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ConfidentialQuestion of inscription of the item
"The Situation in the North of Ireland"
in the agenda of the General Assembly of
the United NationsBrief for Press Attaches

1. In a letter dated 5th September, 1969 the Permanent Representative to the United Nations requested the Secretary-General under Rule 15 of the Rules of Procedure to include the above question in the UNGA agenda as an item of an important and urgent character. In accordance with Rule 20 of the Rules of Procedure, an explanatory memorandum was attached.
2. The item was accordingly placed on the UNGA provisional agenda and was considered for inclusion on the 17th September by the 25 member General Committee (Steering Committee).
3. The official documents of the meeting of the General Committee have not yet come to hand but the accounts of the Irish correspondents of the Irish Press and the Irish Times from New York on the proceedings may be relied upon subject to the following.
4. Chile informally suggested at the meeting that more time was required to consider inscription and that the item should be adjourned. Nigeria proposed a formal oral motion that discussion be suspended and that the item be discussed at a later meeting at the discretion of the President of the General Assembly who is ex officio President of the General Committee. The President of the General Assembly (Miss Angie Brooks of Liberia) adjourned the meeting to 18th September to deal with unfinished business. The conclusion was drawn by the British delegation and some press correspondents that the Irish item would be considered again on the 18th September, whereas the real position was that discussion of inscription of our item was adjourned without a new date being fixed for its consideration.
5. In the course of his statement Lord Caradon, the British

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Perhrep, appealed to Dr. Hillery to consider whether it was not in the best interests of all that the Irish application be withdrawn. If he did this, he would have made a contribution to peace, stability and reform as great as any could render. He also said that to press political debate and inflame opinion at the UN could do great damage and could prejudice and delay the actions of his Government in the matter of reforms.

6. Dr. Hillery accepted the spirit in which Lord Caradon's appeal had been made but he would have to reflect for some time on the consequences of accepting the appeal on the chances of improving the situation in the North.

7. The position at present as regards inscription in the General Assembly agenda is rather similar to the status of the item in the Security Council, which is that in both cases attempts were made to place the item on the respective agendas but the meetings adjourned without taking decisions on our requests.

8. Dr. Hillery may well feel that to press inscription further in the General Committee in the face of Lord Caradon's appeal may have a damaging effect on our bilateral contacts with Britain on the North and the prospects of serious consultations or talks with them on the subject. He would probably also be hesitant to press the question if, as Lord Caradon hinted, this might affect British pressures on the North as regards reforms.

9. In the General Committee only the USSR spoke in favour of inscription. Britain no doubt would have some votes, mainly Commonwealth, against inscription and while we were also assured of some support, the voting could have been tight with many abstentions - states not wishing to take sides against either one of two countries with which they had friendly relations. It is therefore understandable that Dr. Hillery would not wish also to risk a defeat on this question which might be interpreted as damaging to our case. Dr. Hillery could, before the session ends, re-open the question in the General Committee but this is now regarded

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as being unlikely.

10. There are other opportunities for action in the General Assembly e.g. Dr. Hillery can devote his General Debate speech on the 26th September to the North but no resolutions or voting would be involved. Also the question could be raised as a strictly human rights question in the Third Committee in the context of general items on religious discrimination and human rights.

11. Some headlines in the newspapers e.g. that "UN move on North fails" are misleading as the question was not put to a vote. Lord Caradon's appeal must be regarded as a very important element in the situation and there are anyway other possibilities of ventilating the question in the General Assembly before its present session ends around mid-December.

12. The action taken to date in the UN vis-a-vis the Security Council and the General Assembly has been effective in bringing the situation in the North to the notice of all UN member States (126). It has also resulted in useful publicity in influential political and press circles and in the foreign and domestic mass communications media. The degree of pressure exercised by these actions on Britain must also be regarded as useful and effective. To press the inscription question further in the General Assembly could well be counter-productive in the context of British action in regard to reforms in the North and bilateral consultations or talks with us. Finally, if the situation in the North deteriorated seriously again, it would be open to the Government to reopen inscription in either the Security Council or the General Assembly and to obtain a further hearing without going as far as to press for a vote on inscription in either case.

Department of External Affairs
19th September, 1969