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INTERMENT

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S.M.P.
Div 1 (3)
21 Feb 80

Note of Meeting held in Room 406, Home Office, Whitehall
on Thursday, 15th July 1971

Present:

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| Mr J T A Howard-Drake (Chairman) | Home Office |
| Mr W F Stout | Government Security Unit
Northern Ireland |
| Mr M K Harris | Ministry of Home Affairs
Northern Ireland |
| Mr C E Johnson | Ministry of Defence |
| Major R C Rothery | MO3, Ministry of
Defence |
| Lieutenant Colonel M N S McCord | Headquarters, Northern
Ireland |
| Lieutenant Colonel C M Brennan | Headquarters, Northern
Ireland |

The Chairman said that the meeting would not be concerned with policy decisions about internment but it was noted that any decision by the Northern Ireland Government to introduce internment would require prior consultation with United Kingdom Ministers. It would, however, be useful to consider what progress had been made with contingency planning.

The Northern Ireland Government representatives said that plans were in hand but it had not been possible to take them very far partly because of the need to preserve security and partly because it was not possible at this stage to say how many people would be picked up when the plan went into operation. It could be anything between 30 and 300. Detention orders would be prepared beforehand for each individual who might be involved and these could be signed after arrest, if necessary. After a period of

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detention, detainees who were not released would become internees. Any new draft regulations required for this purpose could now be prepared for immediate signature if and when the need arose. Rules for the internal administration of internment camps had been drafted but there was some uncertainty about powers to interrogate on which the advice of the Attorney-General was being sought.

It was confirmed by the military representatives that a list of between 325 and 375 names had been drawn up by Special Branch and that 20-40 per cent of these might be involved in the initial operation. The broad plan for military aid to the civil power for the machinery of detention was in existence but it was agreed that more detailed planning could be done without widening significantly the number of persons involved. One of the matters still being looked into was the provision of sufficient accommodation for the immediate post-detention situation. HMS Maidstone was still a part of the scheme, for use as a fall-back if necessary. The Army were working in co-operation with Special Branch of the RUC to assess how many interrogators would be required for the post-detention period, and it had to be accepted that these might well fall short of the ideal number.

Membership of a review tribunal was raised. A panel of names was already in existence but it was suggested that the chairman or perhaps one other person might be nominated by the Home Office. Mr Howard-Drake agreed without commitment to examine this.

It was agreed that the public relations aspect of internment would be important and that it would be helpful to draft statements on a contingency basis. International interest in internment would be much keener than on the previous occasion on which they were put into effect in Northern Ireland, and public announcements would have to be aimed at three audiences, viz Northern Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom, and international opinion.

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The subject of staffing was discussed and details were given of a Northern Ireland Government plan to close the open prison at Castledillon, bringing prisoners back to Crumlin Road jail. In this way, 60 prison staff would be released for duty at Long Kesh. This would probably result in a short-fall of 30, half of which it was hoped would be found by over-staffed existing establishments, while the other 15 might be found from retired police or prison officers.

It was agreed that an essential part of the contingency plan would be timing. The initial pick-up would take 48 hours and immediate accommodation for 80 could be found in Crumlin Road prison at a few hours' notice, and for others at Armagh prison, possibly within 48 hours. It would take 2 - 4 days to close Castledillon, and 14 days to construct an outer perimeter fence at Long Kesh, although this did not mean that Long Kesh could not be used before then if the number of military guards was temporarily increased.

It was agreed that the Northern Ireland Government should acquire the premises at Long Kesh from the Ministry of Defence on a rental basis, the figure to be assessed by the district valuer on a commercial basis. It was likely that maintenance would be carried out by military personnel, partly because of the security difficulties involved if civilian labour were used. Accommodation stores might be left behind by the Army but this was a matter which required further consultation between the Army and the Northern Ireland Government.

Summing up, the Chairman said that it would be desirable to make immediate progress in producing a draft contingency plan containing as much detail as possible without running a risk of leaks. This was agreed and a further meeting was fixed for Friday, 20th August at which draft copies of the plan would be made available for examination.