Race Today

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Current Crisis in Nigeria

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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Editorial

Newman in Trouble

Recently, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Kenneth Newman, issued his annual report. It was a non-event and the report in itself was quite ordinary. What did catch the headlines though was Sir Kenneth's outburst that he was being hampered in his duties by political activists and subversives who were bent on destroying the credibility of the Metropolitan Police.

Sir Kenneth's remarks were met with opposition which varied from the strident denounciations of leading politicians and radical political activists to a moderately cautious warning from the conservative Times newspaper against the use of 'alarmist statements'.

For us here in 'Race Today', the remarks reveal that Sir Kenneth Newman, whose tenure began no more than a year ago, is in dire straits and deep difficulties and does not know the way out of them. Others portray him as a confident leader with a plan. We beg to differ.

The post of Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, which involves the policing of almost all of London, and with upwards of 25,000 officers under its charge, is perhaps the hottest seat in British public life today and has been heading that way for more than 15 years. The most striking evidence of the instability of that high office is the fact that we have had no fewer than 4 occupants in that post in the last 15 years. 1968-1972 Sir John Waldron, 1972-1977 Sir Robert Mark, 1977-1982 Sir David McNee, 1982 - Sir Kenneth Newman.

These periods must be compared to the preceding one in which Sir Joseph Simpson commanded the troops for 10 years and relinquished it on death in 1968. Simpson's regime may give the impression of stability. Not so. This is Sir Robert Mark condensing the period: "He [Joe Simpson] had given all in the face of countless difficulties, two heart attacks. . . and innumerable crises in which he stoutly defended his force, right or wrong".

Waldron followed and his last few weeks in office was described by his successor as "neither smooth nor relaxed" and he went on to liken the situation to "a minor Gotterdammerung". What was emerging in British social and political life was a concerted and determined movement to keep the police in check. Corruption for material gain, perjury in the witness-box, the wanton use of gratuitous violence by officers and rampant racial hostility became the major focal points for the movement. It is the movement that caused the crises.

Robert Mark came next and set out to do something about corruption in the police. He

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