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Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave and Prime Minister  
Harold Wilson in London, mainly discussing the  
Northern Ireland situation.

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3. The Secretary of State expressed appreciation of the decision to go ahead with the security meeting. It would provide an opportunity for discussing a number of matters that concerned him. Many of these were operational matters on which the GOC NI worked directly to him and he instanced border incidents involving the British Army which should ideally be the subject of direct and immediate contact involving the army personnel concerned. He enquired if it would be possible to have contacts made directly to Stormont on the problems rather than through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Many of the incidents turned out to be nothing more than a storm in a tea cup. The situation could become quite serious and often required immediate contacts and attention - as when, for example, the army had to deal with bombs in milk churns activated by radio from across the border. Could there be arrangements for direct contact by way of, say, telephone to Stormont? The Minister for Local Government said that this could work to eliminate some of the confusion on particular incidents. The Secretary of State also enquired if it would be possible to bring with him to the security meeting an army man in civilian clothes. The Taoiseach said it would be better if that could be avoided but that there would be no objection e.g. to bringing a civil servant from the Defence Ministry. The Secretary of State said he would do that. A general discussion on the possible subjects that might be considered at the security meeting then took place. While no effort was made to agree an agenda, it was suggested that communications, especially for dealing with border incidents, might be considered and that a general review of the pattern of IRA activity might also be useful. The Secretary of State referred to the difficulty of getting people to vote sensibly as long as towns such as Castleberg were being blown to pieces regularly. He also referred to the special difficulties in Crossmaglen and went on to ask if the date for the security meeting could be fixed immediately.

4. The Taoiseach suggested the following Wednesday or Thursday. He said that he and the Prime Minister had noted a drop in the total number of incidents, although it was difficult to know exactly why this had happened. It could be that the British Army was becoming more effective or that the IRA had taken a deliberate decision to lower their level of operations for a while or indeed it could be a combination of both factors. The Secretary of State said it was very difficult to judge these matters. The situation in Derry had shown a remarkable improvement though it was not clear if this could be linked with the decision to reduce the numbers of soldiers. He said that a vital question at the security meeting would be that of securing instant contact between the security forces. The Minister for Foreign Affairs referred to the need to lower the profile of British Army activities, not only on the border but within NI. He pointed out that we had raised this matter on innumerable occasions but apparently without getting any response. The Secretary of State replied that the level of incidents was still very high, even in Belfast where a huge number of IRA men had been lifted. He was not sure that the consequences of adopting a lower profile might be. It might, for instance, increase demands on the majority side for the creation of a third force. The army problems arose out of the absence of normal policing and this was something which might have to be tackled in different ways in different areas. The Marine Commandos were behaving in Newry exactly as they had done in Belfast but were being criticised severely for their Newry behaviour whereas there had been no criticism of what they did in Belfast. It was impossible to please everyone. If he responded to the majority calls for a third force, he was accused by the minority of being dictated to by Generals. If, on the other, he did not respond, the majority accused him of refusing to let the army get on with the job. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that he appreciated the problem of striking the correct balance but it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that the pattern of

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frequent screening of young men and general harassment of minority areas was counterproductive. The Minister for Local Government said he appreciated the problems faced by the soldiers but when they overreacted, they undid whatever political progress had been made. There should be no toleration whatsoever of the army overstepping its authority.

5. The Prime Minister said that in recent months some very nasty men had been lifted on the unionist side. On the Friday and Saturday of the UWC strike, 25 interim custody orders had been signed and the perpetrators of the Dublin bomb outrages had been picked up and were now detained but it was impossible to get the evidence to try them in ordinary courts. The Secretary of State pointed out that the number of cases reaching the courts was increasing and defendants were coming from the majority and minority sides in about equal proportions. Much of the evidence required was coming via the army both by their being in areas where there were no police and also from information which they picked up during interrogations and screenings. Army activities in some areas might seem politically bad but overall the effects of the activities were good. The Taoiseach said he was not questioning the overall activity of the British Army but rather their method of operation in certain areas. He said that we had achieved a fair measure of success through the operation of the Special Criminal Court where about 650 had been tried and 400 convicted. The Minister for Foreign Affairs reiterated that it was a question of balance and that at the moment a reduction in the army's profile might produce a positive political impact. A reduction in searches in minority areas and a re-examination of the scale and emphasis at vehicle check points might be considered.

6. The discussion then turned to power sharing in NI and the Taoiseach emphasised that power sharing in government in NI would have to be an integral part of any solution. He was glad to note

the Prime Minister's commitment to this principle. The Prime Minister confirmed that this was his position and said that if the NI Convention proposed otherwise, there was no way in which the proposal would be acceptable. There could be no return to one party rule, no matter how it was dressed up. No Westminster Parliament would legislate for any solution which did not have power sharing in government. The SDLP had talked the previous day about the grim situation that would develop if a majority in the Convention got carried away and created a new structure which would not be acceptable to the British Government. If any majority attempted that, the Prime Minister said that it would be tantamount to armed rebellion. The Secretary of State said that they would begin their run-in to the Convention about November and spell out exactly and frequently what the limitations of the Convention would be. Their present thinking on the timing of the Convention elections was to play it slow.

7. There was some discussion of the impact of Powell's arrival on the NI scene. The Secretary of State thought that the possibility of a post-Westminster election deal between the Conservatives and the UUUC had been reduced by Powell's standing for a NI seat. The Prime Minister said that there was no possibility of a Powell-led UUUC group and the Conservatives led by Heath getting on together indefinitely. Powell's price (e.g. on the EEC) would be too high. There was dissatisfaction within the UUUC with their leaders and they had adopted the football club expedient of hiring an expensive outsider. It was unlikely to work. The Prime Minister also pointed out that since Powell was against the Government giving financial support to industry, it was difficult to see how he would find support among the Protestants who saw the value of state support for Harland & Wolff. He referred to the sort of conditions Powell might seek to impose if he were the leader of a Unionist group which held the balance of power in the next Parliament. These conditions would be based on monetarism, opposition to the Common Market and to a statutory incomes policy. Where would

this get him with a voter from Lisnaskea and with the Unionists generally? It was not their sort of politics.

8. Agreement was then reached on the issue of a brief interim press release. At this stage the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs joined the meeting.

9. The Taoiseach then raised the question of a joint approach to the EEC for financial support for north-south regional studies. He pointed out that cross-border co-operation had been going on for many years to the advantage of both sides. Pending the formation of a power-sharing Executive and a Council of Ireland, development of this co-operation had been held in suspense and in particular a joint British-Irish approach to the EEC for funds to carry out cross-border studies of both the north-west and north-east areas had been held up. The Minister for Foreign Affairs gave details of the available funds and mentioned that the Taoiseach and Mr. Heath had taken a decision in principle to proceed with the joint approach at Baldonnel a year ago. The Minister for Local Government gave details of the type of cross-border projects that would be of mutual benefit and indeed said that north-south co-operation at all levels would be welcomed. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said he saw no reason why Dublin and Belfast Departments should not intensify their direct contacts but in relation to a joint approach to Brussels, he did not want to give the UWC a chance to say that they were being double crossed. He would therefore appreciate it if the matter could be kept quiet, at least until after the Westminster elections. The Prime Minister intervened to make the same point and said that Brussels was such a leaky machine there could be no possibility of keeping a pre-election approach quiet.

10. The Minister for Foreign Affairs then inquired about the progress and timetable of the renegotiation of EEC membership

terms. The Prime Minister replied that a substantial part of the Irish Presidency would be taken up with it. A lot of time had been lost with e.g. the changes in the German and French Governments and it was reasonable to assume that there would be any real progress until a British election had taken place. It was his hope, however, that the renegotiation would not stretch beyond the end of the Irish presidency.

11. That ended the formal discussions. Over dinner there were further discussions on the Green Pound, the joint approach to the EEC for funds for a cross-border study and Rockall - about which the Prime Minister said "in the end we will arbitrate". After dinner, a communique was agreed and is appended to this report.

### Circulation

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