

SECRET

1969/41

CONCLUSIONS OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT STORMONT CASTLE
ON WEDNESDAY, 20TH AUGUST, 1969, AT 2.30 P.M.

PRESENT: The Prime Minister
The Minister in the Senate
The Minister of Finance
The Minister of Home Affairs
The Minister of Health and Social Services
The Minister of Education
The Minister of Agriculture
The Minister of Commerce
The Minister of Development
The Minister of State at the Ministry of Development
The Leader of the House of Commons

ALSO PRESENT: The Attorney General

The Secretary to the Cabinet
The Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet
The Assistant Secretary

1. DOWNING STREET TALKS

Copies of the Communique and Declaration issued after the Downing Street meeting on Tuesday, 19th August, were before the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister explained that while the negotiations had proved difficult and long drawn-out nevertheless they had been conducted in a friendly atmosphere. He reviewed for his colleagues the various matters discussed at the meeting.

Reports that the transfer of the control of the police security forces to the G.O.C. foreshadowed the disarming and ultimately the disbanding of the Special Constabulary were incorrect. The Specials were to be withdrawn from riot control duties but would continue to be engaged guarding key installations and on other security work. The control of the security forces would revert to the Inspector-General at the end of the present emergency. The deputation appreciated that in making this arrangement they were going beyond their specific brief from the Cabinet but in the circumstances they considered that no other alternative was open to them: the approval of their colleagues for this action was sought.

/The Attorney General

SECRET

The Attorney General asked if any discussions had taken place on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and was assured that the matter had not been discussed save to the extent of the re-affirmation in the Declaration.

The Cabinet approved the deputation's action and the terms of the Communique and Declaration; the Minister of Commerce added, however, that he considered the terms of the agreement should have been referred to the Cabinet for approval before being announced publicly and further that the transfer of security forces of the police to the G.O.C. represented a fundamental shift of power to Westminster.

2. VISIT OF THE HOME SECRETARY

The Prime Minister reported that the Home Secretary had expressed a desire to visit Northern Ireland within the next fortnight.

3. LAW AND ORDER LEGISLATION: POSITION OF G.O.C.

The Minister of Home Affairs informed the Cabinet that the transfer of the security forces of the Police to G.O.C. would possibly require the amendment of law and order legislation. It was arranged that the Minister and the Attorney General should examine the position and report back to the Cabinet.

4. CABINET SECURITY COMMITTEE

After consideration, it was agreed that it was no longer necessary for the Cabinet Security Committee to attend the Joint Security Committee; the Minister of Home Affairs would, however, continue to chair this latter Committee.

