

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code: 2001/6/513

Title: Copy note by the Department of External Affairs on various scenarios that might arise in Northern Ireland in the short to medium term, supplied to the Department of the Taoiseach.

Creation Date(s): 30 January, 1970

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 3 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



OIFIG AN AIRE GHNÓTHÁI EACHTRACHA

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

SECRET

30 Eanáir, 1970

Rúnaí Príobháideach don Taoiseach
Roinn an Taoisigh.

I am forwarding herewith a Note for the information of the Taoiseach relating to possible alternative situations which may arise in the short to medium term in the Six Counties. Each of these alternatives, in so far as they might become realities, may require Government action of a kind distinct from the policy suggestions contained in the Memorandum for the Government entitled "Policy in relation to Northern Ireland" originally submitted as a Memorandum for the Information of the Government on 28th November last. The underlying assumption of that Memorandum is that relatively peaceful conditions would obtain in the North and my Minister is satisfied that the Memorandum's conclusions remain valid for such circumstances.

The Minister, if present at the meeting of the Government which will discuss the Memorandum, would recommend a decision to implement the suggestion expressed at paragraph II - 8; and, if absent, requests that the Taoiseach consider doing so.

If the Government so wish the Minister will prepare and submit for consideration a note on the arguments for and against the placing of an official presence in Belfast.

John Mc Colgan

Rúnaí Príobháideach

Note for the Taoiseach

Introduction

With reference to the Memorandum for the Government on "Policy in relation to Northern Ireland", originally submitted on 28th November, 1969, as a Memorandum for the Information of the Government, it may be advisable to point out that the Memorandum relates to the single question of formulating a basic approach to reunification of the country in due time and suggests some things that could usefully be done to prepare the ground in the meantime. The document is based on the assumption that a genuine attempt is being made, under direct UK supervision, to establish equality of treatment for all in the affairs of the Six Counties and that relative calm will result when this policy is seen to be effective. Therefore the document has not taken into account what the Government may have to do if this assumption proves to be incorrect. The several alternative possibilities may be summarised as follows:

Alternative I Is there a possibility of another Bogside? or another pogrom? The RUC have been disarmed and the new Police Bill will insert some kind of public authority - with minority representation - between the Minister for Home Affairs and the RUC. These two factors should make it virtually impossible to indulge in the kind of confrontation between RUC and people which the Bogside experienced last August. The B Specials are in course of being phased out and being replaced by a Regiment under the direct control of Whitehall partly officered by British army majors and deliberately attempting to recruit fairly substantial minority membership. While it is not yet clear that the UDR will obtain a sufficient number of men to become viable - B Specials in Belfast particularly appear to be boycotting it and the minority have serious reserves about it - it would not appear possible for the UK to return to the B Special concept under Stormont control. Consequently the traditional type of pogrom, usually encadred by B Specials and with the tacit connivance of the RUC, does not appear possible.

Alternative II Account must be taken of the possibility that the Unionist right-wing may succeed in obtaining control of the Unionist party in the next two or three years. They are making a determined effort at present to infiltrate the constituency organisations and squeeze out the moderates. The bye-elections for the seats held by the former Prime Minister and Mr. Richard Ferguson could be revealing but need not be decisive. There are three possibilities worth looking at:

- (i) that committed right-wingers will win one or both seats: in this case the possibility of a right-wing take-over comes substantially closer;
- (ii) that in one or both constituencies a right-wing candidate will come close to winning - in this case the right-wing will certainly continue to assert itself;
- (iii) that both seats will be won with useful majorities by moderates - in this case the sting may be taken out of the right-wing revolt.

In view of possibilities (i) and (ii) above, either of which, ^{after} at this stage and from this distance to be a likelier result than (iii), it would be unwise to count on a return to reasonable normality in the Six Counties.

Assuming, therefore, a right-wing take-over is it conceivable that the right-wing would go for UDI? Short of UDI there is not much they can do in political terms to resist reform in the area as, for the reasons mentioned at Alternative I above, they would not have the necessary force to control the minority. They might conceivably feel that a Conservative government at Westminster would be prepared to let them drift back to the status quo ante but if this proves to be naive - and Quintin Hogg's remarks together with stubborn resistance from the minority and British political attitudes generally would all seem to rule out a return to open discrimination - the right wing might be forced by its own logic to contemplate cutting the connection with London. In such circumstances Britain will certainly suspend the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and be forced to deal with any attempt at a military revolt by the right wing.

Alternative III But what if Britain should simply pull out and leave behind a condition of civil war involving the whole country? The minority would not submit to a new - and officially disarmed - right-wing independent government and would receive support from across the Border leading probably to open armed conflict. The British government must realise this - even if right wing unionists refuse to face such realities - and would not therefore, in its own interests, lend itself by withdrawal to such an eventuality. This alternative appears, therefore, not to be a realistic one.

Alternative IV If the North continues its current spate of demonstration and counter-demonstration, continues to find it necessary to ban public meetings and processions, continues to lose jobs rather than gain them and generally drifts into an ungovernable condition, Britain may be forced to suspend Stormont in any event and govern direct. Government policy in circumstances of direct British rule should be to insist that a long-term solution can only be developed from acceptance of the fact that the 1920 "solution" will have utterly broken down. No armed confrontation need arise in which the Dublin Government would necessarily be forced to be involved as Britain would remain responsible for civil order. The Government's reactions, therefore, would be political ones and would have to depend on the evolving situation.

Alternative V It is necessary to consider the possibility that the North will fall apart in the near future and that widespread disorder will occur throughout the Six Counties which will be incapable of being contained by the British Army. There would be a grave risk of cross-Border incursions but the ~~xxxxx~~ initial reactions of the Government should be political and every effort should be made, while circumstances permit it, to avoid unilateral military involvement. Ultimately this alternative is covered by the Taoiseach's statement of August 13th - "that the Irish Government can no longer stand by and see innocent people injured and perhaps worse".