

Stormont gears up for security

By Dr Eamon Phoenix

SOME sense of the unfolding drama of August 1969 which saw the outbreak of the northern troubles can be gleaned from the Stormont cabinet minutes released today under the 30 years rule.

As violence and looting flared

in Belfast on Sunday August 3 1969, a hurried cabinet meeting took place at Stormont Castle at 4 pm. The prime minister, Major Chichester-Clark, was inexplicably absent.

The minister of home affairs, Mr Robert Porter, and the inspector-general of the RTJC, Mr Anthony Peacocke,

reported to ministers on the disorders which had begun on Saturday and were still in progress. The inspector-general announced he intended to raise a number of Reserve Force platoons by 'diluting' the police with special constables.

The cabinet took a number of decisions relating to the secu-

city situation. The minister of home affairs was given freedom to interpret the conditions applying to the use of CS gas in a less restrictive way. It was also decided that the Home Office should be alerted "to the possibility that the assistance of the military might have to be invoked". Finally, ministers

Too little, too late: O'Neill

By Dr Eamon Phoenix



AS early as January 1969 the northern prime minister, Captain Terence O'Neill, warned his cabinet that he was not prepared to preside indefinitely over a government whose policy was too little, too late.

The idea was contained in a memo circulated by the PM to his cabinet colleagues on January 14 1969, proposing a commission of inquiry into the civil disturbances of 1968-69. O'Neill revealed that he had received a request from the Irish Council of Churches inviting the government to institute a judicial public inquiry into all the events and decisions which surround the present controversy. The PM felt that the appeal from such a representative spectrum of Protestant opinion had "a moral authority which cannot be denied".

In his memo, O'Neill told ministers that while their decision to reinforce the police was inevitable, "I do not think we should delude ourselves that so-called 'firm government' through the exercise of police power will provide any satisfactory answer to our problem." If they were forced to seek army support for the civil power, the PM had "been left in no doubt by the home secretary (Mr James Callaghan) that Mr Harold Wilson's government would refuse to give such help unconditionally".

He went on: "I therefore consider it essential that we continue to search for political as well as law and order solutions. Clearly no concession will satisfy those elements which are bent on disruption. But we would take an enormous amount of steam out of the civil rights movement if we demobilised all its moderate support."

The PM felt that an inquiry would help the government's image. "As things stand, it is all too widely accepted throughout the UK that a sectarian government, directing a partisan police force, is confronting a movement of idealists. The complexities of the situation, and not least the involvement in civil rights of some extremely sinister elements, has not been successfully brought out." Captain O'Neill warned his cabinet that an inquiry into the aims of the civil rights movement might well conclude that, as regards the question of the local government franchise, "the arguments for change were fully founded". He went on to



ON THE MOVE: British troops sprint from their barracks in Holywood, Co Down, in April 1969 on their way to Belfast

express his personal view that a reform of the franchise was inevitable while resistance to such change was "causing Northern Ireland immense damage". He added presciently: "I know full well that if and when we make this change, control in certain areas will be lost. But our loss of prestige, authority and standing since 5 October (1968) has already been catastrophic, and in my

The minister of agriculture, Major Chichester-Clark, strongly supported the proposal as a means of taking the heat out of the situation although he would not be bound to accept its recommendations. The minister of health, Mr Robert Porter, on the other hand, expressed concern about the effects of any commission on police morale. For his part, the minister of commerce, Mr Brian Faulkner, voiced anxiety on a number of grounds. This step, in his view, would be regarded as an abdication by the government of its responsibilities. Everyone knew that the franchise question was fundamental and it would be better to tackle this issue. A commission could too easily develop into a fundamental, far-reaching and potentially highly embarrassing inquest into every aspect of the Northern Ireland government affairs.

The general view of ministers, the minutes record, was that the proposed commission - constituted under Lord Cameron, should be set up.

Franchise Reform Resisted
The Stormont minister of commerce, Mr Brian Faulkner, declared his support for the concept of one man, one vote in local elections at a cabinet meeting on 15 January 1969. The minister said he had never shared the reservations which some members of the Unionist Party felt on this issue. He was supported by the minister of health, Mr Robert Porter. Other ministers, however, were opposed to this view. They pointed out that the civil rights demonstrators had already declared other aims as

well as one man, one vote. Several unnamed ministers felt that an abrupt switch of policy would be regarded as action under duress while such action was unlikely to be acceptable to the Unionist Party in view of previous government pledges.

The Stormont cabinet on February 26 1969 approved the composition of the Cameron Commission into recent civil disturbances. Apart from the chairman, Lord Cameron, approval was given to the appointments of Sir John Biggart, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Queen's University, and Mr J J Campbell, a Catholic academic. A note in the file by the cabinet secretary, Mr Harold Black, states that the members of the commission "should be Ulstermen and people who can bring local knowledge to bear on the interpretation of events". They should not be identified with any political party. As regards the Catholic nominees to the commission, five names had been suggested to the prime minister by the leader of the opposition, Mr Eddie McAteer. These included JJ Campbell, a lecturer at St Joseph's College of Education, Belfast and Professor James Scott, professor of Dental Anatomy at QUB. Ministers expressed reservations about Professor Scott, a founder of the National Democratic Party - a precursor of the SDLP - and a member of the civil rights movement. He was, Black observed, believed to be 'an RC by conversion'. His inclusion would, in any event, "attach a distinctly medical

Barricade radio stations discussed by ministers

AT a cabinet meeting at Stormont on September 12 1969, ministers discussed broadcasts by illegal radio stations which had sprung up behind the barricades as a result of the August violence.

The minister of home affairs, Mr Robert Porter, informed the cabinet of his decision to issue distinctive armbands to 'peace-keeping patrols' in local neighbourhoods in cooperation with the welfare authorities and the churches.

Specials' Mass Resignation
In October 1969, the Unionist cabinet were concerned at reports of the mass resignation of Ulster Special Constabulary members in Newtownards. Ministers agreed on the need for urgent action and considered issuing a statement on the need for the return of the RUC to the Bogside and Falls area and the introduction of an oath of allegiance for the new Ulster Defence Regiment.

O'Neill's Final Cabinet Meeting
At his final cabinet meeting, three days before his dramatic resignation as prime minister of Northern Ireland, Captain Terence O'Neill gave colleagues no inkling of his intention to relinquish office. The escalating security situation in the spring of 1969 dominated the meeting at Stormont Castle on April 25. Following a meeting of the special Cabinet Security Committee, the British government had accepted a request to send extra troops to Northern Ireland. Captain O'Neill recalled that, with the exception of the Special Powers Act, his government had now acted on all the points which the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson had asked them to consider in November 1968. Mr Wilson had requested a further meeting at an early date. Significantly, Captain O'Neill obtained cabinet approval for a television broadcast to the people but made no reference to his

intention to resign. He resigned as prime minister on April 28, 1969 and was replaced by his cousin, Major Chichester-Clark on May 1.

Use of B Specials
Conflicting views emerged at a meeting of the Stormont cabinet in January 1969 on the use of B Specials in crowd control situations. At a cabinet meeting on January 15, the minister of agriculture, Major Chichester-Clark, pressed for a more extensive use of the B Specials. The minister of home affairs, Captain Long, said he had considerable reservations on this subject which were shared by senior RUC officers. 'B Specials were essentially trained for patrol work as an armed force against IRA-type threats. Major Chichester-Clark replied that he did not for one moment contemplate confrontations between B Specials and Civil Rights marchers.

Man shot in attack

A 20-YEAR-OLD man was recovering in hospital last night following a paramilitary-style shooting on the outskirts of Belfast. The victim was shot in the right leg in an alleyway in Ballyronan Park, Rathcoole at around 5.15pm. Detectives last night appealed for witnesses to contact police at Newtownabbey on (01232) 650222.

Lottery record

THE UK National Lottery has created a record 28 millionaires in nine days, organisers Camelot said yesterday. The lucky winners scooped the cash in five draws between December 24 and January 2. The special Big Draw 2000, held just before and after midnight at the turn of the century, created 19 millionaires, itself a record for a single night. Three players shared the jackpot in Game One, where players chose six years from 1900 to 1999, while in Game Two there were 16 £1 million winners, each of whom matched the two drawn years with those on their tickets. On Christmas eve three ticket holders won £4.3 million each, while one winner picked up £4.2 million on Wednesday, December 29. And last night five tickets holder scooped £1,170,389 each. They matched numbers 2, 5, 14, 23, 27, and 48 to share the £5,851,945 jackpot. The bonus ball was 38. In the Republic there were no winners of the lottery draw with a jackpot of £1,613,346. The numbers were 6, 18, 21, 24, 28, 30. Bonus ball 25.

Cannabis seized

A HUGE haul of cannabis with a street value of £95,000 was seized by police in Co Armagh yesterday. Officers made the discovery after a member of the public alerted them to a suspicious holdall on Orange Lane of Newforge Road, Magheralin at around 3pm.

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Advertisement for Irish News Reader Holidays. Text includes: "WEEKEND BREAKS IN DONEGAL", "from Only IR£69 pps", "ONCE AGAIN IRISH NEWS READER HOLIDAYS ARE DELIGHTED TO OFFER EXCLUSIVE SELF-DRIVE WEEKEND DEALS AT THE FOLLOWING DONEGAL HOTELS:", "*Two nights Bed, Breakfast & one evening meal*", "Mount Errigal Hotel LETTERKENNY IR£84", "Allingham Arms Hotel BUNDORAN IR£69", "Situated 1km south of Letterkenny. Ultra modern leisure centre, indoor swimming pool, gym, saunas, lounge, steamroom, jacuzzi. Sunbeds (extra), 105 en-suite bedrooms. Night club.", "Situated in the heart of Bundoran, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Bar with nightly entertainment, 118 luxury bedrooms, all en-suite, with satellite TV. Excellent restaurant.", "All prices are per person based on a two adult sharing. Child prices and single supplements on request. These prices are for any weekend from 5th November 1999 until 30th April 2000, subject to availability.", "TO BOOK: Tel (01232) 337520", "IRISH NEWS READER HOLIDAYS", "or call in person at Irish News, 113-117 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 1XGE.", "Full payment is required at the time of booking. Credit and bookings welcome.", "Cheques can be made payable to All Ireland Holidays.", "WE ARE UNABLE TO ACCEPT CASH PAYMENTS.", "These weekend breaks are a benefit of All Ireland Holidays and are subject to the following conditions."

Advertisement for Direct Holidays. Text includes: "READER COMPETITION", "WIN A FANTASTIC HOLIDAY FOR SIX TO TORRE NOVA, MAJORCA", "Direct Holidays, the UK's largest direct sell tour operators, is associated with the Irish News in offering readers the chance to win a fantastic summer holiday.", "Over the next few weeks we are giving away two fabulous summer holidays to two of the most beautiful and popular resorts in Europe. This weekend's lucky winner is about to become very popular as they get to take five fantastic nights off for a week to remember in the sun.", "Torre Nova has gained a privileged position between Magaluf and Palma Nova and is located in a quieter district. It is within easy reach of all the major areas of shops, bars and restaurants and is just a short walk from the golden sandy beach of Palma Nova - making it the perfect base for groups of young people and families looking for a great holiday.", "The Hawaii apartments offer a panoramic view of Palma Nova bay and the sea, provides a superb sun trap for enjoying your stay. There is a fully equipped swimming pool, a tennis court, a programme, a sunbather's pool and bar and it also benefits from being only 200m from the beach with its pleasant promenade of bars and restaurants.", "Direct Holidays are operating from Northern Ireland for both the summer and winter 2000 seasons, flying from Belfast.", "Belfast is a number of popular holiday destinations. By entering our travel agent and all of their commission Direct Holidays can save you money on the cost of your holiday, with prices for a one-week holiday starting at £199 for adults and £99 for children.", "And to make it even more affordable if you book ANY holiday from the summer 2000 brochure before 31st January you can take advantage of THREE great offers.", "* Free holiday insurance", "* Guaranteed free child places", "* Low deposit of £25", "To request a copy of the Direct Holidays summer 2000 brochure, call 01 232 332112 quoting reference PRCB12 or to make a reservation call 01 232 332114 or visit their website at www.direct-holidays.co.uk.", "To enter simply answer the question below and send your entry along with this Irish News reader to Direct Holidays Competition, The Irish News, PO Box 473, Belfast BT1 2NS. Closing date for entries is Friday 14th January 2000.", "Q) How many metres are the Hawaii Apartments away from the beach?", "DIRECT HOLIDAYS", "ENTRY COUPON", "NAME.....", "ADDRESS.....", "POSTCODE.....", "TEL NO.....", "ANSWER.....", "A) 150 metres (150m) from the beach to the main entrance of the Hawaii Apartments in Torre Nova, Majorca. (150m is the distance from the main entrance of the Hawaii Apartments to the beach, not the distance from the beach to the main entrance of the Hawaii Apartments.)"