

Republic of Ireland CABINET PAPERS

1975

Orange Order in Scotland monitored

THE Irish government in 1975 kept a watching brief on the activities of the Orange Order and other loyalist organisations in Scotland, according to confidential Cabinet files released by the National Archives in Dublin.

According to a February 1976 memo prepared by an official, David Donoghue of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Orange Order had 80,000 members in Scotland.

Its lodges were located principally in the country's industrial areas, especially in Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Inverness – areas which had also a high Catholic population.

Virtually all Scottish loyalists belonged to the Order. "However, the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland has rarely exerted any political influence and its solidarity with Ulster loyalism did not find expression outside the stereotype July 12 speeches and rallies until very recently," according to the file.

Scottish Orangemen "had traditionally been solid, respectable citi-

"The Grand Lodge of Scotland rarely exerted any political influence"

February 1976 memo

zens whose magazine regularly condemned violence".

However, "with the advent of loyalist paramilitary bodies, UDA and UVF units were established in Glasgow and elsewhere. Their object was either to send arms and explosives to their Ulster colleagues or to collect funds for purchasing these."

Until six months earlier (August 1975), the activities of the UDA, UVF and the smaller Orange Volunteers were said to have seemed just sabre rattling. In 1974, Scottish loyalists had distinguished themselves only by sending food supplies to the north during the UWC strike.

Several events had led to a sudden expansion of UDA/UVF activities in Scotland.

These could be partly attributed to the killing of five loyalists at Tullyallen Orange Hall in south Armagh in August.

It now seemed that the Orange Order, which had kept the UDA and UVF at arm's length, had begun to revise its attitude to loyalist paramilitaries. In autumn 1975, it had sent a delegation to Belfast to make contact with the UDA and other paramilitary groups.

The official was clear on the role of the Scottish paramilitaries in the northern conflict: "The commonest contribution of Scots UDA and UVF is to send gelignite.

"Explosives for the north were mostly shipped in small boats which set out at night from the Scottish coast and made contact at sea with vessels from Ulster ports."



■ **OUR STORY:** Thousands of Irish records documents are on display to the public for the first time at the Irish National Archive in central Dublin. Image appears courtesy of the Irish National Archive

PICTURE: Niall Carson/PA

UVF violence was focus of concern for Cosgrave

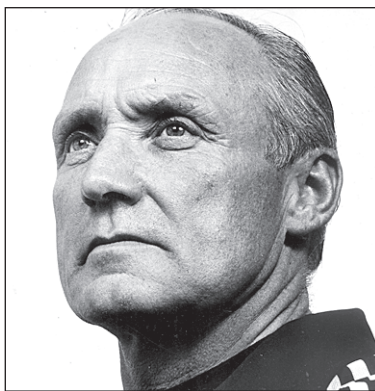
THE violent activities of the Ulster Volunteer Force and its political objectives concerned the Irish government of Liam Cosgrave in 1975, according to confidential files released in Dublin under the Thirty-Year Rule.

Among the files disclosed is a detailed confidential memo on the UVF, compiled by an official at the Department of Foreign Affairs, David Donoghue.

It describes the UVF as "reputedly the best organised and disciplined of the loyalist paramilitary bodies. It has units throughout the north grouped in three battalions, each commanded by a provost-marshal and sub-divided into platoons in Armagh, Belfast and east Antrim, as well as units in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow".

The memo continues: "Founded in the early 1960s, it was proscribed in 1966 after the Malvern Street murder. Gusty Spence, imprisoned for his part in this murder, is the acknowledged commander of the UVF inside Ulster's prisons".

The official estimated the UVF strength at 500 active members. "However, it is generally felt that the UVF have been responsible for much of the loyalist paramilitary sectarian violence. It has estab-



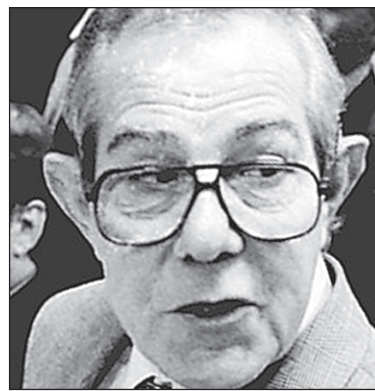
■ **COMMANDER:** Gusty Spence

lished itself most strongly in north and west Belfast and in the Monkstown-Larne-Carrickfergus area".

Unlike the UDA, the UVF had frequently expressed its impatience with the inability of loyalist politicians to unite.

According to the memo, "at the end of January 1974 the UVF responded to a Provisional IRA request, that in return for a Provo declaration that off-duty UDR men were no longer legitimate targets, the loyalists would cease sectarian assassinations."

For a time in 1974, it seemed that



■ **SPOKESMAN:** Hugh Smyth

the UVF was turning away from violence. However, after the October 1974 elections, it abandoned any political ambitions and reverted to its traditional militaristic stance under the influence of a new, right-wing and youthful brigade staff.

This policy had resulted in the worst casualties yet sustained by a loyalist group with 10 UVF men killed on 'active service' in 1975 while attacking Catholic people or premises.

"The most dramatic atrocity was the killing of three members of the Miami Showband and the wounding of a fourth near Banbridge on July

31 1975 when a premature explosion caused the deaths of two UVF members".

According to the memo, "The UVF brigade staff is as shadowy body, but certain personalities who act as political spokesmen for the UVF can be listed. Principal among them is Councillor Hugh Smyth, the former VPP Assemblyman for west Belfast and at present an Independent Unionist member of the Convention... The UVF supports the strict right-wing position of the DUP".

The file records how "on October 2 1975, the UVF ordered a wave of shootings and bombings throughout the north, directed at Catholics, which caused the deaths of 12 people. It is thought that this day of violence was meant as a response to a similar onslaught in September. The killings led Merlyn Rees, the Secretary of State, to once again proscribe the organisation".

The intelligence file, which was sent to the Irish government, concluded: "It is clear that the UVF will continue as one of the strongest and most militant of the loyalist paramilitary bodies. Furthermore, while it is unenthusiastic about an independent Ulster, the general belief is that, in a crisis situation, the UVF would work side-by-side with its fellow paramilitaries."