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cc: Mr Walker

From: Mr T McCusker

19 June 1991

To: Mr N Hamilton

MA 19/6

NATIONALISTS AND SECURITY FORCES

Attached is the note you requested about Nationalist reaction to the Security Forces.



T McCUSKER

PS/MR Fell

Mr Fell will be interested. I have given a copy to Mr Ledlie & Mr Bell.

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ATTITUDES TO SECURITY FORCES

1. The attitude of Nationalists/Catholics to the security forces depends on a number of things: geography, culture, prevalence of contact, nature of contact, sex, socio economic status, age etc.
2. Catholics are not homogeneous in terms of nationalism. For some it does not exist, while for others it is a vague aspiration. However for a significant number it is a deeply rooted desire which affects their attitudes to all institutions of the state, and particularly the security forces.
3. Location plays an important role in attitudes to the security forces. For example, reaction in South Armagh will differ significantly to that in South Belfast or even to parts of predominantly nationalist areas of Down. In part this is related to the level of conflict and scale of security force operations, but it is also a reflection of the strength of nationalist culture which exists in those areas.
4. In areas which experience a high level of contact with the security forces through road blocks, patrols, house searches, etc., there is a perception of the security forces as oppressors, and while there may be the occasional acceptance of the police in situations of serious non-sectarian crime or disasters, it is soon submerged in recriminations following the next security force incident. In terms of the urban/rural split the difference seems to relate to the nature of contact, ie

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road checks rather than foot patrols; the interface with GAA players and clubs also appears contentious in rural areas. The new President of the GAA, Peter Quinn, has recently been very critical of the attitude of the Police to the GAA.

5. A large number of Catholics support the police in all that they do and accept that in the pursuit of terrorists there is bound to be some infringement of rights. However, there is concern about aspects of policing which seems to reflect more of a desire to be seen to do something in the eyes of unionists than form part of a coherent strategy to marginalise support for PIRA. The policing of funerals is one example where to many the police hand PIRA a major propaganda coup. The picture of saturation attendance by the police at funerals does not win any hearts and minds in the Catholic community, and many still remember with great distaste the various incidents surrounding the Marley funerals in Belfast a few years back. That is not to say that Catholics support military style funerals. It is however felt that PIRA would suffer most in propaganda terms within the community and internationally if it was seen to make funerals triumphalist military occasions. It is a fine judgement, but for the Catholic community funeral rites are deeply ingrained and police operations are just as much a distortion as paramilitary trappings. This might be left to the Churches to take a stronger pastoral role.

6. Another area is the use of lethal force. Catholics, while not sympathetic to the activities of those killed, nevertheless believe many could have been arrested rather than shot. The reaction to the recent Coagh killings is an example where Catholics from all levels

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of society have suspicions about the necessity for lethal force.

7. A major problem is the attitudes of young people in disadvantaged areas where the conflict is at its height. The young people in these areas and in Protestant ghettos would in any event have a strained relationship with the security forces similar to that of other major cities. However, the reports of regular harassment by security force patrols gives no confidence that recruitment for paramilitary organisations will become more difficult. On the contrary, it seems from any anecdotal evidence that young people join these organisations more for retribution than any ideological principles.

8. The role of police in schools is also interesting in that both teachers and pupils can appreciate and accept the police roles in crime prevention, road safety, etc. However there seems to be a dichotomy which splits this role into ordinary crime and that related to terrorism; almost as if there were two police forces in operation. The benefits of good school work can be very quickly undone when subsequently the police are seen in a military role.

9. On a scale of popularity the order would be the police, the army and the UDR. In particular, the role of the UDR is seen by many Catholics from different backgrounds as being sectarian. There is a general sense of the security forces being part of the "other side", or at least something apart from the Catholic community. Allegations of collusion are often taken for granted as being "just what you would expect". This can be allied with a general lack of confidence in the independence of the Police Complaints Procedure. Catholics who join the

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police are viewed with hostility in some quarters. For others the impact is mixed because the officers' own security arrangements often mean a reduced contact with Catholic friends and there are therefore no real opportunities for relationships or appreciation to develop. There is no real belief that Catholic recruitment would pick up until the political climate changes and there is wider community support.

10. One of the gaps in our information is the absence of empirical evidence about the relationships between communities and the security forces. In part the British Social Attitudes Survey can give some insight into the general attitude of the community to the institutions of state, but it is no substitute for location studies which can reflect more accurately the different sets of relationships which exist. Apart from any benefit in trying to encourage the security forces to be more sensitive to the impact of their operations, the situation will have advanced significantly if the information base is more effective than the present largely anecdotal evidence.

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FROM: PS/Paymaster General
20 June 1991

cc PS/Paymaster General (B&L) - B
PS/MofS (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Hamilton - B 20/6
Mr Bell - B

585/6

Mr Ledlie - B

SECRASP: PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN SECURITY POLICY

The Paymaster General has asked me to thank you for your minute of 19 June enclosing a draft of the "Public Confidence in Security Policy" note.

Lord Belstead agrees that the paper should be circulated now. He has suggested that some other examples might possibly be added to paragraph 4 (a), (b) and (c) but that can be addressed in the discussion of the paper.

Signed

CHRIS McWILLIAMS
Departmental Private Secretary

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