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FROM: PS/Sof S(13) DESK BY 5.35.NOTES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH THE GRAND ORANGE LODGE OF IRELAND,
STORMONT CASTLE, 14 FEBRUARY 1984

Present:	Secretary of State	Rev M Smyth
	Mr Coulson	Mr N Allen
	Mr Templeton	Mr J Ashenhurst
	Mr Cleasby	Mr J Guy
	Mr Cornick	Col G Liddle
		Mr J McCrea
		Mr G Morrison
		Mr W Porter
		Mr W Russell
		Mr W Williams

Mr Smyth referred to a statement issued by the Grand Orange Lodge (GOL) after the 1983 General Election which identified the removal of terrorist violence as the incoming Government's greatest priority. This remained their primary concern, and they felt that security was still inadequate.

Turning to specific issues the delegation expressed concern at the inadequate protection given to Protestant workers at Mackie's. Although the factory was very close to Springfield Road RUC Station it seemed to be patrolled by men from Grosvenor Road.

Mr Smyth had heard that covert sections of the RUC, to which he referred by name, were no longer operating in Armagh.

The delegation were concerned that the charging of members of the RUC and UDR with serious offences would inhibit other members from taking decisive action, and not only prevent them from carrying out their duties effectively but possibly put their own safety at risk. There was implicit criticism of the Secretary of State for not having intervened to prevent the charges being preferred, and he was urged to arrange for those remanded in custody to be released on bail. The delegation also felt that the Northern Ireland judiciary was too remote and failed to recognise the pressures on the security forces.

Mr Allen and Col Liddle urged greater efforts to prevent further sectarian murders in Co Armagh and recommended a full inquiry into the circumstances of the death of Mr Charles Armstrong, who was blown up with what was supposed to be a secure area. Slackness was suspected.

There was still a tendency for security force operation to be reactive. The terrorist retained the initiative and even if following an incident the security profile was raised in a window-dressing exercise it was quietly reduced to its former level.

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said that too much attention was paid to the propaganda of PIRA apologists, and that it should be made clear to potential petrol bombers and joy riders that they ran the risk of being shot for their pains. The prospect of execution was bound to concentrate the mind. He and some of his colleagues would not be dismayed at firing the fatal shots.

The RUC should pay more attention to petty crime and vandalism and spend less time patrolling in cars and more on foot.

Orange Halls in the Plumbridge and Donnemana area received inadequate protection from the RUC because of lack of resources, and overtime restrictions jeopardised the safety of Protestant congregations in the same area. The establishment of the RUC should be increased.

The delegation regretted that they had been refused a meeting with the Chief Constable despite his apparent willingness to meet Mr Smyth some time years before.

Responding to these points the Secretary of State agreed to enquire about the protection afforded to workers at Mackie's and agreed that the factory could not be allowed to close because of intimidation of its workforce.

He explained that he had no knowledge of the operations of covert elements of the security forces, but he knew that they were operating in South Armagh and other dangerous areas.

The Secretary of State explained that the prosecution of members of the security forces was a matter entirely for the RUC, the DPP, the Attorney General and the courts and although he could advise the Attorney General of the likely public interest effects of any decision, he could not direct him to follow any particular course. The DPP would not direct a prosecution unless he felt there was at least a 50% chance of securing a conviction. The matter of bail was for a High Court Judge to decide. He told the delegation that allegations that members of the security forces had been beaten up in custody had been investigated and found to be without substance. The implementation of the Bennett recommendations had afforded considerable protection to suspects in custody. The Secretary of State explained that arrangements had been made to ensure that members of the RUC charged with offences would, like soldiers, be entitled to the best legal advice available. He regretted that members of the security forces had been charged, but emphasised the importance of the RUC, the UDR and Army acting, and being seen to act, within the law.

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The Secretary of State explained that the security situation had improved, although outrages would still take place from time to time. Although there was no such thing as an acceptable level of violence nor could perfect security forever be maintained. Security force operations were designed to meet the threat at any time in any particular place, and commanders were constantly examining their strategy and tactics to meet the current need. The fact that shootings and bombings continued to happen demonstrated how difficult it was to maintain total security, but he drew the delegation's attention both to the 600 charges preferred in 1983 for terrorist offences and to the security forces' success in preventing outrages through precipitate action often based on intelligence. Covert operations remained the most important aspect of security force activity, but there was also a need to reassure the public by an overt security force presence, particularly after major incidents. Vigilance was still extremely important, as the terrorists were quick to seize the opportunity given by a dropped guard.

The Secretary of State agreed that attention must be given to eradicating petty crime, which often led to more sinister activities, and drew attention to the RUC's efforts against racketeering. Whilst he accepted the principle of reasonable force he refused to acknowledge that a 'shoot to kill' policy would achieve any more than further destabilisation and violence.

The Secretary of State agreed to look into Mr Ashenhurst's points about security in the Plumbridge/Donnemana area. He pointed out that the average level of overtime had been reduced to improve the fitness and efficiency of the RUC, and had not led to a reduction in hours worked. The regular establishment had increased by 500 in 18 months and a further similar increase was under consideration. 250 additional full-time Reservists had also been recruited.

The Secretary of State expressed his high regard for the Chief Constable and his senior colleagues, and agreed to see if a meeting between Sir John Hermon and the GOL could be arranged.

The Secretary of State suggested to the delegation that the security problems in Northern Ireland could not be examined in isolation, but only in the context of political and economic difficulties also. He undertook in response to a question to see if it were possible to establish how many people currently serving prison sentences for terrorist offences had been unemployed at the time of the offence.

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The delegation did not believe that any accommodation of constitutional nationalists in a form of devolved Government in Northern Ireland would in any way help the security situation. Nationalists were never likely to support the forces of law and order as long as they aspired to a United Ireland and felt no allegiance to the Crown.

The Government had followed the wishes of a straight majority in Londonderry by agreeing to change the name of the City Council yet would not unequivocally acknowledge the wishes of the majority of people in Northern Ireland for a democratic form of government on their own terms. Far too much heed was paid those who did not wish to be part of the United Kingdom. The delegation suspected that there had been a secret deal with the SDLP over the Londonderry issue to entice them to join the Assembly, which was in any case an ineffective powerless body whose views were ignored by Government.

The Secretary of State disagreed that there was any sensible parallel between the Londonderry issue and the constitutional problem as a whole. He had recognised that the change of name was an unnecessary and divisive issue which would rouse a good deal of emotion. He had deliberately delayed making a decision for 7 months. He hoped that now that decision had been taken the issue would be allowed to die. Any application to change the name of the City was most unlikely to get a fair wind.

Any system of devolved government for Northern Ireland had, however, to be acceptable to both communities. Although it was part of the UK, Northern Ireland was different from Great Britain and had to be treated as such. Integration was simply not an option and would certainly not be the natural consequence of the collapse of the Assembly which was doing a great deal of valuable work and had gained the respect of Government and the Civil Service.

The Secretary of State regretted that the SDLP were very unlikely to join the Assembly and thus considerably impeded progress towards the establishment of an acceptable form of devolved government in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless it was the continued absence of the Official Unionists, who were still drawing their salaries whilst failing adequately to represent their constituents which proved the greatest threat to the Assembly's future. The Secretary of State could not allow the Assembly to continue as at present indefinitely, and it would be the UUP who would be responsible for its demise. Direct rule would inevitably follow, with little prospect of the Assembly being replaced by an alternative structure for some time.

Mr Smyth was clearly stung by the Secretary of State's suggestion that UUP Assembly Members were behaving dishonourably by drawing salaries whilst not attending the Assembly and

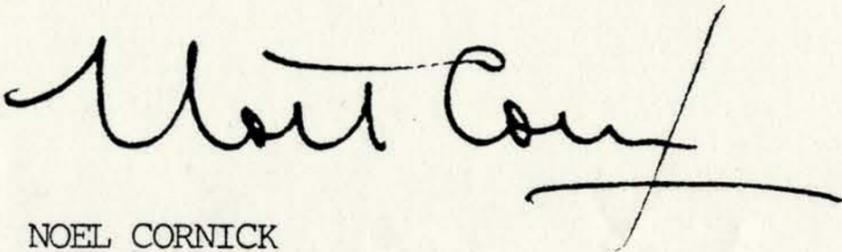
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unfounded threats of mass resignation from the Assembly.

The Secretary of State accepted that they were still doing their constituency work, but that they were failing in their duty of representing their electors by refusing to participate in the Assembly's work. If they continued to absent themselves he would have no choice but to bring the Assembly to an end and, with integration quite out of the question, direct rule would continue.



NOEL CORNICK
Private Secretary

14 February 1984

cc PS/S of S (B & L) - M
PS/Mr Scott (B & L) - M
PS/Mr Patten (B & L) - M
PS/PUS (B & L) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell
Mr Brennan - M
Mr Bourn
Mr Barry
Mr Carvill
Mr Merifield
Mr Buxton
Mr Angel - M
Mr Loyne-Ditmas
Mr Gilliland
Mr Reeve
Mr Coulson
Mr Abbott - M
Mr Boys Smith - M
Mr Radcliffe
Mr Wood - M
Mr Bickham - M

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