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AMBASÁID NA HÉIREANN
EMBASSY OF IRELAND
WASHINGTON, D. C.

16.8.69.

Saturday, 16th August, 1969.

An Rúnai,
An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha.

NORTHERN IRELAND: INTERVIEW WITH ACTING SECRETARY
OF STATE JOHNSON.

I have the honour to report that, on receipt of your code cable 139 late on Friday evening, 15th August, I sought, as instructed, an interview at the highest level in the State Department. I spoke on the telephone to Mr. Mortimer D. Goldstein, Counsellor and Country Director for Ireland, as well as for Britain and Malta. I learned that Secretary Rogers was out of town, in California, and the Acting Secretary of State was Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, who is Under Secretary for Political Affairs. An interview was requested, and Mr. Goldstein rang back shortly to confirm that the Acting Secretary would receive me immediately.

2. At the time of the receipt of your cable 139, the Embassy had official information on the Government's proposals from the text of the Taoiseach's statement of 13th August as relayed on the telephone by the PMUN and from your cable 128 summarising a further statement by the Taoiseach made after the Government's meeting on 15th August, 1969. These two statements had already been put in the form of press releases by the Embassy and distributed to news media in Washington. While waiting for a ring back from Mr. Goldstein, I checked with the Permanent Representative at the United Nations on the telephone, and Ambassador Gremin confirmed to me that there was no draft resolution or other more specific U.N. proposal. I accordingly drafted a Note for the State Department and annexed the two press releases in explanation of the Government's proposals. Note and annexes are attached hereto.

3. With Mr. Jeremy Craig, Third Secretary, I was received by the Acting Secretary of State, Ambassador Johnson, with Mr. Mortimer D. Goldstein at 5.40 p.m. on 15th August. I said that I had been instructed by my Government to seek an interview with the Secretary of State in view of the grave situation existing in Northern Ireland. I summarised the contents of the Note which I presented and of the two annexed press releases. The crucial point was that the Stormont Government was not now in control of the situation and that British troops were not a solution. The Irish Government proposed that, to deal with the immediate situation, an international peace-keeping force or alternatively a joint Irish-British force should be sent to Northern Ireland and that, to reach a permanent solution, discussions should take place with the British Government to review the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. I said that the Irish Government would be grateful for the goodwill and support of the Government of the United States for the proposals of the Irish Government.



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4. Mr. Johnson first asked some factual questions - the meaning of the terms Stormont Government and the B. Special Constabulary. In fact, throughout Mr. Johnson showed some understandable unfamiliarity with the situation; he is recently appointed. Mr. Goldstein, however, is well-informed and during the past month was in Belfast before going to Dublin and meeting our Minister.
5. Mr. Johnson said that they would, naturally, have to study the Note and enclosures, and that anything he said then would be by way of preliminary comment. He made the following comments:
- (1) He could not recall a situation where U.N. forces had entered a country without a request from the Government of the country concerned.
 - (2) Where U.N. troops had previously been introduced, it was because the local authorities did not have the capability of maintaining law and order. The U.K. Government had that capability, and he therefore found it hard to see a role for U.N. forces in the present situation. It was more a question as to how a country was using the forces that it had.
6. I said that we recognised that, up to the present, U.N. practice had been to send troops only at the request of the Government of the country immediately concerned (though, of course, new precedents could be established), and it was for this reason that we had asked the British Government to request U.N. troops. There was also a clear practical advantage in having the goodwill of the Government claiming territorial jurisdiction, for the sending of a U.N. peace-keeping force. The Irish Government had never accepted that the Partition of Ireland was a lasting solution of the Irish nation's right to freedom. In recent years, the Government had hoped that the situation of these people who were being directly injured by partition would be improved, by reforms introduced by the Northern Ireland authorities. However, events in the last year and the tragic events of the last few days, involving loss of life, showed that a very serious problem still existed.
7. Mr. Johnson said that they (in the U.S. Government) tended to look on this primarily as an internal problem of the United Kingdom and that they thought that the Irish interest in the matter should be dealt with by bilateral discussion with the United Kingdom Government. He enquired as to what was the basis of our asking for international action.
8. I said that the situation had international implications because it involved an acute outstanding problem between two countries, lives had been lost and there was a threat to peace. Both countries had the good fortune to have friendly relations with the United States. The United States Government was therefore in a position to use its good offices with the British Government to try to resolve the matter on the basis of the Irish proposals. Mr. Johnson enquired smilingly whether both countries, Ireland and the United Kingdom, had not also friendly relations



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between them and could they not resolve their problems direct. I agreed that Irish-British relations were close and completely friendly for a long time except for the outstanding matter of Partition, and said that indeed, in recent years, the influence of the British Government had been quite beneficent in urging the Six-Counties Government to remove civil and economic disabilities in relation to voting, employment and housing. However, the physical situation in the Six Counties had now deteriorated, as I had outlined, and the influence of the U.S. directly with Britain and with the United Nations, if exercised, could be most helpful.

9. During further discussions, Mr. Johnson expressed some surprise at the reported mobilisation of reserves. I explained that only the first-line reserves was involved (the more numerous FGA territorial force was not called out) and that it was for the purpose of participating in a peace-keeping force under U.N. auspices. The Army was depleted by having a battalion in Cyprus on peace-keeping duties and 25 or 30 officers as observers in the Middle East, also under U.N. auspices. I recalled that many people in the Six-County area were exercising their Irish citizenship as they were entitled to do. Mr. Craig summarised the Irish citizenship law as applied to residents of the Six Counties.

10. As a personal comment, Mr. Johnson remarked that he thought it a pity that, at this stage, with so much ecumenism and inter-faith co-operation around religious differences should cause bloodshed; I explained that the nationalists being discriminated against happened to be mainly Catholics. The rights sought were political and civil rights, not religious rights. The influence of the leaders of the principal churches was good and restraining on the whole. Unfortunately, a small extremist group, under Rev. Ian Paisley, had advocated hatred and violence. Mr. Goldstein remarked that Mr. Paisley was a graduate of Bob Jones University and an extreme fundamentalist in outlook.

11. Mr. Johnson said that he knew that the tragic situation was of great concern to the British Government, as it was to the Government of the United States. It was his hope that peace could be restored with as little as possible international repercussions. He feared that U.N. involvement would give an opportunity for some people (whom he did not further particularize) "to fish in troubled waters". I said that the Irish Government were in favour of getting a quick and permanent solution on a just basis.

12. The interview concluded with the Acting Secretary stating that he had received the Note and promising to study the matter. The atmosphere throughout was friendly. In conducting Mr. Craig and me to the exit of the building, Mr. Goldstein said they would try and let us have a reply as soon as possible.

13. As I understand from Ambassador Gremin on the phone this (Saturday) morning that the Minister is coming to New York tonight in this matter and, as well as discussing the problem at the U.N., will wish to see Secretary Rogers, I told Ambassador Gremin of the Acting Secretary's preliminary comment in paragraph 7 above, and I am taking the liberty of getting a copy of this report direct to the FMUN by special delivery tonight for the Minister's information. I, of course, alerted the Acting Irish Desk Officer at once to the Minister's desire for a discussion with the Secretary of State within the next three or four days.

Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.