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**HOW THE BATTLE OF GROSVENOR SQUARE WAS WON**

**Police even took the chair at a riot meeting**

**By Percy Hoskins and Alain Cass**

THE TRIUMPH of London’s police over the frightening and sadly familiar odds they faced in the streets of London on Sunday was more than just a matter of guts.

It was the result of the most intensive preparation ever undertaken by the forces of law and order in peacetime Britain.

From the moment the demonstrators began organising themselves the police swung into action.

The operation was two-pronged:-

1. Under the direction of the Commissioner, Sir John Waldron, and Assistant Commissioner Peter Brodie, in charge of Special Branch, an enormous undercover operation was mounted to penetrate the secrets of the organisation behind the march.
2. Drawing on their experiences in the first clash in Grosvenor Square last March, Scotland Yard, under the direction of Commander John Lawlor, the self-effacing “riot supremo,” devised a plan to contain the extremists.

This was based on one simple assumption- “Grosvenor Square is a battlefield we know.”

**INFILTRATED**

The significance of this was not lost on many of the agitators within the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. They decided to avoid the American Embassy in the square and make for Hyde Park. Only the extremists – Maoists and anarchists and a shabby collection of troublemakers – were left to face the police.

At the end of July a conference was held at the Home Office when it was decided to meet the hell-raisers on their own terms. Throughout the country hundreds of detectives, 50 in London alone, were assigned to prepare dossiers on each of the extremist groups.

Men were infiltrated into many of them. No sooner was a plan laid than the operations headquarters at Scotland Yard knew about it.

The undercover men were so effective that once a detective actually chaired a meeting of revolutionaries. One man was present at nearly every meeting of the official Ad Hoc Committee, the organisation involved in the national and international planning of the march.

By mid-September the police knew enough to advise the Home Secretary that he could let the march go ahead safely. A conference was then held to work out a detailed plan for the day.

Policemen from each of London's 23 divisions were sent to Hendon Training College. Here they learned the tactics of street power... how to link arms and face the marchers with a solid wall in case of trouble and how to drive a running wedge of policemen into the main body to split it. It was decided to block off the northern edge of Grosvenor Square, ring the embassy, and allow the demonstrators to march in from the north, then down confined South Audley Street.

This turned out to be Sunday's winning tactic. The demonstrators found themselves shut out of the square and facing an impregnable wall of policemen.

## **BREAKAWAY**

The men on the ground were backed up by 7,000 more, concealed in side streets where coaches waited to rush them to trouble-spots.

The entire operation was controlled from Scotland Yard's operation room by the Chief Commissioner.

As the march moved through London, radio cars reported its progress. When the breakaway march, led by Maoists and anarchists, arrived at the top end of Grosvenor Square, the police were ready for them.

One man on horseback, armed with a megaphone, Chief Superintendent Alfred Deates, deployed police round the square. He was able to forestall the troublemakers' every move.

The truth, simply, is that the demonstrators stood no chance against the superbly organised police.

Observers from America and France were there to watch, and it may well be that the plans put to such devastating effect on Sunday, will serve as an example to police forces in the world's riot-torn capitals.

Now the organisers of the demonstration must decide what to do next, for despite the achievement of bringing 35,000 people on to the streets, the immediate results for them are an overdraft of £120 and a growing wrangle over future direction.

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is to hold an inquest with the aim of finding a common cause to keep the Left together for a “Spring leap forward.” But how far can they tone down their extreme opposition to the established government to accommodate the moderates?

[Map of marcher’s route / Grosvenor Square]

**HOW THE BATTLE PLAN WORKED**