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Report of
Discussion at Foreign and Commonwealth Office London
on 15th August 1969 concerning Northern Ireland.

Present:On the Irish Side

Dr P.J. Hillery, Minister External
Affairs

Mr H.J. McCann, Secretary, Department
External Affairs

Mr K. Rush, Chargé d'Affaires, Irish
Embassy, London

Mr D. Hurley, Third Secretary, Irish
Embassy, London.

On the British Side

Lord Chalfont, Minister of State,
temporarily in charge of the
F. & C.O.

Lord Stoneham, Minister of State at the
Home Office

Sir Edward Peck, Deputy Under Secretary
F & C.O.

Mr C Lush, First Secretary Irish Desk,
F & C.O.

Mr Fayle (Private Secretary to Lord
Chalfont)

Mr Pendleton (News Dept.) F & C.O.

The discussions started shortly after 4 p.m. and lasted
almost two hours.

Lord Chalfont

I should like to begin by saying that we consider it useful to have discussions on these matters which concern us both very deeply. I am personally sorry that it was not possible to have a prior agreement regarding your visit. I am aware that you have a number of things to discuss and it would be useful to discuss them. May I begin by referring to the Aide Memoire which was delivered by your Chargé d'Affaires. There are two points on which I would comment. The first one is in regard to the suggestions that there were police attacks on the people of Derry. We reject these suggestions as being without foundation. The second point concerns the suggestion that an international peace-keeping force be dispatched to Northern Ireland. We regard Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. When you had discussions recently with Mr Stewart, there was a certain measure of agreement that anything happening there is an internal matter to be dealt with by the Home Department. We do not regard the dispatch of a U.N. force as necessary or relevant and we do not propose to take any action on the request for U.N. intervention.

At this point Lord Chalfont handed over an Aide Memoire which was the formal reply to the Irish Aide Memoire dated 13th August.

Dr Hillery

It is not entirely realistic to say that this is a totally internal problem. I came over here on the 1st of August to see Mr Stewart because my Government ^{was} ~~is~~ seriously perturbed about what might happen if the Apprentice Boys held their parade in Derry. On that occasion I accepted the point that the control of the situation ^{was} ~~is~~ at present in your hands but not that it is solely your internal affair. Ireland and the Six Counties ^{are} ~~is~~ one island and cannot be separated, or treated as if they were a separate island. In the circumstances the holding of the parade

was sheer madness and it was humiliating for the Catholics who comprise the large majority of the people of Derry. In normal years, this parade consisted of some 16 bands, on this occasion they escalated to 60 or 70.

Lord Stoneham

They did not all turn up.

Dr Hillery

It was expected and planned that they would. You had an escalation of a parade in a city whose citizens had lost all confidence in the police force. I urged, when I called on Mr. Stewart, that the parade should have been either banned or confined to its normal size, or at least confined to certain streets. Mr. Stewart said that the decision to permit the parade to go on was a matter for Stormont. In their judgment, it was better to let it go on than to try to ban it, and that view was shared by you. Mr. Stewart said he was sure it would not boil over, but it did. We have been told that there were attacks on the people of Derry. A historic nation cannot be isolated in that manner. There is trouble for all of us - serious, grave trouble. We can blindfold ourselves with technicalities, but people are being killed now. What we must do is to find a way of defusing the situation. The RUC are, at their best, not an impartial force. The B Specials are a partisan, armed mob, such as is found only in dictatorships. In the circumstances, can we not combine to find a solution. I can see how you feel - that you regard it as an internal matter. But this situation is not one that can be handled by a partisan peace-keeping force. So perhaps your troops and ours could be combined together to form a peace-keeping force acceptable to both sides or, alternatively, there could be a U.N. force. My Government has also asked me to convey to you their view that there should be consultations between us regarding the constitutional position of N.I.

Lord Chalfont

I don't suggest that there is no concern on your part and I understand why you are anxious to discuss the matter. But we do regard the maintenance of law and order in the U.K. as primarily our concern. This responsibility is exercised in concert with the Government of N.I. Their view was that the parade should be allowed to continue and we agree with that view.

Lord Stoneham cut in to say that (the N.I. Government) did not need their (London's) agreement, since it was primarily Stormont's responsibility, but discussions did take place.

Lord Chalfont

We reject the suggestion that there was any attack by the police on the people of Derry. This was a distorted view of the situation. As regards the deployment of troops, when troops are deployed in aid of the civil power no one doubts their impartiality. The troops were welcomed by both sides in Northern Ireland as a stabilising factor, and we have no doubt that they will behave with complete impartiality.

As regards the need for U.N. or international intervention, we consider it is simply not necessary. It is well in our capacity to deal with the situation not only for juridical reasons, but because we are confident we can deal with it in an impartial way. The presence of any international or joint force in the area would be totally irrelevant and here I might add that our view is shared by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I hope you will accept that.

/Lord Stoneham

Lord Stoneham

May I say that I am living with this situation 24 hours a day. I know a great many people over there including Nationalist and Catholic leaders. All day yesterday people were telephoning me - Gerry Fitt, Joe Devlin, John Hume. Hume is one of the most balanced of all the Stormont M.P.'s and he said "we must have troops in Belfast, otherwise there will be slaughter".

Morris, the Secretary of the Civil Rights Association also spoke to me. All these people declared either actually or by implication that the troops were capable of doing their job. I think this kind of evidence from the spot must be taken into account.

Lord Chalfont

We must demolish the suggestion that there were police attacks on the people of Derry. Of the first 112 cases treated for injuries, 91 were police-men. This does not seem to me to indicate any attacks by police on the people.

Dr Hillery

If the people welcomed the troops it was because they were frightened of the police.

Lord Chalfont

The troops are now holding the line. The situation had reached a stage when the request to deploy troops should be acceded to. I can tell you with the greatest confidence that they will handle it successfully and with the minimum use of force. They will go when order is restored. There can be no question of outside intervention

Dr Hillery

The continued presence of troops could provide extremists from both sides with pretexts for intervention.

Lord Chalfont

There is evidence from Northern Ireland that presence of troops would be welcomed by both sides. I would like to suggest that you can help us a very great deal if you will be prepared to do something. We feel that certain things are happening - some as a result of your Government's action, others by "private enterprise". The situation is being made subject to considerable provocation. As regards the establishment of field hospitals on the Border, and troop movements, our view is that such casualties as take place can and are being dealt with on the spot. Our view is that to set up military hospitals along the Border at a time like this could be seen by some as provocative action and we view them with a certain amount of concern. The Red Cross might be considered less provocative.

We have had news of attacks on our Embassy in Dublin today.

The Embassy building was stoned and the Union Jack torn down from the pole outside the building and turn up.

While it is far from my intention to suggest that this was officially inspired, I must protest formally in the strongest terms. We hope you will be able to control those responsible; attacks like this will not help matters, are very provocative, and will have a profound effect on people in Britain.

Dr Hillery

Such incidents are not as serious as people being shot and terrorised. Northern Ireland is part of Ireland. Our people

do not accept that it is part of the United Kingdom. It is not a separate island. It is Ireland, our island. If they are terrorised, what should they do - leave Northern Ireland? When I saw the Foreign Secretary recently he gave me certain assurances on the basis of which I told my Government that you were in full control of the situation. I refrained then from telling the Press, but cannot undertake to do so again.

Lord Chalfont

Your conclusion that the Government was not in control (on 12th Aug.) is false. We are in control. We now have troops. I can assure you we are now in control and that the troops will not be maintained there any longer than is necessary. It is wrong to talk of people living in terror. What happened in Belfast last night was tragic, but the troops will stop it.

Dr Hillery

Apart from any historical claim, the immediate thing is to save lives. But when the troops are withdrawn, what then? Will the minority be exposed once again to repression and be terrorised again?

Lord Stonham

Admittedly people have been in terror in Bogside and Belfast - over the years too, but this is the effect of the action of the Irish Government who gave the people the impression that you would be coming to their aid militarily. Mr McAteer and others have publicly said so. I don't believe your Government had or have any intention of violating the Border militarily. It would be helpful if you would say so. We are going to do in Belfast what we did in Derry last night, that is, keep the warring factions apart whether they are Catholics, Protestants, police or civilians. It is our hope that this intervention will not be prolonged, but it will have to be continued until stability is achieved. We will certainly want all those changes promised by Stormont to continue.

If troops are to be used otherwise than for a short period, Westminster (i.e. Parliament) will have to go into it and the Government will have to consider it. At this stage it is not possible to say more than that we are determined to end the state of terror, and to relinquish control only when we are satisfied there are no other problems. We mentioned extremists. We have evidence that people are being egged on or assisted by persons with no interest in their well-being or their future welfare. You have your problems, too, about this. For instance, there was an interview with Cathal Goulding of the IRA today. He said they will have to decide whether to intervene. This is your problem, but if it becomes our problem we should have to take steps.

Lord Chalfont

The IRA question is a very important element. The trouble at the time of the parade was less from the parade than from controlled intervention by extremist elements.

Dr Hillery

I know about extremists. Everyone has them. I would like to see something dramatic in the tempo of reforms, I want to see the abolition of the B Specials. These people are totally extremist, they are armed by the Government and they are undisciplined. But ~~BRAXXONCHMX~~ it must be done while the troops are in control. Otherwise it may never be done.

Lord Stoneham

What dramatic steps have you in mind.

Dr Hillery

Disarm the B Specials. This would reduce the boiling point. Then speed up and extend the reforms.

Lord Stoneham

The reforms are already going ahead as fast as is practicable.

Mr McCann

I think there is a slight credibility gap.

Dr Hillery (very strongly)

"The B Specials must be disbanded and disarmed". That would be a dramatic reform.

Lord Stoneham.

Nothing dramatic can be done. We know that all the promises will be implemented by the end of the year.

Dr Hillery

The Northern Ireland Government cannot disarm the B Specials. It must be done by you. You can apply pressures, including financial pressure.

Lord Chalfont (summing up)

All I can do at this stage is to take note of your proposals without any kind of commitment, but strongly urge the first thing is to restore law and order. To return to my point that your Government do nothing to exacerbate the situation, can we count on your Government to keep the temperature down? To take firm action against hooliganism outside the British Embassy? Leave it to us to take steps to restore law and order. We could then look at the proposals you have made.

Lord Stoneham

We are fully conscious of the feelings of a lot of people about the B Specials in Northern Ireland. I have read "Burntollet" twice.

Dr Hillery

The troops are a provocation. Our people do not accept that Northern Ireland is not a part of Ireland.

Lord Chalfont

There have always been British troops in Northern Ireland.

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Dr Hillery

The local people welcome them because they believe ^{paradoxically} that
the devil you ^{don't} know is better than the devil you ~~xxxxx~~
know.

Lord Chalfont

This leaves us with your proposition about a U.N. or joint
Irish/British force. This we could not accept in any
circumstances. We could not agree to the deployment of a
U.N. force on United Kingdom territory. The maintenance of
on U.K. territory
peace/is a matter for the U.K. Government.

Dr Hillery

I can see this if the situation were controllable(?). The
Taoiseach's speech reflected Irish public opinion. If there
is serious bloodshed, would you consider outside troops?

Lord Chalfont

There is no danger of a breakdown of that gravity unless
there is outside interference. I very much hope there will
not be any such interference.

Dr Hillery

What type of police force will there be when the troops pull
out? Can you say anything to assure them now that they will
be able to live in peace?

Lord Chalfont

We will take note of what you have said. It would be
unwise to make any kind of undertaking now. The first thing

is to restore order.

We are extremely anxious firstly to restore order and secondly ~~we~~ ^{to} ensure that this does not damage relations between our two countries. But I find it irrational although perhaps psychologically predictable to say that the presence of troops is intolerable to anybody. How can the presence of troops in towns of the United Kingdom be intolerable to anyone except the people in those towns? It is not anyone else's business.

Dr Hillery

I was referring to the possibility of irrational behaviour in Ireland.

Lord Chalfont

This is very much your problem. It is a matter in which the Government of Ireland can be decisive. What is needed now is studied moderation and not reflection of irrational feelings - to damp down and control them so as to make irrational action impossible.

Dr Hillery

I think there should be a discussion about this problem. The problem won't go away simply because you choose not to face up to it.

Lord Chalfont

I see your point of view, but I don't agree with it. The first thing is to calm the situation down. Rational discussion is impossible in a situation of bloodshed and passion. I plead with you and your Government to do nothing to make the situation worse. ~~xxxx~~ As to discussions we have an Embassy in Dublin and you have one in London and there is no reason why we could not have the closest

discussions through normal diplomatic channels.

Lord Stoneham

It won't go away if something rankles in your mind. We believe in self-determination. Therefore 50 years ago when the people of Northern Ireland asked for self-determination we conceded it. There is still a majority who hold that belief in the Six Counties.

Dr Hillery

Three of the Six Counties have majorities that would join up with the rest of Ireland. You so arranged it that a minority of the people of all Ireland was converted into a local majority (in the Six Counties) which has, ever since, oppressed the local minority.

Lord Chalfont

To return to the important affair of the British Embassy in Dublin, can you comment or give any undertaking? I do protest formally and in strong terms.

Dr Hillery

The organisers tried to make the parade a peaceful one, but individuals threw stones. It gives some indication how strongly people feel. I had not heard till now about the flag incident.

Lord Chalfont

We really ought to be able to expect a measure of security.

Mr McCann

We have gone to great lengths to give security to your Ambassador in Dublin, even over his protests. The Secretary of State also complained of our giving too much protection to him.

Dr Hillery

I asked for observers from your country in Derry on 12th August but my request was not heeded.

Mr McCann

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(until recently under British control), ^a U.N. peace-keeping force was used very successfully. We know because we are taking part in it.

Mr McCann

~~Mr Cyprusxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

Lord Chalfont

Cyprus is not a part of the United Kingdom.

Dr Hillery

Do you really regard the ~~Six~~ Counties as part of the United Kingdom?

Lord Chalfont

We regard Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. The use of troops there is exactly comparable to their use in any other part of the United Kingdom.

Dr Hillery

Discrimination etc. is not typical of any part of the United Kingdom.

Mr McCann

There are not first and second class citizens in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Lord Stoneham

We would not like to be drawn on that point.

Lord Chalfont

There are British troops deployed throughout the United Kingdom. They are there to support the police, the civil power, when called upon to do so.

Lord Stoneham

It is the common law. It is the same common law in

Northern Ireland.

Lord Chalfont

I do really urge you to believe our view that it is not particularly profitable ^{in an attempt} to cure a situation at the same time that you apply an immediate remedy. What we really need is to restore the situation and then to look at it again. The business of the Foreign Office is to keep our relations as untouched as possible. I would ~~again~~ emphasise that we have fully effective diplomatic channels.

Dr Hillery

I was sent here

Our Government assumed that you must accept a combined force. I have just been informed that the reserve forces have been called up to participate in this operation. My next sailing orders may well be to go to the United Nations.

Lord Chalfont

I hope your Government will not feel it necessary to take up this matter in the United Nations. The Secretary General

Adjournment

Lord Chalfont

I have just spoken to our Embassy in Dublin and I am glad to be able to say that apologies have been received for the incidents today.

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Dr Hillery

I shall have to talk to my Government now after this meeting. I honestly believe that there is a real danger of a total blow-up which could involve us as well. This could be prevented by co-operation. We would all be terribly sorry if we had not taken preventive action. I would ask you to abolish the B Specials. Would you enter into talks with us as to how to deal with this situation?

Lord Chalfont

It is a situation with tragic implications but Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and we are confident that we can deal with the situation. We cannot undertake to consult your Ministers. We will consider as useful normal diplomatic consultations, but we could not undertake to consult the Irish Government on how to solve a problem which is essentially a problem of the United Kingdom. But we will take careful note of what you have said.

Dr Hillery

I must impress on you that I feel a sense of immediate urgency. Even if I am wrong, I still think they should abolish the B Specials anyway.

Lord Chalfont

I can do no more today than to say we will take note of this suggestion.

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Dr Hillery

I am convinced that this problem must be dealt with by the week-end. I presume your Prime Minister is informed fully.?

Lord Chalfont

The Prime Minister is fully aware of all the nuances of the situation and he will have details of our discussions today.

Dr Hillery

I feel I must ask to see the Prime Minister. The matter is so serious and so urgent.

Lord Chalfont

I don't think there would be much profit in discussing this personally with the Prime Minister. He is in the Scilly Isles. I cannot hold out any hope of talks with him. He would want it to be dealt with by either the Foreign Office or the Home Office.

I don't reject the idea that you have a concern, but it is entirely a matter for the United Kingdom Government. I hope that you will understand that this is essentially and purely a domestic and internal situation and I hope that it does not damage relations between us. I very much hope that your Government will help us in this. In Northern Ireland fear may arise about Irish troop movements. Would you agree to say now or that I can say publicly that the people of Northern Ireland need fear nothing from this

activity?

Dr Hillery

The troop movements were related to the provision of hospital facilities and the call-up of the reserve was intended for peace-keeping operations.

Lord Chalfont

Can you say that if there are no peace-keeping operations the call-up of the reserves will stop?

Dr Hillery

It would be possible to say that the call-up of the reserves is connected entirely with the Irish Government's desire to set up a peace-keeping force.

Mr McCann

They said that already.

Lord Chalfont

Can we say that there is no other connotation and that this mobilisation carries no danger for the people of Northern Ireland? It would be very useful to say before the Press Conference, if you give a Press Conference.

Lord Stonham

If there is nothing to fear from Republican (i.e. Irish Government) troops, then the sense of urgency must come from other fears.

Dr Hillery

There is strong fear in all Irish people - the fear

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of a minority being shot in their beds. We have to be prepared for an upsurge of emotion in Ireland.

Lord Chalfont

You will find that under its charter the United Nations will not be competent to deal with this situation. Under what heading could U.N. do so?

Mr McCann

A threat to peace?

Lord Chalfont

My understanding is that the Secretary-General's view is that this would not be within the competence of the United Nations. Whatever you may say when you meet the Press, you would not take it amiss if I said that neither the troop movements nor the call-up of reserves is any danger for the people of Northern Ireland? We will return the situation to normal conditions as soon as possible (withdraw troops).

Dr Hillery

I have already explained about our troops being used in a peace-keeping role. A joint force of our troops and yours would be acceptable to both sides.

Lord Stoneham

The role of the troops is to keep the factions apart - then, to restore law and order. It is impossible to say how long this will take, but we hope it will be as short as possible.

Lord Chalfont

There are two things at stake - one your political problem of presenting the situation to public opinion in Ireland.

Lord Chalfont

I cannot consult with the Government of Ireland about the affairs of Northern Ireland. It is an internal matter and we could not be seen to be in negotiations with the Government of Ireland about it.

Dr Hillery

Do you think we should have opportunities for further talks between Ministers? I wonder if talks at Embassy levels would suffice in view of the gravity of the matter?

Lord Chalfont

I can only discuss legitimate foreign affairs matters, for instance the United Nations intervention. But as far as we are concerned we do not regard the United Nations as competent in this, neither do the United Nations. I cannot undertake on behalf of Her Majesty's Government to enter into consultations with you about this problem. This is not a situation in which citizens of Ireland are involved.

Dr Hillery

We must follow every legitimate road. I would like to talk to the Prime Minister.

Lord Chalfont

I undertake that the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister will be made fully aware of everything that passed today.

Dr Hillery

I will be asked about the B Specials, a peace-keeping force,

reforms, and further Ministerial consultations when I meet the Press.

Lord Chalfont

We shall say this is an internal matter.

Dr Hillery

I shall say we cannot accept this.

Lord Chalfont

I should like to be able to say that the call-up of troops constitutes no danger, and that you endorsed the expression of regret regarding the incidents at the Embassy and gave assurances regarding future safety of our Embassy.

Mr McCann

Naturally we regret it. Against the background of the last ten years you should know we have made extraordinary efforts to protect your Ambassador.

Lord Chalfont

For political reasons I will certainly have to say that I refused to give you any assurances, and got assurances from you about the role of your troops.

Mr McCann

You will say three positive things, but our Minister will have nothing positive to take back.

Lord Chalfont

I should not like to be in the Minister's position. I could not express surprise if you did go back with nothing positive. This is a domestic affair.

Dr Hillery

The call-up of reserves was based on the assumption that you would agree to a combined force. I did not come

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to give you assurances, but to seek them. I shall have to tell the Press that I asked to see the Prime Minister. Would that embarrass you?

Lord Chalfont

It would not embarrass us, but I cannot hold out any hope. You have my assurance that everything that passed between us will be communicated to the Prime Minister.

KR
16/8/69,