



PUS/B/6374/MLR

PS/Secretary of State (L&B)

cc PS/Mr Scott (L&B)
 i. Mr Bloomfield 2. SEC 1
 Mr Brennan
 Mr Chesterton
 Mr Ferneyhough
 Mr Innes
 PS/PUS(L)
 (without encl)

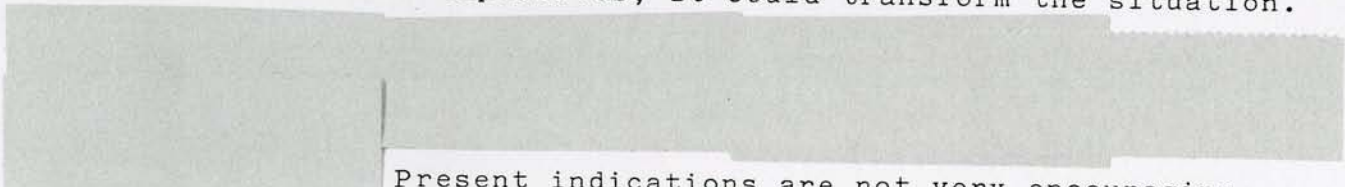
SECURITY SITUATION

I attach a note by Mr Stephens recording a recent conversation with the GOC which I think the Secretary of State should see.

2. The security statistics can be interpreted in different ways. In terms of fatal casualties we are still on a declining curve. But this is due not so much to a reduction in terrorist activities as to the successes of the security forces and to an element of good luck. At any time, a single serious incident, or a recurrence of activity by Loyalist paramilitaries, could push the figures up again. I would accept the GOC's general argument that we are on something of a plateau and that the present level of terrorism could be maintained for the indefinite future by a comparatively small number of activists with access to the necessary funds, weapons and explosives. The question is whether there is any new initiative which might enable us to break out of this situation.

3. I do not think that the GOC's idea of selective, short-term detention is the right solution and I am sure that Mr Stephens was right to discourage him on this. If there is a possibility of a breakthrough, I believe it is more likely to be found in closer co-operation with the Irish. We believe there are a considerable number of terrorists who have taken refuge in the South and are able, from conditions of comparative safety, to launch operations across the border. If we could get better intelligence about these people, closer surveillance of their movements, permission for the RUC to question suspects in the South, and some action to control

the flow of home-made explosives, it could transform the situation.



Present indications are not very encouraging. Nevertheless, it seems to me that this is the most promising single approach and that we should make a major effort in this direction in the context of the current Anglo-Irish negotiations.

4. The Secretary of State may wish to discuss Mr Stephens' minute with Mr Scott and officials as a preliminary to a wider discussion with the GOC and Chief Constable at a future SPM.

23. October 1985

R J ANDREW

Encl