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Telefón } (01) 752971
 Telephone }

Seol fhreagra chun:—
 (Address any reply to:—)

AN RÚNAÍ
 (The Secretary)

faoin uimhir seo:—
 (quoting :—)



AN ROINN GHÓDAÍ EACTRAÇA
 Department of Foreign Affairs

baile áta cliac, 2.
 Dublin, 2.

10th March, 1971

Secret.

Dear Dan

I enclose herewith some notes on the present situation in the North together with suggestions on what the Taoiseach might wish to say to President Nixon on the subject. The enclosure has been approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs for submission now to the Taoiseach.

Yours sincerely

Mr. D. O'Sullivan
 Assistant Secretary
 Department of the Taoiseach.

SECRET

Taoiseach's meeting with President Nixon at Washington -
16th March, 1971

There is considerable malaise among the minority in the North at present. This extends to Opposition MPs, some of whom believe that Mr. Paddy Devlin's car was deliberately damaged by the Provisional IRA. The Opposition seem to feel that nothing they say in Stormont or elsewhere is having any effect and that the Unionists generally, perhaps with an occasional honourable exception, are satisfied to let things slide to the Right, with a return to the status quo ante in real terms. This would mean that the whole Civil Rights Movement would have receded leaving merely a number of paper reforms of no great value to the man in the street and of no value at all to the minority community as a community.

If this should happen leadership of the minority could shift to extremists with consequences which could be very grave indeed and which might be even closer to us than we might think.

Certainly the Unionists, as such, appear to have learned very little from the experiences of the past two or three years. They seem to think that the minority, provided IRA elements are isolated from them, will acquiesce in continued Unionist hegemony and that, therefore, it is safe, protected by the British economically and militarily, to resume old habits. This thinking may be the explanation for the recent speeches and actions of people like Mr. Brian Faulkner, Mr. John Taylor and even Mr. Bradford who once showed promise of having a broader view.

If what is said above is generally correct then it might be advisable for the Taoiseach to say something like the following to President Nixon -

We predicted to the British Government two years ago and repeated our prediction on the 1st August, 1969, that the Northern Ireland situation was about to explode. The minority, which forms about 36 or 37% of the total population, had quite clearly got

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fed up with the situation where all power, authority, wealth and privilege was stubbornly kept in the hands of one section of the community. The British rejected our analysis at that time and even suggested that the matter was none of our business.

When events had reached a point where a number of people had been killed, several hundred houses had been burned down, some factories destroyed and civil war appeared to be just around the corner the British Government took the necessary military action and made it crystal clear that political change would have to follow of a deep and searching kind. This decision was embodied in the Downing Street Declaration of 19th August, 1969 - a Declaration made jointly by the Governments at Westminster and at Belfast.

My Government and I myself on behalf of the Government accepted the Downing Street Declaration as something which was meant to be implemented without delay and without further controversy. It is well enough known that I had certain domestic difficulties in this regard but my point of view prevailed.

Recent months have begun to indicate that the Unionist Government at Belfast is virtually incapable of implementing the Downing Street guarantees. It has been a godsend, particularly to the right-wing of Unionism which seems to be a growing force, that some elements in the Catholic ghettos in Belfast have taken to the gun. There has developed a tendency on the part of many Unionists, with the honourable exception of Major Chichester-Clark, to equate the demands of the gunmen with the demands of the minority community as a whole for fair play in the future.

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The minority is still a considerably long way away from the equality of treatment guaranteed in the Downing Street Declaration a year and a half ago. We have urged speed on the British Government many times and forecast a breakdown of confidence ^{among} ~~in~~ the minority if reform were too long delayed or too much surrounded by considerations which made reform legislation ineffective in any real sense. Again our repeated warnings on this subject do not appear to have convinced the British Government as yet of the real underlying gravity of the situation in Northern Ireland.

Frankly, Mr. President, we have serious anxiety for the future. As we see it a relatively small community - certainly small relative to Britain and representing about 20% of the population of all Ireland - continues to be able to hold Britain to ransom in terms of military and economic support while refusing to give effective justice to a half million people within their jurisdiction; they continue also to hold Ireland to ransom by their refusal to concede any respect to the sizeable minority within Northern Ireland in terms of their political and cultural aspirations. To our mind London should recognise the need not to continue to cater to this historic abnormality as the consequences could very well be disastrous.

We are not seeking the reunification of Ireland overnight. We do not think it wise or possible to obtain this. What we do seek is a decision by Britain - let it be a tacit understanding - that between London and Dublin we should gradually begin to thaw out the situation in the North so that peaceful co-existence of the communities in the North can be guaranteed and made effective. That is our sole political aim at present. We reserve, of course,

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our right to aspire to Irish unification by peaceful means but have no intention of ramming this down anyone's throat. We would hope that when the Northern majority become accustomed to self-restraint in dealing with the Northern minority and become accustomed to the idea of justice within the Northern community they will gradually begin to see the sense of an Irish arrangement about which Dublin is perfectly prepared to be large-minded. It is our considered opinion that this is the only way to begin to ease the strain and tension in the North and to defuse a situation which has begun again to become intolerable.

I am hopeful, Mr. President, that you will use your good offices with Mr. Heath in this direction. I know that you may not be in a position to do as much as Irish-Americans might expect you to do. I am not myself asking you to take a public view, either official or personal, on the question of the unification of Ireland. I am asking you simply to use your influence with Mr. Heath in the interest of preventing a return to the status quo ante in the North - that is to say a Unionist hegemony which has shown itself to be unacceptable to the minority, incapable of good government and fraught with danger to the peace in Ireland.