

NOTE OF A MEETING AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON THURSDAY 5 AUGUST 1971

PRESENT:- The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
 The Home Secretary
 The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary
 The Secretary of State for Defence

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The Prime Minister of Northern Ireland

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The Chief of the General Staff
The GOC (Northern Ireland)
The Chief Constable (RUC)

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Officials of the two Governments

1. The discussions began in private session with only Ministers present. Mr Faulkner stressed the seriousness of the security situation, the decline in public confidence, the increasingly serious implications for commerce and industry and the absence of any new initiative which the security forces could suggest to make an early impact. Accordingly he argued that there should be an early use of internment powers. UK Ministers pointed out the difficulty that military advice that internment was necessary had not been given, and stressed the national and international implications of so serious a step. It could not be contemplated without "balancing" action against *parades*, curtailment of gun clubs, and the clearest emphasis that initiatives to unite the community would be sustained.

/Mr Heath

Mr Heath made the point that if internment was tried and did not succeed in improving matters, the only further option could be direct rule. None of the measures taken so far had really succeeded in uniting the community. Mr Faulkner replied that in his view direct rule would be a calamity; and if they could really get a grip on the security position there was a genuine hope of not merely restoring the pre-1968 position, when people had for the most part been living harmoniously together, but of moving forward to something better in conditions where the changes of the past two years could take effect. Moreover there were other initiatives, notably his Committee proposals, still "on the table" to be taken up.

2. At a second stage of the meeting, the CGS, GOC and Chief Constable were called into consultation. The Chief Constable gave his view that the time for internment had now arrived. The CGS and GOC took the position that they could not describe it as an essential measure in purely military terms. The IRA could be defeated by present methods, but whether the likely time-scale was acceptable was essentially a political question, and thus not one for determination by them.

3. After an interval, during which Ministers discussed the position with their respective advisors, the meeting was resumed between Ministers & with officials in attendance.

4. At this stage Mr Heath gave the firm decision of the UK Government that if, as the responsible Minister, Mr Faulkner informed them it would be his intention to proceed to early internment, they would concur and ensure the necessary Army support. Plans for the operation as such would be co-ordinated on their side by the Home and Defence Secretaries. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary *would handle* possible international repercussions - consultations with other powers, possible action at the UN and Derogation from the European Human Rights & Convention. He himself would send a message to the President of the United States and the Prime Minister in Dublin, and would deal with Westminster repercussions. He did not intend that Parliament should be re-called.

5. Turning to the repercussions of internment, Mr Heath made it clear that, as a matter of decided Cabinet policy, it must be accompanied by a ban on all parades throughout Northern Ireland "without limit of time" while internment lasted. It would be desirable also to suspend the operation of all Rifle Clubs until further notice. If there was any evidence of the involvement of Protestants in any form of subversive or terrorist activity, they too should be interned. It would be important to emphasize what had already been done by way of reform, and to consider whether any fresh initiatives could be taken. All of these steps would be important to "re-assure the other side of opinion" in Northern Ireland, and in the Republic and to take

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account of wider international feeling.

6. Mr Faulkner welcomed their attitude on internment, and then turned to the other aspects mentioned by Mr Heath -

(i) Ban on parades: Previous experience of blanket banning was not encouraging. It would certainly be very rash at this stage to use a form of words which could commit the X Government so far in advance to ban (say) the next Twelfth of July. The practicality of enforcing such a ban, either in this case or in the very possible event of massive Civil Rights protests, should not be underestimated. It might be more prudent to limit the ban to Belfast, Londonderry and "flash-point" areas. As to time, it would be difficult to justify an unlimited ban by reference to the established criteria; it would therefore be better to proceed, as on a previous occasion, by a ban for a specific period which could be extended if circumstances made it desirable.

(ii) Rifle Clubs: There was no evidence indicating that the vast majority of Rifle Clubs were in any way a threat to security. The action proposed would be seen as a political sop, without any sound security foundation.

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(iii) Internment of Protestants: Whatever their involvement in past acts, there is no intelligence indicating an existing or imminent *potential* Protestant threat. It was only on these grounds that internment of Protestants was not envisaged at present. There would be no hesitation to intern such elements if circumstances changed; but the present threat was from the IRA.

(iv) Political steps: The Government of Northern Ireland would undeviatingly preserve its declared policies, and further initiatives were by no means ruled out - although it was not easy to see ^{what} ~~that~~ these could be.

7. In further discussion UK Ministers made it clear that the ban on parades must be total, but they accepted the argument that it should initially be for a period of six months. On Rifle Clubs, it would be acceptable to announce the policy which was in fact already in operation - that is to say no grant of licences to new Clubs until further notice. Mr Heath made it clear that if, in the light of these decisions, Mr Lynch were to seek a meeting with him earlier than October, this might be difficult to refuse. If Mr Faulkner would consider it helpful to meet him again in advance of any such meeting he would invite him to Chequers. Mr Faulkner replied that he would regret any bringing forward of Mr Lynch's visit, which could too easily be misconstrued; and

while he was grateful for the suggestion that he might visit Chequers, this too could be seen in Northern Ireland as an attempt to settle constitutional questions before the Lynch visit.

8. The line of a possible statement for Tuesday 10 August was discussed, and it was agreed that this should be cleared between the Prime Minister (NI) and Home Secretary. It would not be possible to state or imply that the GOC had advised internment; the formula should be . . . "in the light of security advice, and after consultation with the UK Government".