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BOX NO. 500
PARLIAMENT STREET B.O.
LONDON S.W.1

POL.F.51-30-203/D.D.G.

15th October, 1969.

M. Faulkner
The points to consider are whether this
is the sort of thing the Tribunal want & whether, if so,
there is any objection to its being sent to them by us. I wd
be inclined to send it.
Ann Timony, *Jaw*
16/10

When we spoke on 10th October you suggested that it might be helpful to the Scarman Tribunal if we put on record for what it is worth our professional assessment of the subversive influences at work in Northern Ireland in recent months. What follows is very much an outsider's view since, as you are aware, responsibility for the maintenance of law and order and the security of the State in Northern Ireland has rested upon the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and Security Service interest in subversion there has in consequence until fairly recently been limited to the exchange with the R.U.C. of information about Communist and Trotskyist agitators of mutual interest. The R.U.C. itself regarded the Irish Republican Army as its major target and liaison on this was maintained between the R.U.C. and the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police, which is the responsible authority on I.R.A. matters in Great Britain. The appointment last May of a Security Liaison Officer brought the Security Service into close contact with the R.U.C., but the latter's coverage of subversive targets, apart from the I.R.A., did not provide information of the depth and quality necessary for a reliable assessment.

2. The basic security problem in Northern Ireland is all too familiar. It springs from the historical antagonism of two communities whose religious and cultural differences have been perpetuated in the political system there. The effect is that political issues, however genuinely conceived, are liable to degenerate into loyalty tests and the Catholic minority, deprived of any prospect of office, is susceptible to appeals for unconstitutional action. Equally serious is the fact that the principal security instrument, the R.U.C., has been regarded by the Protestants as their first line of defence against internal and external aggression and by many Catholics as the instrument of an oppressive State.

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J. H. Waddell, Esq., C.B.,
HOME OFFICE.

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3. These factors have been constant throughout the history of the Northern Ireland State and it is relevant to ask why there should have been an eruption of violence on the scale of the last few months, more particularly at a time when, under the O'Neill administration, there was a more determined effort to reach an understanding with the Catholic community and with the Irish Republic than at any time in the past. Several factors seem to have contributed to the present eruption, namely Protestant reaction to proposed reforms and the activities of the civil rights movement and the I.R.A. The interplay of these forces has brought about, what has proved to be the decisive factor, the cumulative exhaustion of the R.U.C.

4. From Lord Carson's volunteers of 1913/14 onwards there has been a readiness and capability on the part of the Protestants to resort to violence in defence of what they see as their vital interests. The activities and pronouncements of the Rev. Ian PAISLEY and his associates have inflamed Protestant opinion, but how far PAISLEY himself is prepared to organise or endorse the use of force is a matter of some doubt. Adverse publicity following the Burntollet affair and his own period of imprisonment appear to have had some effect upon him and the claims of his associates, notably BUNTING, to have at their disposal an organised and armed body of Protestant extremists may well be exaggerated. During the summer of 1969 so long as the R.U.C. was able to keep order PAISLEY was prepared to wait upon events, and up to and including the disorders in Londonderry and Belfast in August the main Protestant threat came from urban mobs, including a sizeable criminal element, reacting spontaneously and emotionally to local incidents.

5. The specific contribution of the civil rights movement was to take out of the parliamentary arena into the streets agitation in support of demands which many would regard as unobjectionable. Initially it represented a broad Catholic front with the support of a few Protestant liberals. When, however, disorder followed and at the same time reform was promised, differences emerged. The majority were prepared to

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give the Government an opportunity to demonstrate its good faith, and marches and demonstrations were suspended for several weeks during May and June. There was however a small group, predominantly Trotskyists, whose aim was revolution rather than reform and by the middle of June this group had gained control. Our own sources indicate considerable traffic between these Trotskyists and like-minded groups in Great Britain with the latter seeking information about developments in Northern Ireland and occasionally proffering advice. There was and is also considerable traffic between Anarchist groups in London and their contacts in Belfast and Londonderry who may have contributed something to the street fighting techniques adopted there.

6. The I.R.A. is the traditional enemy in Northern Ireland and its tactics, terrorist raids and bomb attacks, have largely determined the shape of the R.U.C. The last major attack by the I.R.A. between 1956/62 demonstrated its inability to elicit any significant political response in the North and in the aftermath the I.R.A. re-examined its strategy. Largely under the influence of its new Marxist Director of Political Education, Dr. Roy JOHNSTON, it came to the conclusion that it needed to develop a wider political base by penetrating other quasi-political organisations of which currently the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland was its major target. It appears to have had substantial success and by June 1969 found itself working in an uneasy alliance with other revolutionary elements which had by then captured the movement. This is unlikely to have been a genuine meeting of political minds, but just as it was convenient for the Trotskyists in the civil rights movement to have the protection of the I.R.A. strong-arm men, it was equally convenient to the I.R.A. that the Trotskyists should keep the civil rights agitation going and thereby put yet further strain on the resources of the I.R.A.'s particular enemy, the R.U.C. This was the situation on the eve of Orange Day.

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7. With considerable difficulty the R.U.C. managed to contain the disorders of 12th July and the immediately succeeding days, but they had little time to recuperate before the next trial of strength, the Apprentices' March in Londonderry where the two communities are large, geographically well-defined and about evenly balanced. Moreover, the major flashpoint, the Bogside, had bitter and recent memories for both the R.U.C. and the local inhabitants. The former could not forget that they had been driven out of it on two recent occasions nor the latter the indisciplined Police incursion in January. In these circumstances the major preparations which seemed to have been made, namely the erection of barricades and the assembly of a substantial armoury of weapons, could well have been defensive. There is little covert intelligence about the organisation, if any, behind these preparations, but it can be said with confidence that the I.R.A., although progressively involved as the fighting developed in Bogside, were initially taken by surprise.

8. We are inclined to regard the disorders in Belfast as an understandable Protestant reaction to the success of the Bogside in resisting the R.U.C. On the other hand, there is the fact that a Police station came under fire at an early stage - in the circumstances presumably from the Catholic side - and, in the absence of firmer information about the sequence of events in the initial stages of the Belfast fighting, we would prefer not to speculate.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Simkins

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