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Brief (Amended)*L/external Affairs*
26/5/1971

The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs called in the British Ambassador, Mr. John Peck, on Friday afternoon and conveyed to him the Government's views as set out in the statement issued to the press by the Government Information Bureau on the same afternoon on behalf of the Taoiseach.

The subject was also raised by the Ambassador at London, who was accompanied by Mr. E. Gallagher of this Department, at his meeting at official level at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Monday last.

Mr. John Hume MP has conveyed to us a definite assurance that excessive brutality was used by the British troops on Thursday evening last in Belfast and that a number of people, who were clearly innocent, were arrested; this followed intimidation within Gallaher's factory.

The main political point is that the protest on Thursday afternoon outside Gallaher's factory was against the intimidation of Catholic workers inside the factory. We take the strong view that the attack on the protestors was unwarranted in all the circumstances and that it is necessary to draw the British Government's attention to the danger of allowing their Army to degenerate into a kind of B Special force either through ignorance or to placate Unionists.

It is suggested that the references to the Scottish regiments in the Dail Questions should be ignored in the main reply..

The British Ambassador called on the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs this morning and urged that the Taoiseach should avoid saying himself that the Royal Highland Fusiliers are leaving the North ~~from~~ normal rotation on 14th June as this could be read to imply a rebuke and/or a concession. It is felt that this request is understandable and that the Taoiseach should consider acceding to it. A supplementary question may usefully make the point anyway but the Taoiseach's reply to supplementaries on this issue might run as follows:

The views that have been expressed in the House and elsewhere in relation to certain regiments will have been noted.

It is also suggested that no reference to the UN need be made in the principal reply. If the subject is raised in supplementaries the following might be a satisfactory comment:

The matters at issue have been raised direct with the British authorities; this is the quickest procedure and the most appropriate one.

The British Ambassador also made it clear that Mr. Faulkner's statement at Stormont yesterday of the firing instructions for British troops in the North is incorrect. Faulkner appears to have said "Any soldier seeing any person with a weapon or acting suspiciously, may, depending on the circumstances, fire to warn or with effect without waiting for orders".

The Ambassador pointed out that the word or (the first reference) should read and. This changes very considerably the burden of the instruction. Furthermore there is no such regulation as firing to warn. In these circumstances, in reply to supplementaries the Taoiseach might consider saying the following:

The House may take it that the British Army statement of their firing instructions is the authoritative one.

It is assumed that the Taoiseach will have an opportunity of saying this in such a manner that it will not be lost in the House that Mr. Faulkner's statement in Stormont is known to be incorrect.

TS 26/5/71

L/External Affairs
26/5/71NOTE

The British Ambassador called to see me this morning at his urgent request. He told me that he had been in touch with Belfast immediately after my conversation with him on Friday afternoon. The Taoiseach's public statement shortly thereafter changed the picture somewhat. He had asked to see the Taoiseach urgently on Monday but the Taoiseach was unable to receive him until yesterday afternoon. He had sent to the Taoiseach on Monday a statement, copy attached, giving the British version of recent events in Belfast. I asked the Ambassador the basis for the statement at the beginning of paragraph 3 attributed to the Catholic Councillors as we had seen nothing published to this effect and from our knowledge of the situation in the Gallaher factory we would be surprised that they would have spoken along the lines indicated. The Ambassador was unable to give any information as to the basis for the statement but said he would make enquiries and let me know.

The Ambassador then referred to the satisfactory conversation he had with the Taoiseach yesterday afternoon in the course of which the Taoiseach seemed concerned about the question on today's Dáil Order Paper asking the Taoiseach to approach the British Prime Minister with a view to having the Scots Royal Highland Fusiliers Regiment withdrawn from the Six Counties. The Ambassador said that the Regiment was in fact leaving at the end of their tour of duty on June 14th. This is public knowledge - it is referred to in page 9 of today's Irish Times. Nevertheless the Ambassador expressed the hope that the Taoiseach should not say in ^{his} reply to Supplementaries that the Regiment is going anywhere as this would imply that otherwise he would have made representations to London.

The Ambassador went on to say that they had hoped that they might avoid Questions in the British House of Commons on recent developments but, unfortunately, a number of Questions have been put down. They hoped, however, to help calm the situation by so delaying matters that the Questions will fall for written answer. This will avoid the possibility of Supplementaries and with the imminent Whitsun recess perhaps the heat will die down before there is a further opportunity for Questions.

I then referred to the reported statement by Mr. Faulkner about firing by British troops. I said that this was most unhelpful and would be bound to raise the temperature in the Dáil this afternoon. The Ambassador agreed that the timing was unfortunate. He said that it was up to Mr. Faulkner to explain away what he said but as far as the British are concerned it is the statement by the British Army that is correct. The Ambassador made two points: he said that first of all the Army do not fire warning shots and secondly they do not fire just because persons are acting suspiciously. They might, however, fire on persons carrying weapons and acting suspiciously. Mr. Faulkner's statement as reported in the Henry Kelly column on the first page of the Irish Times would be more correct if the word "and" replaced the word "or". I asked the Ambassador whether he had any suggestions how the Taoiseach might deal with this point if it is raised this afternoon. I wondered whether a statement by someone in Belfast e.g. the British Army, which would tend to neutralise the damage done by Mr. Faulkner might be made this morning. The Ambassador said that he

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would go away and see whether anything could be done and whether he could offer any suggestions.

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The Ambassador has since telephoned me to say that there is as yet no sign that Mr Faulkner intends making a statement to clear up the issue. The Ambassador promised to give me the exact text of Army statement last night in case it may be helpful as it is the British position. He hopes that any dichotomy will not be overemphasised.

Am b

26/5/71.