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Memo.

Spoke to Sir Robert Andrew, PUS, NIO. I told him that while we were being inundated with reports about today's situation in Northern Ireland, we had not yet fully examined them. We would be doing so overnight and tomorrow and would probably be in further contact through one or other channels within a few days.

There were, however, some very disturbing trends in the reports which we wished to bring to attention immediately

- the RUC, though present, were not very active in relation to street protests (e.g. the Upper Newtonards Road, Cookstown area generally, Ballygawley roundabout, Newry and Armagh outskirts);
- many towns/villages were cut off, apparently because the RUC did not have the manpower to cope and the army was not in action, even in towns like Ballinahinch, Carryduff, Saintfield where there had been a significant increase recently in army activity;
- there was considerable evidence of intimidation e.g. of individuals on their way to work and no evidence that the authorities were responding appropriately;
- two flashpoints were causing concern at that moment (3.30 p.m.) viz. the situation of the girls in the clothing factory at Lurgan and the possibility of a loyalist march into "nationalist" parts of Derry;
- all petrol stations in Northern Ireland seemed to be closed, suggesting a considerable degree of organisation, probably accompanied by intimidation;
- the electricity situation was worrying, given the assurances we had been given that there would not be a repeat of the 1974 situation.

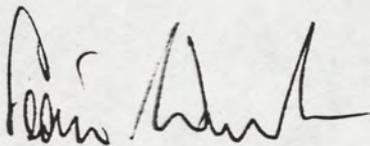
Andrew responded by saying that the situation in general was worsening. The day had started off not too badly but was deteriorating. What I had said reflected the sort of reports he was getting and in particular he could confirm reports of widespread intimidation and that the RUC was not as active as it might be. His information on road closures was patchy but clearly there were problem areas. Both airports were now closed and the public transport was very limited. The

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Secretary of State had just spoken to the RUC Chief Constable and hopefully there would be some visible changes as the day wore on, particularly in regard to RUC activity.

In regard to the Northern Ireland civil service, Andrew said this was one of the few bright patches. About 90% of the non-industrial civil servants had reported for work - some of them by coming in the night before and camping in their rooms. Shorts and Harland and Wolf had about 10% turnout and that mainly at the management level. The power situation was not too bad - middle managers had turned up and were able to keep the system moving. Cuts would be confined to 4/5 hours and probably not in all areas.

I told Andrew that I would be in contact again within a few days to give him an outline of the information coming to us from all over Northern Ireland. People on the nationalist side were outraged, especially at the attitude of the RUC and the sooner that could be changed, the better. To my surprise, Andrew seemed to share this outrage and went on to say that further contacts within a few days would be useful.



Secretary
3 March 1986

cc. Taoiseach, Mr. D. Nally, Minister, A/Sec Ó Tuathail,
Ambassador Dorr, Mr. Lillis