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ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2  
DUBLIN 2

12 Meán Fómhair 1969

Dear Taoiseach

The attached is the report of Eamonn Gallagher of this Department on impressions he received when meeting some important people in Derry last week-end.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Lynch".

John Lynch, Esq., T.D.  
Taoiseach

A handwritten signature in blue ink, possibly "Reynolds", with the date "13.9.69" written above it.

~~Secret~~

Mr Holmes

When I was in Letterkenny at the weekend I had an opportunity of meeting some important people in Derry which I visited (Saturday 6th September). My principle contacts there are an important political person and an important financier [REDACTED]

The position in Derry is quiet and confident. Virtually all of the city of Derry outside the walls on the Donegal side of the river Foyle is outside Stormont police control. The area will not accept an RUC presence until the RUC is thoroughly reformed and, on normal police duties, is disarmed. The people there are confident that the British army will not enter the Bogside and, as the protestant community (the Fountain Street area) is very much a minority, no trouble is anticipated from them. The Craigavon double-decker bridge is protected by units of the British army who do not interfere in any way with the free flow of traffic. On the east side of the bridge is the Waterside area of Derry which is protestant. An attempt was made by them some time ago to burn down a catholic church. The element involved were advised that the church would be protected and furthermore that retaliation against the Waterside would be severe. This appears to have been a successful threat and there has been no trouble in the Waterside area and none is seriously expected.

It is taken for granted that the Unionists will not again politically control Derry city. Even under the new Faulkner proposals for Local Government redistricting the Unionists can have no hope of coming back to power in Derry city. Apart from this the Faulkner proposals are believed to be an attempt at a gigantic gerrymandering and are not acceptable to the Civil Rights movement. It was pointed out to me, for example, that the new district lines run three times through the town of Limavady, which is in majority Nationalist.

The Derry City Commission is co-operating generally with the Derry City Defence Association in providing the usual city services. It is felt that the Commission and its officials realise that they will have to deal with a Nationalist - CRA Council in due course following the next elections and are therefore responsive now to the advisability of co-operating with the Bogside leaders.

In sum, the victory in Derry is complete and there is no anticipation whatever that it will not be confirmed in local elections in due course.

The policy of the Civil Rights Association at present is to bring about the suspension of the Stormont Parliament and consequent direct rule from Westminster. This will give them the opportunity and occasion to insist on and secure the elimination of discrimination in housing, jobs (directly so in public administration but necessarily less quickly in private employment) and in political area control. When this happens it is felt that a sizable proportion of the Unionist leadership will realise that the game is up and move in the direction of

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of fitting themselves into the new structure. They will accept the inevitability of constitutional change deriving from demographic factors, among others, and begin to face up to the need to do a deal with Dublin - the sooner they do it the greater their bargaining power. My informant considers this to be a real possibility and that an early consequence of such a move in opinion will be a decision to contain the Paiselyite virus. There are several means by which this problem can be diminished and moderate Unionists will be encouraged by the realities of the situation to begin to use these means. The purpose and eventual result would be to reduce the extremist element to a cold and lonely minority which could be contained even in circumstances where rapprochement with Dublin became known to be the policy of moderate unionism.

Such a progress of events could lead to an agreed solution with Dublin in a matter of 10 or 15 years - a solution which would be arrived at peaceably and would avoid the very real prospect of bloodshed in the North of Ireland if events are hastened by premature activity along more aggressive lines. The political person fully approved of the economic co-operation policy with the North followed by the Government in recent years and hoped it would continue through any administrative channel that might emerge in Belfast.

It is considered that the actions taken to date by the Irish Government have generally been along the right lines. It is hoped that the Government will emphasize the human rights aspect of the problem at the United Nations General Assembly. When I pointed out that the Government here could not but point to partition as the root cause of the sick society in the North of Ireland and in any event could not but refer to its permanent policy on the subject I was not contradicted. The political person said that the Civil Rights policy had succeeded where an overt nationalist policy had not but that the ultimate objective was the same.

[In this respect the position of people like Ivan Cooper needs explanation. My opinion is that such persons are conscious of the need to end partition not so much by reason of historical necessity as by reason of social necessity; hence protestants can be persuaded to support the Civil Rights movement as a good and necessary thing in itself without openly countenancing an anti-partition stand although well aware that reunification of the country is a certain issue in a foreseeable number of years.]

I enquired of my other contact about the differences between the Nationalist Party and the Civil Rights Association. He is himself a Nationalist of long standing as is his father but he has moved over to support the Civil Rights movement. He said that the reason for the present disparity of opinion is that both the Nationalist Party and the Civil Rights Association will have to fight each other politically for control of the Derry City Council in due course and both are laying the ground work for this already.

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My contacts are extremely worried about the situation in Belfast. They are totally opposed to anything in the nature of a repartition of the Six Counties. They are well aware that the Falls Road etc. in Belfast is a hostage and they are not prepared to encourage any policy which would separate the Six Counties into two entities and thus leave the minority in Belfast to suffer interminably.

I enquired whether the creation of a new city and university of Craigavon was considered to be an element in a long range Unionist policy against the day when they might be out-voted as a whole and whether it might indicate a tendency to let the "west of the Bann" go. This interpretation was challenged by the political person who said that the intention was simply to direct internal emigration to the area of Belfast so as to diminish the population "west of the Bann" and continue to control the entire area.

Not much was said on the subject of Miss Devlin. My financial friend considers that she would not be elected now as, inspite of the Joan of Arc symbolism, people do not fully trust her judgment. She is regarded as having done a good job in the United States but of spoiling it by injudicious remarks and by her association with some doubtful characters.

I went to Belfast on the weekend of 31 August/ 1 September. I [redacted] and visited the Shankill Road area and subsequently the Falls Road area. I was unable to get any conversation in the Shankill Road area. This confirms the reluctance which newspaper men have mentioned of people in the Shankill Road area to talk to the Press. The area is covered with union jacks most of them obviously quite new. I examined particularly the area between Shankill Road and Falls Road and concluded that the attack was a planned one and was directed towards burning out the area rather than a massacre.

People in the Falls Road area spoke freely and although they differed in points of detail the general belief appears to be that the RUC, furious about the withdrawal of their comrades in Derry and anticipating the arrival of the British army in Belfast within a matter of hours, decided to put a long term plan into immediate effect. They drove up the Falls Road at about eight o'clock in the evening of Thursday 14th August spraying the area with machine gun fire from their armoured cars and whippet cars. There is physical evidence of this and the intention would appear to have been to get people off the street. When this had been achieved the B Specials came in from the Shankill Road area leading ununiformed and probably armed men. The B Specials ordered people out of their houses but, apart from breaking in doors and windows and hastening their departure by occasional shots they do not appear to have engaged in physical brutality against persons. The B Specials were followed by civilians who systematically set fire to the vacated houses. There are several parallel streets burnt out, only the brick walls remaining.

There are also several sections of the Falls Road burnt out including a large 19th century factory which the Falls Road people admit to having burnt out themselves because of snipers

on the roof. This operation took several hours and the B Specials did not succeed in crossing the Falls Road from which there was some gun fire from the total of about five guns (my impression is that 2 revolvers, 1 rifle and possibly 2 shotguns were all the arms available in the Falls Road area); they had the effect of slowing down the attack while barricades were being built. The attack continued in full swing until about 4 p.m. on Friday morning and thereafter continued sporadically until the British army arrived on Friday afternoon.

While in the Falls Road area I took the opportunity to have a discussion with a member of Peoples Democracy in order to find out, as far as I could, what their ideas are and what their present influence is. This group runs Radio Free Belfast whose location is known to everyone behind the barricades and is not difficult to find. They also publish "Barricades Bulletin" and participate in the publication of "Citizens Press". At present they are gathering statements and material which will be published in report form in due course probably by Bowes Egan who is a leading member of Peoples Democracy.

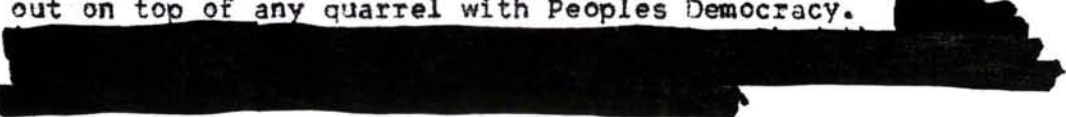
I found it very difficult to get a clear statement although the young man I was talking to, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was obviously intelligent but himself found it difficult to explain the movement. The best I can do is to try to summarise it in the following form -

Peoples Democracy was formed after the October 5th '68 clash in Derry. It was formed at Queens University, Belfast where the originators were sufficiently free of police interference to discuss things among themselves and plan their campaign. Leading members are, as is well known, Miss Devlin, Michael Farrell, Eamonn McCann, Bowes Egan etc.; a branch exists in London. It is a small group some of whose members were earlier members either of the British Labour Party or the Northern Ireland Labour Party. Their tendency is substantially left of either of these parties but my informant stated that it does not contain maoists, anarchists, trotskyites or marcusians. Some may be marxists. In general, if the British Labour Party were properly described as social democrat the Peoples Democracy would consider itself to be socialist in a purer sense. There is a strong tendency in the group to advocate social structures of an extra-parliamentary kind. They put up several candidates in the Stormont general election last February in order simply to take advantage of the Electoral Act provision which entitles candidates to speak in their constituencies. Prior to the general election they had found that when they announced a meeting the Rev. Ian Paisley would also announce a meeting for the same time and place and thereupon both meetings would be banned. They put up candidates against both Unionists and Nationalists and came close to winning a seat from a Nationalist. There was opposition in the movement to putting up candidates and some extremists appear to have left the movement because of that issue. My informant summarised the majority point of view within the Peoples Democracy by saying that they were not a political party but had used the electoral process as a strategic manoeuvre in order to attract support to their political movement. My informant also remarked that a prominent Stormont M.P., a member of the Northern Ireland Labour Party endorsed their programme in his election campaign and may soon leave that party. (In fact he was coming and going to the same building while this talk went on)

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So far as this affects the position of Miss Devlin I am inclined to think that Peoples Democracy may find it necessary to move in a parliamentary direction so as to avoid the dead end of becoming a political movement without representation. If it does this the extremist elements in it may continue their departure from it. On the whole I am satisfied that, apart from the personality and influence of Miss Devlin, the Peoples Democracy movement has very little popular support in Derry and, despite the remarks above about a present M.P. who is a member of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, I doubt if their influence in Belfast is of much political importance. Nevertheless they are entitled to the credit of the Belfast/Derry march from 1/4th January this year but I rather tend to think that the Civil Rights Association group will come out on top of any quarrel with Peoples Democracy.



So far as the removal of the barricades is concerned it is quite clear that the situations in Derry and in Belfast are completely different from each other. It might be useful to note that my political contact in Derry was in two minds on the question of removing the barricades in Derry until the failure of the Unionist Parliamentary Party to endorse the joint communique of Mr. Callaghan and the Northern Ireland Cabinet. This convinced him that the barricades remained a political necessity until such time as the Unionist Party make some step in the direction of accepting the Callaghan package. So far as the Belfast barricades are concerned, however, they remain as a physical measure of protection until the Paisleyites are clearly brought under control.

It is anticipated that the incidents in Belfast will continue and that there is a real danger of a clash between the Paisleyites and the British army. The CRA policy is to keep their own side cool while the position worsens. There is, nevertheless, talk of commemorating the 5th October but I should think that the CRA leader will attempt to contain any demonstration within the barricades.

*E.S. 10.9.69.*