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*Mr B. Ford at*  
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*Mr. Ford*  
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CABINET OFFICE
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15 AUG 1969
FILE INSTRUCTIONS
FILE NO. 110/6

SECRET

August 15, 1969

*Mrs Nym to see us*

I am attaching a copy of a record of the discussions that took place yesterday afternoon at St. Mawgan between the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary.

I am sending copies of this letter to Graham (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Dowler (Treasury), Blair (Lord Chancellor's Office), Matthews (Secretary of State for Social Services' Office), Jaffray (Ministry of Defence), Smith (Lord President's Office) and Hetherington (Attorney-General's Office). I am also sending copies to Lloyd Jones and Hooper (Cabinet Office).

(signed) D.H. Andrews

G.L. Angel, Esq.,  
Home Office.

SECRET

Note of a meeting held at R.A.F. St. Mawgan on Thursday,  
August 14, 1969

Present:

Prime Minister  
Home Secretary  
Sir Robin Hooper  
Mr. D.H. Andrews  
Mr. David Faulkner  
Mr. George Holt  
Mr. T.D. McCaffrey

The Home Secretary said that he had spoken to the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland shortly before leaving London. The Northern Ireland Government were expecting more trouble that evening. The Royal Ulster Constabulary in Londonderry were feeling happier about the situation since their mobility had been increased by the relief which the Special Constabulary were affording on other duties. On the other hand, the G.O.C. had advised that the police might not be able to handle adequately any further trouble that evening and that a request for troops from the Northern Ireland Government was likely.

The Home Secretary said that in his view, if such a request were received, the British Government would have to accede. He considered that the objective should be limited to the restoration of law and order in the limited area where this was necessary. It should then be the intention to withdraw the troops as soon as possible, leaving the maintenance of law and order to the police. If it were found in the event not possible to hand back responsibility to the

civil authorities quickly, it would be necessary to consider what more formal administrative arrangements were required in this situation. He suggested that it might be possible to isolate Londonderry and to replace there the Royal Ulster Constabulary with a new police force which we would hope would carry the confidence of both the Protestants and the Catholics and which could be made responsible to local commissioners drawn from both religious groups.

The Home Secretary said that, if the decision to send in British troops was taken, it would be necessary to issue a statement. He suggested that this should reiterate the constitutional position; explain that it was intended that the troops should be used temporarily to restore order; and announce that it was the intention to have discussions with the Northern Ireland Government about the constitutional position arising as a result of the use of British troops. The Home Secretary said that it was important that the G.O.C. should have clear orders on how the troops should go about their task. He thought it important that there should be a police and possibly a civil servant liaison officer attached to the G.O.C. He was also anxious to have an independent assessment of the methods and activities of the R.U.C., and he had suggested to the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland that two police consultants should be sent to Northern Ireland for this purpose. The Northern Ireland Prime Minister had not reacted unfavourably to this suggestion and he considered that the two officers should be sent out that evening if

agreement could be reached. The Home Secretary also envisaged that it might be necessary for him to go to Northern Ireland himself if it became clear that the troops were likely to be committed for an extended period.

The Home Secretary said that in his earlier contacts with the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland he had been impressed by what Major Chichester-Clark had said about the likely reaction among Protestants of any decision by the United Kingdom Government to assume full responsibility for Northern Irish affairs, and the <sup>possible</sup> effect of this on the standing and authority of the Northern Ireland Government. He had indicated to Major Chichester-Clark on the telephone that morning that he was considering possible proposals for a new type of delegated authority if the situation required this, though he had not spelt out to the Northern Irish Prime Minister the sort of ideas that were being examined by his officials. As alternatives to the full assumption of powers by Westminster, he was having considered:-

- (i) an arrangement in which the Northern Ireland Parliament would remain in being in an advisory or consultative capacity;
- (ii) arrangements under which the Northern Ireland Government would remain in being but the United Kingdom Government would assume certain specific functions in relation to the maintenance of law and order;
- (iii) arrangements under which again the Northern Ireland Government would remain in being and would act as an agent for the United Kingdom Government in the maintenance of law and order.

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The Home Secretary said that, whatever the outcome of the immediate situation, it seemed to him necessary that consideration should be given to the fundamental questions which lay behind the series of disturbances that Northern Ireland had faced over recent months. These issues included the status and composition of the R.U.C. which clearly lacked the trust of an important section of the community; and the problem of making the Catholics in Northern Ireland feel part of the community in a situation where political control had been firmly in the hands of the Protestants throughout the years since partition. It also had to be recognised that there were increasing indications that outside influences were having a material effect upon the situation in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister said that it was important to avoid any appearance of using troops in the interests of one section of the community against those of another. There was a particular danger of this in a situation where the disruption was the result of the activities of a Catholic element. On the other hand it was clearly a matter for the U.K. Government if the Government of Northern Ireland were unable to maintain law and order.

During the discussion, the Home Secretary reported, following discussions with Lord Stonham on the telephone, that the Home Office had been informed by the Secretary to the Northern Ireland Cabinet that the Royal Ulster Constabulary were unlikely to be able to maintain their positions and would be forced to fall back to their barracks. In this event a large part of the city would be

expose to the rioters and there would be a danger of widespread looting. The Secretary to the Northern Ireland Cabinet had said that it was likely that a formal request for troops would be made later in the afternoon.

The Prime Minister said that, if a request for the assistance of troops was received, he agreed that this should be met, though it should be made clear that they were being used only in the limited area for which they were requested and that this was intended as a short term operation to restore law and order, and not to maintain it in the longer term. If the purpose was limited in this way he did not consider the wider constitutional issue would arise immediately. If in the light of developments in the next few days the early withdrawal did not seem likely, the position would have to be reviewed. In this connexion further consideration would have to be given to relations with the Irish Republic whose attitude had so far been unhelpful. In these circumstances a meeting of Cabinet might be necessary early in the following week. The Prime Minister agreed with the Home Secretary's proposal to send a police liaison officer, together with a member of the Home Office, to assist and advise the G.O.C. He also agreed with the proposal to despatch two senior police consultants.

The Prime Minister said he was attracted to the suggestion for creating a separate police force in Londonderry. It would be necessary to consider carefully how this was presented publicly. If the Northern Ireland Government were allowed to take credit for the idea, this could militate against the success of the proposal. He suggested that

consideration should be given to the possibility of encouraging some members of the British Police Force to volunteer for service in the new force. The Prime Minister suggested to the Home Secretary that he should discuss with the Minister of Defence the deployment of the troops available in Northern Ireland. He also suggested that the Secretary of State for Defence should be consulted about the need for reinforcements of the present garrison and the availability of accommodation in Northern Ireland for this purpose.

August 15, 1969