

E.R.

- CC PS/SOS (B&L)
- PS/Lord Gowrie (B&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- Mr Bletloch
- Mr Marshall
- Mr Moriarty
- Mr Buxton
- Mr Wyatt
- Mr PalmerX
- Mr Doyne Ditmas
- Mr Harrington
- Mr Davenport

*Mr. Templeton
to see. Re C (A) is
Mr Molyneux also interested in*

Mr Jackson

*To see (also Mr Templeton)
and return to me.*

// on p2 is interesting

JLT 24.9.81

NOTE OF A MEETING WITH GENERAL SIR EDWIN BRAMALL, CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF, 21 SEPTEMBER 1981

Those Present:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Secretary of State | General Sir Edwin Bramall |
| Lord Gowrie | Lt Col Wilkes |
| Mr S Boys Smith | |

The Chief of the General Staff called on the Secretary of State at his own request. The Secretary of State had before him Mr Harrington's note of 18 September.

2. Security Policy

The CGS said he believed co-operation between the Army and the Police, and between the security forces and the NIO, was very good. Earlier friction had disappeared and he did not believe that it would return. He wholly supported the policy of giving the lead in the enforcement of the law to the Police. The Army had the right number of troops in Northern Ireland to hold things steady for the foreseeable future, although he hoped in due course it would be possible to reduce the number of roulement battalions from three to two. It was likely to be necessary to have one roulement battalion in West Belfast and one in South Armagh for some time to come. Morale was good and there was enough flexibility to be able to deploy troops in rotation without imposing too much strain on soldiers or their families.

3. The Secretary of State said that everything he had seen had led him to the same conclusion as the CGS about co-operation between the Police and the Army. He was glad to see it and was grateful for the contribution the GOC and his colleagues made to that end. He outlined to the CGS the points on security made to him in meetings the previous week with Mr Molyneux and Dr Paisley, noting he had said that the security forces had told him they were satisfied with the resources and powers they had available.

E.R.

4. The Hunger Strike

The CGS said he had no doubt it would be beneficial from the security point of view if the hunger strike could be brought to a close, although he realised it could not be done "by an Alamein". The security forces were quite able to contain any disorders arising from the dispute but the hunger strike had undermined the efforts of the RUC to work in harmony with the minority community, and he believed this was in the long-run very unfortunate. In his view the Government, at the moment, had the worst of all worlds. He wondered if the Government could now, as an administrative act, make the changes to the prison regime which it had agreed in principle to make but pending the end of the hunger strike had not yet implemented. He believed this would show opinion in the UK and elsewhere that it was serious in its wish to improve the prison regime and to end the dispute. The Government could also consider establishing some kind of commission to examine the future development of the prison regime. A clear cut move of this kind, leaving no room for further speculation about future developments in the regime, would in his view be acceptable to many of those in the minority community who were at present supporting the protest.

4
non
required

5. The Secretary of State noted the view the CGS had expressed, pointing out that the end of the hunger strike might ^{lead to another} well/matter on which to take issue with the Government. Any movement by the Government would have to be from a position of strength. He would be receiving advice on the Government's position as the hunger strike developed, bearing in mind that the ICRC were soon to submit their report and that there were signs McCluskey would be taken off before he died; if he was the Government might be in a somewhat stronger position than it was at the moment. Negotiation was not however possible without giving the other side the recognition it could not receive. He noted that the CGS would be considering with the GOC a security view of the hunger strike and its effects, and he said he would be glad to receive the results of their reflection as soon as possible. The CGS undertook to submit his further thoughts within about ten days.

6. Other Matters

The following further points were touched on during the course of the discussion:

- (a) the CGS referred to a conversation he had had with

E.R.

Mr Enoch Powell a year or so ago. Significantly in his view Mr Powell, in contrast to Dr Paisley, had not criticised the Army on what it was doing and had felt that if anything there were too many soldiers in Northern Ireland at that time;

(b) the CGS outlined to the Secretary of State the alternative weapons to the PBR available to the security forces, such as water cannon and gas, and the difficulty in making effective use of them;

(c) the CGS said that in his view the Government had lost a lot of ground in presenting its case during the early part of the current hunger strike. It was now being more successful. He would be examining a number of points on publicity with the GOC. He believed it was very important to ensure that the RUC Press Department was adequately equipped to fulfil the tasks being increasingly imposed on it now that the Police were taking the lead in the enforcement of the law;

(d) he believed the time had probably come to arrest Gerry Adams. He imagined it would be possible to prosecute him successfully for some offence and thought that more was now likely to be lost by allowing him to continue his activities than by forcing his colleagues to choose a successor, who would probably be less able;

(e) the Secretary of State said he would be glad to have further meetings whenever the CGS thought that would be helpful.



S W BOYS SMITH
Private Secretary

22 September 1981