

POLICE FOUNDATION LECTURE - 21 JULY 1992

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I start by saying how very pleased I am to have been invited to address you this evening in this beautiful building. Here we are surrounded by history and tradition, but during the course of my lecture I shall be making some suggestions which may be regarded as representing a departure from tradition.

Before doing so, however, it might be appropriate if I were to say something about Northern Ireland.

Most of you will be all too aware of the difficulties about life in the Province - the way in which the murderous and barbaric activities of various paramilitary gangsters impinge on people's lives, creating the need for a style of policing and military back-up that is not found elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I ought therefore to highlight just for a moment some of the good things about life across the water. Northern Ireland has some of the warmest people and some of the finest scenery imaginable. Despite the efforts of terrorists on both sides to keep people apart, there is genuine cross-community contact, producing many initiatives to bring together young people from both sides of the community. Despite the efforts of the bombers Belfast, during the last decade, has benefited from massive commercial regeneration. There is new housing, a thriving nightlife, accessible shopping centres, as well as the huge investment in the Lagan-side development which will transform the central area along the river. There is considerable support for live

entertainment and a wide variety of sports, with special events ensured of an enthusiastic response, as we saw last year with the enormous crowds that turned out for the visit of the Tall Ships. Some of you may remember the publicity which surrounded the commercial and cultural initiative known as 'Belfast 1991', and this year Londonderry is enjoying a similar festival under the logo of 'Impact 92'.

Each year, the Royal Ulster Constabulary perform tens of thousands of tasks which are important to people's everyday lives. Superimposed on our normal responsibilities is the priority of combatting terrorism. It is a fact, a highly regrettable fact, that terrorism has distorted policing, to the disadvantage of the community and the police - and against the desires of both. Necessary security measures have adversely affected policing methods; the terrorist threat has inhibited the degree and quality of contact between the police and the public and, at times and in places, the nature of the police response to community needs. It is not through choice that the RUC carry weapons, drive around in armoured vehicles or operate from fortified stations. Neither do we wish to avail of emergency laws as we police in an atmosphere that so frequently requires the support of soldiers to protect our members. These abnormal necessities are created by terrorism. They are necessities we would prefer to be without, and it would be to the everlasting benefit of the whole community if normal policing were to be restored. That is the heartfelt desire and objective of the RUC.

But I'm afraid the reality is different and the principal terrorist activity continues to come from loyalist terror gangs and the Provisional IRA.

Although loyalists do not, in general, attack the security forces, they have done so in times of particular tension. More recently, however, a more determined leadership has emerged leading to a series of criminal atrocities, which in terms of wanton cruelty and loss of life, almost beggar description.

However, it is the Provisional IRA, with its stated objective of creating a 32 County Republic, covering the entire Island of Ireland, which remains by far the biggest threat.

Clearly it is the intention of PIRA to strain the credibility of the security forces to work within the law and, by their barbaric acts and the anticipated reprisals of loyalist terrorists, to push society outside the democratic framework and into a spiral of community violence, when the state and its organisations would lose the capacity to govern.

A critical factor in preventing this becoming a reality is undoubtedly the stability created by the commitment of the security forces and the ability of the police and the army to work effectively together. On many occasions in Northern Ireland I have been happy to praise the work of the armed forces. But I would like to say to this audience that they perform their role with outstanding bravery, resolution and commitment. At all levels they are highly impressive and my

force simply could not manage without them.

For PIRA to continue its present campaign it requires:-

- manpower;
- firearms and explosives;
- money;
- a safe base within the community;

and it has all four.

It may be interesting, insofar as firearms and explosives are concerned, to remind you of the scale of the problem.

Following the seizure of the Eksund by the French Customs in October 1987 the level of earlier successful shipments from Libya to the Republic of Ireland became clear. These were estimated to include:

- 6 tons of Semtex
- 1500 plus AKM rifles
- 1.5 million rounds of ammunition
- 20 SAM missiles
- 50 RPG7 rocket launchers
- 10 flame throwers

and a quantity of general purpose and heavy machine guns.

Since then we can account for approximately one-third of this equipment, the bulk of which has been recovered by the Garda Siochana. But, with so much outstanding, I hardly need to remind you of the continuing capability of PIRA to inflict death, injury and destruction in Northern Ireland, Great

Britain and Western Europe. In this specific connection the recent Garda finds in Arklow, Donegal, Cork and Limerick are of particular significance and I warmly congratulate Commissioner Culligan and his colleagues on their excellent work.

In countering this threat, the RUC requires all of its 11,700 full-time and 1,700 part-time officers together with the indispensable support of some 17,000 military personnel, and the full co-operation of the Garda Síochána. Obviously relationships are of paramount importance and I firmly state, again, that co-operation between the RUC and the Army, and the RUC and the Garda, is at an all time high.

Relationships, of course, also extend to the issue of who does what and there has been recent media comment about the roles of the RUC, the Army and other agencies which has been, at best, misleading. Let me, therefore, put the record straight.

The defeat of the current intense and prolonged terrorist campaign, through a policy committed to the primacy of the legal process, presents unique challenges for the RUC and for the Army acting in our support. Given that this policy is based on the maintenance of the rule of law, it is a logical consequence that the police take the lead in the fight against terrorists whose acts are clearly criminal offences. In matters of intelligence, the agreed lead agency in Northern Ireland is the RUC; the intelligence relationships between the RUC, the Army and the intelligence community are

extremely good and highly productive. This is equally so of the relationship between the RUC, New Scotland Yard and the Garda. It is well to remember that, despite technological advances, the key weapon in the battle against both republican and loyalist terrorists remains the well-placed informant.

The importance of intelligence cannot be overstated. I have already indicated in public, although for obvious reasons I cannot give details, that the vast majority of terrorist outrages are thwarted by intelligence before they come to fruition. Meanwhile conventional incremental police work continues, with some 2,500 persons being convicted of terrorist-related offences in Northern Ireland in the last five years.

A more recent development in the strategy against the terrorists is the success of our Anti-Racketeering Squad. Terrorist finance, in a very real sense their 'blood money', is central to their efforts. In order to frustrate the terrorists on both sides, the Anti-Racketeering Squad is in regular liaison with the Garda, New Scotland Yard, the City of London, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Prosecutions so far have implicated 340 people in various rackets involving in excess of £45 million.

Last year the RUC conducted an organisational review which led to the appointment of a second Deputy Chief Constable to concentrate, unencumbered by administrative tasks, on the

operational thrust. A recent development in the force has been the creation of what we call the Province Executive Committee and I have appointed the new Deputy Chief Constable (Operations) to chair this committee, which includes the Army Major General, the Intelligence Co-ordinator and the RUC head of Special Branch. This will provide a more direct and cohesive thrust across the whole anti-terrorist field and, when complemented by new developments in the anti-racketeering field that I do not wish to detail, represents a significant step forward in the battle against terrorism.

The difficulty in obtaining convictions, which is familiar to police and others who work for the administration of justice on the mainland, is exacerbated in Northern Ireland. Witness evidence is scarce because of intimidation and, after so many years of appearing before the courts, terrorists increasingly guard against leaving forensic traces. Admissions, therefore, remain a vital source of convictions.

Although the interviewing of terrorist suspects is already monitored by closed circuit television, it has recently again been argued that such interviews should now be video recorded. It is the considered view of the RUC that to do so would not achieve the purpose of allowing allegations of brutality to be incontrovertibly rebutted - the terrorists' tactics would simply change - and, crucially, the existence of such video records would unquestionably inhibit the flow of information which is essential to our efforts. It would not be an aid to the police. It would be an aid to the

terrorists. You will recall that this was also the conclusion of the Bennett Committee [Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Police Interrogation Procedures in Northern Ireland (1979) CMD 7497] which specifically considered this aspect.

Bearing in mind that the RUC is the major supplier of intelligence on Irish terrorism to mainland Britain, any diminution in the flow of such intelligence to the RUC would also have detrimental consequences for the mainland. Let me therefore return my focus over here and ask about the structures for handling this intelligence and, more broadly, where are we heading as a police service?

In recent months aspects of policing in the United Kingdom have come under close scrutiny in the public arena, with some harsh things being written and said about our efficiency, credibility, accountability, and about our personal and organisational effectiveness. I accept, indeed I welcome, legitimate questioning and reasoned criticism, but for the sake of balance, there are a number of points which need to be made publicly about the current state of our police service.

Much has been said about the increase in spending on the police during the 1980's, and disappointment implied that there has been no corresponding increase in detection rates. Whilst we all know that there are many factors outside the control of the police which contribute to crime rates, I do not wish to distance the police from their responsibility for



clearing up crime; but I think it is only right, to put the matter in context, that we should look at the broader picture of police responsibilities. During the last fifteen years it was the police service which, at the expense of its commitment to its traditional duties, was called upon to assist in carrying out the roles of the Fire Brigade and then the Ambulance Service during industrial disputes in those services. Most damaging of all, however, is the long drawn out and continuing commitment to performing many of the duties which are properly the responsibility of the Prison Service. The custody and transportation of prisoners is work for which the police are neither trained nor equipped, and whilst payment is made for the police man-hours deployed, it does not compensate for the thousands of policing hours lost on the street, and this has been going on for over a decade. In recent months between 1,000 and 1,600 prisoners have been held daily in police cells, with policemen and police vehicles trailing around the country in an exercise which clearly prevents those officers from carrying out their principal functions.

Additionally, changes in legislation, even when they are sought and welcomed by the police, may have implications for police manpower which belie the apparent increase in available resources. Cases in point would include the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Drug Trafficking Offences Act, the Criminal Justice Act, the Data Protection Act, the Dangerous Dogs Act, numerous Road Traffic provisions and the ever-increasing volume of European Community law. Increasingly, police time and resources are being devoted to

matters such as child abuse, domestic violence, sexual offences and racial harassment, which now rightly receive a higher priority.

The number of vehicles registered in Great Britain has increased by 10 million in twenty years. In the same period the population has risen by 1.6 million. People generally have more leisure time, and there has been a vast increase in places of public entertainment.

Superimposed upon all this has been the scourge of terrorism which comes from many quarters and spans the spectrum from food contamination to the bombing of aircraft. Re-deployment of police resources to guard VIPs, protect conferences and major events, gather intelligence and investigate terrorist crimes has been considerable. Those who so forcefully draw attention in a general manner to the input of resources into policing would render a greater service if they focussed equal attention on the output. By that standard the record of the police service in this country will stand the closest scrutiny.

And on the technical front you may think it ironic, as well as quite unacceptable, that the nation which produced the world's finger-print system now lags behind North America and the developed countries of Western Europe in equipping its police service with automatic fingerprint recognition facilities, leaving individual forces, in abject frustration following some 13 years of sterile debate, to embark on a DIY enterprise.

I do not have time tonight to dwell on the causes of crime. But it must be clear to all in this audience that a society which has allowed respect for authority, in the widest application of that term, to diminish, cannot possibly be allowed to heap the unwelcome consequences solely on the police service. The reduced standard of discipline in many homes and schools; the disappearing influence of those unofficial policemen - the bus conductor, the school caretaker, the park-keeper, and the postman - who now stand to be assaulted if they intervene, has left only the police service in the firing line of a consumer-orientated society of which growing elements, who are violent, greedy and selfish, are significantly less likely to be reined in by the stigma of transgressing against the law.

I welcome, as do my colleagues at all levels, the Home Secretary's review, although I would have expected that those responsible for financing, equipping and supporting the police, both centrally and locally, would be subjected to equally critical examination. But whatever emerges, I do hope that the obsessive drive towards clinical efficiency will not impede those many services that fall to the police, which are hardly their remit, but which take up many thousands of police hours that might otherwise be spent on the prevention and detection of crime. I have in mind incidents like the lost child; the person suffering from harmless delusions; the suicidal and the lonely; the motorist whose keys have fallen down a kerbside drain and the elderly lady accidentally locked out of her home. These are

not the stuff of our drive towards value for money; they do not create compelling performance indicators; they will not impress the Treasury. But they do contribute, in a small way, to the sort of society which most people who live in these islands cherish and do not wish to see abandoned.

And now, what of structures? When we look at the way in which our police effort in Britain is organised, it is apparent that the structures which would be best suited to dealing with today's policing problems are not in place. History indicates that when problems arise, we reconsider our organisation and make changes accordingly. For wholly proper reasons we are very concerned to preserve what are viewed as constitutional safeguards in order to avoid making the police an arm of central government. In recommending the continuance of a system of local constabularies, the Royal Commission of 1962 recognised the dangers of local political pressure upon the police, but preferred it to central political pressure. Dr Goodhart, in his memorandum of dissent, preferred a national structure in which regional police commissioners answered to the Home Secretary.

At that time there were some 125 police forces in England and Wales which have been systematically reduced, through amalgamations, to the existing 43. Were they reduced to this number because they reflected the most efficient structure? Obviously not, and a question now hangs over the existing number. Do we really need 43 police forces, supported by 43 police authorities; with 43 methods of direction; command and control; information technology; purchasing;

maintaining vehicle fleets etc? I don't think so.

I have long believed that Dr Goodhart was right and that the most appropriate long-term structure would be a nationally controlled police force operated on a regional basis.

It has constantly been argued that policing is essentially a local service and, as most crime is local, we need local police forces. I believe this argument is flawed.

Most crime is indeed local, but most major crime - kidnapping, drug trafficking, money laundering, robbery and even the better class of burglary - is not. It is national and international. And whilst the delivery of general policing services is local, and should be tailored to prevailing circumstances and individual community needs, the police force itself does not need to be local. Would a home beat constable at Eastbourne behave any differently if, instead of being a constable in East Division of the Sussex Police, he was a constable in East Division of the South East Region of the Royal English and Welsh Police? Or would the local chief of police, the Sub-Divisional Commander at Eastbourne, relate any differently to his local consultative committee? I doubt it. This was put succinctly, even in 1962, by Dr Goodhart when he said, *inter alia*, "It is essential that a clear distinction should be drawn between a local police force and a locally controlled police force. It is only the questions concerning the locally controlled police force that are relevant to the regionalisation of the police, because it is obvious that local police forces will

always continue to exist, for a police force must be locally stationed. There must be an Oxford branch of the police, just as there is an Oxford branch of the Post Office. Thus the regionalisation of the police forces would not mean that the Oxford branch would be disbanded, but it would mean that the Oxford branch would become part of the larger regional force."

However, as I cannot foresee a national police force in the immediate future, I do suggest, that in two elements of policing, we now need to establish national operational units whose remit is outside the jurisdiction of local chief constables and police authorities.

The first of these is a National Crime Squad.

I do not wish to imply that the concept of co-operation between local forces, or common standards and values, is somehow revolutionary, or unforeseen by the signatories of the report of the Royal Commission. 'Regionalisation' has been a practical reality in, for example, the role of the regional police training centres, with common standards and systems in recruit and inspector training, driver training, firearms and public order training. Local forces share the facilities of the regional Forensic Science Laboratories. There are parallels in the way in which common standards are applied on a national basis, by for example, the Home Office circular, the role of ACPO and the Staff Associations, shared experiences at the Police Staff College, the input of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and, more recently,

the formation of the Crown Prosecution Service followed by the Serious Fraud Office.

Whilst the move towards regionalisation has been inexorable, I believe that our response so far falls short of what is already required in 1992. The existing nine Regional Crime Squads for England and Wales should be seen as only an interim answer to serious and organised crime. Even before recent proposals for change, many Regional Crime Squad operations involved more than one region, and more than one squad. This trend has been increasing, with a rising number of applications for special facilities involving several regions. In particular, a significant number of operations which are centred on a provincial region now also involve the London Regional Crime Squad. A high proportion of these operations involve drugs which are imported to the capital and then travel up to Scotland, with stops for distribution in the major conurbations of the Midlands and the North of England.

A serious attempt to co-ordinate the work of the Regional Crime Squads and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in relation to drugs matters, by collating and analysing available intelligence centrally, was made with the creation of the National Drugs Intelligence Unit, (NDIU), but this had no operational role. A further step forward was taken with the introduction this year of the National Criminal Intelligence Service, (NCIS), which subsumed the NDIU and extended the intelligence remit to include all serious crime. This is a national unit with five regional offices, but again no

operational role. It is now envisaged that the nine Regional Crime Squads will be re-organised into five larger squads with boundaries which are co-terminous with those of the NCIS. This is a very promising development, but why stop there?

Surely what is required for the type of serious crime I alluded to earlier is a single National Crime Squad which has responsibility for the gathering, analysis, evaluation and operational exploitation of criminal intelligence. Is this not the way in which we ought to be tackling the ruthless and sophisticated criminals whose activities involve such large sums of money that they threaten to undermine legitimate businesses? In the United States, with its large population and land mass, and in particular with its varying jurisdictions, the benefits of investigating defined serious crimes by a central squad, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, have long been recognised. I believe the time has now come to give ourselves a better chance of dealing effectively with big-time criminals. Fear of regionalisation and, I would contend, national units, can no longer be sustained.

You will doubtless have noticed that in listing the sorts of criminal activity which I described as serious and having no geographical boundaries, I made no mention of terrorism and I would like to touch on this as my final theme.

You will all recall the publicity recently given to the primary role in handling intelligence on Irish Republican



terrorism moving from Special Branch at New Scotland Yard to the Security Service. Most of you will also recall the appointment of the Commander of the Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorist Branch as National Co-ordinator of terrorist investigations, and the creation of the Association of Chief Police Officers' Advisory Group, headed by the Assistant Commissioner Specialist Operations.

I do not believe, however, that these measures go far enough. Sterling work by Commander Churchill-Coleman and the willing co-operation of chief constables and senior investigating officers outside London, cannot validate the disparate approach which is inherent in the investigative responsibility, and support services back-up, resting with 43 different forces.

Although a national response to this national problem seems to be slowly evolving through the advisory group referred to, it is a compromise solution when a bolder thrust is necessary.

I therefore propose the early formation of a National Anti-Terrorist Unit which would have four major divisions:

- the cultivation of informants;
- the gathering, analysis and assessment of intelligence;
- an operational capacity to respond to such intelligence; and
- a training, legal and support services wing.

Such a unit would incorporate the Security Service, the Metropolitan Police Special Branch and Anti-Terrorist Unit, with a significant input from provincial CID and Special Branches. It would also include military and customs personnel with the capacity to co-opt specific skills from other agencies or departments as appropriate.

Amongst the permanent staff I would envisage a forensic unit along the lines of the Serious Crimes Unit of the Metropolitan Police Laboratory, combining the disciplines of forensic science, scenes of crime, fingerprints, photography and mapping. The legal department would maintain liaison with the Crown Prosecution Service and bodies such as the Serious Fraud Office.

There could be no fudging with such a unit and primary legislation would be necessary to give its Director the remit to oversee the investigation of all terrorist incidents; to appoint the senior investigating officer, and to call upon local police for investigative and incident room support.

The creation of a National Anti-Terrorist Unit would provide a cohesive and common approach to all terrorist activity. It would provide a single police and intelligence focal point for liaison with the RUC, the Garda and the police forces and intelligence services of Europe and North America.

But who would lead such a unit? My colleagues may regard me as something of a heretic when I suggest that the

professional discipline of the post holder is secondary to getting the right person, whoever he or she may be (and please don't read anything into that!). The post would be prestigious and demanding, and this must be recognised at the outset and reflected in a status equivalent to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner or a civil servant at Permanent Under Secretary level. The line command would most likely be to the Home Secretary, but with direct access to the Prime Minister.

The professional qualities and experience of the candidate would be the express factors to determine selection but, should the appointment be from the Security, Diplomatic or Civil Services, the military or Customs and Excise, for example, then I believe the deputy should be a senior police officer with proven operational experience.

Terrorism has been with us now, from one group or another, for decades and, whatever the outcome of Irish terrorism, it would be carelessly optimistic to assume that terrorism will disappear. It is therefore of crucial importance to put in place now the measures that stand to bring future success.

I do not wish to undermine the authority of chief constables on matters which occur within their police areas, but we really must face a serious threat with a realistic and professional response, even at the risk of offending a few sensibilities. Nor should we hold back because of doubts about accountability. The Home Secretary will always be held ultimately responsible for our domestic security and freedom

from crime. As such he should be the authority, through the medium of suitable advisory boards, for both a National Crime Squad and a National Anti-Terrorist Unit.

Despite the sophistication of the top criminals, whether motivated by a desire for personal gain or for the achievement of political objectives which have been regularly rejected at the ballot box, and despite their exploitation of the protections which a liberal democracy such as ours affords them, we do still arrest, bring to trial and convict significant numbers. Perhaps we do not fulfil all the expectations of a public which has been reared on the successes of the imaginary television policeman, but we are striving to deliver a quality of service, and we are content to subject ourselves to standards of performance measurement, which some of our critics would be slow to emulate.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in drawing my remarks to a close, this occasion offers me an opportunity to mention one other matter, an opportunity I very much welcome and which I have deliberately reserved for my conclusion. The RUC has endured more than two decades of extraordinary policing. It continues to endure. It is in good shape and good heart. That this is so undoubtedly stems from the special characteristics of the organisation and the men and women in its ranks. But there is, I am sure, another reason. The RUC has never stood, or felt, alone. It is a part of the British police family and it has drawn great support from that shared comradeship. Throughout these many years the police service here on the mainland has had a special place for the RUC and

that has been expressed in so many ways, most of all in its concern and caring for our widows and bereaved families.

This evening, therefore, on behalf of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, I wish to thank those forces, police authorities, organisations and individuals who have been such good friends and who have supported us so steadfastly and generously. We are grateful beyond words and I am especially glad to have this occasion on which to express a profound thank you from the men and women I represent.

My final remarks are a reflection on the words of Sir Robert Mark when he delivered the Dimbleby lecture in 1973. At that time, serving as a superintendent at Brixton, I was not absolutely sure of his meaning. Conscious of my own remarks tonight I now know, with absolute clarity, what he meant when he said; "We share with another more famous service a tradition of silence. Perhaps in our case this arises from agreeing with the Book of Proverbs, that even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise."