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NORTHERN IRELAND

The Inspector General of the Royal Ulster Constabulary called on me on 5th March. From his point of view it was a courtesy call on the Home Office during the course of a visit to London, the primary purpose of which was to attend the Central Conference of Chief Constables.

2. For the most part our conversation consisted of a review of recent events and although it was lengthy Mr. Peacocke did not have any new information to convey. In the course of this conversation I was, however, able to glean one or two pieces of information which are worthy to be put on record.

3. The R.U.C. are in good heart (contrary to some reports that had reached us) and determined to maintain law and order to the best of their ability irrespective of the political views of those seeking or provoking its disruption. Mr. Peacocke is conscious of the political implications of the mobilisation of B-specials and is organising the use of their services in ways which will give least cause for criticism. Recruitment is not as good as he would like but is sufficient to maintain strength although not to increase it sufficiently; voluntary retirements are somewhat below average; Mr. Peacocke would welcome larger numbers of recruits from the Roman Catholic community but they are not coming forward as he would like.

4. Liaison has been established with the military. This Mr. Peacocke welcomes as also the opportunity of conference with the Governor. He is completely happy about liaison arrangements with Scotland Yard and the Security Service.

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5. Mr. Peacocke foresees further demonstrations and counter-demonstrations initiated by both sets of extremists and could see no alternative to continuance of the R.U.C. role in any circumstances as being to protect lives and property; in other words he is not a proponent of the school of thought that says the two sides should be left free to fight it out.

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6. At the moment at least Mr. Peacocks is in no doubt of the ability of the R.U.C. to carry out their responsibilities and does not contemplate that situations are likely to arise that will make it necessary to call troops to their assistance.

7. For his part the Inspector General sees no reason why the regulations made under the Special Powers Acts should not be put in suspense. He said that the risk of terrorist outbreaks by the I.R.A. (especially by splinter groups impatient of central control) could not be discounted but that short of organised attacks of the kind made up to 1962 the ordinary criminal law should suffice. He recognises to the full, however, that a decision to suspend the regulations must depend on political as much as on operational considerations. The I.R.A. has not, as an organisation, taken part in the civil rights movement but individual members of the I.R.A. were fully involved and the civil rights and peoples democracy movement offered opportunity for the new I.R.A. approach to fostering social and industrial unrest of which the I.R.A. would make every use.

10th March 1969

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