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PS/MINISTER OF STATE

NORTHERN IRELAND: INTERROGATION

During the Secretary of State's meeting this morning with the Minister of State, CDS, CGS, PUS, GOC Northern Ireland and AUS(GS), there was some discussion of the present position on the Compton investigation and the recent Sunday Times article about the methods used to interrogate in depth IRA suspects who had been detained for internment.

- CGS said that the GOC was anxious to have guidance on what to say to the RUC Special Branch about how far HMG would be able to protect them from having to bear the brunt of any criticisms of interrogation methods which resulted from the Compton inquiry. S of S said that, while he quite understood how fragile the morale of the RUC Special Branch was, he found it difficult to answer the GOC's question. As he saw the situation, once the Compton report had been submitted - and, according to present expectations, had criticised some of the interrogation methods as amounting to ill-treatment, though not brutality - the British Government would probably take the line that the techniques in question were those which had been used in all the other emergencies in recent years; that they had been taught by the Joint Services Intelligence Wing to the RUC; and that they had then been used in Northern Ireland with the broad knowledge and the approval of HMG. He did not see how it would be possible to avoid saying that the actual interrogation had been conducted by the RUC.
- S of S added that he hoped this was in fact what had happened. It had certainly always been his firm intention that the Army's participation in the interrogation process should be confined to providing back-up in the sense of expert advice and technical support; he therefore found it difficult to understand why it was that we now anticipated much of the criticism being directed at the Army. CGS confirmed that S of S's understanding was in fact correct, i.e. that the Army team at Ballykelly had confined itself to the support role. The GOC said that he had certainly encouraged the RUC to

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adopt the interrogation methods advocated by the JSIW, in preference to the RUC's own rather cruder traditional methods. Mr. Faulkner's recent statement denying the Sunday Times charges in toto had been unfortunate, in that it gave the impression that the RUC were not involved in whatever interrogation was going on; in fact they were of course very much involved, though certainly they were hoping that it would not become public knowledge that they had done the actual interrogating.

PUS said that we must nevertheless recognise that, once Compton had reported, not only would there be a substantial political rumpus but much of the criticism would be directed at British (as opposed to Northern Ireland) Ministers and at the Army (as opposed to the RUC). CDS and CGS agreed that this would be so; considered that, inequitable as this would be, the Army should be prepared to allow the line between their and the RUC's areas of responsibility to be blurred in this way, as the preferable alternative to shrugging the onus of responsibility on to the RUC Special Branch and thus incurring the risk of shattering the latter's CGS added, however, that if the RUC Special Branch wanted to pursue their plea not to be mentioned at all in connexion with interrogation, they should do so through their Chief Constable and the Northern Ireland Government rather than with the GOC.

(A.W. STEPHENS)
APS/SECRETARY OF STATE
Ext. 2111/3

20th October 1971

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