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Reference Code: 2001/43/1406

Title: Report from Seán Donlon, Consul General of Ireland in Boston, on events and coverage in the Boston area relating to Northern Ireland.

Creation Date(s): 3 February, 1970

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 3 pages

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Access Conditions: Open

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CONFIDENTIAL

D.1/13/3A

3 February 1970

Secretary,
Department of External Affairs

Boston and the Six Counties

1. This report relates to developments in this area since our minute of 29 December 1969.
2. Press radio and TV have carried the Agency reports on the disturbances in Derry and Belfast within the last two weeks, but there has been no editorial or feature coverage. The Agency reports, generally, credit British troops with preventing an escalation of the disturbances. The HERALD TRAVELER carried a series of three articles by John Chamberlain at the end of December and the beginning of January. A copy of the first article was sent under cover of our minute of 30 December, 1969.

Subsequent articles were in the same general tone and confirmed that Mr. Chamberlain, with a group of other U. S. journalists, had been invited by the Six County authorities to visit the area and see for themselves the implementation of the reform programme and the favourable climate now prevailing for foreign investors.

3. Mr. Paddy Devlin, M.P. paid two visits to Boston in the period under review but did not contact this office at any stage. Mr. E. Gallagher's letter of 31 December, 1969 refers to this visit. His main purpose, according to press statements, was to collect money for the rebuilding of houses in the Bombay Street area of Belfast. He asked the Committee for Justice in Northern Ireland to help him in this connection and told them he would be available in Boston on the weekend of the 17 and 18 of January. The CJNI, however, did little for him, partly because it is getting fed up with appeals for funds from a number of Six County groups and partly because its organisation, finances and morale are currently rather low. A few of the prominent CJNI members brought Mr. Devlin to dinner when he came to Boston on the 17th January but, apparently, they did not try to obtain either money or publicity for his cause.

4. Mr. Devlin's second visit to Boston was not on his original schedule. The CJNI had arranged an annual banquet for the 25th January and Mr. Gerry Fitt, M.P. had accepted an invitation to be the main speaker. A few days before the function, Mr. Fitt decided not to make the trip and arranged for Mr. Devlin to take his place. In social terms the function was a success in that about 500 people were present, including some local politicians and representatives of the Mayor and Governor. It is relevant to add that this is an election year and inter alia, the democratic Mayor is challenging for the republican Governor's position. The undersigned also attended the

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banquet at which Mr. Devlin spoke for about twenty minutes. In his talk he made a plea for money, "to buy what is needed to defend ourselves" and alleged that almost all the Unionist families in the Six Counties had been granted licenses to hold guns. He claimed that non-Unionists were being denied licensing facilities and, therefore, had to resort to the illegal holding of weapons. He also held up a copy of the "United Irishman", claimed it was the best source of information for what was happening in Ireland and appealed to those present to take out subscriptions to it. He also appealed for unity among the Irish-American organisations and said that this could best be achieved by following the leadership of the National Association for Irish Justice. His speech was incomprehensible to many of those present, not only because of its heated style of delivery and Mr. Devlin's strong Northern accent, but also because Mr. Devlin wrongly assumed that his listeners were thoroughly familiar with the current Six County political scene. The reaction of the vast majority of those who did follow his talk was one of disgust. What they had hoped for was a reasoned and balanced talk about discrimination in Belfast and what had been achieved by Civil Rights groups in the past year to rectify the situation. The last thing they wanted to hear from a representative of the minority group in the Six Counties was an emotional plea for money to buy guns. Predictably, the small IRA element within the CJNI greeted Mr. Devlin's speech enthusiastically and shortly after he had finished, a number of people came into the hall and went from table to table selling the most recent issue of the "United Irishman" and soliciting subscriptions for it.

5. The only activity of the CJNI in recent months has been the function described above. A number of reasons can be given for this inactivity. The Chairman, Dr. McCaughan, is frequently away from Boston for business reasons and the Vice Chairman, Professor McAloon, lives 50 miles away in Rhode Island. In addition, the enthusiasm generated by the August 1969 crisis has declined. Above all, however, many of the reasonable members of the Committee have become exasperated with the antics of extremist pressure groups in their midst and this exasperation is reaching a point where the only members prepared to do his work in the organisation are the supporters of the IRA. For instance, most of the arrangements for the banquet were in the hand of these people and it is not unreasonable to assume that they have prevailed on Mr. Devlin to make a plea for the "United Irishman" in return for some financial support.

6. Two other points are worth reporting:- firstly, the Friends of Irish Freedom referred to in Paragraph 5 of our minute of 4 November, 1969, never got going and the originators of the idea have now left Boston; secondly, the local chapter of the American Federation of Teachers, a CIO affiliated organisation, recently held its annual convention in New Orleans and expressed support for the minority in the Six Counties. The Boston Teacher's Union was

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entrusted with the task of expressing these sentiments in the form of a suitable resolution and sending copies to the British Parliament, the Queen and various others. We have given the local officers of the Federation a selection of published material relating to the Six Counties and invited them to contact us again should they require further help. It is understood that the National Headquarters of the Federation are in Washington, D. C.

7. Since the above was dictated, most of the papers here have carried reports based on the British Home Secretary's briefing on the Six County question for U. S. correspondents. The fullest report of the briefing was by David P. Shaw in the Christian Science Monitor of 2nd February. A copy is enclosed.



Consul General

Enclosure

cc: Consulate General, N. Y.
" " , Chicago
" " , S.F.
Embassy of Ireland, Wash. D.C.