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Title: Report written by CC Cremin, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, of a meeting on 13 October 1970 between Patrick Hillery, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, at which the political situation in Northern Ireland, the actions of the British Army, and human rights were discussed.

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P. S. M.
 Minister may wish to see
 Mr. Cremin's report
 12/11/70

WA

R. P. A.

4/12

19th October, 1970

NOTE: MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH SECRETARY-GENERAL

The Minister called by appointment on the Secretary-General at 3:00 p.m. on 13th inst. The interview lasted approximately 25 minutes.

2. After the usual exchange of greetings the Secretary-General enquired about the situation in the North. The Minister said that he was somewhat apprehensive about the outlook. Already prior to the British general election there had been a move towards the Right in the North, and the Right-Wing elements there would tend to expect that the return to office of a Conservative Government would help their cause. Thus, there is a feeling of anxiety among the minority in the North about the resolve of the Stormont Administration to implement the programme of reform set out in the declaration from Downing Street of 19th August, the declaration which Lord Caradon had read into the record in the Security Council on the following day. Any drawing-back on that programme, or doubts about its being executed, would have a very grave effect on the minority.

3. The fact is that in August, 1969, the minority were attacked not only by their opponents but by the Forces supposed to maintain law and order, the RUC and the B Specials. Consequently, when British Troops were first deployed, the minority were inclined to see them, if not quite as friends, at least as neutral. This attitude had, however, changed

as a result of the raid made by British troops on the Falls Road in July. There was no obvious immediate cause for that raid: indeed, it was made on a district that had had no breaches of law - not even hooliganism - since attacked last year by the forces of hate. The inhabitants, therefore, regarded it as a hostile act. As a result, the standing of the British troops in the eyes of the minority had very seriously deteriorated, and the minority tends to regard them as inimical.

4. The Minister went on to say that it is vitally important that the new British Government stand firm on the programme of reform. He sincerely hoped they would do so and, in this regard, he would be disposed to place confidence in Sir Alec Douglas-Home, whom he regards as a man of humanity and integrity.

5. If the British Government are determined to see that the reforms go through, and if Stormont should prove vacillating, London might be compelled, the Minister went on, to take over direct administration of the area. This could, however, give rise to many complications. Consequently, the best hope is that the Reform Programme be put through in resolute fashion. The Minister repeated, however, that he is very apprehensive.

6. The Secretary-General enquired whether there had been any bilateral talks between Dublin and London, as such talks could, he felt, be helpful. The Minister agreed with this view, and told the Secretary-General that the Taoiseach hoped to see Mr. Heath here during the Commemorative Session.

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7. In the course of this part of the conversation the Secretary-General referred to his efforts last year to have a special representative of his go to the North. He was, he said, thinking solely in terms of Human Rights but, as the Minister would know, the British were opposed. The Minister agreed that such a move would be useful, and he informed the Secretary-General that he (the Minister) had put it to Mr. Stewart, then Foreign Secretary, on 1st August, 1969, that the British Government consider sending British observers to the North: their presence could, he thought, have been helpful as the majority would know that they were being watched by relatively objective outsiders. However, this suggestion came to nothing. The Minister expressed doubt whether the British would even now accept the Secretary-General's proposal, although they might possibly, he thought, do so should matters get really bad.

8. The Minister expressed the view that the British public generally are upset by the situation in the North and distressed that policies should be pursued there, in the name of Britain in an area which is formally part of the United Kingdom, which would not be tolerated in Britain.

9. The Secretary-General enquired whether the situation in the North had been discussed with President Nixon. The Minister replied that he himself had not been present at the conversation between the President and the Taoiseach, and he had spoken to Mr. Rogers about the situation and his anxieties regarding it.

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10. The conversation then turned to other topics which are the subject of a separate note. (Attached^{*})

** on 3/2/36M*

CCC:rd