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'Intelligence Management and the security stovepipe in Northern Ireland, 1968-1974' –

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Abstract

Right from the beginning of the Northern Ireland Troubles, two different strands of British intelligence were developed in Northern Ireland that failed to effectively cooperate or coordinate their efforts with each other. Though the JIC, the Office of the UK Representative and later the Northern Ireland Office were all aware of (and opposed) the lack of singular control over intelligence in the province, they were unable for much of the 1970s to wrest control of security intelligence from the hands of the Army and Special Branch. This problem, which emerged as a result of both the developing nature of the deployment in the early 1970s and from the fear of alienating RUC Special Branch meant that a Security-Forces-controlled intelligence 'stovepipe' emerged that exclusively served the purpose of enforcing law and order rather than aiding in the UK government's wider political strategies. Records from the National Archives show that at times this stovepipe operated without reference (and at times in opposition) to the political initiatives also being tried by the UK government in the province.

The findings of this research are important because they demonstrate that stovepipes can continue to exist in intelligence communities where there is formalised intra-agency leadership and coordination. The post-9/11 reforms that sought to end the competitive and at times hostile nature of relations between the US's intelligence agencies (and the cast iron intelligence stovepipes identified in the 9/11 commission report) created the Office of the Director of National Intelligence

and the National Counter Terrorism Centre as a means to force intelligence sharing between agencies. The DNI especially is an effective American equivalent of the Joint Intelligence Community. Unfortunately in the case of Northern Ireland, whilst very much aware of the problem the JIC in the 1970s were effectively unable to get the Army and RUC to cede much, if any control over security intelligence or to collaborate with those on secondment from MI6 in the Northern Ireland office that involved themselves in political intelligence initiatives.

The origin of the stovepipe lies in the dual stream deployment of Britain's troops as part of Operation Banner and, separately, Britain's officials at the newly formed Office of the UK Representative. Arguably it was the officials who were *actually* first to be deployed and as early as April 1969 the Cabinet Office were instructing the Joint Intelligence Committee 'on the means for obtaining information other than through the Northern Ireland official sources.'¹ This led to the Security Service (MI5) sending over a Security Liaison Officer to supplement the existing tiny coterie investigating loyalist groups and create a more direct link with RUC Special Branch that would report both on the security threat and on the police's performance in dealing with it. The MI5 SLO became Britain's first independent source of information in Northern Ireland and a key part of what the JIC chairman Sir Edward Peck described as the 'slightly better intelligence service on Northern Ireland'.² In August, reporting was increased again when alongside the troops, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had supplied Oliver Wright, a senior diplomat, for the newly formed post of 'UK Representative' in Belfast and, finally on 28 August the General Officer Commanding [GOC] (Lt. Gen Sir Ian Freeland) was granted a Director of Intelligence responsible to him, but in 'close touch with Mr Oliver Wright.'³ These overlapping appointments –

¹ Cabinet Office Committee Misc. 244, 1st Meeting at Home Office, Sir Phillip Allen (Home Office PUS & Chair), 21st April 1969, Section G, CAB 130/422, NA.

² Sir Edward Peck (Chairman of the JIC) to Sir Andrew Gilchrist, 5 August 1969, FCO 33/764, NA.

³ Terms of Reference for the Director of Intelligence Northern Ireland, 28 August 1969, CJ 3/99, NA.

made in haste during a period when it was uncertain how long the crisis would last – were the *ad hoc* foundations upon which the security and intelligence stovepipe would soon be built and, during the honeymoon period of late 1969 army officers began operating as though they represented the entirety of the British response, without reference to Oliver Wright at all. One such example was the so-called ‘Sullivan-Dyball treaty’ of September 1969⁴ in which a group of Catholic vigilantes in Belfast agreed to remove their barricades and combine their patrols with the British Army but to the exclusion of the RUC.⁵

The honeymoon period of course did not last. By April 1970 the GOC faced nightly riots in Belfast and Derry coincidental with an ever stiffer army resolve that exacerbated the violence they faced. By June, gun and bomb attacks, by both wings of the IRA had begun to supplement and replace the riots as the main threat to the British Army. Huw Bennett at this seminar last term spoke of how the army was gradually being allowed to employ a strategy of attritional counter insurgency culminating in the Bloody Sunday shootings and the imposition of Direct Rule. Direct Rule did not create stability or improve security, and by the end of 1972, 212 members of the Security Forces, 113 paramilitaries and 366 civilians⁶ had been killed in the Northern Ireland Troubles. The Army still had the role of peace keeper between Loyalist and Republican armed groups, but were now targeted in particular by the Provisional IRA as part of a war for Irish unification. Thus the intelligence the security forces sought was influenced by their urgent need for effective defence. The product generated therefore needed to be practical, urgent and actionable when it came to the activities of republican paramilitaries, and without unnecessary consideration of the potential of that intelligence to be useful to those outside the army to bring the conflict to an end by other means.

⁴ So-called because it was negotiated between Major General Tony Dyball of the British Army and Jim Sullivan, member of both the Central Citizens’ Defence Committee and the Belfast IRA.

⁵ Geraghty, *The Irish War*, (Harper Collins, 1998); xviii-xix

⁶ Statistics from Malcolm Sutton, *Index of Deaths* (<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/>)

The MI5 Security Liaison Officer (SLO) assigned to Belfast in April 1969 was based at RUC Headquarters and was joined from August 1969 by increasing numbers of military intelligence personnel who, in turn were coordinated by the Director of Intelligence (another MI5 officer) appointed at the end of the month. However, whilst MI5 could claim to have been there first the GOC (Freeland) had been given full control over all security matters in the province and these included the existing intelligence systems. The post of Director of Intelligence had even been established at Freeland's request, his having told the Chief of the General Staff that he, 'would welcome a Director of Intelligence ... who would be answerable solely to him.'⁷ Freeland's choice of words were reflected in the new Director of Intelligence's Terms of Reference which began, 'You will be responsible to the GOC...'⁸ Thus, the SLO, Military Intelligence Liaison Officer (MILO) and even much of RUC Special Branch initially were under Freeland's operational control.⁹ Within days of their arrival however, the domestic situation had improved to such an extent that there was relatively little to report on and, as late as October 1969 even future MI5 DG Stella Rimington admitted that her information coming from Northern Ireland – while significant in size – 'did not at this stage contain much in the way of real intelligence'.¹⁰

So too, the JIC strained to hear information from the Director of Intelligence that had been appointed, who was an officer of MI5 but responsible to the GOC. The JIC requested weekly assessments, that were reduced to fortnightly, and when even these were not forthcoming, Sir Martin Furnival-Jones, the MI5 DG was asked to see if the DI required secretarial support.¹¹ The JIC secretary, Brian Stewart, responded in

⁷ Imperial War Museum [IWM], Documents and Sound Section: 'CGS Record of a Discussion with GOC Northern Ireland', 21 August 1969, p.4, sub-file Letters to and From the Chief of the General Staff, File Exile! Feb-June 1971, Papers of General Sir Ian Freeland, Box 79/34/3, quotation and citation from Charters, *'Have A Go.'* 208.

⁸ Terms of Reference for the Director of Intelligence Northern Ireland, 28 August 1969, CJ 4/99. TNA.

⁹⁹ Charters, *'Have A Go.'* 204.

¹⁰ Rimington, *Open secret*, 106.

¹¹ JIC(A)(69) 36th, 40th, 42nd 43rd and 44th meetings' minutes, receipt of the first fortnightly assessment by the Director of Intelligence was noted on the 30 October 1969, over ten weeks after

October 1969 with the establishment of a Northern Ireland Current Intelligence Group which in theory gave the RUC Special Branch direct representation at the JIC.¹²

However, MI5 and the British Army were used to working with each other and alongside local police special branches in colonial conflicts in Malaya, Kenya, Aden and Cyprus and perhaps they had come to prioritise the building of these relationships above the reporting demands of a far-off Whitehall particularly as the GOC had been given blanket control over security. Thus RUC Special Branch did not become the active members of the JIC the JIC had hoped they would be. Thus the JIC's problems with non-reporting continued.

MI5's Director General, Furnival-Jones was sent again to Northern Ireland in January 1970¹³ and, following a brief respite, it was apparent that the system of reporting had again begun to break down. In June 1970, another draft assessment was late at the exact moment that the security situation began deteriorating again¹⁴ and by October, with the honeymoon now completely over the JIC moved to replace the original Director of Intelligence by the newly arrived SLO, David Eastwood MC.¹⁵ A change of personnel however did not change the problem of non-reporting from the Director of Intelligence and twice in October assessments or commentary were, once again, late in coming from Belfast.¹⁶

In March 1971 the JIC again reviewed the intelligence arrangements for Northern Ireland and the Intelligence Co-ordinator, Sir Dick White was sent over and reported

deployment. CAB 185/9, NA. Secretarial Support was eventually sent on the orders of the Cabinet Secretary on 6 November, JIC(A)(69) 45th meetings' minutes. CAB 185/9, NA.

¹² O'Halpin, 'British Intelligence, PIRA, and the early years of the Northern Ireland Crisis', 172.

¹³ JIC(A)(70) 2nd meeting minutes, 8 January 1970, CAB 185/3, NA.

¹⁴ JIC(A)(70) 24th meeting minutes, 25 June 1970, CAB 185/3, NA.

¹⁵ H David Eastwood, had earned his MC as a platoon commander at Arnhem in 1944. He later served in the Malayan Civil Service and, after presumably joining MI5 in 1959, served in Jamaica before being sent to Northern Ireland as SLO. He was appointed Director of Intelligence, in October 1970. See David Eastwood: Obituary, *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 Dec 2010, Bloody Sunday Inquiry, Witness Evidence, KD2.1, and Huw Bennett, 'Detention and Interrogation in Northern Ireland, 1969-75', 201 n58.

¹⁶ JIC(A)(70) 38th & 39th meeting minutes, 1 & 8 October 1970, CAB 185/4, NA.

back.¹⁷ Although White's report itself remains classified, excerpts from it appear in the archives and its recommendations clearly influenced future considerations of both the introduction of internment and the risk of a Protestant backlash should the Northern Ireland Government be replaced by Direct Rule from Westminster.¹⁸ White auspiciously noted, 'It is important to emphasise that there was not an intelligence crisis in Northern Ireland.'¹⁹ Before writing that RUC Special Branch was, 'the crux of the machine' and that as a result of it being 'the object of over the last two years of close scrutiny and heavy criticism, it was thus in a highly sensitive state.'²⁰ White believed there were therefore 'weaknesses in the direction, collection and collation of security intelligence' within the RUC though still, he felt able to conclude that 'however much we improve our own arrangements, there cannot be a consequential radical improvement in the intelligence situation as a whole [without RUC SB improvement]... the army's contribution is probably only about 10% of the total intelligence take – the balance being principally from RUC SB.'²¹

In further excerpts from White's actual report two recommendations appear. The first, was that whilst it was important that there should be 'a better balance between the two partners in the overall intelligence system in Northern Ireland... it will be imperative to carry the Northern Ireland police with us and retain every bit of their confidence'²² in the event of Direct Rule. Second, was that *once* the intelligence was

¹⁷ Sir Dick White was a career intelligence officer and uniquely had been Director General of MI5 (1953-56) and Head of MI6 (1956-68). Samantha Newbery, 'Intelligence and Controversial British Interrogation Techniques', 114.

¹⁸ This perennial fear was considered regularly at the JIC and around the Cabinet office between 1969 and 1972, Craig, *Crisis of Confidence*, 92-93 and Aldrich, Cormac and Goodman, *Spying on the World*, 352-371.

¹⁹ JIC(A)71 13th meeting minutes, 25 March 1971, CAB 185/6, NA.

²⁰ JIC(A)71 13th meeting minutes, 25 March 1971, CAB 185/6, NA.

²¹ Chief Defence Staff memo on Northern Ireland Intelligence Arrangements April 1971, Ref JIC(A)(71) 23, DEFE 25/304, NA.

²² Excerpt from Dick White's report of Northern Ireland Intelligence Arrangements, 22 March 1971, Annex A in Stewart (JIC) to Hockaday (MoD), CAB 163/171, NA.

in a state that would enable it and, 'after a lull in its expectation, an internment policy could be expected to yield considerable intelligence dividends.'²³

White's report effectively tied the hands of the JIC, MI5 and the Army. By emphasising both their importance and their fragility White was making it clear that no one could afford to upset RUC Special Branch and that Special Branch could not be made to report back to the JIC if they were unable to do so for any reason. This problem of a non-reporting RUC Special Branch, whether it stemmed from inadequacy or a more general unwillingness to co-operate²⁴ only got worse over time and, as the casualty lists mounted, both the military and police commanders involved might well have felt reporting to Whitehall came a poor second to gently squeezing out of the RUC the actionable intelligence that the Security Forces needed for themselves.

Perhaps nowhere are the limits and inadequacies of the security intelligence set-up in Northern Ireland more evident than in Operation Demetrius, the introduction of internment which took place on the morning of 9 August 1971. The arrest operation, furnished by intelligence gathered predominantly by RUC Special Branch netted 342 of the 520 suspects on their list in the first 24 hours,²⁵ figures that were considered 'outstandingly good'. Evidence of initial success however was an illusion with 105 of the 342 lifted on the first night being released within two days and, as time went on it emerged that the list was both inflated and out of date including a number from left-wing organisations²⁶ as well as long-retired former republican paramilitaries.²⁷

²³ Excerpt from Dick White's report of Northern Ireland Intelligence Arrangements, 22 March 1971, Annex B in Stewart (JIC) to Hockaday (MoD), CAB 163/171, NA.

²⁴ Unwillingness to co-operate was evident in the silence of the RUC to repeated requests for statements and evidence to be supplied for the UK defence case against allegations of mistreatment at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in November 1972. An FCO memo noted, 'we are most unlikely to be able to rebut the extensive evidence, whether true or false, which the Irish [government] have brought to substantiate their charges, chiefly because of the refusal of members of the RUC to make any statement about the incidents in question ... [followed by redacted text]'. Memorandum, 'Irish State Case at Strasbourg: The Next Stage', 15 November 1972, FCO 87/144, NA.

²⁵ Estimates from McCleery (2015) although they do vary. E.g. Hennessey reports that Heath was told 304 out of 464 were arrested. Hennessey, *The Evolution of the Troubles*, 132.

²⁶ McCleery, *Operation Demetrius*, 22.

²⁷ Taylor, *Provos*, 93.

Richard English would later estimate that ‘Fewer than a hundred of [those arrested initially] were either Provisional or Official IRA Volunteers.’²⁸ And Prime Minister Ted Heath, though himself initially convinced of the operation’s success later admitted that the intelligence supplied by RUC Special Branch had proven to be ‘hopelessly out of date.’²⁹

Though the Director of Intelligence had no responsibility for the arrest lists, or any say over who were selected for enhanced interrogation³⁰, it is clear that the implementation of Dick White recommendations was the DI’s responsibility. Thus, Eastwood was drawn into the maelstrom of controversy that emerged once word that the Five Techniques³¹ had been used got out in the autumn of 1971. The DI for example had ensured that ten RUC interrogators had been trained at the Joint Services Interrogation Wing at Ashford, Kent following Dick White’s report earlier that spring. Even some in the army questioned the wisdom of handing over such an ‘exceptionally sensitive’ operation to the RUC, urging the DI to ‘strongly advise’ the RUC that they follow the JIC directives on interrogation laid down in 1965 ‘to provide at least some cover to reduce the inevitable recrimination’.³² Though no indication of this advice being passed on to the RUC has been identified, its relevance rings true in the minority report of the Parker Committee (the second of two government inquiries conducted on the issue in its immediate aftermath) where Lord Gardiner concluded:

‘The blame for this sorry story... must lie with those who, many years ago decided that in emergency conditions in Colonial-type situations we should abandon our legal, well-tried and highly successful wartime interrogation

²⁸ English, *Armed Struggle*, 139.

²⁹ Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 619. Citing Heath, *Course of My Life*, 427-428.

³⁰ Samantha Newbery, ‘Intelligence and Controversial British Interrogation Techniques’, 114-115.

³¹ The techniques were used prior to and between interrogation sessions on 14 suspects and included with prolonged wall standing, hooding, subjection to white noise, sleep deprivation, deprivation of food.

³² Brigadier General-Staff (Intelligence) JMH Lewis to Director of Intelligence, 6 August 1971, DEFE 24/744, NA. These directives are discussed in O’Halpin (2008) ‘A poor thing but our own’, 670-671.

methods and replace them by procedures which were secret, illegal, not morally justifiable and alien...'³³

Despite the controversy, some justification might still have been found had there been an 'operational dividend' to the practices of Enhanced Interrogation and reports were submitted in defence of the methods based on their results in terms of the operational intelligence they had gathered. This, ends justifying means argument, included the details of planned IRA operations, IRA order of battle and the location of arms caches and safe houses. According to one report, the techniques had resulted in 'over 40 outstanding major incidents [being] cleared from Police records.'³⁴ Most apparent however is the positive effect of the internment policy on *army* morale and confidence. That the army felt that they were now winning the war of attrition after August 1971 is sustained by their own internal communications if not the incident statistics which showed the IRA were becoming more rather than less active.³⁵ The opportunity to participate more actively in the conflict may have given the troops a better sense of purpose but it did little to shorten or ameliorate the conflict at this point.

Caught in the middle however, the DI, Eastwood, became exhausted by the pressure of his office, following yet another visit from Dick White in November 1971, a direct and urgent request was made to the Cabinet Secretary Burke Trend asking that MI5 insist on Eastwood accepting another assistant immediately. White told Trend that and that 'as soon as the Security Service reinforcement gets going it should be possible to persuade [Eastwood] to a further break'³⁶ so exhausted was the DI had become since internment began.

³³ Lord Gardiner, 31 January 1972, Minority Report of Lord Parker, et al, *Report of the Committee of Privy Counsellors appointed to consider authorised procedures for the interrogation of persons suspected of terrorism*. Cmd 4901. London, HMSO, 1972.

³⁴ Intelligence gained from interrogations in Northern Ireland', unsigned [MoD], November 1971, DEFE 13/958, NA. Reproduced in Newbery, Brecher, Sands & Stewart, 'Interrogation, Intelligence and the Issue of Human Rights', 635.

³⁵ Hennessey, *Evolution of the Troubles*, 220-225.

³⁶ Sir Dick White to Sir Burke Trend 15 November 1971, CAB 163/172, NA.

In a number of respects, the internment policy and its results can be seen as a case study in stovepiped intelligence failure. After the initial operation, propaganda meant for the internal consumption of the managers within the security forces hid the external controversy and two British Government reports into internment only served to make security intelligence even more defensive about its product, activities and outcomes. Beyond increasingly strained attempts at pinning the IRA down there is little to no consideration in these documents of intelligence serving any wider, political or strategic purpose.

The political failure however was most obvious and the policy led directly to the escalation of republican violence in Belfast and Derry and an increase in support for the IRA throughout Ireland.

The consequences had already been predicted, it had for example been clearly spelled out in a warning from Britain's ambassador in Dublin that once internment was introduced, 'all the moderates would identify with the internees.'³⁷ Subsequently the ambassador wrote directly to the UK Representative in Belfast, Howard Smith, asking that Protestant extremists be included and that once republican ring-leaders had been rounded up the army should 'operate with as light a touch as possible'³⁸ cognisant of the propaganda effect the policy was already having in the south.

POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Howard Smith as UKREP was not a part of the security intelligence stovepipe that had emerged around the Director of Intelligence, the army and RUC Special Branch. The Office of the UKREP, had been established at the behest of PM Harold Wilson to monitor the implementation of internal reforms by the Northern Ireland government and was led between 1969 and 1972 by a series of three senior diplomats, Oliver Wright, Ronnie Burroughs and Howard Smith. These UKREPs had a more general

³⁷ Peck to Douglas-Home, Record of meeting with Lynch, 31 July 1971, CJ 4/56, NA.

³⁸ Peck to Smith, 9 August 1971, CJ 4/56, NA.

reporting role as well and began almost immediately to seek out the opinions of those beyond the unionist government at Stormont. Though largely using open source or freely given information, the UKREP was effectively gathering and analysing political intelligence and was in the process of creating channels of information on Northern Ireland that were 'uniquely detached from sources supplied by or through the Northern Ireland government.'³⁹

The letters, reports and despatches of the UKREP were distributed around the 'Irish Net' at Whitehall (clearance coded 'PERIMETER' to exclude Northern Ireland officials) and this included all the same people privy to the security intelligence reporting.⁴⁰ These political intelligence reports however began to diverge from security intelligence perceptions from the summer of 1971 over the issue of internment and their analyses of its success. Howard Smith, the final UKREP (a Bletchley Park alumni, later ambassador Moscow and MI5 DG 1979-81) urged caution over the perceived efficacy of internment weeks before its introduction when he wrote to the Home Office, 'I do not believe that internment alone in Northern Ireland would do the trick...[as] in my judgement a considerable capacity for terror would remain.'⁴¹ Similar opposition was voiced by MI5 who advocated the internment of loyalist paramilitaries as 'a sop for the minority community' and its application over only the Greater Belfast area.⁴²

With internment in place and the army reports now conflating their own increased COIN success with an actual decline in the insurgency, opposition from the UKREP only increased with the appointment of MI6's Frank Steele as Smith's deputy in October 1971. Steele took a practical and ecumenical approach to the post of Deputy UKREP, later justifying his methods on the basis that on a recent posting to Kenya he

³⁹ Craig, 'From Backdoors and Back Lanes to Backchannels', 101.

⁴⁰ Recipients of 'PERIMETER' classified material regularly included the PUS at the Home Office, Edward Peck followed by Stewart Crawford, FCO and successive Chairmen of the JIC, the British Ambassador in Dublin, and the GOC. Occasional despatches were given a wider audience being classified. FCO 33/769 & FCO 33/770, NA.

⁴¹ Smith (UKREP) to Crawford (FCO & JIC) and Woodfield (Home Office), 20 July 1971, CJ 4/56, NA.

⁴² MI5 (Box 500) to Robin North (Home Office), 16 March 1971, CJ 4/56, NA.

had worked with Jomo Kenyatta ('one of our staunchest friends in the world') who had previously been interned by the British because of his 'links with the Mau Mau' prior to Kenyan independence. The Mau Mau, according to Steele, 'made the IRA look like a Sunday school choir' therefore, 'to people like me it seemed just pragmatic to talk to the IRA.'⁴³ Within a fortnight of his arrival Steele was reporting valuable news from moderates within the nationalist community, who were directly contradicting the army's line that they were winning, 'they [the moderate nationalists⁴⁴] themselves were not as optimistic about this... [and] they also commented that [the army] were not taking sufficient care in winning the security battle to minimize the political damage incurred in doing this.'⁴⁵

The difference in approach between the approach of the UKREP group and the MI5/Military Intelligence/RUC group is perhaps best illustrated in the treatment of the PIRA Adjutant Frank Morris on 9 February 1972 when he reported to Victoria RUC Barracks in Derry. There, Morris delivered a message from PIRA Chief of Staff Sean MacStíofáin proposing a truce between the IRA and the British Army. The Director of Intelligence added comments to the minute, 'This approach must be viewed in the context of increasing security force pressure on the IRA in Belfast where I expect their activities to be reduced to a minimum in six to eight weeks' time.'⁴⁶ The contact with Morris was subsequently allowed to lapse. Meanwhile, following similar contact that spring Frank Steele was to organise talks that resulted in a PIRA ceasefire and, talks with the Secretary of State at Cheyne Walk in London when the IRA delegation was led by the aforementioned MacStíofáin.

⁴³ Taylor, *Provos*, 137.

⁴⁴ The group included 'Hayes of the Community Relations Board, Guckian of the UDR advisory committee, Canavan of the Police Authority and Fr Murphy of the CCDC' Steele to Woodfield, 26 October 1971, CJ 4/82, NA.

⁴⁵ Steele went on to analyse the meeting himself, 'it could be argued that there is a considerable degree of self-interest in their remarks, and that they have deliberately exaggerated their views to make our blood run cold... but I doubt this – their pessimism seemed to be genuine.' Steele to Woodfield, 26 October 1971, CJ4/82, TNA.

⁴⁶ Memo from Director of Intelligence, note of meeting with Frank Morris, IRA Adjutant, Victoria Barracks, 9 February 1972, FCO 87/5, NA. See also, Craig 'From Backdoors and Back Lanes to Backchannels', 114, n33.

Before his death in 1997, Steele told journalist Peter Taylor;

‘There was very little coordination of whatever intelligence was being produced by the RUC, the army and MI5. Internment had been a disaster. It barely damaged the IRA’s command structure and led to a flood of recruits, money and weapons. It was a farce. And as for the special interrogation techniques, they were damned stupid as well as morally wrong. Such methods are counter-productive and do you enormous damage when they get out, which they inevitably do. And in practical terms, the additional usable intelligence they produced was, I understand, minimal.’⁴⁷

Following Bloody Sunday, the advance toward Direct Rule was swift. The UKREP was expanded and renamed the Northern Ireland Office and sought greater civilian control over the very security matters that had been withdrawn from the Northern Ireland government in 1969. The NIO began making its case to the JIC for greater input and access to intelligence in mid-April, arguing, ‘It is certainly the case that the D of I could not have been responsible to the civil authorities in NI before direct rule...[although] intelligence is valuable not only to the army: it is also a source of essential information for policy making.’⁴⁸ Halliday of the NIO argued, ‘that the DofI should be made *as* responsible to the Secretary of State as he is to the GOC.’⁴⁹ The Ministry of Defence had already moved to defend the stovepipe, clarifying the role of the DI to the GOC in anticipation of Direct Rule in the following terms:

‘Your dealings with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (or where appropriate his senior representative in Northern Ireland) on intelligence matters will be direct or by *your* Director of Intelligence acting for you.’⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Provos*, 130.

⁴⁸ JF Halliday (NIO) Howard-Drake (JIC) 14 April 1972, CJ 4/99, NA.

⁴⁹ JF Halliday (NIO) Howard-Drake (JIC) 14 April 1972, CJ 4/99, NA.

⁵⁰ CDS, Directive for the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland as Director of Operations, 23 March 1972, CJ 3/99, NA.

Eastwood's replacement from October 1972 was the now Director and Coordinator of Intelligence, Allan Rowley of MI6. Rowley took over the position just as a series of scandals and failures of British security policy were exposed in the Autumn of 1972 these ranged from revelations regarding the actions of the plain clothed Military Reaction Force (MRF), the IRA's Four Square Laundry Counter Intelligence operation, along with the Littlejohn and Wyman Affairs. All could be linked back to failures of military intelligence. Allan Rowley as the new DCI was aware of the damaging political implications of these failures and they happened with a greatly reduced frequency under his tenure. Under Rowley, the MRF was disbanded, more regular formal and informal meetings with officials from the NIO and FCO took place channels of direct communication with the Irish government and their security forces were successfully opened.⁵¹ Rowley's gregarious personality undoubtedly helped resolve a number of problems and by moving his office to Stormont he helped develop an atmosphere of 'good fellowship and calmness',⁵² with his counterparts in the NIO. In time, Rowley developed trust between the political and military intelligence units that had not existed before and although the structural problem remained with one group in control of security intelligence and another group the political side of the conflict Rowley allowed them to communicate, at least informally. Although no evidence of how Rowley was perceived within the police or the army has been identified, the use of internment more selectively from late 1972 until 1974 meant that 'virtually all the detainees were members of the IRA and that the MOD had more faith in the RUC SB intelligence'⁵³ by the end of his tenure.

⁵¹ Craig, *Crisis of Confidence*, 162-163.

⁵² Obituary: Allan Rowley, *The Times*, 13 October 2014. According to a later DCI, Rowley, 'was there for a year and he did it in tremendous style... He lived like a king, he entertained like a king, he used to drink with [Willie Whitelaw] all night' Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*. 621.

⁵³ McCleery, *Operation Demetrius*, 84.

By 1974, a combination of natural rotation and a change of government however led to friction again. The new Secretary of State Merlyn Rees and his PUS Sir Frank Cooper along with MI6's Michael Oatley arguably made up one coterie supported by Prime Minister Harold Wilson that once again pursued talks with the PIRA following the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement in May 1974. The GOC Gen. Sir Frank King, his (now MI5) DCI Denis Payne and for other reasons RUC Chief Constable Jamie Flanagan, made up another. From the political side, Oatley's use of Steele's former contacts in 1974 developed a series of backchannels that negotiated another ceasefire with the PIRA in 1975. The terms of the ceasefire, reproduced exactly in UK government documents as well as in the papers of Sinn Féin President Ruairí Ó Brádaigh show an interim agreement to stop all searches, arrests and otherwise harassment of the Republican Movement⁵⁴ so that political talks might begin.

However, the ceasefire, monitored by incident centres run by both the NIO and Sinn Féin, provided evidence over a number of months that the security forces were not keeping the NIO's side of the agreement. Ryder and more recently Ó Dochartaigh have found that not only were direct orders to soft-pedal ignored, but continued (and at times increased) security force patrols and checkpoints were specifically designed to interfere with the NIO's ceasefire talks.⁵⁵ For Ó Dochartaigh. 'Ongoing pressure from the RUC and the British army made it extremely difficult for the republican leadership to restrain local units from what those units characterized as defensive or retaliatory action and strengthened 'spoilers' within the republican movement.'⁵⁶ The NIO incident centres in fact recorded 967 complaints about Security Force activity from February to October 1975, (though the Security Forces used the same system to complain about republican activity 400 times)⁵⁷ and this led to tension between the political intelligence units at the NIO and senior elements of the Army and MoD. This

⁵⁴ Undated page marked "Top Secret: UK Eyes A, Terms for Bi-Lateral Truce," PREM 19/521, NA. Identical text of which appears in document in the Ruairí Ó Brádaigh papers, facsimile dated January 20, 1975, published in White, *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh*, 230.

⁵⁵ Ryder, *The RUC*, 130.

⁵⁶ Ó Dochartaigh 'Everyone Trying', 70.

⁵⁷ Incident Centres brief, PTE England to Merlyn Rees, 10 October, 1975, CJ 4/867, NA.

tension is apparent in some of the papers and by the fact that the DCI, is left out of NIO internal correspondence regarding Security Forces harassment during the ceasefire. The longest note available, accusing 2 Para, then stationed in North Belfast, of 'over playing their hand' and of being unsuited to improving community relations presented excerpts from some of the '15 complaints of assault, mostly serious, in the 6 weeks from 12 July'⁵⁸ and the author concludes;

'As you know we have suggested a "horses for courses" approach to the MoD in the posting of roulement battalions in Northern Ireland. Their reply was predictable but disappointing.'⁵⁹

With Rowley gone, the DCI's Terms of Reference alone were not capable of maintaining the kind of cooperation the first Rowley had managed to achieve between military and political intelligence. The new DCI, Denis Payne, moved out of Stormont and back to the army's HQNI at Lisburn's Thiepval and the stovepipe of security intelligence returned. The return of the post of DCI to an MI5 officer might have been crucial to this silo mentality re-emerging. The role of MI5 as a security organisation is undoubtedly different from the more active and inquisitive MI6 approach, and perhaps implies more of a defensive approach to intelligence gathering. These two cultures created two divergent systems Northern Ireland that had a detrimental impact on efforts to resolve the conflict there.

Conclusions

The security intelligence stovepipe in Northern Ireland is undoubtedly important in explaining how security policy developed along the lines that it did in Northern Ireland. Although it was recognised that a more unified approach that included political intelligence might lead to more preferable outcomes, it was the severity of

⁵⁸ RAMPART, PTE England to Cooper, 1 September 1975, CJ 4/867, NA.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the violence from 1970, the desire of the police to prosecute the conflict, and the need of the army to maintain its relations with the RUC meant that the protection of Security Force lives was prioritised over what were only ever potential peace-feelers from the PIRA. The security stovepipe however had little to fear and much to gain from political intelligence that could induce occasional PIRA ceasefires. By the 1990s certainly this was one important area in which MI5 played an important part and the PIRA campaign as a result gradually flickered and stuttered its way into obsolescence. But the wider lesson in all this is that the structure of British intelligence, in theory, should not have allowed this problem to have developed. The JIC's role in oversight may have identified the danger of losing the support of RUC Special Branch early on but it did not create the means through which intelligence could serve both the security and the diplomatic response. One wonders if the architects of the US's post-9/11 reforms were as aware of the potential for the system to break down and for stovepipes to re-emerge when the need for effective defence outweighs the requirement to share and share alike.