrolling. The criticism of policing in South Armagh by the government of the Irish Republic at the time of the Dunne kidnapping had exposed a shameful situation and steps ought to be taken to reverse the situation. The Government had withdrawn covert operations from the area and the Royal Ulster Constabulary now lacked the strength and resources to police the border effectively.

Summing up the Deputation's arguments, Mr Molyneaux said that it was important that the Government was made aware of the general feeling in the Protestant community that the summit discussions had made the security situation worse by encouraging Republican terrorists to step up their activity. The Minister in turn stressed that the Secretary of State had himself said that the security battle was his first responsibility. Those who were advocating the sort of action that had been advocated at the meeting ought to bear in mind that this would merely have the effect of making the job of the security forces far more difficult than it might otherwise be and of diverting attention from the real problems. It ought to be borne in mind that the RUC, the army and UDR were the people best qualified and best equipped to deal with terrorism from whichever quarter it came. It would not help matters at all if the effectiveness of their operations were diluted by the need to deal with allegedly anti-terrorist activity by loyalist organisations.

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