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NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND DUP MPs IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 21 NOVEMBER 1983

The Secretary of State met Dr Paisley, Mr Robinson and Mr McCrea in the House of Commons on 21 November following his statement on the Darkley shooting. Mr Needham, Mr Bickham and Mr Lyon were present.

Dr Paisley said that fear was widespread in the South Armagh area following the shooting. There were seven Protestant congregations on this stretch of the border. Because of the regularity of their church services, they all felt extremely vulnerable. It was essential they should be offered protection. He was aware of the RUC telex that had been sent to all police officers: he asserted that police headquarters had claimed this was sent after the shooting - he knew from messages from many police officers that it had been issued before. He urged a change in security policy. Members of Parliament in England and Wales had ready access to their Chief Constables and he strongly criticised Sir John Hermon's refusal to see Members. As a response, they would ask to see the Police Authority. He hoped that the Assistant Chief Constable for the Armagh area would not refuse a request to see church leaders from the area.

Mr Robinson said that it was essential for the Secretary of State to take some action on security to relieve the pressure. Otherwise the DUP would have to initiate something, as they had done with the Day of Action. He was sure that the intelligence services knew the whereabouts of Dominic McGlinchey. It would be a major boost to morale if he were caught. He hoped action would now be taken to apprehend him.

Mr McCrea said that police in the localities had said that they could not provide the necessary level of security because of overtime restrictions and the cutting back of the police reserve. Police in sensitive areas were too busy protecting themselves to protect the community. Overtime was not worked in such areas as Strabane, but in quieter spots like Bangor.

The Secretary of State, responding to this part of the discussion, said that he was satisfied that the level of police activity had not been reduced this year. Less overtime had been worked, but this had

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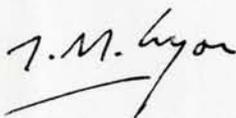
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been offset by manpower increases. He would, however, check on Mr McCrea's allegations and write to the DUP. He would also urgently consult the Chief Constable about the provision of security to churches in the Armagh border area.

In discussion of the Unionist Party's decision to leave the Assembly, Dr Paisley said that he greatly regretted it - the people would not be deceived. The Assembly should continue and he hoped the Secretary of State would not suspend or abolish it.

Mr Robinson said that the Secretary of State might consider holding Assembly elections, or holding a referendum on the Assembly at the same time as the European Parliament elections. The people should be given the chance to decide which view they supported.

The Secretary of State, concluding the discussion, said that he doubted if it would be wise to hold further elections or a referendum. He wanted a little time to consider the present situation. He would then arrange a further discussion with the DUP leaders on the best way forward.



J M LYON
Private Secretary

22nd November 1983

CC PS/SOS (B&L) - M
PS/Ministers (B&L) - M
PS/PUS (B&L) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell
Mr Brennan - M
Mr Bourn
Mr Angel - M
Mr Buxton
Mr Carvill
Mr Merifield
Mr Doyne-Ditmas
Mr Gilliland
Mr Boys Smith - M
Mr Abbott - M
Mr Coulson
Mr Radcliffe

Mr Reeve
Mr Bickham - M