

Ref: OF. 2049/3

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT LECONFIELD HOUSE AT
2.15 p.m. FRIDAY, 20th SEPTEMBER, 1968

Present:

- [redacted] 4 Security Service, CHAIRMAN
- R.A. JAMES Home Office
- Chief Insp. C. DIXON Metropolitan Police
- ✓ Chief Insp. [redacted] 1 Metropolitan Police
- ✓ Chief Insp. [redacted] 2 Metropolitan Police
- [redacted] 2 Security Service
- [redacted] Security Service
- [redacted] Security Service
- [redacted] 4 Security Service
- [redacted] Security Service
- [redacted] Security Service
- [redacted] Security Service

The Chairman explained that the meeting had been called to discuss the October Demonstration planned by the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (V.S.C.). It was hoped to share information in order to meet requests for advice on physical security from Government Departments.

Chief Insp. DIXON outlined the route proposed by the V.S.C. for a demonstration on Sunday 27th October. Special Branch estimated that at least 20,000 demonstrators would assemble on the Embankment near Charing Cross at 2 p.m.: they intended to march to Blackfriars Bridge, Fleet Street (where the Daily Telegraph and Daily Express offices were targets), the Strand (protesting at the Australian High Commission and doubtless taking note of Rhodesia House), round Trafalgar Square, which had been booked by the London Federation of Youth Clubs, into Whitehall. The V.S.C. wished to occupy the full width of Whitehall where the Ministry of Defence (said to house the S.E.A.T.O. office), the Foreign Office, Home Office and Number 10 had been named as targets. It had been said that the demonstrators would remain in Whitehall for between 1/2 hour and 2 hours but the Police considered that the demonstration might end there. The V.S.C. had, however, suggested a continuation along Victoria Street (target Metropolitan Police Headquarters), Grosvenor Gardens, Hyde Park Corner (targets Hilton Hotel and the Bunny Club) into Hyde Park for a final rally. It seemed fairly certain that many demonstrators would take a short cut from the Embankment direct to Whitehall. Although this was the official route, Chief Insp. DIXON said that the pro-Chinese groups, anarchists and the Young Communist League strongly supported another demonstration in Grosvenor Square. Many other targets, e.g. the South Vietnam Embassy, Stock Exchange, Banks, Dow Chemical office and American offices had been mentioned by groups or individuals.

[redacted] 4.....

[redacted]

[4] Noted the existence of a rival October Ad Hoc Committee, controlled by pro-Chinese Communists, which planned to demonstrate in Grosvenor Square. The C.P.G.P. had not yet decided its official attitude but it did not wish to press for changes in case a pro-Czechoslovakia demonstration against the Russian Embassy was proposed. The American Students Mobilisation Committee now planned a week of protest in the U.S.A. from 21st October and there was some evidence of preliminary moves to co-ordinate the activities of students in the U.S.A., Canada, France and Britain. Although the V.S.C. had initially favoured demonstrations abroad in sympathy with its own, invitations had been sent to German and French students to take part on the 27th October.

In answer to questions Chief Insp. DIXON said that Trafalgar Square would not be free on Sunday, 27th, but had been booked by the V.S.C. on Saturday, 26th, when a smaller meeting could be expected. There was already evidence of considerable provincial support for the 27th. Although the V.S.C. professed its peaceful intentions, definite proposals for violence had been made at lower levels. He emphasized that changes in the programme could be expected before 27th October.

The Chairman invited the meeting to consider the advice to be given to the occupiers of target buildings. The Security Service and the Police had a responsibility to Government Departments but private buildings were a police responsibility.

Whilst noting the wide range of targets for diversionary attacks, the meeting concentrated on the security of Whitehall departments. It was agreed that some external damage was inevitable and counter measures should concentrate on the protection of delicate equipment, preventing entry into buildings and denying demonstrators access to potential ammunition (e.g. building materials).

Mr. JAMES considered that, once the demonstration was under way, all Whitehall buildings would be threatened and he suggested that the Treasury might be asked to provide general advice to departments on the recommendations of the Police and Security Service. He undertook to take up this point at the Home Office.

[3] Chief Insp. [redacted] explained that a strong force of uniform police would be on duty and he was confident that they would be able to assist departmental staff in the protection of their premises. Departmental Duty Officers at Government buildings should be informed that they could contact the Special Police Operations Room, set up to deal with the demonstrations, at 230-1212, Extension 75. The Operations Room would find it valuable to be provided with a list of Departmental Duty Officers and telephone numbers at which they could be contacted.

The meeting agreed that comprehensive advice should be given to Whitehall departments but, defensive measures should be as unobtrusive as possible; it would be difficult to prevent disclosure and knowledge of counter measures might incite violence.

Mr. JAMES

Mr. JAMES said that, if any department wished to use military personnel within their buildings, the matter should be taken up with the Home Secretary through the Minister concerned. This was a serious policy decision which the meeting was not qualified to discuss.

The Chairman summarised the recommendations of the meeting:-

1. There was a need for a general appreciation of the threat from the demonstration, and advice on physical security to be circulated to Government Departments. [redacted] and [redacted] would now prepare this. [4]
2. Subject to the results of Mr. JAMES's enquiries, the Treasury should be requested to act as a liaison centre for this purpose.
3. A further meeting should be held in the Conference Room at Leconfield House at 2.15 p.m. on Friday, 11th October, to review the latest information about the plans for the demonstrations. In the light of this the Security Service, in co-operation with Special Branch, would produce a more detailed assessment of the threat.
4. It would probably be necessary to have a further meeting shortly before the demonstration.

[redacted] [4]

Chairman

24th September, 1968

[redacted]