

ORANGE, GREEN, AND BLUE: POLICE REFORM AND SECTARIAN POLITICS IN
NORTHERN IRELAND, 1922-2001

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AN HONORS THESIS

in

History

Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of History of the University of Pennsylvania
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

2017

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*“Oh well do I remember the bleak December day
When the Sheriff and the Landlord came to drive us all away.
They set my roof on fire with their cursed English spleen
And that’s another reason why I left old Skibbereen.”*

-“Skibbereen,” Irish traditional folk song

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Introduction **An Unfortunate Remark**

On the morning of April 24, 1963, Belthazar Johannes Vorster took his feet on the floor of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. As the pro-apartheid government's Minister for Justice, it was that morning his task to make the case in favor of passing the General Law Amendment Bill.

The mundane-sounding proposition was anything but. Though its name may have been innocuous, the General Law Amendment Act was, in fact, the latest addition to the body of South African legislation popularly known as the Coercion Acts — the expansive set of laws and decrees which gave the authoritarian Government of the Republic of South Africa the legal authority to administer and enforce its strict and brutal policy of racial apartheid. This particular bill criminalized several additional forms of anti-apartheid activism and granted the Republic's police force the authority to detain political dissidents for an unlimited number of consecutive 90-day periods without a warrant.¹

The task was complicated somewhat by the distinct possibility that the measure might further embarrass South Africa, already under heavy fire from many corners of the international community, and further complicate its already-strained relationship with Great Britain, from which it had seceded two years earlier. That possibility had evidently occurred to some member of the South African Parliament, who, in turn, put it to Justice Minister Vorster in the course of parliamentary oral questioning.² Vorster had a deflection ready. "Why," he remarked, "I would

¹ Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. General Law Amendment Act, 1963. Act No. 37 of 1963.

² Series of untitled memos. PRONI File HO/5/31

be willing to exchange all the legislation of this sort for *one clause* of the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act.”³

Vorster’s insinuation was clear: Britain could hardly object to the passage of his illiberal law while tolerating the existence of an even more draconian statute on the books of its own devolved government in Northern Ireland.

He had a point, and the Parliament knew it. So did the Government of Northern Ireland. When word of the remark reached their main offices at Stormont Castle just outside Belfast, it generated a flood of hastily-written memos fretting about how the Government would answer the questions which would inevitably come from the international press if the comment received any real attention. It had been, they agreed, “an unfortunate remark,”⁴ but nobody had any good answers. Vorster had clearly touched a nerve.

The Act to which Vorster had alluded (and arguably, the nerve he had touched) had its origins in the 1920 partitioning of Ireland into North and South, amidst the backdrop of the then-ongoing Irish War of Independence between the British government and the Irish Republican Army and its political wing, Sinn Fein. The War of Independence, in turn, had its origins in — among other things — the failure of four successive pieces of legislation intended to grant Ireland a degree of self-government, known as “Home Rule,” which it had not held since the dissolution of the Parliament of Ireland in 1801. Home Rule, however, was a deeply divisive issue in Ireland. The island’s Protestant minority, who lived mainly in the northernmost province of Ulster was fiercely opposed to it, and it was an opposition rooted in long rooted in long history. The Ulster Protestants were, for the most part, descended from the Scottish and English settlers who had arrived during the 17th-century “Plantation of Ulster,” a partially-successful

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

attempt to establish a loyal, British, Protestant satellite-community in one of Ireland's most historically uprising-prone regions. The Plantation had forcibly displaced tens of thousands of native Irish Catholics, and relations between Catholics who mostly thought of themselves as Irish, and Protestants who mostly thought of themselves as British, had been tense and intermittently violent in the region ever since.

Ulster Protestants, who enjoyed a position of socio-political supremacy in their province under British rule, consequently feared that Home Rule would mean Catholic Rule, and that they would wind up a second-class minority in a vindictive Irish Catholic ethno-state. The colonial attitudes that many of them absorbed from their mother country did not tend to mitigate these sentiments, either. As debates over Home Rule and Irish governance unraveled from 1886 to 1914, these attitudes and fears led to the emergence of "Unionism" as a political identity and platform all its own, centered around the pillars of maintaining British rule of Ireland, opposing movements for Home Rule and Irish independence, assertion of British and Protestant identity, and — to a debateable but undeniable extent — anti-Catholic prejudice. As it developed and matured, the movement coalesced around a number of overlapping political and social organizations, most notably the Ulster Unionist Council and the fraternal Orange Order. Given its comparatively small number of adherents, Ulster Unionism played an outsized role in prewar British politics. Along with their allies in the Conservative Party, Unionists secured the defeat of every legislative attempt to grant Home Rule to Ireland up through the outbreak of the First World War. Nor was Unionism a purely legislative phenomenon. So fierce was Unionist opposition to Home Rule that when, in 1912, it looked likely that the Irish Parliamentary Party's Third Home Rule Bill was likely to pass Parliament, Unionist leaders James Craig and Edward Carson formed an armed militia, the Ulster Volunteer Force, to oppose Home Rule by force if it

became law. Indeed, it was in no small part the fear that the granting of Home Rule would provoke massive sectarian violence in the North which facilitated the defeat of the Third Home Rule Bill.

The idea of partition, which had been floating around British politics in various forms since the 1880s, had been largely settled on before the outbreak of the First World War as a grand solution to the crisis presented by the failure of the Home Rule bills and the ever-growing tension between Unionists and their opponents, Nationalists and Republicans, in Ireland. However, the Home Rule question had been put on hold during the war, during which time the general sentiment in Ireland swung dramatically. Harsh British behavior during wartime, including the execution of the Republican leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising and the conduct of a massively unpopular and draconian conscription campaign had pushed much of the population away from the compromise position of Home Rule and toward Sinn Fein's demand for a wholly independent Republic, as evidenced by Sinn Fein's victory over the Home Rule-supporting Irish Parliamentary Party in the 1918 General Election. When Herbert Henry Asquith's Liberal government took up partition again in 1920, therefore, it no longer represented an acceptable compromise to the Irish people, and so did little to siphon popular support from the IRA. Nevertheless, the Government of Ireland Act was pushed through, nominally taking effect in March 1921.⁵

In theory, the Act divided the island into "Northern Ireland," composed of the six counties of the historical province of Ulster in which Protestants formed a majority, and "Southern Ireland," composed of everywhere else. Outside the "Six Counties," however, the Act had functionally no effect. Following their landslide victory in the 1918 General Election, the

⁵ Gallagher, Frank. *The Indivisible Island: The History of the Partition of Ireland*. London: Gollancz, 1957. 140-49.

elected MPs of Sinn Féin had abstained from attendance at Westminster, instead assuming the mantle of the “First Dáil” (Parliament) of Ireland and declaring themselves the legitimate government of a thirty-two county independent Irish Republic. Later the same day, IRA members ambushed and killed several members of the British-commanded Royal Irish Constabulary, effectively beginning the Irish War of Independence.

In consequence, by 1920, Westminster’s practical ability to impose a new government in “Southern Ireland” was extremely limited. In accordance with the Government of Ireland Act, elections were technically held, but as candidates allegiant to the Dáil (and as such, who rejected the validity of the partition) stood unopposed in 124 of 128 constituencies, no polling actually occurred.

In the North, meanwhile, elections were held to the new Parliament of Northern Ireland. Unionism’s total dominance of politics in the Six Counties allowed the Unionist political infrastructure, led by the Ulster Unionist Council, to easily transform itself into the province’s new Government. The Unionist Party, the Ulster Unionist Council’s newly-formed political wing, easily won 40 of the 52 seats in the new Parliament, with UVF co-founder Sir James Craig as its first Prime Minister. The new Government packed itself and the Civil Service with Orange Order officials and UVF leaders, forming what was, on paper, simply a devolved parliamentary regional government, but which in practice — thanks to the drawing of its boundaries on deliberately partisan lines — amounted to a one-party state governed utterly in lockstep with Unionist ideology.⁶

⁶ For a complete analysis of Unionist political hegemony under the Parliament of Northern Ireland from 1921-1962 see: O’Leary, Brendan, and John McGarry. “Exercising control: the second Protestant Ascendancy.” In *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*. 107-52. Conflict and Change in Britain Series. 2nd ed. London: Athlone Press, 1996.

The Unionists were deeply shaken, however, when the British Government signed a peace treaty with the IRA in 1922 which provided for the creation of an Irish Free State which would enjoy Dominion status equivalent to that then enjoyed by Canada, and a greater degree of autonomy than Home Rule. Although Northern Ireland would be given an opportunity to opt-out of the Free State (which nobody was under any illusions that they would fail to take,) it would nevertheless mean the withdrawal of British forces from the South, leaving the Unionist Government — from its perspective — alone on an island most of which would be under the control of an insurgent-run regime hostile to its continued existence.

These developments hardly served to soften the Unionist government's feelings toward the minority of Catholics living within its jurisdiction, whom they generally suspected of Republican sympathies and subversive activities. That the IRA — which had split in two over whether or not to accept the partial victory represented by the Treaty — continued to conduct military operations along the Northern border did not do much to alleviate the paranoia, either.

It was in the midst of these conditions that Craig's government introduced the "Civil Authority (Special Powers) Act" to which Johannes Vorster would allude 41 years later. The "single clause" which he had likely had in mind could plausibly have been either clause 1 or 3 of Section 1, which stated, respectively, "the Civil Authority shall have power, in respect of persons, matters and things within the jurisdiction of the Government of Northern Ireland to take all such steps and issue all such orders as may be necessary for preserving the peace and maintaining order," and, "If any person does any act of such a nature as to be calculated to be prejudicial to the preservation of peace or the maintenance of order in Northern Ireland and not specifically provided for in the regulations, he shall be deemed to be guilty of an offence against the regulations." It also contained a number of more specific (though hardly necessary, given

the above) powers restricting various civil liberties.⁷ In addition to these provisions granting the Government power to make virtually any regulation it pleased, the Act also contained provisions granting to any police officer any power he should deem necessary to enforce any regulation or order arising under the act.⁸

It was thus not only the Special Powers Act's jaw-droppingly draconian provisions which made Vorster's remark uncomfortable in 1963. By raising the issue in connection with the passage of a policing bill, Vorster had implicated the Northern Irish policing structure as well, which had its own prickly history, married firmly to the questions of rule, governance, and legitimacy in Ireland which had shaped the circumstances of the Act's passage.

Any survey of the last thousand years of Irish history almost invariably becomes a tale of a long series of events and conflicts which expanded, shrunk, and expanded again the amount of Irish territory under English — later British — rule. It is easy, in performing such an exercise, to visualize the lines shifting on the map, green and red-shaded areas expanding and contracting in turn, but it takes a rather closer examination to discern what, to the average Irishman, the arrival of "English rule" in his town had historically meant.

In many respects, it would not have meant much. For most of their respective modern existences, English and Irish society, religion, civic culture were markedly different, and a change of banner over the local castle would hardly have meant that the Irish villagers around it became socio-culturally English overnight. A poor subsistence farmer under traditional Gaelic clan rule was likely to remain a poor subsistence farmer under English rule. That farmer could hardly have failed to notice, however, if he were suddenly obliged to obey not the old Gaelic

⁷ O'Leary and McGarry, *Politics of Antagonism*, 127.

⁸ McKenna, Fionnuala. "Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland), 1922" CAIN Web Service, Belfast: University of Ulster, 2016.

Brehon laws, which were entirely civil in character and lacked formal enforcement mechanisms,⁹ but English Common Law, containing both civil and criminal elements and enforced by a permanent Sheriff and royal judges. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that it was the attempted installation of these alien mechanisms which had, on more than a few occasions, prompted Irishmen to take up arms against English rule. In more recent cultural memory, the generally vicious behavior of paramilitary policing bodies during the War of Independence — the Auxiliaries and the hated Black and Tans most notably — had done much to garner support for the IRA and militant Republican politics.

Given that background, it is not difficult to understand why the news of Vorster's comment prompted an uneasy reaction in Northern Ireland. With the single comment, he had shone a spotlight on a great deal of historical baggage both recent and ancient which, by 1961, was no longer so easily dismissible as it might once have been. With the Special Powers Act still on the books, Northern Ireland had more in common with the pariah-state in South Africa than could be comfortably explained away if international attention shifted onto its government's conduct. The rampant direct and indirect economic discrimination against the Catholic minority which had become *de rigueur* in the years of Unionist rule since 1921¹⁰ could have probably been explained or spun to the public's satisfaction, but the routine use of criminal sanctions, enforced by police, to suppress expression of or organization around a single political ideology was, even in 1963, unlikely to be received well if brought too much to light, as police in the American South were beginning to discover, and as Northern Ireland would find out in due course.

And so, with his remark, Vorster — who was himself the very incarnation of repressive quasi-English regimes — had just opened the possibility that Northern Ireland's practice of just

⁹ Kelly, Fergus. *A Guide to Early Irish Law*. Early Irish Law Series, Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988.

¹⁰ O'Leary and McGarry, *Politics of Antagonism*, 129.

that kind of repression would be placed squarely in the public eye's field of focus. As it turned out, the international community's attention was not attracted, but it was clear from their uneasy reaction that the Northern Irish Government feared that it might be. So it is not unforgivably beyond the realm of plausibility to imagine that someone in Stormont Castle that morning had a thought which had occurred to Northern Ireland's leaders in the past and would occur to them again in the future: that something was going to have to be done about the police.

Chapter One A Single Force Under a Single Command

The thought that something would need to be done about the police in Northern Ireland had certainly crossed the mind of Northern Ireland's first Secretary for Home Affairs, Sir Richard Dawson Bates Jr. A native of East Belfast's upper-middle-class and staunchly Protestant Strandtown district, Bates, though an only child, represented the third generation of Northern Irish, Protestant, and above all, Unionist civil servants in his family.¹ Bates' path into the highest levels of Northern Ireland's government was, in many ways, typical of the class and clique from which the first generation of officials serving the new Parliament was drawn. His paternal grandfather, John Bates, had been a career Belfast political operator who, through his machinations within both the Conservative Party the administrative ranks of the Corporation of Belfast, had risen to the post of Town Clerk of Belfast in 1842. In this capacity, John Bates was able, through machine politics, to amass so much political influence that later scholars of Belfast politics have described him as the "dictator of Belfast" from 1842-1854.² Disgruntled political contemporaries assigned him the somewhat less flattering title of "Master." Whether or not the former characterization is hyperbolic, John Bates was nevertheless able to amass enough political sway that, despite his own downfall and ostensible disgrace following a conviction by the Chancery for extensive tampering with the Belfast electoral rolls in 1855, he was able to ensure the accession of his otherwise politically inactive barrister son, Richard Dawson Bates, Sr., to the Crown Clerkship.

Though Richard Sr. would serve in this position for many years, he evidently did not share his father's enthusiasm for political connivance. His son, Richard Jr., — who went by his

¹ Hepburn, A.C. "Bates, Sir (Richard) Dawson, first baronet (1876–1949)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008.

² Budge, Ian, and Cornelius O'Leary. *Belfast: Approach to Crisis; a Study of Belfast Politics, 1613-1970*. London: Macmillan; St. Martin's Press, 1973. 44-50.

and his father's middle name, Dawson — proved to be another matter altogether. Dawson initially followed his father into the law, becoming appointed as a solicitor in 1900. In 1906, however, he made his entrance into Unionist politics when he became the Secretary of the Ulster Unionist Council, the organizing arm of the Unionist Party. Bates quickly developed a reputation for a conviction, unmatched in firmness even among the deeply-Orange first generation of Northern Irish political leaders, that Northern Ireland was rightly, in the slogan derived from a misquotation of Craig, a “Protestant state for a Protestant people.” His dislike of and distrust for Catholics was legendary.

From the UUC, Dawson Bates's path to involvement with Edward Carson's Ulster Volunteer Force was not a long one. In 1914, he gained major acclaim by his leading role in the successful Larne gun-running operation to supply the UVF with smuggled German military equipment. Bates had also been instrumental in the effort to establish Northern Ireland's locally-controlled security force, the Ulster Special Constabulary, in 1920.³ Following the passage of the Government of Ireland Act but before the convention of the Parliament of Northern Ireland, James Craig, then a junior minister in the British Government, had cut a deal with Prime Minister David Lloyd George to allow for the creation of a locally-organized and commanded police force which could operate independently of the regular RIC, and thus, the British Government. What this meant in practice was that from the moment of its inception, the devolved Government of Northern Ireland would command its own armed forces. This was an extraordinary arrangement unlike any other in the United Kingdom, made even more so by the fact that Bates, along with Carson and fellow Orangeman Colonel Wilfred Spender, orchestrated the raising of the force by enrolling nearly the entire membership of reconstituted (and dubiously

³ “Sir Dawson Bates.” *The Times* (London), June 11, 1949.

legal) Ulster Volunteer Force,^{4 5} who were promptly put to work in the capacity of a full-time counterinsurgency militia charged with stamping out the IRA however they could.

It is was perhaps this last accomplishment which prompted Craig, in 1922, to charge Bates with overseeing the process of setting up a permanent policing arrangement in Northern Ireland.

By the time that the Irish War of Independence had begun to wind down, there was little love left for the Royal Irish Constabulary anywhere in Ireland. In the South, they, along with the British Army and its various paramilitary auxiliaries, still represented the modern face of long-hated English rule in Ireland, despite the broad inclusion of Catholics amongst the ranks of constables and sergeants. In the North, their failure to suppress the IRA left the Constabulary facing charges of indifference to Ulster Unionism's interests at best, and institutional Republican sympathies at worst.⁶ Bates himself would later allege that the RIC had made a practice of transferring the "better type" of officers — by which he meant loyal Protestant ones — to theaters of action in the distant South, leaving Ulster with a force comprised of "men who could not be trusted or who were inefficient." "Over 50 percent of the force in [Belfast] are Roman Catholics," he complained, "mainly from the South, and many of them are known to be related to Sinn Fein. The majority of [constables and sergeants] are Roman Catholics and there exists a feeling that the force does not deal impartially with both sections of the public."⁷

Though Bates' allegations of Sinn Fein ties among the RIC's ranks was not entirely unfounded — there were, in fact, a significant number IRA informers inside the RIC and Dublin Castle more generally, — his comments echoed the long-held Unionist fear that the British

⁴ Hepburn, "Bates, Sir (Richard) Dawson."

⁵ Farrell, Michael. *Arming the Protestants : The Formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1920-7*. London: Pluto Press, 1983. 35-8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

government was either indifferent to the cause of maintaining the Union or actively sympathetic to Republican ends, wishing to rid itself of the burden of governing Ireland. In the War of Independence period, this spectre manifested itself in constant suspicion that the British government's anti-IRA efforts were performative and halfhearted.

The authors of the Government of Ireland Act had intended that the RIC simply be split in two between North and South, with command authority given to the two devolved governments. However, the Anglo-Irish treaty stipulated that the RIC be disbanded, providing both Northern Ireland and the newly-formed Free State an opportunity to re-shape their police forces in a mold more to their liking. In the South, the Free State Government opted for a single, nationally-organized and unarmed force, formally creating An Garda Síochána (Irish: "The Civic Guard") by statute in early 1923. In the North, the task of deciding how to organize the regular police fell to Bates, who decided, in January of 1922, to convene an Advisory Committee under the Ministry of Home Affairs to advise him and Craig on how best to organize the new force.

The Interdepartmental Committee on Police Reorganisation

As with many of the decisions made by officials of the early Northern Irish Governments, it is not entirely clear how Bates went about selecting members for his Committee, styled the Departmental Committee on Police Reorganization. A close look at its ultimate membership, however, is useful in gaining some sense of its overall character and orientations.

Lloyd Campbell, a Unionist Party MP for North Belfast, served as chairman of the Committee. Prior to his election, he had been an executive at his family's flax-spinning firm,

based in Belfast;⁸ Sir Robert Newton Anderson, Unionist Party MP for Londonderry who had been the Mayor of the same city before partition;⁹ Lord Mayor of Belfast Sir William Frederick Coates, a linen merchant turned stockbroker who had served as High Sheriff of Belfast in 1906;¹⁰ James Cooper, Unionist Party MP for Fermanagh and Tyrone, a former solicitor from Dublin¹¹; William Coote, also Unionist Party MP for Fermanagh and Tyrone, a textiles executive and former Justice of the Peace and County Councilman for Tyrone; Joseph Cunningham, a shipbuilder with no prior political experience appointed to the Senate as a representative of the Unionist Party¹²; Sir Joseph Davison, then the High Sheriff of Belfast, who had been knighted during the opening of the Parliament of Northern Ireland and who would later go on to serve in the Senate and as the Grand Master of the Orange Institution of Belfast and later the Orange Institution of Ireland;¹³ James Hill Dickson, a landowner and Justice of the Peace who represented the Unionist Party in the Senate;¹⁴ George Chester Duggan, the Acting Assistant Secretary to the Ministry of Finance;¹⁵ William Grant, a Unionist Party MP and former shipwright who had been a founding member of both the Ulster Unionist Labor Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force who would go on to serve in a number of Cabinet-level positions in the Stormont government;¹⁶ James Roche, an officer of the Royal Marines; James Verdier Stevenson, a former District Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary then serving as Chief

⁸ Harbison, John Fitzsimons. *The Ulster Unionist Party 1882-1973: Its Development and Organisation*. Belfast: Blackstaff Pr., 1974. 78.

⁹ "ANDERSON, Rt. Hon. Robert Newton." *Who Was Who*

¹⁰ "Sir William Coates." *The Times* (London), Jan. 20, 1932 1932.

¹¹ Harbison, *Ulster Unionist Party*, 144.

¹² *Ibid.*, 204.

¹³ "High Sheriff's Luncheon." *Irish Times* (Dublin), 21 July 1921.

¹⁴ Harbison, *The Ulster Unionist Party*, 204.

¹⁵ "Departmental Committee on Police Reorganisation: Minutes of Evidence" PRONI File HA/47. i.

¹⁶ Harbison, *The Ulster Unionist Party*, 67-8.

Constable of Glasgow;¹⁷ Patrick J. Tiernan, a Justice of the Peace; Samuel Watt, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs; Lt. Colonel Charles George Wickham, the British Army Divisional Commander for Belfast who would go on to become the first Inspector-General of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which the Committee would create. A Mr. Thomas.W. Bunting served as the Committee's Secretary

There are a few apparent threads of commonality among the members. A number seem to have had some background in security or law enforcement and that some, such as Lord Mayor Coates and Colonel Wickham were obvious choices. That there were apparently no avowedly Nationalist members on the council is not altogether surprising, given that both of the two non-Unionist parties which succeeded in getting members elected to the Parliament — the Nationalist Party and Sinn Fein — had declined to seat their elected members. Two of the members, Roche and Tiernan, were Catholics (though presumably Unionists also.)¹⁸

The Minute of Appointment appended to the Committee's Final Report was signed by Bates and read as follows "I hereby appoint [the members] to be a Committee to inquire into the existing Police Organisation in Northern Ireland and to report on the following matters :—(a) the alterations in the existing organisation which would be necessary in establishing a Police Force under the Northern Government; (b) recruitment and conditions of service of the new Police Force; (c) the extent to which the new Force should be composed of existing members of the Royal Irish Constabulary and of existing members of the Special Constabulary; (d) the strength of the new Force and what provision should be made by way of a temporary Force, and (e) the cost involved in carrying out the recommendations of the Committee." Nothing in the body of either of the two Reports which the Committee produced, Interim or Final, gives any further

¹⁷ "Chief Constable J V Stevenson." *The Glasgow Story*.
<http://www.theglasgowstory.com/image/?inum=TGSA05197>

¹⁸ Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 188.

indication as to the constitutional processes of the Committee, nor does the Minutes of Evidence booklet which records the Committee's proceedings.

What is abundantly clear, however, is that the Committee was in a hurry. It met for the first time on February 28th, 1922, and concluded its hearing of evidence on the 15th of March. By the 28th of March, just a month after its first meeting, the Committee released its Interim Report, containing the great bulk of its substantive recommendations.

On its first day of convention, the Committee examined Mr. J.P. Gelston, the Commissioner of Police for the Belfast RIC. Their questions focused largely on what modifications to the RIC's existing organizational structure would be strategically advantageous to the new force. Though the Committee's questions and Commissioner Gelston's answers covered a broad variety of subjects, from pay to rank structure, the meandering conversation returned a number of times to the RIC's practice of disallowing personnel to be stationed in communities to which they have local ties. The following exchange is typical of the examination:

Campbell: In your preliminary statement you say "No officers or men should be stationed in their native County. It renders the impartial performance of duty difficult and leaves the constabulary open to the charge of favoritism. No difficulty should arise in the northern area in regard to this. At headquarters, lists of candidates from each county should be kept. When vacancies occur the selection of candidates should be made that an undue proportion from anyone county or city would be avoided". Would it be practicable to carry it out in our small area with such a small population?

Gelston: The only thing that would prevent it will be if the people did not come forward as candidates for the force. If the conditions of service are sufficiently attractive you will get candidates, but if they're not you have a difficult period we found the difficulty in the regular RIC some years ago when the conditions of service were very poor. We were not getting the numbers or the proper kind of men.

The Committee went on to propose a number of hypothetical combinations of location of origin and location of service to Gelston, asking whether he would permit the combination.

Seeming to grow exasperated with the exercise, Gelston proposed a rule that no constable should

serve within a 30-50 mile radius of his place of birth, depending on the number and diversity of recruits at a given time. This, he said, might be a workable alternative to the RIC practice of forbidding men to work in the county of their birth. “We have only six counties to recruit from,” objected Watt, the Home Affairs secretary. To this, Gelston suggested that recruits from England could be used to fill out the ranks to ensure adherence to the rule. Grant, the UVF man, objected immediately. “It would not be satisfactory to accept recruits from England and debarment from joining the force here,” he insisted. Watt concurred.¹⁹ Sir Joseph Davison, the High Sheriff of Belfast, also objected, insisting that such a rule would require a great number of experienced Belfast policemen to be relocated elsewhere. “We have men in Belfast who were born in the City. They were the sons of policemen, but had no connection with Belfast. They simply came here to serve in the City and their sons joined up here and those were the cases in which an exception to the regulation was always made. Belfast was not regarded as the native place of such men. They had not the family surroundings which might tend to render their efficiency not as good as it otherwise would be. The object of the rule was to prevent men doing duty amongst their own relations,” he protested. Tiernan interjected with an unrelated question before Gelston had a chance to respond.²⁰

After some brief and apparently confused discussion of staffing levels, the discussion turned to the issue of the coexistence of the Regular and Special police forces. Gelston expressed some frustration that RIC District Inspectors had a difficult time coordinating activities with Special Constabulary units stationed in RIC barracks but subject to the primary command of their own senior officers. Campbell inquired whether Gelston considered it proper that RIC

¹⁹ Minutes of Evidence, *Examination of William Gelston*. 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

Inspectors should have authority to issue orders to USC platoons. When Gelston responds in the affirmative, Secretary Watt again objected:

Watt: You do not contemplate there will be two forces in the future corresponding to the regular and special forces?

Gelston: I never understood that.

Watt: There will be only one force and if it is necessary to augment the regular police force it will be done by means of men who will be merely temporary police?

Gelston: In considering a scheme for the northern area I assumed that you would have one regular police force and nothing else. At the present time the police force is absolutely inadequate for what is going on.

Watt: When the RIC is disbanded and you are forming a new police force if your regular police force is not sufficient and you find it necessary to engage temporary men how would you enlist them?

Gelston: I would enlist them as special constables if the necessity arises.

After some further tense back and forth, Grant intervened. "The reason we have got the present Special Constabulary is that these men anticipate they will have an opportunity of joining the Regular Force when it is established. Some of them will be turned down [due to higher Regular Force standards] and when trouble again arises you cannot expect these men to come forward unless they are kept... as a reserve force."

"If you want recruits to form a Police Force you should have a standard, and that standard, whatever it is, should be strictly carried out," Gelston riposted. Campbell again changed the subject to comparatively trivial matters. A short time later, Gelston is dismissed.²¹

The balance of the Committee's week was spent putting largely similar questions to various other senior policemen from the RIC. They are asked about pay and promotion, administrative structure, discipline, and personnel-management practices. It is clear from their examinations that the questions put to Gelston reflect the Committee's major managerial concerns, and the RIC men largely toe Gelston's line with minor variations. The definite

²¹ *Ibid.*, 14

consensus among the witnesses, with greater or lesser degrees of intensity, was the redundancy of having a Special Constabulary operating alongside a regular one — they seemed all to agree that it presents an unnecessary logistical hassle.

This view was echoed, somewhat surprisingly, by witnesses from among the Specials themselves. On its fifth working day, the Committee examined a group of five members of the Ulster Special Constabulary: listed as Head Constable Pinder of Belfast, Head Constable McCullough of Kilkeel, Sergeant Bennett of Londonderry, Sergeant McIlwaine of Newtownards, Constable Thompson of Larne, and Constable Hicks of Lurgan. The six men appeared before the Committee as elected representatives of an unofficial body self-styled as the Council of the Specials, to which the Committee had written requesting that a delegation be sent to answer questions. Which of the Specials addressed the Committee first is not noted, but he turned, almost immediately and apparently unprompted, to the question of parallel forces.

“We suggest that there should be two forces,” he said at first, “one a permanent force much on the same style as the RIC, but under a different code, and the second to be a mobile force.” The permanent force, he suggested, would perform “the simple work of policemen,” while the mobile force would be primarily tasked with responding in armored vehicles to the locations of emergencies.

It is clear that the Specials were here alluding to the two roles which had been performed during the 1920-22 period by the RIC and USC, and Campbell must have understood as much. He pressed them, however, as he had Gelston, on whether the two functions ought to be performed by different forces under different command structures, or simply by separate divisions of a single force under a single command.

“I take it that you look upon that mobile force more in the nature of a military force than a police force — it would really be a striking force?” Campbell inquired.

Head Constable Pinder ducked the question, confining himself to the types of equipment — cars and mounted machine guns — that he envisions the mobile force would require.

Campbell did not let up:

“I would ask you whether you would have dual command [of the mobile force]?”

“In cases of emergency, you would put [the armored car crew] with the ordinary constabulary,” Pinder replied. “You have [the mobile force] as a fighting force, the two bodies cooperating.”

The answer confused Campbell: “Yes, but there would not really be two bodies, simply one body?”

“Yes,” replied Pinder.

“You have no idea of dual control in the force?”

“No.”

“Whatever the necessary number of mobile units are, they are under the same District Inspector, Head Constable, Sergeant, and Constables [as the regular force]?”

“Yes.”

“In other words, there is no difference in the forces?”

“Not exactly in the forces... the word “forces” ... I should strike out. The force should be one force with a mobile column from it.”

Apparently satisfied, Campbell moved on. “Well, as regards the Specials being taken on in the new force, at present there about 6000 to 7000 Specials and 2000 to 2000 Regulars. In other words there are about 10,000 Constabulary in the Northern area at the present moment. I

hope we will not have to keep a force of 10,000 in Northern Ireland. Supposing we were to start forming a new force at once, and take a certain proportion of the specials into it. Supposing we take your figure a 75% which would be between 3000 and 4000 specials, yet you would not want all those in your new force. Therefore a lot of Specials would be taken in some would not.

Unfortunately we will not be able to disband the Specials for a considerable time yet. Would the men in the Specials who applied to be taken on in the new force and who had to be turned down from numerical reasons not be very dissatisfied?²² Pinder managed to avoid answering, but Campbell's comment about the unfortunate impossibility of "disband[ing] the Specials for a considerable time yet" gives an important clue as to the unstated assumptions at play in the exchange. He seems to take it for granted that the Special Constabulary would be maintained for as long as fighting with the IRA continues, at which time it would be disbanded and some portion of its members assumed into the regular force. The deputation seems to share this assumption, giving no indication that they believe that the Ulster Special Constabulary will be preserved as-is in perpetuity, even if their dual-force proposal is accepted. The Specials refer on a number of occasions to the "old" USC and inquire as to what the procedures will be for "former" USC men to enlist in any "new" force.

As the examinations progress, the Committee members seem to come around to this view as well. At the very least, the hostility directed at Inspector Gelston on the first day — when he suggested that the retention of two distinct forces would be unnecessary — is not echoed in the responses to the Deputation of Specials or later witnesses, mostly Constables and Sergeants, who expressed the same sentiments.

²² "Minutes of Evidence" *Examination of the Deputation of Specials*. 11

On March 9, when the Committee examined Head Constable McCabe, the elected representative of the Head Constables of Armagh, the Committee explicitly broached the subject of the senior RIC staff's regard for the Special Constabulary for the first time. The bulk of the questions which Campbell directed at McCabe concerned McCabe's opinion on the standards by which applications by serving RIC and USC men to join the "new force" should be judged and how accepted men ought to be evaluated for promotion. McCabe's proposals are markedly stringent— region-wide competitive examinations rather than county-wide, raised standards on written and practical tests, and raised time-in-service floors for promotion eligibility. When Campbell remarked on this stringency, McCabe replied that "my idea is to bring the class of men to the police who are worth having." Campbell refers to his written submitted testimony. "You wrote 'New Force to comprise 50% each.' You meant RIC and Specials?"

"Yes." McCabe replied. "But since writing that I have thought that as many as possible of the old RIC should be in these service for various reasons. It would meet the care of a good many branches of the service that Special men could not do."

Seeming to sense McCabe's unsaid point, Campbell put the question to him flatly: "Do you consider that men coming in after twelve or fifteen months in the Specials — to put it in plain English — do you consider he is a policeman in any shape or form?"

"I do not."

The Committee's Report

On the 28th of March, the Committee released its Interim Report, which contained the bulk of its recommendations. It included the following extracts:²³

To the Right Hon. Sir RICHARD DAWSON BATES, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland,

Sir...

²³ "Interim Report of the Departmental Committee on Police Reorganization." Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922.

6. The evidence given before us disclosed much difference of opinion as to the extent to which the new force should be recruited from the R.I.C. and the Special Constabulary; representatives of each force contending that the force to which they belong was entitled to special treatment. We have carefully weighed the merits of each case. Undoubtedly both forces deserve well of the Northern Government.

7. Suitable men should be recruited as to one-third of the new force from the existing Catholic members of the Royal Irish Constabulary and Special Constabulary if available, and if any portion of this number be not available, be recruited from members of that denomination. The balance of the new force to be recruited from the Protestant members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (not exceeding 1,000, if suitable and available) and from the Special Constabulary, preference being given to the " A " Class. We consider that in the appointment of officers of the force the Minister of Home Affairs should have a certain latitude, and that also the claims of any suitable officers of the Special Constabulary should be considered. We take this opportunity of paying a tribute to the services which the Special Constabulary have rendered throughout the six Counties... We must recognise, however, that to become members of a permanent police force, special qualifications are necessary, which are not to be gained by service in a temporary police force...

8. We have come to the conclusion that there are certain minor modifications which will require to be made in the present R.I.C. Code in order to suit the conditions of the new force. When this has been done we recommend that the existing R.I.C. Code so revised be adopted for the New Force. On these matters we hope to report later...

We therefore submit for your consideration the following :-

11. That the new force shall be called the Ulster Constabulary and that His Majesty the King be requested to be graciously pleased to grant permission to use the prefix "Royal." This would constitute a link with the old R.I.C. to whom the title " Royal " was granted in recognition of their loyalty and devotion to duty in the most arduous and dangerous circumstances, and it would also give great satisfaction to the loyal population of the Northern Area who have always been noted for their attachment to the Throne and Constitution. -

12. That no attempt be made to organise the Police Force on a local basis as in Great Britain. There should be a single force under a single command for the whole of Northern Ireland.

13. That the total force of all ranks should not exceed 3,000. The Committee hope that when times again become normal, it may be possible to reduce this force considerably.

...

20. That members of the Special Constabulary. Class " A," should enter the New Force as Constables with benefit of former service in the Special Constabulary, Class " A," for increments of pay and also for pension...

We have the honour to be,
SIR.
Your obedient Servants.

These recommendations are striking for a number of reasons, and are difficult to square, in many cases, with the concerns which the Committee's members had raised in their witness examinations. The Committee's most significant — and most controversial, among its members — suggestion was that a third of slots for recruits to the “new force” be reserved for Roman Catholics. Seven of the nine reservations appended to the Report and signed by one or more of the Committee members objected in some way to the imposition of a one-thirds quota, including both of two reservations submitted by the Committee's Catholic members, Tiernan and Roche, and a number submitted by Protestant members objecting to the same provision.²⁴

Most striking, however, is the fact that the Committee recommends, without quite saying so explicitly, the disbandment of the Ulster Special Constabulary. The statement in paragraph 12 that “there should be a single force under a single command for the whole of Northern Ireland,” is almost impossible to read any other way. The testimony of the witnesses had, apparently, convinced even the initially skeptical and hostile members of the Committee that Northern Ireland would be better off without two forces. Not one of the nine reservations lodges an objection against paragraph 12.

This would not be particularly remarkable had it actually resulted in the disbandment of the USC and the integration of its members into the Royal Ulster Constabulary as recommended.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

But of course, the Specials were neither disbanded nor merged with the regular police during the 1922 reorganization. Why this was so is somewhat murky. Within the secondary treatments of what happened in the wake of the release of the Departmental Committee's recommendations address the issue of paragraph 12's recommendation that there be only a single force. The earlier of these accounts, provided by Michael Farrell in his 1983 book *Arming the Protestants: The Formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary 1920-1927*, indicates that "the Government accepted all the main recommendations [of the Committee's Interim Report] and rushed a Bill through the Northern Parliament to set up the RUC by the end of May 1922."²⁵ Ronald Weitzer, in his 1995 study *Policing Under Fire: Ethnic Conflict and Police-Community Relations in Northern Ireland* differs and elaborates somewhat, saying that the Government "did not reject" the recommendation that one-third of the RUC be composed of Catholics, "but neither did it incorporate [the recommendation] into its 1922 Constabulary Act. Instead, it left it to the RUC and Home Affairs Ministry to implement the Committee's recommendations."²⁶ Weitzer's details appears to be more complete, but neither provides a full account of what became of the "single force" recommendation or the one-third Catholic quota. Based on their citations, it seems that this may be simply because neither scholar realized that the recommendation, which was included in the Interim Report in obtuse, coded language (presumably to provide political deniability if it were to become politically volatile) was there at all. If one reads paragraph 12 of the Interim Report without having first read the Committee Minutes of Evidence booklet, it would be altogether reasonable to assume that the "single force"

²⁵ Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, 188.

²⁶ Weitzer, Ronald John. *Policing Under Fire: Ethnic Conflict and Police-Community Relations in Northern Ireland*. SUNY Series in New Directions in Crime and Justice Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. 38.

recommendation in paragraph 12 refers only to the *regular* police forces, and not the Special Constabulary.

Both Farrell and Weitzer cite the Interim Report in their discussions, but neither cites the Committee Minutes of Evidence. Not apparently having examined the Minutes of Evidence, Farrell and Weitzer generally characterize the Constabulary Act as representing, to a greater or lesser degree, “an acceptance of the Committee’s recommendations. Farrell suggests that the Government “accepted all” the Committee’s “main” proposals, but “backpedaled” on the Catholic quota in the face of opposition from Unionist hardliners following the passage of the Act.²⁷ Weitzer notes the quota’s non-inclusion in the text of the Act and concludes, apparently based on the Act’s granting of authority to make staffing and personnel decisions to the Minister of Home Affairs, that it was simply left to Bates to implement the quota as a practical matter.²⁸

In fact, however, when the Minutes of Evidence, the Interim Report, the Constabulary Act, and the Parliamentary record are all examined together, they show something rather different than either of these two interpretations. The ultimately-passed Act was not a full or nearly-full acceptance of the Committee’s proposals, but an explicit rejection of the two most significant of them. During the Committee’s examination, the members put a consistent line of questioning put to nearly every important witness asking whether the regular Police and the Special Constabulary should be maintained as two independent bodies (“dual forces under dual command,” in the Committee’s consistent terminology,) or merged into one single force performing both a regular policing and a security function (a “single force under a single command,” in the language employed by the Committee during its interviews and in the Interim Report). The answers they received from both RIC and USC members, some of which are

²⁷ Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, 188-90.

²⁸ Weitzer, *Policing Under Fire*, 38.

recounted earlier in this chapter, were generally in agreement that a single force would be more advantageous. The Committee reflected this in its “single force” proposal in paragraph 12 of its Interim Report. When this Report was submitted to Parliament, however, it was met with considerable hostility. The debate which followed the Report’s distribution to the MPs, held on April 5th, 1922, consists largely of MPs complaining vigorously about two issues: the proposed pay rates for members of the force (too high) and the composition of the force (too Catholic and too heavily drawn from the ranks of the RIC). William Coote, one of the Committee members who had appended an objection to the quota, fired the first volley at Bates: “Personally I object to fixing a figure and laying it down that there are to be so many Roman Catholic constables and so many Protestants,” he said. “If the Roman Catholic population refuses to join the new Force in the proportion specified are you to leave the Northern area without police simply because the Roman Catholics will not or dare not join? If the Roman Catholics will not join your Force, surely it will be the duty of the Ministry of Home Affairs to fill up the ranks with Protestants.”²⁹ “I am very sorry indeed that [a religious quota] forms any part of the recommendations of the Committee,” added Unionist Samuel McGuffin. “I am quite tired hearing about sectarianism. It has wrought havoc amongst us here.”³⁰

Moreover, the members themselves appeared uncertain as to whether the Report called for the disbandment of the Specials, as the following exchange demonstrates:

Thompson Donald (*UUP, East Belfast*): With regard to the strength of the new Force, the figure of 3,000 is a bit of a mystery to me, when I find that the Estimates for 1922-23 make provision for some 5,156 constables and 854 officers. That deals alone with the " A " Specials. According to this report 4,000 Specials and 600 officers are to be discharged.

Hugh Pollock (*Minister of Finance*): No. Where do you find that?

²⁹ "The Parliamentary Debates: Official Report." In *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 v. Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationery Office on behalf of the Government of Northern Ireland, 1921. v.2 c.361

³⁰ *Ibid.*, c.366

Donald: In the Estimates for 1922- 23. That does not include the " B's " and the " C"s " at all.

Daniel Dixon (*Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Finance*): I rise to a point of order. This report deals only with the regular Police Force. It has nothing whatever to do with the "A," "B," or "C" Specials.

Donald: I beg to differ from my hon. Friend (Captain Dixon). The report clearly and precisely sets out that one-third should be recruited from the existing Catholic members of the R.I.C. and Special Constabulary, if available, and two-thirds from the R.I.C. who are Protestants (not exceeding 1,000), and the Special Constabulary, preference being given to the "A" Class. I am only pointing out that the Specials are going to be disbanded wholesale in a very short time, and that that fact is giving them very serious thought.

Pollock: I think it is rather a pity that such an impression should be encouraged, because there is no intention whatever in the meantime of disturbing the arrangements in regard to the "A" Specials.

Donald: I quite realise that for some time to come, owing to the state of the country, there will be twice the number, but we are getting down to facts, and you will shortly be bringing in a Bill fixing the strength of the Police Force for the Six Counties. That is all the criticism I have to offer.³¹

The three men apparently disagree on whether the Report calls for the USC's disbandment (they apparently had not read the Committee minutes either), but none is supportive of the idea. The potential disbandment of the USC is not mentioned elsewhere in the debate.

When the Constabulary Bill was introduced in Parliament in mid-May, these complaints had evidently been taken squarely into account. Though many of the logistical recommendations of the Departmental Committee were adopted, the one-third quota for Catholics was missing altogether. But the repudiation of the idea of disbanding the Specials was even stronger. In the place of any language unifying the USC with the RUC, the Constabulary Act instead included a provision incorporating and extending the 1914 Special Constables Act, the legislative instrument which had been used in 1920 to form the USC originally. Moreover, the Act conferred the authority to invoke the Special Constables power solely with the Minister of Home

³¹ *Ibid.*, c.372.

Affairs, effectively extending the lifespan of the USC indefinitely. These drastic departures hardly went unnoticed by the MPs who had sat on the Committee. At the Constabulary Bill's second reading, William Grant angrily protested that "As a member of the Police Committee, I am beginning to wonder what that Committee was set up for at all, because there is nothing that I can see up to the present in this Bill of the recommendations of that Committee."³² James Cooper of Fermanagh was also upset, and addressed the composition question directly. "I also served on the Police Committee," he said, "and I am surprised to see that several of the Clauses in this Bill are directly in opposition to the findings of that Committee... [A] very important thing, which was... brought before the Police Committee, was the constitution of this new Force. It was decided that at least two-thirds of the members of the new Force should be Protestants, and there is not a solitary word in this Bill about that. That is also mentioned in the Report of the Committee, and I would like to know why it is left out of the Bill."³³ He got no answer.

So did the Government really "backpedal" on the key de-sectarianizing elements of the Act? In a sense, perhaps, but it is arguably more accurate to say that it never really embraced them at all. The Committee recommended a quota for Catholic officers and a consolidation of the RUC and USC, in what Campbell described to Parliament as a feeling "that it was only fair the community as a whole should know that we were playing fair and square, and treating everybody on an equality so long as they were loyal. That is why we fixed a certain proportion."³⁴ The Government, however, never embraced those recommendations beyond floating them with Parliament, to immediate hostile reaction. That resistance encountered, they simply abandoned the Committee's de-sectarianizing proposals.

³² *Ibid.*, c.649

³³ *Ibid.*, c.650

³⁴ *Ibid.*, c.358

Consequently, no real effort was made to ensure meaningful Catholic recruitment into the RUC. In the absence of a legislative mandate, Dawson Bates was not inclined to do otherwise. Early 1923 represented the high-water year for Catholic representation in the force, at only 21 percent. By 1927, that had dropped to 17 percent, and by 1966, only one in every 10 RUC officers was Catholic. Calls by Nationalist MPs for affirmative action programs were ignored, and all applicants to the RUC were made to disclose their religion. Adding insult to injury, by the time that the RUC had reached its mandated complement of 3,000, most of the spots that would have been filled by Catholic ex-RIC members had the Committee's plan been adhered to had been given instead to transfers from the Specials.³⁵

The USC, having survived 1922, would go on to become a hated but regular feature of Catholic life in Northern Ireland. They remained an exclusively-Protestant, militantly loyalist, and almost entirely unaccountable force. Though they shrunk in size over the remaining years of the 1920s down to only the part-time "B" division, the Stormont regime consistently and increasingly used them as a private army to suppress Republicanism in both its militant and political forms. In doing so, both forces leaned heavily on the draconian powers given to them under the Special Powers Act, which had passed through the Parliament soon after the Constabulary Bill. In the extensive literature documenting the conditions of life in Northern Ireland in the years 1923-1970, accounts of misdeeds by "B-Specials," as they came to be known, are not difficult to locate. They were, by all accounts, particularly vicious toward Catholics who spoke out against their increasing social subjugation under Stormont's rule. Indeed, it was in no small part antagonism Specials and politically-active Catholics which would spark the events which led the the next major round of police reform in Northern Ireland.

³⁵ Weitzer, *Policing Under Fire*, 39.

Chapter Two Robber-Catchers at Heart

In his 1970 account *Barricades in Belfast*, British journalist Max Hastings editorialized that “the tale of Northern Ireland’s reluctant struggle toward the twentieth century began, if one must choose a single date, with the doings of the [in the words of the Stormont Government] “so-called Civil Rights Movement.”¹ Whether or not Northern Ireland’s journey into the twentieth century began there, its journey toward its second round of major police reforms in less than a half-century certainly did.

“The Troubles” Begin: Attacks on the Civil Rights Movement 1968-9

The precise origins of the loose coalition of protest groups which made up that movement are somewhat foggy. Locally-based groups had existed and been protesting statutory and *de facto* discrimination in elections, council representation, housing, and other areas since well before the late ‘60s, but had never coordinated their efforts on any kind of regional scale.² In 1967, however, a group calling itself the Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland called a meeting of a number of these groups in Belfast. At this convention, they formed an umbrella organization dubbed the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, or NICRA.

The leaders of NICRA drew heavily for inspiration upon the nonviolent organizing techniques and philosophy of Mohandas Gandhi’s Indian Independence Movement and Martin Luther King Jr.’s African-American Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and they resolved before long to mimic those sets of tactics to achieve their ends. On August 24th, approximately 2,500 Catholics turned up in Coalisland to participate in a protest march to

¹ Hastings, Max. *Barricades in Belfast: The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland*. New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1970. 39.

² *Ibid.*, 42.

Dungannon which went off uneventfully despite tensions and the gathering of a Protestant mob.³ Emboldened, NICRA planned a second march, to be held on October 5 in Derry along with a number of local Catholic activist groups. Unionist groups complained to Stormont, and the Minister for Home Affairs, William Craig, banned the march. But the organizers, who by then included Nationalist political groups, M.P.s from Westminster, and a few representatives of the little remaining leadership of the Border Campaign IRA, decided to go ahead anyway. When the marchers attempted to evade an RUC barricade line outside the city, the police charged the crowd, brandishing batons. Another police platoon, whether out of confusion or malice, advanced from the opposite direction, encircling the marchers attempting to flee. In a flash, the RUC commanders on the scene either lost or relinquished control of their men, and what had been a chaotic melee became a one-sided attack. Women and children were beaten bloody by police, who “hammered without mercy at anything within their range,” as Hastings described the scene. Catholic men from the nearby Bogside neighborhood, a population long-victimized by the notoriously discriminatory Derry Corporation, retaliated in anger. Derry devolved into two days of vicious rioting between Catholics and the RUC.⁴

Whatever the instigation of the violence, whether or not the IRA elements within the protest had been involved in instigating the riot, the incident looked bad for the RUC, in no small part because of their behavior in front of cameras. A television news crew on the scene had managed to capture graphic footage of crazed-looking officers bludgeoning young women and old men. One of the RUC riot vehicles had turned a water cannon on the news crew itself, camera rolling. A Westminster MP, Gerry Fitt, who had been wounded in the head, claimed in the house of Commons that he had been targeted by police for injury and demanded that Prime

³ *Ibid.*, 44-46.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 50-56.

Minister Harold Wilson open an inquiry into their behavior.⁵ Craig refused to do so, stating that he was confident no unnecessary force had been used and blaming the IRA for the violence. The *Times* editorial board, at least, was unconvinced. "The refusal... cannot be the last word. His assurance that the police used no undue force echoes exactly that of Mayor [Richard M.] Daley in Chicago last month," it wrote. "The reports of police brutality to individuals, and loss of self-control in general, are too uncomfortably convincing to be waved away by Mr. Craig. Any such occurrence in another part of the United Kingdom would almost certainly be the subject of an inquiry, as well as of questions in Parliament... But that does not dispose of British interest in the Ulster police."⁶ Lords Brockaway and Byers attempted to raise the issue in the House of Lords, but were prevented by the longstanding rule which prevented discussion in Westminster of the actions of devolved governments.⁷

Four days afterwards, on October 9, a group of more than two thousand students from Queen's University Belfast attempted to march to City Hall to protest the police's actions in Derry. The march was met, however, by a hostile gathering of Unionists led by firebrand loyalist politician Rev. Ian Paisley, who refused to let them pass into the city center. In the aftermath of the standoff which followed, a number of the students met and organized themselves into a new civil rights group, which they named the People's Democracy. The new organization rapidly became one of the most influential players in the larger Civil Rights movement, holding two more high-profile marches before the end of October. On December 20, the group announced its intention to hold a multi-day protest march from Belfast to Derry city, in deliberate imitation of

⁵ "Brutality complaint by MPs." *Times* (London), 7 Oct. 1968.

⁶ "Questions For Ulster." *Times* (London), 7 Oct. 1968.

⁷ Hansard 7 Oct. 1968 cc. 811-815.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s march from Montgomery to Selma, Alabama in 1965.⁸ The planned march began on New Year's Day of 1969 and was, for its first three days, largely uneventful despite a few clashes with counter-demonstrations along the route. On January 4, however, the 40 or so core marchers had to cross Burntollet bridge on the way from Claudy into Derry city. There, a mob of angry loyalists, including numerous off-duty members of the USC, waited with various makeshift arms to confront the demonstration.⁹

Tipped off to the impending clash, the RUC in Derry sent a contingent of 80 officers out to meet the protest and escort them into the city. As the march approached the bridge, the loyalists began throwing stones and bottles. The march paused momentarily so that organizers could consult with the RUC escort. The officers conceded that they could probably not prevent the missile attacks, but expressed a belief that if the marchers stayed to one side of the road, they should be relatively shielded, and should be able to pass the crowd in overall safety. Michael Farrell, one of the People's Democracy organizers, conveyed the message to the marchers by megaphone, and the group proceeded.¹⁰ As they crossed, the bridge, however, the mob descended from the hillside on which it had been standing and attacked the marchers with pipes, tire irons, and more projectiles. The demonstrators scattered, pursued by the loyalists and Specials. In the aftermath of the attack, protesters alleged that the RUC escorting them had made little or no attempt to protect them or prevent the assault, or, in some cases, had stood by and observed while members of the mob battered them. One visibly-injured young woman told a television crew that as she had been driven down into the riverbed by attackers and subsequently

⁸ Melaugh, Martin. "The People's Democracy March - Chronology of Main Events" CAIN Web Service, Belfast: University of Ulster, 2016.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ "There is a Good Possibility Some Stones May Be Thrown." *Raidió Telefís Éireann Archives Online* (Dublin).

beaten she had observed several RUC men some ways off watching the events unfold.¹¹ Once again, footage of the attack and its aftermath, including allegations and apparent evidence of police malfeasance was broadcast in Britain and in the Republic, prompting a renewed wave of outrage and recrimination against the Northern Irish police and government. Later investigations revealed what some at the time had suspected and claimed: the attack at Burntollet had been a carefully-coordinated plan hatched by the local Orange Order and Special Constabulary, with the cooperation of at least some members of the RUC.¹² Worsening the situation, the “Burntollet Ambush” sparked another weekend of sectarian rioting in Derry, in which police were again accused of siding with Protestant mobs. Alongside accounts of brutality against Catholics by RUC and Specials,¹³ The *Times* ran accusations that, in the aftermath of the unrest in Derry which followed the attacks, uniformed police officers went on a spree of retaliatory property-damage in a number of Derry’s Catholic neighborhoods.¹⁴

Reputationally, the damage done to the RUC and USC’s public image by the attacks on the Derry Civil Rights March and the People’s Democracy March was severe. O’Neill’s government continued to publicly dismiss criticisms and allegations of wrongdoing as Republican propaganda, but they were privately aware that their every move was under intense scrutiny from London and beyond. As the year progressed, the government’s position grew more and more insecure. Parliamentary elections in February saw the fragmentation of O’Neill’s Unionist Party majority into “Official” and “Unofficial” camps, and on April 19, an RUC attempt to serve a search-warrant on a Catholic home in Derry prompted yet another round of rioting, contributing to O’Neill’s loss of a Unionist no-confidence vote on April 28. But the blow

¹¹ “Not a Policeman in Sight.” *Raidió Telefís Éireann Archives Online* (Dublin).

¹² Egan, Bowes and Vincent McCormack, *Burntollet*, London: LRS Publishers, 1969, 56.

¹³ Chartres, John. “New Ulster Riots feared after Derry battle.” *Times*, London: January 6, 1969.

¹⁴ Weymark, Peter. “Police are accused of window-smashing spree.” *Times* (London), January 6, 1969.

that would do the policing status-quo in Northern Ireland in once and for all came in August, when Ulster was rocked by the most severe spasm of violence it had seen since the War of Independence.

The annual Apprentice Boys' parade, during which Ulster Protestants celebrate the lifting of Catholic King James' Siege of Derry in 1689, had become a relatively calm event in the years up to 1968, marked by little of the perennial clashing of Belfast's July 12th celebrations. But 1969 was different. Anticipating trouble, authorities had tried to maintain as much separation between the Unionist marchers and the Catholic residents of the Bogside area for the planned parades on August 12, erecting barbed wire and traffic barricades along the roads where the parade would skirt Bogside's frontier. As the processions began, it looked as though the RUC had learned their lessons, both about reacting to provocation from crowds and about comportment in front of rolling television cameras.¹⁵ But as the day wore on, the behavior of the crowds on both sides of the barricades deteriorated, as did the discipline of the police, a number of whom were observed throwing the stones raining down upon them back at the Bogside crowd whence they had come, or otherwise passing them to members of Loyalist gangs as an ammunition supply.¹⁶

At 3:25 in the afternoon, someone threw a petrol bomb, and the fight was on. As the afternoon wore on, RUC officers struggled to keep their men from joining in the mob attack on the Bogside's trying to hold to now-reinforced barricade line. At 6:00, an RUC unit used a "Humber Pig" armored vehicle to break through the barricades on William Street. This, from a tactical point of view, was inexplicable, as it allowed the Protestant mob, led by Special

¹⁵ Stetler, Russell. *The Battle of Bogside: The Politics of Violence in Northern Ireland*. London,: Sheed & Ward, 1970, 75.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 79. County Inspector Corbett, one of the senior RUC officers on scene that day, objected to the former practice not on professional or ethical grounds, but because he considered it be returning ammunition to opponents better trained in its use.

Constables, to flood into the Bogside area. In the orgy of violence that followed, there was a total breakdown of police discipline as officers and Protestant rioters joined forces in clashes against residents and IRA members which periodically devolved into savage and pointless beatings. Amidst the chaos, the Bogsideers were ably to rally, and by morning, they had driven the mobs, as well as both police forces, back across the re-established barricade lines.

The RUC's heinous conduct and humiliating defeat in the "Battle of the Bogside" seemed one and for all to solidify the idea that serious reforms were needed, fast. It certainly prompted dramatic action in London — as rioting spread across the region, the British Army was deployed to Northern Ireland on August 14 (to the initial joy Catholics who viewed the troops as there to protect them from the police.)

"Unless there are reforms in the administration of the Royal Ulster Constabulary," editorialized the *Times* the following week, "that force will be no better able to maintain the peace in Derry or Belfast after the troops have returned to barracks than they were before they left them. Wherever the chief blame lies, it is again the fact that is important, the fact that too many Catholics now fear and distrust the R.U.C." ¹⁷

The Hunt Committee

The opinion that that doing nothing about Northern Ireland's policing arrangements and hoping for the best was no longer an option was evidently by this time shared by Major James Chichester-Clark, O'Neill's successor as Unionist Party Leader and Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. A Home Office memo from August 18th notes that the Home Office Secretary Barbara Castle and two Home Office officials had called Chichester-Clark to "put strong and urgent

¹⁷ "Next Steps In Ulster." *Times* (London), August 18, 1969. The *Times*, in this editorial, denied the claims — later proven true — that RUC men had participated in the unrest as baseless. It is significant, therefore, that they nevertheless stated unequivocally the need for immediate reforms.

pressure on him to remove [the B Specials] from street duty.”¹⁸ It is clear that there was little love lost for the B Specials in Whitehall. “[The USC] are not a Special Constabulary in the English sense,” reads a Home Office internal memo dated August 18th. “They are a sectarian group of citizens trained in the use of firearms and... lacking the knowledge of policing essential to their employment on police duties.”¹⁹ A second memo, dated the next day, indicates that a significant part of the motivation for deploying British Army troops to Northern Ireland was, at least from Castle’s perspective, to deprive Chichester-Clark of an excuse to avoid standing the Specials down.²⁰

At a meeting of the Stormont cabinet on August 18th, Chichester-Clark expressed distress at the mounting criticism of the police, and the Specials in particular, and fretted over the apparent fruitlessness of trying to convince the Catholic population and the international community that all was well and that the police were behaving appropriately and asked the Cabinet to consider what might be done. “After considering various possibilities,” the minutes of the meeting note, “the general view of Ministers was that some form of Advisory Body should be set up to assist the Inspector General to carry out an appraisal of the effectiveness and organisation of the police forces and their methods in light of recent events and to put forward recommendations to strengthen and increase their efficiency. Possible composition of the Board and its terms of reference were considered.”²¹ The proposal to form an Advisory Committee was considered again on the 19th and publicly announced on the 21st, despite not being formally

¹⁸ “‘B Specials’: Transactions of 15th and 16th August.” National Archives File CJ 3/71

¹⁹ Untitled Memo of August 18, 1969. National Archives File CJ 3/71. James Callaghan’s near-exact repetition of this language in recounting the views of Robert Mark and Douglas Osmond with regard to the USC in his 1973 memoir *A House Divided* (p. 58) may indicate that the memo was written by one of the two, or by Callaghan himself.

²⁰ “Use of the Ulster Special Constabulary.” National Archives File CJ 3/71

²¹ “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle on Monday, 18th August, 1969 at 2:00 PM.” PRONI File CAB/4/1463

endorsed by the Cabinet until the 22nd, when the membership was finalized. The Committee's chairman, John Hunt, had been decided on prior to the other members by Chichester-Clark in direct consultation with Home Secretary (later Prime Minister) James Callaghan and Prime Minister Harold Wilson, who had initially suggested Hunt. The cabinet itself was apparently not consulted as to the appointment of Hunt, who was at that time serving as chair of the Home Office Parole Board,²² as by the time he appears in the Cabinet minutes on the 22nd, his position has already been finalized.²³

Baron John Hunt was a long-serving and well-regarded Army officer known primarily for leading the 1953 Mount Everest expedition. He had served briefly in the Indian police in Bengal during a period of anti-colonial unrest, with which he is thought to have had some sympathy, but had no executive experience in policing. He was not particularly active politically in 1969, but would align with the Social and Liberal Democratic parties later in life.²⁴ Why exactly Porter and Chichester-Clark settled on him to lead their Advisory Committee is not clear from the paper record. Joining him would be Sir James Robertson, the Chief Constable of Glasgow, and Mr. Robert Mark, Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Mark had been one of the English officers sent by the Home Office to report on conditions in Northern Ireland. Robertson's appointment was considered to be a gesture of good faith to Ulster Protestants, as he was apparently known and well-regarded among the Unionist community.²⁵

²² Callaghan, James. *A House Divided: the Dilemma of Northern Ireland*. London: Collins, 1973. 66-7.

²³ "Extract from Cabinet Conclusions of 22nd August, 1969." PRONI File CAB/9/G/88/1

²⁴ "Hunt, (Henry Cecil) John, Baron." *Who's Who in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

²⁵ Callaghan, *A House Divided*. 67.

The Committee convened for the first time at noon on August 29th. Over the course of its meetings, the members interviewed 65 groups of one or more witnesses and received written testimony from seven more.²⁶

The opinions of the witnesses regarding existing policing arrangements varied along fairly predictable lines. Mr. John McKay, an English Chief Inspector of Police attached to the Army's Northern Ireland Command disparaged the USC as "a militia" and suggested that they be "closely examined," though he noted that USC Commanders had, in his experience, bristled at any suggestions which seemed to hint at the possibility of USC disbandment. "I need time to consult with my men or there could be a bloodbath," he reported being told by one. Another had protested that the USC were "the main deterrent to the IRA," while yet a third had suggested that to de-escalate the Specials' role "would be to surrender to the enemy." McKay also noted his perception of a danger that if the USC were disbanded, they would flock to Loyalist paramilitaries in droves.²⁷ Mr. J. Greeves, the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs concurred that "politically it would be very difficult to disband" the USC.²⁸

During the first week of September, the Committee members traveled to a number of RUC and USC stations "in the field." Their first outing was to a joint RUC/USC barracks in Antrim to interview the leadership there. The RUC County and District Inspector agreed that they would prefer an arrangement which relieved them of security duties and allowed them to focus on ordinary police work. "We are robber-catchers at heart," one of them told Hunt. They also complained that some of the USC men they had worked with had been deployed with no training whatsoever, and that their poor conduct had soured public opinion against the RUC.

²⁶ Minutes of the Hunt Committee: List of Witnesses/Agenda. National Archives File CJ/3/57

²⁷ *Ibid.* Testimony of Mr. John McKay

²⁸ *Ibid.* Testimony of Mr. Greeves and Mr. O'Connor

Hunt notes that these discontents appeared to be taking a toll on the force in other ways. Visits to stations in Armagh, Keady, Newry, Crossmaglen and elsewhere revealed RUC men and officers operating in varying levels of disorganization, indiscipline, and overwhelm. On multiple occasions, RUC men complained that the conduct of untrained and unruly Specials damaged their public image. Nearly all who Hunt spoke to echoed the desire to return to ordinary police work.

That this desire was felt more generally among RUC members was confirmed by a memo submitted to the Hunt Committee on the 18th of September. It came from the Central Representative Body of the RUC — the main organization representing RUC officers to the Government — and, in an almost pleading tone, emphasized what it characterized as the strong wish of RUC personnel to return to ordinary policing duties. “The recommendations which we make in this Report have one major aim,” opened the memo, “to establish the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the role which all its members wish to see it occupying: that of a civilian law enforcement agency carrying out recognised police duties only. The paramilitary image which has been given to the force arises from the requirement to perform a dual function as a police force and a state security body. In the past there were historical reasons for this situation, but we feel that the quasi-military duties still undertaken by the Royal Ulster Constabulary are now totally out of keeping with the modern understanding of police functions.” Central to accomplishing this, the memo argued, was disarmament. “The regular carrying of firearms is not conducive to the image of a civilian police force,” it asserted, “and the eventual aim must be the phasing out of firearms as soon as is compatible with the safety of our members.”²⁹ The memo also criticized the use of RUC personnel as border guards, characterizing this as a properly

²⁹ Royal Ulster Constabulary Central Representative Body, “Memorandum Submitted to the Lord Hunt Advisory Board, September 1969.” PRONI File CAB/9/G/88/1

military function, and pleaded for the establishment of a Police Advisory Board of the type already set up in England, Wales, and Scotland.³⁰

Whereas the RUC and its membership's tone in communications with the Committee seems almost pleading, the tenor of USC men and commanders is markedly defensive. This evident insecurity seems to have been the result of a general impression among the Unionist community that their interests, the continued existence of the USC in particular, were in some way jeopardized by the Committee's proceedings. On August 26, after the Committee's announcement and formation but three days before its first meeting, several ministers complained to Chichester-Clark in a Cabinet session that "the effect on the Force which lack of direct and positive communication of facts to its members about their position was creating."³¹ On September 15, while the Committee was still in the process of making inquiries and conducting interviews, the Cabinet Secretariat received a document carrying several hundred signatures beneath the statement "we the undersigned, warn the Government, that to disarm or disband the ULSTER SPECIAL CONSTABULARY, will only give grounds for further republican interference, with discreet retaliation from "PROTESTANT LOYALISTS." The document's header read "Ulster Protestant Volunteers." On September 20th, W.S.. Fyffe, a Unionist MP in Stormont, wrote to Chichester-Clark offering a more refined, but substantively similar "warning." "Considerable disquiet has arisen in the Border areas by suggestions that the Special Constabulary will be rendered practically innocuous following the recommendations of the Hunt Committee," he wrote. "Any diminution of their status would be greatly resented and, I am afraid, resisted... if this occurred it would very likely lead to increased UVF activity... I hope you will give this matter serious thought. To a large extent the security of Ulster is bound

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Extract from Cabinet Conclusions Tuesday August 26 1969." PRONI File CAB/9/G/88/1

up with the welfare of the Specials.”³² Chichester-Clark replied to Fyffe, dismissing the idea that the USC was to be disbanded as “rumors.” “There is absolutely no question that we must have a reserve of some kind to back up the police,” he said, “and I have complete confidence that we shall not be faced with the recommendation that there be no such thing.”³³

But the USC personnel who spoke with the Committee seemed to share Fyffe’s skepticism. In the Committee’s travels to barracks around the six counties, USC members regularly brought up the idea of disbandment unprompted, expressing their hostility toward the proposition in no uncertain terms. In his notes, Hunt states that many USC men admitted to him without hesitation that they would join paramilitary groups if the force were disbanded.³⁴ In Derry, Hunt was “unimpressed” by a pair of USC commandants with whom he spoke, one of whom, apparently fired a revolver several times through a window into the air to quell a disturbance outside in the course of giving testimony.³⁵

The Hunt Report

Chichester-Clark’s cabinet received an advance copy of the Hunt Committee’s Report on October 6th. Giving form to the members’ apparently low impressions of the USC, it recommended the wholesale disbandment of that force, along with the disarmament of the regular RUC and their relief from “all duties of a military nature as soon as possible.” The quasi-military functions which had been performed to date by the Specials and the RUC should be assumed by a locally-recruited, part-time military unit which would be under the central command of the Army. The auxiliary policing functions of the USC should be taken up by a new RUC volunteer reserve force which would be under the ordinary RUC chain of command.

³² Letter from W.S. Fyffe to the Prime Minister, September 20, 1969. PRONI File CAB/9/G/88/1

³³ Letter from Maj. James Chichester-Clark to W.S. Fyffe, 23 September, 1969. PRONI File CAB/9/G/88/1

³⁴ Minutes of the Hunt Committee: “Visit to RUC and USC County Antrim.” National Archives File CJ/3/57

³⁵ *Ibid.* Lord Hunt’s Notes from Visits to Derry, Keady, Dungannon, Antrim, Armagh, and Crossmaglen. National Archives File CJ/3/57

Command of the RUC should be transferred from the Ministry of Home Affairs to a new Police Authority, to be composed of representatives from both the Unionist and Nationalist communities. The still-on-the-books Special Powers Act, they recommended, should be repealed as soon as possible.

The ministers were generally welcoming to the idea of relieving the RUC of security duties, provided that a commitment was secured from Westminster that the Army would meet all security needs in Northern Ireland for as long as the Stormont government considered necessary, and that any arrangement to that effect could not be suspended unilaterally by the Army. In response to the Committee's suggestion to disband the USC, ministers voiced surprisingly little hostility beyond the recognition that it would be politically unpopular amongst Protestants. It is clear though, that this lack of resistance had little to do with their agreement with what they must have known to be Hunt's underlying intentions. For one thing, they had been told unequivocally — apparently through backchannels and before the official publication of Hunt's report — that if they did not do this themselves, it would be done for them by Westminster, and no replacement force would be provided for.³⁶

But there was another reason for the Ministers' lack of resistance on this point as well. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting that day make it abundantly clear that they had a plan — and every intention — to merely repeat in 1970 the maneuver that had been performed with the UVF at the USC's creation in 1920. That is, they would simply roll the entire membership of the “disbanding” organization into the new, “forming” one. “Ministers generally accepted that they should not agree to any proposal which did not in effect allow re-organization of the Special Constabulary or their absorption into acceptable reserve or auxiliary forces,” says the note of the

³⁶ Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, 174.

meeting, with remarkable candor.³⁷ One minister even suggested that since the intention was to form the new force from the current ranks of the USC, it would not even be necessary or appropriate to publicly refer to the reorganization as a “disbandment.”³⁸ Ministers agreed that, provided they could secure a commitment to ongoing presence and a guarantee that the new force would be called out at their request, it would even be convenient and advantageous to have Westminster handle its administration and maintenance.³⁹ The Cabinet, it is clear, had every intention of appearing to comply with Hunt’s recommendations while making absolutely sure that, in practice, as little as possible actually changed.

London however, seemed, at least to a certain extent, to be anticipating this. The following day, October 7, Callaghan called Chichester-Clark twice, one at 11 AM and again at 7 PM. The notes of their conversations indicate a distinctly adversarial tone. Callaghan had written the following day to express his preference for Sir Arthur Young to replace Sir Anthony Peacocke, who was expected to resign following the publication of the Report, as Inspector-General of the RUC. Chichester-Clark was “not happy” with this, and requested either F.E. Williamson of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary or Peter Brodie, chief of New Scotland Yard’s Criminal Investigations Division (CID). Callaghan refused both requests, saying that neither man could be relieved of his current position.⁴⁰ That Chichester-Clark did not wish Arthur Young, a policeman with a reputation for overseeing overseas police departments during periods of decolonisation and British withdrawal, is suggestive. The second call, later that evening, was apparently not any friendlier. Chichester-Clark pushed Callaghan to endorse amendments to the

³⁷ “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle on Monday, 6th October, 1969 at 11:30 AM.” PRONI File CAB/4/1479

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ “Note for the Record of a conversation by telephone between Maj. James Chichester-Clark and the Home Secretary on October 7, 1969 at 11 AM.” National Archives File CJ 3/71

Report's language which would have implied that some level of control of the new military force should rest with the Northern Ireland government. Callaghan refused. "The British Cabinet had grave doubts about the existence of an armed civilian force," he said, "It had come to accept it, but on the condition that if the British Government was responsible for creating it, it must also control it." "Constitutionally," he said, "one part of the UK could not be allowed to run its own army. Consultation between the two governments was acceptable but ultimate responsibility must remain in Westminster." Chichester-Clark threatened a "severe reaction" from the Northern Irish "public" if no local control of the USC's replacement were retained and insisted that Stormont be given at least veto power over the new force's dissolution. Absent that, he said, he could not endorse the proposal. Callaghan countered that as the Ministry of Defence would be funding the new force, the exclusive power to disband it must rest with the UK Parliament. At this, it seems Chichester-Clark blew up. He "remarked that the present problem would not have arisen if the Ulster Special Constabulary remained, [to which] the Home Secretary replied that a substantial minority of the Northern Ireland public would not tolerate such a proposal." At this, Chichester-Clark issued an ultimatum— either the Report would be amended, or he would denounce it. The conversation reached an impasse, and ended.⁴¹

Immediately after the call ended, Chichester-Clark met with the Northern Ireland cabinet to discuss the Hunt Report again. He downplayed his disagreements with Callaghan, suggesting that the Home Secretary had accepted his suggested wording change, when he had in fact only not ruled it out altogether. He made it clear, though, that London was resolute that ultimate command authority rest with Westminster, not Stormont. The Ministers were divided on whether to accept this. "The handing over of control of security and the apparent disbanding of the USC

⁴¹ "Note for the Record of a conversation by telephone between Maj. James Chichester-Clark and the Home Secretary, on October 7, 1969 at 7 PM." National Archives File CJ 3/71

could produce a violent reaction and give rise to disturbances if not civil war,” some argued. “For almost 50 years Northern Ireland had, in fact, control of its own armed security force.” On the other hand, others argued, “It was a logical consequence of civilianisation of the police that security control should be re-organised and it was constitutionally correct” that Westminster control the security forces. “Insistence on control of the new force could have repercussions which would put at risk Northern Ireland’s position as a part of the United Kingdom — a greater risk than the possibility of disturbances.” Ultimately, the Cabinet agreed that if no further concession could be extracted from Callaghan regarding local control of the new force, that they should at least insist on a four-part guarantee: that the USC would remain operational until the raising of the new force was complete, that recruitment for the new force would begin immediately, that London would commit to maintaining an “adequate garrison” in Northern Ireland in perpetuity, and that “the military forces would always be available to deal immediately with any security problem which might arise.”⁴²

On the following day, the Cabinet received word from Mr. J.V. Morrison, a Ministry of Home Affairs employee detailed to the staff of the Hunt Committee, that each of the Committee members had made verbal statements to him to the effect that it was their understanding and intention that the new force would not be able to be disbanded without the consent of the Northern Ireland government. This seemed to set their minds at ease.⁴³ In further talks with Callaghan on October 9th and 10th, a final agreement was reached: the Northern Ireland government would accept the Report’s recommendations, and the Home Office would agree to interpret the language as requiring the consent of Stormont before the force could be disbanded.

⁴² “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle on Tuesday, October 7 at 8:00 PM.” PRONI File CAB/4/1482

⁴³ “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle on Wednesday, 8th October, 1969 at 10:30 AM.” PRONI File CAB/4/1483

During these talks, Chichester-Clark managed to extract one more concession from Callaghan as a final condition of his Government's acceptance of the Hunt Report. Section 171 (d) of the draft Report stipulated that the the Ulster Special Constabulary be "disbanded." Chichester-Clark wanted the stipulation modified to read "replaced" instead. By his own account, Callaghan felt that this "seemed a small concession to make... as they felt so strongly about it," and believed that "the meaning remained the same," and so consented.⁴⁴ This accepted, the Cabinet finally agreed to abandon its demand for command authority of the new force.

The Report was released to the public on October 10th. The reaction among the Unionist community was unsubtly hostile. Rioting broke out in Protestant neighborhoods across Belfast which lasted two days. From a Catholic perspective, however, the Report's recommendations must have looked promising. With the disbandment of the Specials, a perennial antagonist would be removed from the picture. The transfer of control and command powers to the new Police Authority, furthermore, would finally take the RUC out from under the direct control of the hated Ministry of Home Affairs.

As the year 1969 drew to a close, Northern Ireland had, after much agonizing, a plan for police reform in the new decade. But they now faced a process which was equally if not more daunting— putting it into practice.

Implementing Hunt

Though Callaghan may have thought that there was no meaningful difference between, "disbanding" the USC and "replacing" it, this view was evidently not shared by the Northern Irish Cabinet. Indeed, the whole process of putting the Hunt Report into practice may be best

⁴⁴ Callaghan, *A House Divided*. 109-10.

understood as two governments doing two different tasks simultaneously; Westminster attempting to “disband,” Stormont attempting to “replace.”

The Cabinet began work on “replacing” the USC with remarkable speed. On October 14th, Chichester-Clark called a meeting of the Cabinet to discuss what steps might be taken to pre-empt the spread of unrest among members of the USC following the announcement of the Hunt Report’s acceptance. Porter, who had evidently attended a meeting of men from the B Specials in Newtownards the previous evening, reported that there had already been mass resignations and that demands had been made that USC members be enrolled in the new force “en bloc.” They agreed to announce as soon as possible their intention to accept USC members into the new force by default and to require applicants to take an Oath of Allegiance, effectively shutting out committed Republicans from membership.⁴⁵

On the 15th the Northern Ireland Government put out a press release addressing how they would recruit for the new force. “Members of the USC who wish to [join] will be accepted for service with the new defence force,” it said without qualification, “subject to satisfying requirements as to age and physical fitness which have yet to be determined.”⁴⁶

The matter of the setting up a regular police reserve force, which Hunt had suggested in the Report as well, was taken up somewhat later, on August 23rd. Porter floated the idea that, since Hunt had suggested only that the Reserve Force’s name be changed, and not what it should be changed *to*, it might be possible to call it the Ulster Special Constabulary. His motivations for making this suggestion, though not stated in the minute, must have been obvious to all who heard it. If a force called the Ulster Special Constabulary remained in existence, the public perception

⁴⁵ “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle on Tuesday, October 14th, 1969 at 10:30 AM.” PRONI File CAB/4/1485

⁴⁶ Press Release dated 15th October, 1969 PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/1

that the B Specials had been “disbanded” would be further diminished.⁴⁷ At the same meeting, Porter laid out the timeframe for authorizing the new defense force. His Working Party would deliver its suggestions to the Ministry of Defence in London in time for it to issue decisions by October 28 at the latest. The Ministry of Defence would publish an official White Paper on the Force, and legislation would be presented “with a view to its enactment in time to allow the formation of the new force on 2nd January.” Ministers accepted this proposed timeline as satisfactory.⁴⁸

On the 24th of October, Chichester-Clark mailed the recommendations of Porter’s Working Party to Callaghan’s office in London. The tensions between the two men over the issue had evidently not faded. “The recommendations seem to me, if I may say so, to constitute a satisfactory basis on which to raise the new Force and I think they offer good prospects of attracting recruits in sufficient numbers. I very much hope the recommendations can be accepted in Whitehall pretty much as they stand. In view of the political situation here I trust that any move to make the proposed terms more restrictive than the Working Party propose will be discouraged and I should be grateful for any help you can give in ensuring that the recommendations go through.”⁴⁹ Callaghan’s reply was equally frosty. “I know that the Ministry of Defence have given great care and consideration to the recommendations of the Working Party which has been studying these matters in Northern Ireland,” he said, rejecting implicitly the possibility that Stormont’s proposals would be passed into law as-is. “It is proposed to publish a White Paper and a Bill dealing with the new local defence force on 12th November and by the weekend I hope to let you have a copy. It will be necessary to ask you to let us know of

⁴⁷ “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle on Thursday, 23rd October, 1969 at 10:30 AM.” PRONI File CAB/4/1487

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Letter from Chichester-Clark to Callaghan dated 24th October 1969. PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/1

any points by Monday evening, so that we shall have an opportunity to take into account any comment that you may have.”⁵⁰

The suggestion that the RUC’s Reserve Force be renamed the Ulster Special Constabulary did not last long. By the next week’s regular Cabinet meeting, held on October 30, the Cabinet had agreed that the new volunteer reserve force should simply be titled the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve.

When the first draft of the Ministry of Defence’s White Paper reached Stormont, the primary point of contention was what the Ministry of Defence termed “call-out liability” — the question of who would have the authority to deploy the new force under what circumstances. The Ministry’s first draft granted call-out authority to any Army officer holding the rank of Major or higher, or whenever the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve (known as the Territorials or the TAVR) had also been placed on alert. It stipulated only that the General Officer Commanding (GOC), the commander of all British Army forces in Northern Ireland, should “consult closely with the Government of Northern Ireland concerning the calling-out and operational employment of the force.” It also proposed that the force should be named “the Northern Ireland Defence Force.”

Stormont’s counter-offer was delivered by telegram on November 2nd. It suggested that the new force be named the “Ulster Defence Force” and that it be liable for call-out under any of three circumstances. The first more or less matched the first clause of the MOD’s proposal regarding senior officers of the regular army. But it also added two more liability criteria, coequal to the first: “in defence of the United Kingdom against actual or apprehended attack or sabotage,” and “in circumstances of imminent national danger or emergency.” These terms

⁵⁰ Letter from Callaghan to Chichester Clark dated 30th October 1969. PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/1

matched the MOD's language from their draft describing the circumstances under which the TAVR might be called out, but omitted the requirement that the Territorials actually be mustered before the Northern Irish force could be called out. They also requested the deletion of the proviso that all applications to join the new force would be considered "without discrimination," calling the words "objectionable and unnecessary."⁵¹

Later that week, Porter flew to London to meet with Roy Hattersley, then the Minister of Defence for Administration, in order to reconcile the two governments' respective proposals. Hattersley agreed to the changes to the wording of the call-out liability provision, provided that the the Army's authority to call out the force was clarified to be "for as long as necessary or expedient" and that the latter two clauses be restricted to call-outs for full-time service. This, presumably, would prevent Stormont from being able to classify the ongoing unrest in Northern Ireland as an open-ended "national emergency" and keep the new force in active, indefinite part-time service. The possibility, however, that the "national emergency" and "attack or sabotage" clauses might be invoked unilaterally by Stormont in the absence of an MOD-initiated Territorials call-out seems to have been allowed to remain. The non-discrimination clause proved to be somewhat more of a hang-up. Hattersley agreed to its deletion only on the condition that it be replaced with an explicit guarantee that membership in the force would be open "to all male citizens of the United Kingdom of good character, whatever their denomination." Porter refused.⁵² After the meetings with Hattersley concluded, the Ministry of Home Affairs generated a memo for distribution in Stormont on the points in the White Paper on which agreement with the MOD had not been reached. These were: whether or not the new force should be prohibited

⁵¹ "Draft White Paper on the Proposed Defence Force." PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/1

⁵² "New Defence Force: Note of Outcome of Minister of Home Affairs' Discussion in London with Mr. Hattersley, Minister of Defence for Administration on the Points Raised by the Cabinet in Relation to the Draft White Paper." PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/1

from deployment for riot duty and crowd control in cities (Hattersley for, Porter against); the 6000-member ceiling on the force's total size (Hattersley for, Porter against); the inclusion of an explicit non-discrimination provision (Hattersley for, Porter against); and the allowance for the annual training requirement to be conducted on weekends rather than seven consecutive days (Porter for; Hattersley against). In the memo, Porter noted his concurrence with Whitehall's assessment that the seriousness of the differences should be "toned down" in statements to the two Parliaments.⁵³

Though not mentioned in the memo, the title of the force was also turning out to be something of a sticking point. Stormont had argued in its initial counter-proposal that the use of the term "Ulster" in the new force's name would be commensurate with other military units based in Northern Ireland, include the Royal Ulster Rifles and the RAF's Ulster Squadron, in addition to the RUC.⁵⁴ A later reconciliation memo from Home Affairs noted, however, that "it seem[ed] unlikely that the word "Ulster" will be approved as part of the title." In the meeting with Hattersley in London, Porter raised the subject:

"On the title of the force I said that we felt strongly that the word "Ulster" should be used and not "Northern Ireland". Mr. Hattersley said that the latter was the correct description and asked why "Ulster". I told him on grounds of tradition, sentiment and indeed precedent for which the Armed Forces themselves provided ample evidence, as did also, of course, the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Hattersley said the feeling existed in Whitehall that if the word "Ulster" were to be used, Roman Catholics would not join the new force. I said I did not accept this and, in any case, where it proved to be correct, the person concerned would not, in my view, be a suitable recruit in any event. I added that insistence on the use of "Northern Ireland" would present presentational difficulties for us as many people, quite unconnected with the Special Constabulary, felt that the Constabulary in general were being made the scapegoats and that omission on "Ulster" from the title would be taken as yet another example of the Government's alleged acceptance of criticisms levelled at the Constabulary.

⁵³ "Ulster Defence Regiment: Points of Difference Between the Two Governments." CAB/9/G/89/1

⁵⁴ "Draft White Paper on the Proposed Defence Force." PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/1

In view of my strong views in the matter, Mr. Hattersley undertook to put the point to his colleagues and to indicate that it is one on which the Northern Ireland Government feels very strongly.”⁵⁵

Porter, of course, did eventually get his way on the name of the new force, and a Home Office memo from just before to the above negotiations sheds some light on why. The memo, which relayed the views of Oliver Wright, the UK Representative at Stormont, emphasized that “the disbandment of the USC was the most sensitive political point in Northern Ireland at the moment,” and offered Wright’s view that “Hunt was not well informed enough on the needs of the new force to form an accurate view.” Wright urged great deference to Stormont’s views in the matter of the new force’s organization in order to avoid a total failure of the reform platform. “small points [such as the name of the force] would make all the difference to the acceptance of the new arrangement by Protestants,” he said. “It is necessary to make the new defence force really attractive to the B Specials, otherwise [they] would continue, apart from going underground, to excite public sympathy among Unionists... if there is no room in the the new force for all the qualified applicants from the Specials, there could be great trouble.”⁵⁶ Wright’s views were apparently adopted by the Cabinet Defence and Oversea Policy Committee, who stated in their official Cabinet brief on the new force that “Protestants in Northern Ireland take great interest in the creation of the new force which they look upon as a successor body to the Ulster Special Constabulary. The Unionist Council has clearly indicated to Maj. Chichester-Clark the importance of the new force being created in an acceptable form.” Without explicitly saying as much, the memo hinted at the wisdom of not pushing back too hard against Unionist preferences for the force’s creation. “If an effective new force cannot be recruited,” it cautioned,

⁵⁵ Undated note of a telephone call between Porter and Hattersley. PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/1

⁵⁶ Memo dated 30 October 1969 by N. Cairncross, Home Office, detailing the views of Mr. Oliver Wright. National Archives File CJ 3/56

“it will be difficult to disband the USC and could be seen as a political defeat.” As an apparent afterthought, it noted that “it is, of course, important to create a new force which Roman Catholics will join.”⁵⁷

The negotiations over the final language of the White Paper lasted for two more weeks, but the final product certainly reflected the consequences of this conciliatory mentality. Not only was the force given Stormont’s preferred title, but nearly all of Porter’s initial counter-requests of November 2nd were ultimately adopted. The Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) would be 6,000 strong instead of the 4,000 recommended by Hunt. No form of explicit non-discrimination statement was included, and Porter’s less-specific wording regarding call-out liability was adopted with only the weakened proviso that any emergency service be done on a full-time basis. Though the force would, as agreed, be under the direct command of the Ministry of Defence, the White Paper stipulated that the GOC would “work in the closest consultation with the Northern Ireland Government through a Security Committee presided over by the [Northern Ireland] Minister for Home Affairs.”

But that was not the only important further concession which Chichester-Clark’s government gained during these late-stage negotiations. Porter continued to insist that, in order to maintain Northern Ireland’s security, the Government must be given additional authority and discretion to supervise the transition from the USC to the UDR. In a Cabinet meeting on 27 February, he bristled when Gen. Freeland suggested that any shortfall in recruits at the proposed UDR activation date of April 1 could be made up by the temporary assignment of Army troops. If the UDR could not be completely staffed by the proposed date, he insisted, the USC would

⁵⁷ Cabinet Defence and Overseas Policy Committee. “The New Defence Force for Northern Ireland.” Undated. National Archives File CJ 3/56

have to remain operational until the 6,000-man quota was fully filled.⁵⁸ Apparently getting nowhere with the general, Porter took the matter up with Hattersley by telephone on March 3rd. Hattersley backed Freeland's suggestion and the conversation became heated. Porter wished to indefinitely postpone the USC's stand-down and the UDR's activation, but Hattersley refused. Porter stood fast, and Hattersley vowed to take the matter to Wilson, and hung up.⁵⁹ But Wilson must not have cared to press the matter, as a note dated 6 March indicates that the two governments had agreed that any shortfall in recruits as of April 1 would be filled by the retention of an equivalent number of USC men. The practical effect of this concession, of course, was that whatever number of B Specials were needed to fill the UDR's ranks out to 6,000 would be able to essentially join the UDR as active, full-time members by default. If, as may be assumed, the Government hoped to preserve the appearance that the USC was being, in effect, preserved, then this was a terrifically important victory, as it allowed the circumvention of any potential attempt by the Ministry of Defence to check or limit the number of USC members who were transferred automatically into the UDR.

Forming the UDR

With the authorizing legislation now put in place and most of the points of disagreement tabled, it was time to go about actually recruiting and organizing the UDR and RUC Reserve. True to form, an advisory council was convened in December to guide the raising of the Regiment. The six-member body was chaired by General Sir John Anderson, who was to be the UDR's first commanding officer. This body, under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense, was to be primarily responsible for the recruitment of the Regiment. The Northern Ireland

⁵⁸ "Conclusions of a Meeting of the Joint Security Committee Held on Friday, 27 February in Stormont Castle at 4:00 PM." PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/2A

⁵⁹ "Note of Minister's telephone conversation with Mr. Hattersley on Tuesday, 3rd March at 9:55 AM." PRONI File CAB/9/G/89/2A

Cabinet, however, made it clear that they were not simply going to sit back and allow Westminster to handle the recruiting efforts as it saw fit. While the Ministry of Defense went about with the military recruitment exercises with which it was indubitably familiar — placing advertisements in the newspaper and on television, printing and circulating rousing pamphlets singing the praises of patriotic service, and deploying recruiting sergeants from the Regular Army — Stormont waged its own, parallel campaign to cajole as many USC members into UDR service as possible. Less than a week after the White Paper's terms were finalized, the Cabinet drafted and distributed a letter to all active members of the B Specials explaining the terms of service in the UDR and the new RUC Reserve and encouraging them to join either. Cabinet staffers sent letters on a near-weekly basis to the Ministry of Defence, pestering them to print and distribute UDR application forms to USC county commandants in greater numbers.

The fact that the recruiting drive directed by the Ministry of Defence, rather than the Northern Irish Government meant that, aside from the provided rollover of any desiring USC personnel, early recruiting proceeded in a fairly non-sectarian manner. The UDR's earliest recruiting materials are conspicuously free of ostentatious references to the Crown and other Unionist shibboleths.⁶⁰ Initially, these attempts at neutrality seemed to have an effect. With the help of encouragement from moderate Catholic politicians and clergy, Catholic recruitment to the UDR stood at 17 percent by November 1970.⁶¹ Callaghan believed that this figure alone “was sufficient to show that the UDR was not just the B-Specials under another name,”⁶² but the concessions which he had made during the negotiations with Chichester-Clark took their toll. The new regiment retained “Ulster” in the title, a fact whose significance Callaghan apparently

⁶⁰ UDR Recruiting Materials. National Archives Files DEFE 826-832

⁶¹ Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, 290.

⁶² Callaghan, *A House Divided*, 132.

did not fully grasp. It was mostly composed, thanks to the guarantee of a full complement, of former B Specials who had simply changed uniform overnight. It appeared, thanks to the “close consultation” clause, to be at least to some extent under Stormont’s command. None of these factors could have done much to convince the Catholic community that Callaghan’s assessment was correct. Worsening the problem, the government relied heavily on the UDR to implement some of the early Troubles’ least popular policies, including random searches of vehicles and persons in areas — predominantly inhabited by Catholics — thought to be harboring IRA activity, and internment without trial. Just one year later, Catholic UDR membership had dropped by half to only 8%.⁶³ Before long, the Regiment would gain for itself the Specials’ old reputation for sectarianism and brutality, an impression not helped by persistent allegations — later proved to be correct — that its membership was heavily infiltrated by Loyalist paramilitaries who cooperated in the facilitation of sectarian terror attacks.⁶⁴

It is thus not considered controversial today to argue that the Hunt Committee’s recommendations failed to lead to a substantively less sectarian policing and security situation in Northern Ireland. Hunt’s reforms had been suggested with two primary goals in mind. The first of these was to decrease public perception that the police were a sectarian force representing the militarized wing of the Ulster Protestant majority. The second was to create a security arrangement which could effectively maintain public order and suppress the IRA. On both counts, the reforms did not succeed. The disorders which had begun in the summer of 1969 crystallized into the thirty-year conflict that became known as the Troubles, and relations

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Ellison, Graham, and Jim Smyth. *The Crowned Harp: Policing Northern Ireland*. Contemporary Irish Studies. London: Pluto Press, 2000. 193. For a comprehensive account of substantiated allegations of collusion by members of the UDR and RUCR with loyalist paramilitaries, in particular the Mid-Ulster UVF’s notorious “Glenane Gang,” see Cadwallader, Anne. *Lethal Allies: British Collusion in Ireland*. Cork: Mercier Press, 2013.

between the Catholic community and the security forces remained unambiguously poor through the end of hostilities.

There is no one conclusive reason why this failure happened, but the extent to which the Unionist political establishment conspired to manipulate the implementation of Hunt's proposals certainly played a role. Through their campaign of hard-bargaining, hostage-holding, and general political connivance, the Stormont Unionists were effectively able to foil Hunt's overall goal of severing the centuries-old tie between policing and politics in Northern Ireland. The consequence would prove to be the same that it had been in 1922— reforming the police would have to be tried, from the ground up, all over again.

Chapter Three Changing of the Guard

Like its two predecessors, Northern Ireland's third major round of policing overhauls was instigated by a major shift in the region's larger political landscape. This time, however, it was not the outbreak of violence which catalyzed the reform process, but the resolution of it. The full story of the process of ending armed hostilities in Northern Ireland is too long and complex to fully recount or analyze here, but it had its spiritual origins in a philosophical change-of-heart among the IRA and Sinn Fein leadership. Beginning in the early 1980s with the posthumous election of former IRA fighter Bobby Sands to the UK Parliament, senior Republican leaders began, by their own accounts, to consider the possibility that Irish Republican goals could be accomplished by political means, either in conjunction with or in lieu of violent ones. It was this philosophical reorientation which would enable the start of the formal processes of negotiating an end to the Troubles and, ultimately, a new policing arrangement for Northern Ireland. In 1988, lines of communication were opened between Sinn Fein, understood to be the political arm of the IRA, and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), a center-left Nationalist party opposed to Republican violence. The establishment of those channels began the agonizingly slow process of opening the necessary lines of political communication to get the people capable of negotiating a peace agreement to sit at the same table. The multilateral haggling went backwards as often as forwards as a dizzying array of demands, conditions, and provisional agreements were made, modified, and broken; the American and Republic of Ireland governments became involved as mediators and go-betweens; acts of violence repeatedly threatened to scuttle the possibility of further communication. Ceasefires were declared and either broken or allowed to expire on multiple occasions. Crucial factions flitted in and out of talks as events unfolded. Then, seemingly all at once, in the last week of March 1998, everything

fell into place. When Sinn Fein, who had been expelled from the negotiations in January over their alleged involvement in murder of two men, returned on March 23, all the crucial groups were at the table. The independent chairman of the talks, US Senator George Mitchell, pounced, setting a deadline of April 9th for a final agreement to be reached.

The United Kingdom's statutory declassification rules have not yet been applied, either by virtue of elapsed time or a specific waiver, to the documentary records of these multi-party talks, so it is not as of yet possible to make an account of these negotiations in the day-by-day, hour-by-hour fashion which this examination has attempted in the case of the 1922 and 1969-70 reforms. What is knowable is this: on April 10, 1998, the negotiating parties (all of Northern Ireland's political organizations except the hardline Democratic Unionist Party) announced and signed the Belfast Agreement of 1998, better known as the Good Friday Agreement. The Accords created a new constitutional arrangement for Northern Ireland, in which the Unionist majority and the Nationalist minority would share power in a new, proportionally representative Assembly and Executive. They also established intergovernmental councils between the Northern Irish and Republic governments and the Republic government and the UK. The Agreement also addressed, in concrete terms, plans for the release and pardon of conflict-related prisoners and the decommissioning of paramilitary arms. Conspicuously, however, the text of the Agreement did not lay out a specific plan for police reorganization, which had, given the persistently poor relations between the RUC and the public, been widely expected to be a key element of any new governmental arrangement. Instead, Section 8 of the Agreement, entitled "Policing and Justice," was purely aspirational in nature, calling for "a new beginning" to policing in Northern Ireland. The signatory parties expressed their belief "that this agreement offers a unique opportunity to bring about a new political dispensation which will recognise the

full and equal legitimacy and worth of the identities, senses of allegiance and ethos of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland. [The parties] consider that this opportunity should inform and underpin the development of a police service representative in terms of the makeup of the community as a whole and which, in a peaceful environment, should be routinely unarmed.”¹

It continued:

“ Policing structures and arrangements [should be] such that the police service is professional, effective and efficient, fair and impartial, free from partisan political control; accountable, both under the law for its actions and to the community it serves; representative of the society it polices, and operates within a coherent and co-operative criminal justice system, which conforms with human rights norms. The participants also believe that those structures and arrangements must be capable of maintaining law and order including responding effectively to crime and to any terrorist threat and to public order problems.”²

It seemed, however, that beyond these abstract goals, the parties had been unable to agree upon specific policing structures and policies. The looming questions of whether the RUC should be retained or disbanded, of who would be eligible for police service, of how the accountability, “free[dom] from from partisan political control” and representative composition to which it aspired should be attained in practice went unaddressed. Instead, the Agreement “punted,” the issue, establishing terms of reference for an independent commission “to make recommendations

¹ McKenna, Fionnuala, ed. “The Agreement.” CAIN Web Service. Belfast: University of Ulster, 2016.

² *Ibid.*

for future policing arrangements in Northern Ireland including means of encouraging widespread community support for these arrangements within the agreed framework of principles.”³

The Patten Commission

The Commission itself was established on June 3rd, 1988.⁴ It was chaired by the Rt. Hon. Chris Patten, best known for having been the last British Governor of Hong Kong, and having presided in that capacity over the handover of the city to the People’s Republic of China. The seven other members of the Commission were: Dr. Maurice Hayes, a member of the Irish Senate (*Seanad Éireann*); Dr. Gerald Lynch, President of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, Kathleen O’Toole, an administrator at Boston College and former Secretary of Public Safety for the state of Massachusetts; Dr. Clifford Shearing, a professor of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Toronto and the University of the Western Cape; Sir John Smith, former Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police; Mr. Peter Smith QC, a Northern Irish barrister; and Mrs. Lucy Woods, former Chief Executive of British Telecom Northern Ireland. The Commission’s Secretary was Mr. Robert Pierce of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.⁵

Once established, the Commission began an extensive fact-finding process. Following its first convention on June 11th, 1998, it held 60 days of plenary meetings briefing itself on the background and terms of the Good Friday agreement, the contemporary arrangement of the RUC, the history of the Northern Irish policing arrangement, previous examinations and modifications of it (presumably including those discussed earlier in this examination, although the extent to which they would have had access to the materials used to compile the accounts of

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Rea and Masefield, p.29 (First Citation)

⁵ *Ibid.* p.44

the prior two chapters is not clear), and the contemporary state of scholarship, thought, and debate on policing worldwide. Additionally, the Commission report stated, “From the beginning the Commission collectively, and Commissioners individually, had numerous private meetings with a range of people – clerics, politicians, civil liberties groups, community and youth workers, editors, academics, and others – as well as visiting every police sub-division, other police stations, headquarters departments and meeting individual police officers.”⁶ In October, the Commission began hearing oral statements from members of the public during a series of open meetings in each of Northern Ireland’s 26 District Council jurisdictions. All in all, more than 10,000 people attended the Commission’s meetings and a further 2,500 submitted individual written testimony. The Commission then made visits to the headquarters of *An Garda Síochána* in the Republic and several police forces in Britain, Canada, South Africa, Spain, and the United States.

The actual written records of these fact-finding processes — Commission members’ personal notes, copies of the submitted written testimony, minutes from exploratory and deliberative meetings, et cetera, — are not yet available for public review. Compiled, they must comprise, speculatively, at least 10,000 pages. Their unavailability makes assembling an unfiltered picture of exactly what the Commission members saw, and how it might have affected, shaped, or changed their thinking over time nearly impossible, unlike in the case of the Hunt Committee, whose contemporaneous, unedited notes and minutes unexpectedly became part of the public record. Though the lack of data must necessarily change this examination’s approach to examining the third reform process somewhat, it does not render the Commission’s views and motivations altogether inscrutable.

⁶ Patten, Rt. Hon. Chris. “A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland (Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland.)” September 1999. s. 2.3

The Commission's full report, entitled "A New Beginning" after the language of its original charge in the text of the Good Friday Agreement, was released on September 9, 1999. It was divided into 20 chapters and five annexes, comprising some 130 pages in total. The third of these chapters helpfully enough, was entitled "Perceptions of the Police: Main Findings," and is devoted in whole part to providing an account of what the Commission had gathered from its fact-finding and what conclusions it had drawn. It is, unfortunately, impossible to assess the candor of the chapter, or the extent to which it has been sanitized, but the account it provides nevertheless gives what seems a fairly comprehensive insight into what Patten's inquiries turned up.

The Patten Report

The Commission began with an examination of survey data, noting the presence of a 30-plus percentage-point gap between Catholics and Protestants in the RUC's raw overall approval rating. More than 80 percent of Protestants, it said, approved of the RUC overall as compared to less than 50 percent of Catholics. The Report qualified this finding, however, by noting that in the same polls, Catholics tended to report higher rates of satisfaction with the police services they actually received in their home areas than with the performance of the RUC as a whole, and that the reverse was true of Protestants. From these statistics, the Commission concluded that it was likely that "a distinction [exists] between the way in which people think about their local policing experiences and concerns, and the way they think about the RUC as an institution... [that is,] the views people express about the police are often essentially political views about the RUC as an institution rather than views about the policing service which they themselves receive."⁷ They also reported that the surveys had found "a large difference between Protestant

⁷ *Ibid.* ss. 3.5-3.6

and Catholic views of whether the police treat their two communities equally,” with 70% of Protestants answering in the affirmative as compared to only 30% of Catholics, and that this disparity remained constant in assessments of the RUC at the local and national levels, and in assessments of the RUC’s conduct in both ordinary criminal and “public order” situations.⁸ The Commission reported that the same trends had been reflected in their open meetings and the individual testimonies which they received, with a few exceptions. Among lower-income respondents, polling showed a much higher approval rating of the RUC among Protestants than Catholics. In public meetings in low-income communities, however, both demographics testified to holding relatively low opinions of the police. The Report offered this as reinforcement of its theory that views of the police were, in the abstract, more informed by politics than by actual experiences on a daily basis. “We had a stark example of this at one of our public meetings in a Unionist/Loyalist area when, after an hour or so of discussing difficulties facing local policing, one speaker made a statement of unqualified support for “our” police force and the mood of the meeting was abruptly transformed as nearly all subsequent speakers rallied behind the same, essentially political, position. (Our focus group study also had examples of Protestants referring to “our” police, but none of Catholics doing so.)”⁹:

Perhaps more surprisingly than what the Commission did find in this respect was what it did not find, or at least did not seek to find. In the first half of section 4, which addressed the Commission’s view of the relationship between policing and human rights, the Commission explicitly declined to issue findings as to the past role of the RUC or other state security bodies in preserving or depriving human rights to the people it had policed. “We do not, in this report, make judgments about the extent to which the RUC may or may not have been culpable in the

⁸ *Ibid.* ss. 3.7-8

⁹ *Ibid.* s. 3.21

past of inattention to human rights or abuse of human rights,” it said. “We were not charged in our terms of reference to make judgments about the past, [and] our approach is restorative rather than retributive.”¹⁰

The bulk of the report, however, was devoted to making and explaining 175 specific recommendations regarding how the Commission believed the current policing structure in Northern Ireland should be changed. Despite the Commission’s claim to be uninterested in the successes or failures of the past, many of these recommendations clearly were intended to address some of the enduring historical difficulties whose genesis and longevity this examination has been devoted to recounting. It is therefore worth examining some of them in detail.

The first seven recommendations, arising from Chapter 4 of the Report, dealt with integrating police practice and structure with the political-philosophical doctrines of universal human rights. “There should be a comprehensive programme of action to focus policing in Northern Ireland on a human rights-based approach,” said Recommendation 1. Recommendation 2 suggested the following phrasing for a new Oath of Office for police officers: “I hereby do solemnly and sincerely and truly declare and affirm that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of constable, and that in so doing I will act with fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality, uphold fundamental human rights and accord equal respect to all individuals and to their traditions and beliefs.” Not only does the form of this oath at minimum suggest a recognition that the Northern Irish police had, in the past, been less than fully supportive of the human rights of all people, it explicitly dealt, in the last clause, with the issues of unequal treatment across communities which the Report had nodded to in Chapter 3. Moreover, it conspicuously omitted the statement of allegiance to the Crown and the United Kingdom which

¹⁰ *Ibid.* s. 4.4

had, by its inclusion in 1922 and its retention in 1970, effectively precluded committed Nationalists from service in the police.

The next 36 recommendations fell under the heading of “Accountability.” The first two points under this heading recommended, when taken together, the creation of a new Policing Board to replace the old and never-effective Police Authority created following the Hunt Report. The new Board’s “primary function... should be to hold the Chief Constable and the police service publicly to account,” the Report said. By recommending a ground-up overhaul, the Patten Commission was, in effect, recognizing that Northern Ireland’s policing command structures had historically been ineffective at creating real cross-community accountability. Going yet further, Recommendations 16 and 17 stipulated that the Board should have 19 members, divided 10-9 into “political” and “independent” seats. The “political” members should be members of the new Assembly representing the parties with seats on the power-sharing Executive but not holding ministerial positions, while the “independent” members “should be selected from a range of different fields – including business, trade unions, voluntary organizations, community groups and the legal profession – with the aim of finding a group of individuals representative of the community as a whole, with the expertise both to set policing priorities and to probe and scrutinise different areas of police performance.”¹¹ By delving into this level of specificity, Patten was venturing into territory which his two predecessors had not breached. The establishment of the board as a body independent from governmental structures but inclusive of leaders taken directly from the Northern Irish community seems calculated to create responsiveness to public concerns while bypassing the political channels which had been used to give force to sectarian priorities in the past.

¹¹ Patten, “A New Beginning,” s. 20.17

The next heading, “Policing with the Community,” consisted of eight items which, collectively, suggested the adoption of practices standard to the ideals of “community policing” which had gained traction globally beginning in the late 1980’s. The heart of the community policing notion, which the Report noted was over-cited and underdefined, was that law enforcement should be both envisioned and practiced as a cooperative endeavor between professional police officers and members of the “communities” — neighborhoods, rural districts, et cetera — within which they worked. Standard community policing practices include long-term assignment of officers to the specific area in which they are trained, formulation of policing strategy on a neighborhood level, foot patrolling, and the deliberate development of interpersonal relationships between officers and residents. That the Report suggested each of these, though perhaps not surprising, was certainly dramatic. Whatever else the RUC had been, it had not historically been a force which acted primarily in partnership with the community. Its stylistic root had of course been its predecessor, the Royal Irish Constabulary, organized in the style of a continental gendarmerie, to which the community partnership model was almost diametrically opposite.¹²

The next two headings, “Policing in a Peaceful Society” and “Public Order Policing,” contained suggestions intended to make the Northern Irish police look and behave, to the extent possible, like an ordinary service policing a society not torn by conflict— a suggestion similar to the one which had formed the essence of the Hunt Report’s recommendations in 1970. These suggestions included reversing the conspicuous physical reinforcement of police stations and vehicles, continuing the reduction of the Army’s day-to-day role in security and public order operations, and developing the police’s ability to handle potentially-volatile situations, such as

¹² Recall that the continental and colonial gendarmeries were composed, at least theoretically, of single men who rotated through residential barracks on tours of duty in the style of a military deployment.

parades, without external assistance. The “Management and Personnel” section suggested devolving major managerial responsibilities, such as deployment and budgeting, to District Inspectors and introducing an automated system for tracking citizen complaints against specific officers. A section on restructuring followed that trend by suggesting the shifting primary organizational command from the County to the District Council level and the merger of the notoriously intrigue-prone Special Branch with the more mundane Crime Branch under a single Assistant Chief Constable. The next section recommended the stabilization of the service’s size at 7,500 officers over five years, down from its 1998 strength of 13,000.

The sections which addressed the issue of sectarianism most directly were entitled “Composition and Recruitment of the Police Service” and “Culture, Ethos, and Symbols.” The first item under “Culture, Ethos, and Symbols,” though stated simply, was arguably the most politically significant point in the report. “The Royal Ulster Constabulary should not be disbanded,” it said, “[but] it should henceforth be named the Northern Ireland Police Service.”¹³ The section also recommended that “Northern Ireland Police Service should adopt a new badge and symbols which are entirely free from any association with either the British or Irish states,”¹⁴ and that “The Union flag should no longer be flown from police buildings.”¹⁵ The most practically significant recommendation was split up over two items somewhat buried in the middle of the “Composition and Recruitment” section. Taken together, recommendations 120 and 121 stipulated that new members should be recruited to the force on a 50-50 Catholic-Protestant basis. Despite their relatively low profile within the Report itself, the combination of 50-50 representation, removal of “Ulster” from the force’s name, and removal of British symbols

¹³ Patten, “A New Beginning,” s. 20.150

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, s. 20.151

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, s. 20.152

from its iconography, taken together, represented a huge strike against the institutional sectarianism which had plagued the RUC.

Taken in totality, it was crystal clear what Patten was recommending. Though the RUC was not being formally disbanded, this was wholesale reorganization and reorientation on a scale that no Northern Irish police force had seen before.

Patten and Politics

As should perhaps have been expected, the report was controversial before it had even been released. The English and Irish press reported numerous times prior to its publication on what measures the Report would propose, met each time with uproar from whichever side perceived the reported proposals to be against their interests. On September 6, four days before the Report was formally published, Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble, who had been appointed Northern Ireland's first First Minister under the power-sharing arrangements of the Good Friday Accords, warned that a report deemed by Unionists as hostile to the RUC would endanger the larger Good Friday framework.¹⁶ Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams countered on September 8 that "'No one should underestimate the difficulties facing republicans if the Patten commission does not produce a new policing service. The RUC must go."¹⁷

Though neither side nor the British Government got exactly or all of what it wanted when the Report was formally issued on September 10, the extensive anti-sectarian proposals described above were immediately met with hostility from Unionists. Trimble blasted the Report that same day as the "most shoddy piece of work I have seen in my entire life," and proclaimed

¹⁶ Unsworth, Monika. "Trimble warns Patten Report could derail Mitchell work." *Irish Times* (Dublin), Sept. 6, 1999.

¹⁷ Unsworth, Monika. "Adams says Patten report must propose new policing." *Irish Times* (Dublin), Sept. 8, 1999.

himself “deeply offended” by the proposals to change the force’s name and iconography as well as deeply skeptical of the suggested CID-Special Branch merger.¹⁸

Instead of the broadly-acceptable compromise position it had been intended to represent, the Patten Report had become, nearly immediately, a political controversy— Nationalists liked it, Unionists didn’t. And so, as it had in 1970 and 1922, the Unionist political structure went to work trying to blunt the proposed reforms.

It is worth pausing for a moment here to re-make a point about this project’s methodology. In the previous two chapters, this examination has reviewed declassified private government materials to assemble a picture of the behind-the-scenes negotiations and maneuverings in which Unionist politicians engaged to influence either the recommendations of police reform advisory bodies or the legislative and practical implementation of those suggestions. For the same reasons discussed earlier in this chapter with regard to the records of the Patten Committee’s deliberations, the records of any private communication which may have occurred between Northern Irish political parties or government branches and the Northern Ireland Office in London — who bore primary responsibility for implementing the Patten Report’s suggestions — is not available for review. What is available is the significant record of the public airing of views and opinions regarding the implementation of the Patten Report which took place between September 1999 and November 2000, when the Police Act (Northern Ireland) was given royal assent. That record will be reviewed below, but the reader would be well advised, as the author has tried, to keep in mind the inherent differences between public and private communications and what they reveal.

¹⁸ Unsworth, Monika. “Trimble dismisses report as gratuitous insult to the RUC.” *Irish Times* (Dublin), Sept. 10, 1999.

Since the implementation of the Patten Report, including the drafting of the enacting legislation, was to be overseen by the Northern Ireland Office in London, it was at that body which Unionists directed their persuasion efforts. The NIO had, since Labour's 1997 general election victory, been headed by Marjorie "Mo" Mowlam, MP for the Redcar constituency. By 1999, however, Mowlam, who had overseen the Good Friday negotiations process, had become disliked by Unionists as too friendly to Nationalist priorities. In October of 1999 she was replaced as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by Peter Mandelson, a close ally and confidant of Prime Minister Tony Blair's who had been a crucial engineer of the victorious 1997 "New Labour" election strategy.¹⁹ Whether or not Mandelson's appointment was in any part intended to placate Unionists with regard to implementing Patten is unclear, but he did later admit that it had been his intention upon taking the job to get the peace process moving again.²⁰ The previous July, an attempt to form the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive called for in the Good Friday Agreement had failed over disagreements on the timeline and criteria for decommissioning paramilitary arms. In the standstill, unionist support for the overall Agreement seemed to be evaporating, and Mandelson saw tinkering with Patten as a chance to keep Trimble at the table.²¹

In their 2009 account of the 1999-2001 reform process, Desmond Rea and Robin Masefield say that during the period of time during which the implementing legislation was being drafted, Mandelson was in regular and usually-adversarial contact with Northern Ireland deputy First Minister and SDLP deputy leader Seamus Mallon and SDLP justice spokesman Alex Attwood, and, with lesser frequency, David Trimble and the UUP leadership. Rea and

¹⁹ Ryder, Chris. *The Fateful Split: Catholics and the Royal Ulster Constabulary*. London: Methuen, 2004. 299-300.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 301

²¹ *Ibid.*

Masefield describe the trilateral relationship as perpetually tense, with Mandelson pulled in one direction by the desire to persuade the SDLP to encourage supporters to support and sign up for the reformed police service, and in the other by the need to keep Trimble and the UUP onboard the power-sharing arrangements. They report that the SDLP, in talks, was intensely interested that the powerful role of the Policing Board which Patten had outlined be preserved in the final legislation, but that Mandelson was willing to sacrifice this to keep the UUP from walking out of the Executive.²² Peter Smith, a UUP Secretary who had sat on the Patten Commission, later described these concessions as “a ham-fisted attempt to ‘save Trimble’ by attempting to water down the Patten Report recommendations that were causing embarrassment to Trimble and his party.” “This,” he continues, “served only to threaten the vitally important support of the SDLP for the new policing arrangements.”²³

In addition to whatever else it was saying to Mandelson behind closed doors, the UUP was also coordinating a public pressure campaign against the Patten Report’s “Culture and Ethos” recommendations. At a UUP Assembly meeting in October, the party leadership put on what the Irish Times called a “parade” of anti-Report speakers and announced that it was convening a working group to put together an alternative policing proposal.²⁴ The Police Federation, which represented the RUC’s rank-and-file personnel, launched a petition in opposition to the Report’s conclusions.²⁵ A protest was organized in Belfast’s City Centre.²⁶ Numerous Unionist legislators and activists placed letters and op-eds in the British and Irish press denouncing the plan as well.

²² Rea and Masefield, *Policing Northern Ireland*, pp. 49-53

²³ Doyle, John. *Policing the Narrow Ground: Lessons from the Transformation of Policing in Northern Ireland*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2010. 71-2.

²⁴ Murphy, Clare, “Speakers line up to defend RUC from Patten's proposals.” *Irish Times* (Dublin), Oct. 11, 1999.

²⁵ Unsworth, Monika. “NI police petition on Patten report.” *Irish Times* (Dublin), Oct. 12, 1999.

²⁶ Unsworth, Monika. “Protesters rally to defy premature reform of RUC.” *Irish Times* (Dublin), Sept. 20, 1999.

Implementing Patten

Initially, however, neither private persuasion nor public pressure seemed to incline Mandelson to “tinker” too much with the Patten recommendations in Unionism’s favor. On January 19, 2000, he delivered a statement to Parliament, accompanied by the distribution of a written “Implementation Plan,” outlining the Government’s intentions with regard to each of the Patten Report’s relevant items. The Plan formally endorsed the great majority of the recommendations, with 152 being “accepted” without comment, 14 “accepted in principle,” 2 accepted “in part,” three given “qualified acceptance” and one not accepted at all. The recommendations accepted “in principle” generally simply allowed some or greater flexibility with regard to timeline or method of implementation. Accepted “in part” were a suggestion relating to public access to police detention facilities and the recommendation that all officers be required to take the new, community-neutral oath of office. Instead, Mandelson stipulated, only new officers would be required to take the oath, with existing RUC members allowed to continue serving under their original affirmation. The proposals given “qualified acceptance” were the three pertaining to removal of British symbols from the force’s iconography. In this matter, Mandelson punted the issue to the yet-to-be-formed Police Board, leaving it to them to decide upon a design for the force’s badge and flag, as well as whether to fly the Union Jack on stations. “The Government does not... accept that these new arrangements necessarily need be entirely free of association with both traditions providing this is consistent with the principles of the Good Friday Agreement,” the Plan said, vaguely. Also somewhat vague, or at least ambiguous, was Mandelson’s intention with regard to the force’s new name. The written Plan marked suggestion 150, designating the name of Northern Ireland Police Service as “accepted,” and

quoted Patten's use of that name several times. In two other instances, however, the document referred to the force as "the Police Service of Northern Ireland." In his statement to Parliament, Mandelson stated that he "preferred" the name "Police Service of Northern Ireland," and intended that it be used, possibly to avoid tagging the force with the otherwise-inevitable "NIPS" moniker, which was at any rate already in use by the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

The SDLP issued a statement the next day through Attwood signalling its support for Mandelson's Plan,²⁷ but while police reform moved ahead, the connected effort to decommission paramilitary arms began to hit trouble. The idea of RUC disbandment was unpopular with the base of hardline Unionists to whom Trimble had to answer at UUP conferences, but the idea of losing the trusted RUC whilst the IRA retained its store of arms was absolutely unacceptable. Lack of apparent progress on IRA decommissioning was therefore a continual source of positional insecurity for Trimble, and with Mandelson's acceptance of the Patten Report, it must have looked for all the world as though RUC disbandment was going ahead anyway. Within this unstable climate, any new development which seemed to indicate IRA recalcitrance on decommissioning could seriously jeopardize Trimble's position.

That development came on January 31st, with the publication of two reports by Canadian General John de Chastelain, who was serving as chairman of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, the body charged with overseeing and verifying the process of decommissioning the weaponry held by Northern Irish paramilitary groups. The reports, in essence, said that the IRA was continuing to cooperate with the Commission but had not taken any concrete action to fulfill its promise in the Good Friday Agreement to put its arms "beyond

²⁷ McGarry, Siobhan, "SDLP welcomes Mandelson speech." *Irish Times* (Dublin), Jan. 20, 2000.

use.”²⁸ The Chastelain reports infuriated Unionists operating on the assumption that a concrete start to decommissioning by the end of December had been a condition of entering into government with Sinn Fein. Acting on their outrage, Trimble let Mandelson know that he would resign at the end of the first week of February — which would likely mean the end of the power-sharing Executive — if the Assembly were not suspended and Direct Rule reimposed.²⁹ When emergency talks with IRA leadership failed to secure a commitment to begin decommissioning immediately³⁰, Mandelson acquiesced, suspending the Good Friday institutions on February 11.

During the suspension, two processes proceeded simultaneously. First, the UUP needed to be persuaded to get back on board with preserving the Assembly. Trimble, who was known to favor sticking with Good Friday, was up for re-election as UUP leader, and the result of that vote would essentially signal whether there was sufficient support for that aim within the Party for there to be any chance at ending the suspension. Second, major legislation needed to be drafted and introduced to implement the Government’s acceptance of Patten’s recommendations. Though Northern Ireland Office documents detailing the two efforts have yet to be declassified, there are strong indications, in addition to a logical presumption, that they were deeply interconnected, and that Mandelson used the process of drafting the Bill to provide political advantage to Trimble in his re-election by giving him victories on some of his base’s preferences.

On May 16, with the Assembly still suspended, Mandelson introduced his draft bill to Parliament. As many in Northern Ireland had suspected, it represented a significant backing-away from the almost-wholehearted embrace of the Patten Report which Mandelson had

²⁸ <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/decommission/iicd310100.htm>

²⁹ Millar, Frank. “Trimble resignation date set for Friday.” *Irish Times* (Dublin), Feb. 2, 2000.

³⁰ Cusack, Jim. “Talks to seek possible move on weapons.” *Irish Times* (Dublin), Feb. 2, 2000.

announced on January 19. The Bill made no provision at all for the name, badge, or insignia of the force, dictating instead that these decisions should be made at a later time by means of discretionary regulations propagated by the Secretary of State.³¹ Furthermore, though it included provisions for the proposed accountability, diversification, and oversight mechanisms outlined in the Patten Report, they were nearly all weakened in some way from what Patten had appeared to suggest. While the 50% quota for Catholic recruits was maintained, it was suspendable by the Secretary of State; the position of Oversight Commissioner had its mandate reduced from overseeing the implementation of the Patten Committee to overseeing the implementation of the Government's plans; the Policing Board was prohibited from inquiring into police conduct from before its own establishment; the Secretary of State was given power to halt certain enquiries by the Police Ombudsman; and the RUC Reserve, created in 1970 as a secondary means of attempting to preserve the B Specials, was not disbanded as Patten had suggested.³²

The obvious departure from Patten prompted outcry against Mandelson from several fronts, including not only Sinn Fein and the SDLP, but the Irish government,³³ and US Congressman Ben Gilman, chairman of the House Committee on International Affairs, who urged President Clinton to ensure that the Patten Report's recommendations were carried out in full.³⁴ The flip-flop, however, had its intended political effect. Now able to claim to his base that he had struck a blow against the hated Patten Report and the "disbandment" of the RUC — and would likely be able to strike more — Trimble narrowly defeated the bid to oust him from the

³¹ Parliament of the United Kingdom. "Police (Northern Ireland) Bill 2000 (Draft - House of Commons First Reading)" May 16, 2000. Accessed via CAIN Web Service.

³² O'Leary, Brendan. "The Patten, the whole Patten, and nothing but the Patten." *Irish Times* (Dublin), July 28, 2000.

³³ "Ahern calls for further changes to North Police Bill." *Irish Times* (Dublin), June 8, 2000.

³⁴ Carroll, Joe. "Clinton urged to see Patten implemented." *Irish Times* (Dublin), May 31, 2000.

UUP leader's spot and was re-elected, enabling the survival of the the Labour government's peace program, which was built in critical part upon cooperation with him.

The public assault on Mandelson continued for a month, but on June 13, Mallon and his two SDLP colleagues in Westminster joined the Government in voting to allow the Police Bill to continue on to the Committee stage of consideration. The SDLP had apparently calculated that the public outcry against the 'watering down' of Patten would put Mallon in a strong negotiating position as the Bill progressed, and they made clear that this support was conditional on the Bill's radical alteration in Committee to be brought into line with Patten.³⁵ This calculation proved only partially correct. In Committee, the Bill faced volley after volley of countervailing amendments pushing it alternately towards and away from a fuller embrace of the "detail and spirit" of Patten. The end result was decidedly weak tea. Though the SDLP was able to secure amendments strengthening the Policing Board and Police Ombudsman's powers somewhat from the first draft, the changes were largely cosmetic. Worse yet, the Government announced on July 7 that it had cut a deal with the UUP to include a rumored and republican-feared "title deed" provision in the Bill, making the force's official full name "the Police Service of Northern Ireland incorporating the Royal Ulster Constabulary." It was a major defeat for the SDLP, but provided Trimble with another victory within the UUP.³⁶ On July 11, the much-amended bill passed out of Committee, to be taken up for consideration by the House of Lords, who passed the Bill without major modification despite ongoing public outcry, including denunciation of the weakened Bill from two of the Patten Commission's original members.

Upon its final passage on November 22, the SDLP and Sinn Fein denounced the Police Act and declared that they would not encourage their constituents to join the new police force.

³⁵ "Battle of wills between SDLP and Madelson changes." *Irish Times* (Dublin), June 13, 2000.

³⁶ Millar, Frank. "SDLP enraged by new British concession on retaining RUC title." *Irish Times* (Dublin), July 7, 2000.

Without Nationalist political support, it was nigh on impossible that the police would achieve the cross-community representation which Patten envisioned. Such a failure would be seen as a major defeat for Mandelson, who had continued to insist that his Bill represented an embrace of the Patten Report's spirit and goals. Having appeased the Unionists in the legislative phase, Mandelson would now have to mollify the Nationalists in the implementation.

Newly finding himself in this position of leverage, Mallon issued a list of seven demands which he insisted be met before the SDLP would encourage its constituents to enlist in the new force or appoint members to the Policing Board. Principal among these demands were retroactive judicial inquiries into allegations of police collusion in sectarian killings, consolidation of the RUC's controversial Special Branch with the PSNI's ordinary Criminal Investigations Division, and a commitment that if the Policing Board could not agree on emblems for the new force, any emblems adopted under the Secretary of State's statutory powers would adhere to Patten's principle of neutrality.³⁷ In talks at Downing Street, Mandelson tried to assure Mallon that the SDLP's demands could be met by exercising the discretion granted to the Secretary of State by the Bill.³⁸ Mallon, however, no longer trusted Mandelson, and demanded a written commitment as a condition for reversing his position. However, Mandelson was in no position to make such commitments, as he well knew that any action in this regard would simply cause Unionists to become recalcitrant.

This impasse, along with stalled negotiations on the issues of demilitarization and weapons decommissioning led to a period of broader stalemate in the Northern Ireland Peace Process. During this lull, however, a few key developments paved the way for future movement. The first of these was the resignation of Peter Mandelson from the Cabinet, on January 24, 2001,

³⁷ Moriarty, Gerry. "SDLP lists requirements for endorsing Police Act." *Irish Times* (Dublin), December 1, 2000.

³⁸ Moriarty, Gerry. "SDLP demands to back Police Act 'can be met.'" *Irish Times* (Dublin), Dec. 5, 2000.

over accusations that he had improperly obtained British passports for an Indian billionaire.³⁹ His successor, Dr. John Reid, seemed to embrace a more cautious, methodical approach to Northern Ireland, and was evidently in less of a rush to strike a grand bargain between the parties. Furthermore, Reid was a Roman Catholic (though a Scottish one,) and the first to hold the position, though he dismissed the significance of this.⁴⁰ The second development came with the General Election in June, when both the SDLP and the UUP lost their status as the largest parties representing their communities to Sinn Fein and the DUP, respectively. The possibility that they had been punished by voters for recalcitrance may have motivated both to move toward ending the stalemate. More shakeup came at the end of June, when Trimble resigned as First Minister of the Assembly when the IRA failed to meet an arms decommissioning deadline he had imposed as a condition for his remaining in the post. Trimble's resignation prompted Blair and Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern to intervene personally, convening talks at Weston Park in Staffordshire. The result of these talks was a far-reaching Implementation Plan for the remaining unresolved elements of the Good Friday Accords, including policing. The plan committed the British Government to issuing an updated framework for implementing the Patten Commission's recommendations — a victory for Nationalists, as it functioned as an acknowledgement by Whitehall that the “new beginning” had not fully been delivered by the 2000 Police Act.⁴¹

That new Patten Report Updated Implementation Plan was published on the 17th of August. It once again effectively reversed the British Government's approach to Patten, announcing the planned enactment, under the Secretary of State's statutory discretion, of some

³⁹ “Mandelson resigns over Hinduja affair.” *BBC News* (London), Jan. 24, 2001.

⁴⁰ Toolis, Kevin. “The Operator.” *Guardian* (London), Mar. 2, 2002.

⁴¹ Melaugh, Martin. “A Draft Chronology of the Conflict - 2001.” *CAIN Web Service*. Belfast: University of Ulster, 2016.

form of most of the measures which had been omitted from the Police Act. The SDLP promptly endorsed the Updated Plan, indicating on August 20 that they planned to encourage their constituents to join the PSNI. The UUP took a further month before agreeing to endorse the Plan on September 20th despite not having received the concrete decommissioning steps which they had previously demanded as a condition for returning to any police reform negotiations. The Royal Ulster Constabulary became the Police Service of Northern Ireland on November 4th, and the Policing Board met for the first time on November 6. On December 12, its Unionist members having previously rejected seven emblems submitted for their consideration by the British Government, the Board adopted a new emblem.⁴² The badge's central element was the Saltire of St. Patrick, an uncontentious symbol as the Saint is recognized by both Catholics and Protestants as the patron of the island of Ireland. It was surrounded by the traditional crown and harp — though placed adjacent to one another, rather than with the crown atop the harp, as in the RIC and RUC's badges — in addition to a Scales of Justice, a burning torch, and an olive branch. The end result was, altogether, rather boring.

Evaluating Patten's Legacy

Putting an end to the story of the Patten Report is not an easy task because it is, in many respects, not over. It is far too soon to determine whether the spirit of the reforms have been vindicated. Anyone with serious knowledge of Northern Ireland will say that the peace process — with which the process of implementing Patten is inextricably linked — is very much still ongoing. The successful creation of the PSNI did not put an end to serious questions about the viability of Northern Ireland's police infrastructure, nor did it mark the end of stalemate conditions in the peace process, which ebb and flow in the halls of Stormont to this day.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Gauging the degree to which policing in Northern Ireland has been de-sectarianized is hardly easier. One simple but incomplete metric for success on this front is the proportion of Catholic membership of the PSNI, which reached 30% in 2011—the last year in which Patten’s 50-50 recruitment rule remained in effect — but has plateaued, hovering within 3% of that proportion since then.⁴³ In 2015, indications that Catholic recruitment to the PSNI was declining prompted some to argue for the ever-controversial rule’s reinstatement.⁴⁴ Today, the PSNI reports that its officer force is 31.3% Catholic, 67.2% Protestant, and 1.5% Undetermined.⁴⁵

On another, more nebulous front, however, indications are more unambiguously promising. One of the consistent remarks of impartial observers of the RUC was that the Protestant community in Northern Ireland viewed the force as in some way “ours,” even after the disbandment of the all-Protestant USC. It would require some difficult interpretive gymnastics to argue that this remains true of today’s PSNI. Indeed, if anything, Northern Ireland’s bastions or diehard Orangeism are today also the neighborhoods in which police patrols are likely to feel least welcome. This dynamic was perhaps most evident in the aftermath of a riot which occurred on the evening of July 12, 2014, when the PSNI enforced a ban on an Orange Order return parade marching past the Catholic Ardoyne neighborhood of North Belfast. There was something more than ordinary anger and frustration in the outrage and vituperation which the Orangemen directed at the PSNI in the wake of the major disturbance, which had seen the deployment of the Service’s full range of riot-control tactics. Many of the marchers interviewed seemed shocked, almost in disbelief, that the police had taken earnest action against them in order to protect the sensibilities of a Catholic community. It was clear that they felt betrayed as

⁴³ Police Service of Northern Ireland. “The Workforce Plan: Equality Impact Assessment.” February 2015.

⁴⁴ Byrne, Jonny. “Arresting this slide in Catholic officers crucial if faith in police is not to suffer.” *Belfast Telegraph* (Belfast), October 23, 2015.

⁴⁵ Police Service of Northern Ireland, “2016 Workforce Composition Statistics.” Jan. 12, 2016.

much as angry, as though the realization had landed that the officers blocking their path were no longer “our boys” had just truly landed for the first time. Catholic residents who witnessed the incident, some of whom I had the chance to speak with, spoke of a similar sense of disbelief, recalling that they hardly believed the police would actually stop the march until they had actually done so. It is, of course, an unrigorous analysis, but, I think, an instructive one nevertheless.

Conclusion Crumbling Pillars?

It seems appropriate, by way of an attempt at an elegant end to this examination, to try to draw some threads of thematic continuity through the story that has herein been told. That story, from the perspective of this author at least, is best understood as that of an evolving 97-year-and-counting struggle to “de-sectarianize” (to coin a phrase) the police force of a state that was founded to be a sectarian one.

At three moments in the 20th Century, the Northern Irish police’s behavior, either over a prolonged period of time or in a short, bright flash, was perceived by those with decision-making authority to be more obviously sectarian than they were willing, whether for altruistic or self-interested reasons, to accept. In each of these three moments, a committee was convened to attempt, at the least, to reduce the perception of sectarianism to acceptable levels, if not to eradicate it completely. In each case, the committee in question proposed a complex means to accomplish this end. In each case, political processes were employed, manipulated, or subverted in an attempt to preserve, to a greater or lesser degree, the sectarian nature of the police themselves. In two cases, those attempts were unambiguously successful. In the last, it is probably still too early to tell, but there are promising signs that the attempt may have failed.

Perhaps more interestingly, however, are the thematic motifs which recur in each of the three attempts. Over the course of 80 years, sectarianism manifested itself in remarkably consistent ways. The countervailing efforts to combat and maintain it were, therefore, less a matter of applying old solutions to new problems than of applying new solutions to old problems.

It is in the analysis of what these “old problems” — these “pillars,” as they might be called, of sectarian policing — that an historical analysis of Northern Irish policing may have

something to share with the rest of the world. Setting aside the notion that Northern Irish society is some bizarre, unique anomaly which functions according to principles different from those at play anywhere else in the world, it should be instructive to examine, in the abstract, what forces made the Northern Irish police sectarian, what types of reforms were tried to counteract those forces, how pro-sectarian interests tried to subvert those reforms, and to what degree those subversion efforts succeeded or failed.

The analysis which has been attempted here seems to show at least three of these “pillars” of police sectarianism. First and foremost among them, almost inarguably, is the demographic composition of the police’s ranks. In 1920, by the wholesale recruitment of the Ulster Volunteer Force into the Ulster Special Constabulary, it was seen to that policing in Northern Ireland was the business of Protestants. In 1922, the Departmental Committee on Police Reorganisation proposed a requirement that one third of policemen be Catholics. But the Parliament of Northern Ireland, shot through with the hardline sectarianism that was the defining characteristic of the first generation of Northern Irish government saw to it that the proposal never saw the light of day as policy or practice. In 1970, the Hunt Committee attempted to remove the cultural and structural barriers to Catholic enrollment in the police by the disbandment of the all-Protestant USC, which was intended to help equalize the number of Catholics and Protestants in the security service. It was hoped that this reform, along with the transfer of the inherently politically-charged task of suppressing sectarian paramilitary activity to the Army, would deprive the security services of their essentially-Protestant character. But again, sectarian forces foiled the “de-sectarianization” efforts. By exercising their political influence to tinker with the plan’s implementation, however, Chichester-Clark’s government ensured that the USC’s replacement, the Ulster Defense Regiment, was recruited primarily from the Protestant B

Specials. With all-Protestant or all-ex-Special units manning checkpoints and searching cars, law enforcement post-Hunt retained its Protestant character. In 1999, the Patten Commission took on police sectarianism for a third time, confronting the issue more directly than had been attempted in either of the two previous reform efforts. They proposed the 50-50 rule, a drastic affirmative-action measure for Catholics. The UUP, led by David Trimble, attempted to neuter the anti-sectarian provisions of the Patten Report by cutting a backroom deal to end the Assembly suspension of February, 2000. This time, however, the attempt was not successful. The political infrastructure in Northern Ireland had been dramatically changed by the Good Friday Agreement, and the political frameworks which had worked for so long to preserve sectarianism in policing no longer had the clout to counteract anti-sectarian pressures from the Catholic community in Northern Ireland as well as the larger global interests which had become involved. Though the question of whether proportional representation within the PSNI's ranks will be achieved remains open, Catholics are better represented amongst police officers today than they had ever been prior to Patten and Good Friday.

The second pillar of police sectarianism in Northern Ireland has been command authority. Democratic politics is an essentially majoritarian business, and in a divided society, political control of the police will tend to give policing a majoritarian character as well. In 1922, the placing of the RUC under the direct authority of the Home Office, a bastion of sectarian Orangeism, cemented the police's function as the armed agents of Craig's "Protestant Parliament and Protestant State." In 1970, the Northern Irish Cabinet subverted the Hunt Committee's intention to subject the RUC to cross-community democratic control by failing to give the Police Authority the autonomy or representative character which Hunt had suggested in the enacting legislation. Furthermore, they stymied attempts to de-politicize the force responsible for routine

regional security duties by refusing to allow the UDR to be commanded from London like any other military unit, insisting instead upon restrictive language in the implementing legislation which enabled them to politically influence the force's composition and use. In 1999, the Patten Commission insisted on the establishment of a Policing Board accountable both to the power-sharing political establishment and to Northern Ireland's communities directly. Peter Mandelson's first Police Act stripped the Board of much of the independence and authority which Patten had recommended, but this time, the politicking played out in de-sectarianization's favor. During the implementation process, Nationalists secured commitments to revitalize the Board's independence as a condition of their political support for the PSNI. And while the reform process is still not over, the Northern Ireland Policing Board stands today as a unique institution which has, overall, had good success in holding the PSNI to the Patten Report's vision of "policing with the community."

The third pillar of sectarianism is less susceptible to succinct characterization, but may be characterized as a cultural affiliation between Northern Irish policing and Ulster Unionist politics. In their 2000 survey of Northern Irish policing, *The Crowned Harp*, Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth argue that this linkage has been maintained by "cultural symbols, institutional ethos, and occupational culture,"¹ and the progress of reform shows how each of those elements has been preserved to the detriment of de-sectarianization efforts. In 1922, little if any effort was made to uncouple the functions of the Northern Irish state and its agents from the cultural politics and practices of Unionism. In 1970, the preservation of Unionist-preferred nomenclature of "Ulster" in the title of the police and local security forces was successfully clung to by the Northern government in the face of Westminster's preference that it be replaced with the more

¹ Ellison and Smyth, *Crowned Harp*, 153.

neutral “Northern Ireland.” The required profession of allegiance to the crown in the policeman’s oath of office and the image of that crown on his badge were also preserved, allowing the aesthetic and “spiritual” impression that the police apparatus was a pro-Union one at heart to remain. In 2000, calls for cultural and aesthetic neutrality were actually heeded, with serious attention paid to the symbols and name of the force. Though Unionists bitterly resisted the renaming and rebranding of the force, compromises were ultimately reached on iconography and today it would be disingenuous to characterize the PSNI, at least from an unbiased outsider’s perspective, as overtly Unionist in its aesthetic or symbolic culture.

The consistency of the pattern which emerges from the examination of these threads gives reason to be hopeful that the multigenerational attempt to perpetuate sectarianism in Northern Irish policing has seen its last success, and other indica seem to follow that trend. In 2013, the PSNI successfully enforced an injunction against a 12th of July parade marching past a Catholic neighborhood despite the outbreak of major disturbance, a hopeful sign of the Service’s willingness and ability to enforce Northern Ireland’s laws equally against both communities. Walking the streets of Belfast’s paramilitary hotbed neighborhoods today, one is equally or perhaps even more likely to spot anti-police graffiti in a Protestant back alleyway as in a Catholic one, evidence, if only anecdotal, that the residents of that area no longer look upon the police as “their boys.” The conspicuous firearms carried by the men and women who patrol the streets of Belfast and Derry today, and the armor-plated landrovers which they patrol them in may indicate to the clever mind that 2016’s PSNI is something slightly different than the stolid, conventional band of robber-catchers which the old RUC man wistfully envisioned to Lord Hunt in 1970. The PSNI of today, however, can say that they are hated more or less equally by robbers on both sides of Belfast and Derry’s “peace lines.” And in Northern Ireland, that’s real progress.

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