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By agreement with the Inspector General of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, I visited Ulster from 15th to 18th April to enable me to be present during the Easter celebrations that weekend. In consequence I am setting down these brief impressions for what they may be worth.

2. As late as Friday 15 April, Royal Ulster Constabulary information was that it remained the I.R.A. intention to exploit confusion and lawlessness arising out of the Belfast celebrations on Sunday 17 April in order to shoot members of the Crown forces. That the day passed off peaceably was due to three things :

- (a) The restraint of the Ulster authorities in assisting, rather than obstructing, the organisers of the provocative nationalist parade, and in their decision not to make precautionary arrests of dangerous men, which went far to ensure that tension was kept low:
- (b) The closing of the border on Saturday night and Sunday, and the late announcement of the decision to do so which, on the one hand, by reducing ordinary traffic and thus increasing the conspicuousness of demonstrators, deterred I.R.A. members from risking entry to the North, and, on the other, left them no time to alter plans:
- (c) The high order of police work.

3. The last point needs elaboration. It is beyond question that the tactical deployment of the police; their courteous firmness; their skill in handling two large parades, extreme nationalist and ultra unionist; the concentration and mobility of police reserves; the widespread radio network enabling the central operations room to exercise instant control; and the individual efficiency and high morale of officers and men, all combined, in the event, to frustrate the I.R.A. plan. Two or three incidents in the most dangerous area of the city, though perhaps seemingly trivial in themselves, were just the kind which could very rapidly have spread and produced the pre-conditions for violence which the I.R.A. wanted, but they were quickly neutralised by the instant preventive action made possible by the deployment, mobility and communications of the police.

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4. To say that in the event Belfast experienced little more rowdyism than on a boisterous Saturday night, would be to miss the point that the efficient discharge of the deliberate policies of the Northern Ireland authorities brought Belfast safely through what may well have been the worst moment of danger that has threatened it for decades.

5. The Easter celebrations will not close till the end of this week when there is to be another parade in Dublin to commemorate the actual date of the 1916 Rising. Although no information of I.R.A. intentions following the failure of their Belfast plan has yet been received, it is the assessment of the R.U.C. that this week must be regarded as a continuing period of special danger.

6. For the longer term, until revised I.R.A. intentions can be assessed, it would be proper to assume that the intensive training of last year, and distribution of arms, and the current activity of the most militant elements, indicates the likelihood of a period of violence, though possibly sporadic.



W. M. T. Magan.

20th April, 1966.

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