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HEAD OF DIVISION
 1186 14 APR 1987
 POB-NIO BELFAST

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ART 17/4

Mr Stephens

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH THE CHIEF CONSTABLE ON 13 APRIL

The Secretary of State invited the Chief Constable to a brief discussion yesterday. A number of matters were raised.

Portrush Murders

2. The Secretary of State expressed his sympathy for these murders. The Chief Constable said that they reflected careful planning of a simple operation; and also the effort which PIRA were investing outside Belfast where they were under intensive surveillance.

Day of Defiance

3. The Chief Constable reported that on RUC calculations there had been no more than 2,000 people on the streets at any time.

Marley Funeral

4. The Secretary of State pointed to the support which he had

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expressed in public for the RUC's actions; he genuinely appreciated the dilemma which such funerals posed to the force. On the other hand he was concerned at the propaganda downside which had resulted from that particular funeral. In reply the Chief Constable said that he had earlier warned that the question of paramilitary funerals would be brought to a head. He acknowledged that PIRA had won a propaganda victory but on the other hand they had been faced down in the eyes of the local community. There had been no winners. Nor was the Chief Constable convinced that the handling of the funeral had resulted in a uniform loss of image in the USA.

5. The Secretary of State underlined his respect for the Chief Constable's operational independence but expressed concern about the future handling of funerals. The Chief Constable reiterated that the police could have no agreement, even if indirect, with terrorists. He was keenly aware of the sensitivity but had to be very careful about the latitude which he gave to PIRA in relation to these events.

Easter Parades

The Chief Constable agreed that these would be a major test of the RUC. He had however issued an invitation to the Governors of the Apprentice Boys to discuss their programme of marches and he hoped this would prove fruitful.

MS

D J WATKINS
Private Secretary

14. April 1987

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