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IRELAND



Reference Code: 2000/6/658

Title: Statement on Northern Ireland issued by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Irish Government

Creation Date(s): 21 August, 1969

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 3 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

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Rufus 22.8.69

The following statement has been issued by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Government:-

The success of the Irish Mission to the United Nations, led by the Minister for External Affairs, Dr. Hillery, in bringing the facts of the present situation in the Six-County area to the attention of the Security Council, is a most satisfactory and welcome development. The facts are now better known than ever before to the members of the Security Council, to their Governments and to the world at large.

The Government adhere to their view that a United Nations' peace-keeping force, or other appropriate U.N. involvement, offers the best hope of securing peace in the Six-County area.

In ^{the} view of the Government the London talks on Tuesday last produced very little which would effectively contribute to a solution for the political, social and economic injustices from which the minority in the Six Counties have suffered so grievously and for so long.

While the bringing of the R.U.C. and the "B" Specials under direct British military control in the Six Counties may temporarily alleviate the present fears of the Catholic minority for their lives and for their property it can scarcely be regarded as an effective and permanent solution for the basic problems involved.

Both the communique and the "Declaration", issued after the London talks, raise far more questions than either satisfactorily answers. An already confused situation has, indeed, become more confused because of the open conflict of views as to what precise and accurate interpretation should be put on various Paragraphs of the "Declaration".

Is it, for example, sufficient to meet the present dangerous and distressing situation in the Six Counties to say that the British and Stormont Governments have re-affirmed that every citizen in the Six-County area is entitled to equality of treatment and freedom from discrimination without spelling out in detail how all this is to be brought about, by whom and how soon? That it should be necessary after fifty years to restate such a fundamental principle of basic human rights

- 2 -

highlights more than anything else the failure of the Stormont regime. The question arises - can the present Stormont regime be relied upon even now to grant basic human rights and equality of citizenship? If the Stormont regime will not do it will the British Government do it for them?

Those who express the view that reforms had been speeded up and were moving ahead very fast and that many reforms were already on the Statute Book are not speaking in accordance with the facts. When it is said that the British and Stormont Governments "have agreed that it is vital that the momentum of internal reform must be maintained" one must ask - is this sufficient to avoid a further period of even more serious agitation and unrest? If the "momentum of internal reform" which, as the "Declaration" implies, has been adequate and has been acceptable to the minority, why is it that the situation in the Six Counties has erupted so violently and so extensively, and with such tragic consequences, in recent weeks?

What of the future role of the "B" Specials? Is this partisan, armed force to be "phased out" or is it not? Which view is to prevail - Mr. Wilson's or Mr. Faulkner's? Are the "B" Specials to be disarmed or are they not? If they are, how precisely is this to be done and by whom?

These are some of the vital questions which, so far, have not been satisfactorily answered and which must be answered, clearly and unequivocally, before present fears and tensions can be eased or any accurate and realistic assessment of the present Northern situation can be made. One fact, however, has clearly emerged - the constitutional position of the Six-County Government has already been altered in that the control of the Six-County police forces has passed from the civil power at Stormont to the British military authorities controlled by Westminster.

Finally, no Irish Government can, and never will, accept the assertion contained in Paragraph (2) of the "Declaration" that responsibility for Six-County affairs "is entirely a matter of domestic jurisdiction" for the British Government. The Irish Government does not concede in any way, and never will, Britain's right to exercise jurisdiction over any part of Irish territory.

- 3 -

As the Minister for External Affairs told the Security Council yesterday - the claim of the Irish nation to control the totality of Ireland has been asserted over centuries by successive generations of Irish men and women and it is one which will never be renounced.

21st August 1969