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Thank you

Mr Whitmore: ^{Adv} ^{Svc}
You may wish
to see

TF

PRIME MINISTER 5/7

1) Mr Whitmore
2) Prime Minister

The Home Secretary expresses guarded optimism about the prospects for avoiding serious public disorder this summer ~~and~~, do it occur, do better containing it

TF
29/6

PUBLIC ORDER

As we approach the anniversary of last year's widespread public disorder I thought it right to report on:

- a. the work that has been done in the last 12 months;
- b. the few disturbances so far this year;
- c. the prospect for the rest of the summer.

MF

2. Following last year's disturbances and subsequently Lord Scarman's Report, action has been taken on a broad range of issues, extending beyond the public order aspects of policing, and beyond policing itself to the problems of the inner-cities. On the broad preventive front, I should mention that following an exercise of intensive consultation, both nationally and in selected local areas, we issued, on 16th June, guidance to chief officers and police authorities which gives an added impetus to the work they have in hand to establish consultation arrangements with local communities. Such arrangements will, I hope, assist in crime prevention, in its broadest sense, by providing for a two-way flow of information and support, and fostering links with local beat officers who can often pick up the first signs of potential trouble. Many more men are now back on the beat - for example, 900 in London and 300 in Manchester - and the foot patrol experiment in Toxteth, using experienced officers, has been well received. The rest of this minute has the narrower focus of public order.

3. On 26th March we issued a substantial circular to chief officers of police about monitoring the potential for serious disorder. After a study during the autumn and winter of the present arrangements in a number of forces it pointed chief officers to what we judged

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the best practice in promoting good relations with the community. It was well received and should have helped the police to see that information is passed quickly from grass-roots to senior management so that if there are threatening signs, preventive action can at least be tried.

4. Meanwhile, we have been taking steps to deal with trouble in case it occurs. The capacity for mutual aid is now adequate. In England and Wales, forces have about 11,000 men available in standard police support units (PSUs) of an Inspector, 2 Sergeants and 20 Constables to travel to other force areas if necessary. Each force is pulling its weight and the recent papal visit provided a useful exercise in deployment. The effectiveness of the PSUs depends on good training on the basis of agreed tactics. Much has been done here; but more remains to be done. We held a seminar for chief constables at Bramshill at the end of March where the need for agreed tactics and a graduated response was generally recognised. The Metropolitan Police have provided training this spring for their own Commanders and selected ACCs from the rest of the country. A further programme of courses at Hendon is now rapidly covering Chief Superintendents, including at least one from every force in England and Wales. A programme of training and exercises for PSUs at force and Regional level continues.

5. More work is required on tactics and on the graduations of force to be used. We have therefore established a working group of senior and experienced officers from the Metropolitan police and the provincial forces which had the worst of last year's disturbances, with inputs from the Staff College at Bramshill and our Scientific Research and Development Branch. This group has been given the exclusive task of working through and ordering the tactical options. When the results have been endorsed by me and the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Commissioner, they will be translated into training programmes for common, minimum standards. This work is separate from but will underpin a more general review of public order training under the aegis of the Police Training Council (on which the local authority associations are represented), which will be asked to agree to measures to improve the public order training of,

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in particular, probationers and the critical immediate command ranks of chief inspector, superintendent and chief superintendent.

6. On equipment, great strides have been made. Chief Officers in England and Wales now have a total of 20,000 riot helmets, 8,000 shields and 6,000 flameproof overalls at their disposal. Twenty-four forces have obtained supplies, although in varying amounts, of CS gas and/or baton rounds, for use as a last resort. Guidelines on the use of this aggressive equipment were provided last September. We have invited tenders for the production of a proto-type water cannon, and have two models on loan from West Germany for technical and tactical evaluation. The greatest difficulty about equipment in recent months has been the supply of protected vehicles to carry PSUs. A survey in March revealed a shortfall in vehicles which could travel into a troubled area with relative safety. My Inspectors of Constabulary have been checking the reasons for the shortfall force by force and encouraging energy and ingenuity where it may have been missing.

7. So far this year there has been no extensive trouble. Between 29th and 31st January there were relatively minor disturbances in two adjoining areas of Bristol. One was St. Paul's, the scene of the serious disorders in April 1980. These disturbances primarily consisted of attempted fights between rival gangs of youths, white and black, between whom the police successfully intervened. One of two community beat officers caught up in this was seriously injured, and two petrol bombs were thrown. But otherwise, whilst there were 70 arrests and 20 police officers incurred minor injuries over the period, the scale of the trouble was well contained and the local community strongly condemned the youths involved. Before Easter, Brixton was flooded with rumours about serious disturbances on the anniversary of the events that led to Lord Scarman's enquiry. Happily they did not materialise. On 20th April, barricades were erected and about 250 people took to the street in Notting Hill after police had sought to make a drugs arrest. The police reacted firmly and quickly before petrol bombs, which had been prepared, could be used. The street was cleared in 4 minutes and 26 arrests were made. Nine officers were injured (two during the initial attempted arrest), none of them seriously. For about a

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week after a controversial arrest in Toxteth on 23rd April the situation was very tense. Sizeable gangs of black and white youths roamed the streets, throwing stones at vehicles and dispersing when approached by any group of policemen. Two officers were quite seriously injured while on foot patrol together on 24th April. But the police stuck to the task, did not overreact and gradually tension was reduced.

8. As to the rest of the summer, the assessment from the Security Service* of the threat to civil order as a result of subversive influences is that, in general, there is no intelligence to suggest that any black or white subversive groups are currently planning civil disorders or considering in detail how they might exploit any future disorders. The rhetoric and activities of those groups are, however, inimical to law and order, and they would be quick to try to exploit any disorders which broke out. The assessment is that the greatest initial threat would still appear to come from spontaneous outbreaks of disorder in response to a perceived "wrong", possibly in the areas and at or near to the anniversaries of the major disturbances last year. If there were such outbreaks, there would be a risk of imitative violence elsewhere. It is encouraging that the better preparedness of the police, illustrated by the prompt and effective action in Notting Hill, appears to have been noted among some of the potentially disorderly communities.

9. We have also obtained local assessments from the Commissioner and the Chief Constables of Greater Manchester, Merseyside and the West Midlands. In summary, their views accord with those of the Security Service: that the situation is relatively calm without evidence of planned disorder, and that the greatest risk is of an initial spontaneous outbreak of disorder sparked by a minor incident and with a potential for imitation. They are alert to the possibility of change in local circumstances and feeling and prepared to deal quickly and firmly with disorder should it occur.

* Copy attached

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10. The fact that serious trouble has so far been avoided this year is due in part to the efforts which the police have made. Other events - the Falklands and now the World Cup - may also have played a part in distracting attention.

11. To sum up: while we certainly cannot rule out the possibility of public disorder this summer, the police have learned a great deal from last year's experience and are much better prepared to deal with it than they were a year ago. If trouble occurs I believe that there is a good prospect that a prompt and firm response by the police will enable it to be contained and prevent it from developing into the sort of riots we saw last year.

12. I am sending copies of this minute to Cabinet colleagues, the Attorney General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Law

29 June, 1982

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THE THREAT OF CIVIL DISTURBANCES:
SUBVERSIVE INFLUENCES

General

There is no intelligence to suggest that any black or white subversive groups are currently planning civil disorders or that they are considering in detail how they might exploit any such situations in future.

The Extreme Left

2. The attention of the larger subversive organisations of the extreme left has been focussed on a range of issues such as unemployment, industrial disputes, relations with the Labour Party, nuclear disarmament and the Falklands and also in some cases on their internal problems. Racial issues and the possibility of a recurrence of civil disturbances do not at the moment figure prominently amongst their interests.
3. The (Trotskyist) Militant Tendency (MT) and Socialist Workers Party, which were to the forefront in the exploitation of the July 1981 disturbances, instructed their members at their annual conferences in November 1981 to be prepared to respond in the same way to any future troubles. Neither appears to have attempted to take matters further. The MT has however arranged a Black and Asian Conference to be held under Labour Party Young Socialist auspices at County Hall, London on 3 and 4 July, to mark the first anniversary of the outbreak of the July 1981 disturbances. The Workers Revolutionary Party, which is opposed to the use of violence, continues to devote considerable effort to its project to provide training for unemployed youth, particularly in Brixton and Merseyside, with a view to attracting black youth to its policies.
4. The smaller Trotskyist groups, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG), which were very active in the 1981 disturbances, have since then been those most closely involved in pursuing matters arising out of the disorders, including the Bradford 12 Defence Campaign. For the moment however the RCG lacks cohesion and direction and, apart from support for the Bradford 12 mainly by members in Leeds and Bradford, its main interest in racial matters lies in campaigning against apartheid. The RCP on the other hand is trying to establish Workers Against Racism groups on a national basis. With groups already formed in South and East London, Manchester and Coventry, it is seeking to set up others in Sheffield, Bristol and probably Birmingham. It is active on a wide range of racial issues, including defence campaigns (in support of those charged), racial attacks and the formation of vigilante groups, although it has been frustrated by a lack of ethnic support. Whilst the RCP is probably the most virulent extreme left-wing group operating in the racial field at the moment, it is still comparatively small and the close attention that it receives from the media tends to exaggerate its impact.
5. Small groupings of violence-prone anarchists, particularly those based in South London some of whose members were involved in the civil disturbances in 1981, seize on any opportunities for disruptive action. They can be expected to pose law and order problems in any future civil disorders.

6. Whilst there is no information that any of these groups intend to initiate civil disorders, they and other extremist groups are likely to move quickly to extract the maximum political advantage, should such disorders break out. It is also probable that members of some of them will participate in the disorders, as individuals. The general pattern and tone of their activities and propaganda are often provocative and will continue to be inimical to law and order.

Racial Extremists

7. Black racial extremists can be expected to continue to take a line hostile to the Government in general and to the police and the judicial system in particular. There are signs that some of the less extreme leaders are prepared, in the aftermath of the 1981 disturbances, to consider pursuing their aims through the political system and that some extremist organisations, such as the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee, are trying to project a respectable image with the object of acquiring public funds. Others, such as Darcus HOWE of Race Today, however continue to advocate extreme policies, including confrontation. Whilst there must be some doubt whether they will be prepared to go beyond "revolutionary rhetoric", there is a danger that black youths, influenced by their ideas and mindful of the events of last year, will be incited to violence. There is a risk that any action by the authorities, particularly the police, perceived by black communities as being "provocative" or "discriminatory" will be met by a violent reaction.

8. The greatest risk of violence by Asians is likely to continue to arise in response to racial attacks on members of the community and also to provocative demonstrations in their areas by the extreme right wing.

Outlook

9. It is not possible to predict with any confidence the circumstances which might give rise to public disorder. The greatest initial threat would still appear to come from spontaneous outbreaks of violence in response to a perceived "wrong". There are many events, controversial and non-controversial, which could provide the occasion, if not necessarily the direct cause of disturbances in the future. In the next two months, the first anniversary of the July 1981 civil disturbances and the Notting Hill Carnival at the end of August are two such occasions. Similarly there are many areas in which, because of the underlying problems and tensions, disturbances might occur, although the black areas which were most affected last year, notably Brixton, Toxteth and Moss Side, still appear to be most at risk. In addition Notting Hill, Bristol, Wolverhampton and West Yorkshire must also be considered potential troublespots. In the event of disturbances, imitative violence is likely to follow in other areas. But there is also an awareness that the police are probably much better prepared than in 1981 to deal with any future disturbances and a belief that they would react very firmly. The prompt and forceful police response to incidents in Notting Hill in April appears to have been noted by other black communities.

17 June 1981