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Mr Farver
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Copied to: Mr. Hopper
Mr. Waddell
Mr. Cairncross ✓
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Northern Ireland: the Belfast Barricades

The Home Secretary received on 11th September a deputation led by Mr. G. Fitt, M.P. Mr. Fitt was accompanied by Father Murphy, Mr. P. Devlin, M.P. Mr. Tom Conaty and Mr. J. McSparran, Q.C. Mr. Waddell was present.

The Home Secretary opened the meeting by emphasizing that he was seeing Mr. Fitt as a Member of the Westminster Parliament and therefore a person with whom he had a direct constitutional relationship. It was largely for Mr. Fitt to choose whom he brought with him, except that the Home Secretary had to insist that he could not see people with I.R.A. connections.

The Home Secretary reviewed the situation in Northern Ireland by emphasizing the gains already made by the Catholic community. The Hunt Report had still to come and it was clear that the Northern Ireland Government could not escape its consequences. These advances, coupled with the criticisms in the forthcoming Cameron Report, carried the risk of a Protestant backlash. He adhered to his policy of not antagonising the Protestant majority in order that reforms and peace would be possible, and for this reason had been at pains to give no suggestion that Stormont would not continue. The continuance of the barricades undermined this delicate balance. They were quite inconsistent with the normal concepts of law and order and whatever might be said about volunteer policing behind the barricades, things were going on which should be investigated and stopped. The international reaction to the situation also gave cause for concern. It might be that the right wing of the Unionist Party had brought some pressure for the removal of the barricades and Major Chichester-Clark had to look to his rear just as the Catholic leaders had to take some note of extremists on their side; but there was also a substantial feeling in the business and commercial community that the barricades must go, not for the physical hindrance they caused, but because of the state of lawlessness which they represented.

The Home Secretary said that he regretted the lack of consultation with the Catholic community before the decision announced by Major Chichester-Clark that the barricades must come down, and he quite understood the Catholic community's wish to be satisfied with the amount of alternative protection. On this he could say that the Army already had in Belfast about 3,000 men, and a decision had been taken that day to send another battalion to Northern Ireland; as a result there would be as many soldiers in Belfast as the total strength of the R.U.C. for

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policing the whole of Northern Ireland. The Home Secretary also informed the deputation of the four stages which the Army would operate in their programme for removing the barricades, starting with local consultation with the people behind the barricades, leading to decision on what alternative protection was needed and to the final removal of the barricades. In view of this he asked the deputation for their support in getting the barricades down.

Father Murphy said that he agreed that the barricades must come down eventually, but the deplorable communications before the Prime Minister's announcement had led to a breakdown of trust on the part of the whole Catholic community. The terms of Major Chichester-Clark's broadcast were in themselves offensive to the Catholic community and the Cardinal could not believe that it had the Home Secretary's approval. The decision was inconsistent with General Freeland's previous assurance that there would be consultation on the removal of the barricades. General Freeland had also created difficulties for himself by publicly thanking Mr. Paisley for assisting in the removal of certain barricades. Mr. Paisley's lieutenant, Major Bunting, seemed able to make public threats about the use of guns without being prosecuted. The Home Secretary had asked for time for the implementation of the reforms and for the disarming of the 'B' Specials. In return he should give the Catholics time for the removal of the barricades.

The Home Secretary said that he had no responsibility for the form of the Prime Minister's broadcast, and Father Murphy should ask the Prime Minister for his interpretation of the words he used, but the Home Secretary did not believe that Major Chichester-Clark had any intention of slighting the Catholic community. If Major Bunting had committed offences which were not being prosecuted, this was typical of the general undermining of law and order to which the barricades had contributed. The Home Secretary asked Father Murphy to recognise that if law and order was not restored, the alternative was anarchy. The Home Secretary also referred to the statement by the Northern Ireland Minister for Home Affairs about the use of the Special Powers Act against the people behind the barricades.

Mr. Devlin said that there had been far more illegality and disorder in the few days before the barricades were put up and the barricades had, in fact, steadied the situation. There was no real crime in the Catholic areas behind the barricades but, on the other hand, Catholics were still exposed to mobs of Protestants and to intimidation in employment and outside social security offices. A large number of the 'B' Specials still had their arms.

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The Home Secretary said that he would take up these complaints of intimidation and referred to the setting up of the Public Protection Authority. He gave in round figures the latest information about the disarming of the 'B' Specials, confirming that they were based on full and proper records of the number of arms issued to 'B' Specials over recent years. The barricades might have been needed in the past, but the G.O.C. was now satisfied that alternative protection could be given, and that the removal of the barricades would itself reduce the tension because of the rumours which could be spread in the present atmosphere.

Mr. Conaty said that it had been established that the disorders and the resulting situation had had virtually no direct commercial consequences of any significance. As Chairman of a barricade committee in Anderson Town he was most concerned with the way in which the military had broken their word about removing the barricades only by agreement. There had also been a regrettable dawn swoop in the last day or so on Mona Road and Albert Road barricades. If the four stages now outlined by the Home Secretary had been previously made known by the G.O.C., the present meeting would have been unnecessary. (Father Murphy and Mr. Devlin agreed.)

The Home Secretary said that he had no information to suggest that the recent decision on the removal of the barricades was in conflict with any promises which he or the military had made.

Mr. McSparran repeated the complaints about the terms of Major Chichester-Clark's broadcast and, in particular, the reference to a "mischievous minority behind the barricades". As he had made clear to Mr. Oliver Wright the previous evening, it was a major blunder that there had been no previous consultation with the Catholic leaders, who could have prepared their people for the decision. The result had nearly been a riot on Tuesday evening. It was essential that the Catholic leaders should have the coming weekend to prepare their people before any substantial moves were made against the barricades.

The Home Secretary reminded the deputation of Mr. Wright's functions and emphasized that he had no executive responsibility for the handling of the announcement. He had in fact on this, and all other matters, been at pains to keep the Cardinal in the closest touch. The Home Secretary had full confidence in him.

The Home Secretary then said that he had been impressed by all the deputation had said about the need for another weekend before substantial moves were made, but he still wanted the deputation to be able to come out with a clear statement in favour of removal, in view of the assurances he had given them about protection. Mr. Devlin's first reaction was that they could say nothing about the barricades. It was then agreed that there should be a recess for about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour.

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It is known that during the adjournment the deputation consulted Mr. Paddy Kennedy and Mr. Sullivan. They then returned to offer the form of words which, with two minor amendments, is embodied in paragraphs 4 to 6 of the attached press notice issued after the meeting. Paragraph 5 reflects what they were told about the details of the four stages of removal to be operated by the Army. This description of the four stages had previously been agreed in substance with the G.O.C. The Home Secretary made it clear to the deputation that under (3) of paragraph 5 of the press notice any ambiguity about the adequacy of the proposals for protection would in the last resort be resolved by the Army. Plainly this could not be done in every case without terrible trouble resulting, but in the case of some individual barricades it might be that the army would have to proceed with the removal of the barricade without agreement with the local people on the proposals for protection.

The following main points of detail were made by individual members of the deputation:-

- (a) Father Murphy said that Radio Free Belfast stopped broadcasting on the previous day. He and Mr. P. Devlin and Mr. J. Sullivan had been associated with this decision.
- (b) Mr. McSparran said that he had no confidence in the Minister for Home Affairs, though he had believed that he had liberal instincts. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry was a right-wing hard-liner, and the Permanent Secretary publicly regretted the departure of Mr. William Craig as Minister. Over a period of years hard-liners had been specially recruited to the Civil Service staff at the Ministry. The Home Secretary said that he took note of this and was concerned to hear what Mr. McSparran had said.
- (c) Father Murphy said that at the last Peace Community Conference they had been told that the police would not support applications for bail from those charged with offences during the disorder. But cases had since arisen where bail was granted.
- (d) Father Murphy said that the volunteer policemen behind the barricades were admirable characters and he would like to see them join the R.U.C. One difficulty in the way of Catholics becoming part of the public service was that the Union Jack and emblems of Royalty were used in an offensive way as symbols of the Unionist Party. He hoped that this could be stopped and that in time Northern Ireland might have a separate flag.

(e) Mr. McSparran

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- (e) Mr. McSparran said that some of the recent appointments of Catholics to important public posts (e.g. the Cameron Commission and the Boundaries Commission) did not inspire confidence. He suggested that there should be some informal machinery for considering such appointments before they were made. The Home Secretary said that he would see that this suggestion was considered by the Working Party on public employment.

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PRESS NOTICE

The Home Secretary today met Mr. Gerard Fitt, M.P. and representatives of Roman Catholic organisations in Belfast. Mr. Fitt was accompanied by The Rev. Fr. Padraig Murphy, Administrator St. Peter's Pro-Cathedral, Mr. Patrick Devlin, M.P. (Falls), Mr. Tom Conaty, Mr. J. D. McSparran, Q.C.

2. The Home Secretary said that he had kept in continuous touch with the situation in Belfast since his visit to Northern Ireland a fortnight ago. He fully understood the fears of those who erected barricades but drew attention to the growing strength of the military forces available to assure protection against violence and intimidation. There were now six full-strength battalions for the City of Belfast alone and he informed the deputation that the G.O.C's request for the addition of one more battalion to the Army forces in Northern Ireland had been met by the Secretary of State for Defence, and would be announced immediately.

3. General Freeland had assured him that by means of the peace line and in other ways the Army would afford all reasonable protection for whatever period it was necessary.

4. The deputation expressed their satisfaction with the results of the meeting and with the details of the additional military protection which would be made available. It was accepted that the continued existence of barricades constituted an interference with the normal commercial and social life of the community. All parties agreed that they should be removed at the earliest possible moment.

5. The steps preliminary to the removal of the barricades would be:-

- (1) The army local commander should discuss the situation with the representatives of the people behind each barricade;
- (2) together they should assess the requirements of those people for military protection and the army commander should decide how that could best be produced;
- (3) on agreement as to the proposals for protection between the local people and the army, the barricades to be removed by the local people alone, or by the joint efforts of the army and the local people or, in the last resort, by the army alone if they were satisfied that the requirements for protection were met.

6. The members of the deputation emphasized the wish of the people whom they represented to work towards peace and justice for all in the community, and expressed their willingness to use their best endeavours to bring about an early removal of the barricades.

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7. The Home Secretary said that he welcomed the establishment of the Public Protection Authority as a means of dealing with intimidation by securing speedy protection through the Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He urged people who are intimidated not to hesitate to call for the help of the authorities.

8. The Home Secretary said that the action programme initiated by the Northern Ireland Government would go far to redress the grievances identified in the Cameron Report that would be published tomorrow. The Working Parties would carry this task still further, as would the work of the Committee on the Police headed by Lord Hunt whose report to the Northern Ireland Government was expected within the next four weeks. The momentum of the work that had been set in hand must be maintained.

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