

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

Reference Code: 2003/16/461

Title: Note of call to Taoiseach Jack Lynch by Ambassador of Great Britain to Ireland John Peck on 6 January 1972, mainly in relation to the intensification of internment in Northern Ireland.

Creation Date(s): 13 January, 1972

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.

5.18650

Note of call to Taoiseach by British Ambassador

Friday, 6th January, 1972.

The Taoiseach informed the Ambassador that recent events for which the British and Stormont Governments were responsible were causing us serious apprehension:-

The new instructions for British forces in Northern Ireland;

The opening of a new internment camp at Magilligan, Co. Derry;

The suggestion that women might be interned and even that morning came the suggestion of another internment camp being opened on the shores of Lough Erne (this was subsequently denied by Stormont).

Apart from the fact of there being another internment camp, the location of the one proposed for Magilligan was both dangerous and provocative - overlooking Lough Foyle across to Donegal and a short distance from Derry City. In fact Mr. Ivan Cooper was reported as saying that the British troops in charge of the new camp would be harassed.

All this will be interpreted as an intensification of repressive measures and would drive the 40% more into the arms of the I. R. A. More than that, whatever passive sympathy that existed south of the Border for the I. R. A could be made active and this would especially be so if women were interned.

The Ambassador said he had no information about the possibility of any intensification of internment measures.

As an indication of what could happen south of the Border, the Taoiseach mentioned the incidents at Ballyshannon a few days before Christmas. There was also the present unemployment position here. People who became disemployed would naturally blame the Government to some extent and with the Trade Union practice of last in first out it would be likely that many of the disemployed would be young persons and the devil could make work for these idle hands.

The Government here had been hoping for, indeed expecting, some political

- 2 -

initiative after Christmas. The Taoiseach and Government members had not been talking in public about Partition since the Christmas adjournment debate in order not to prejudice any such initiative.

If the recent announcement of the setting up of the Special Section in the F. & C. O. was what the expected initiative amounted to there would be disappointment and even frustration here. The Ambassador said that this section was in existence for some two years but some commentator had only recently "got hold of it".

The Taoiseach referred to the changing attitude towards re-unification in the North: it now seems to be official Labour policy. Mr. Maudling appeared to go a little further in the Commons debate on Northern Ireland than the position he had taken up to then when he said that he thought the British public would be pleased if re-unification were achieved.

If Mr. Heath could go a little further and say they would facilitate and support any moves in this direction it would probably ease the intransigence of the Unionists. Instead there was the repetition of the guarantee in the 1949 Act.

The Ambassador seemed to suggest that the Civil Service advice in Whitehall was in the direction of a worthwhile political move but it seemed to be killed on reaching Ministers who were influenced by the tough attitude of Right-wing Tory backbenchers. This, however, could be a misinterpretation of his rather guarded remarks on this point, although he seemed not to hide his own views which are probably known to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Taoiseach referred to his last visit to Chequers when he agreed with Mr. Heath that the respective Ambassadors could have direct access to the Prime Ministers if there appeared to be need for it and if an important message had to be conveyed.

The Taoiseach felt very strongly about and viewed the current situation with apprehension. This was the reason he asked the Ambassador to

- 3 -

come so that his views could be transmitted and he thought he would ask the Irish Ambassador in London to arrange a call on the British Prime Minister to emphasise the urgency of the matter.

13. 1. 72.