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Oifig an TaoisighMEMORANDUM FOR THE GOVERNMENTS.18966 M

15 Samhain, 1974.

NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION

1. The Tánaiste and the Sunningdale Ministers who were available at the time, together with the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Industry and Commerce, met a delegation from the Social Democratic and Labour Party in Dublin on 20th August last. The Attorney General also attended.
2. At the meeting it was suggested that a further meeting should be held. The SDLP have asked on a number of occasions for this further meeting which has now been arranged for Friday, 22nd November. It is understood that the SDLP will, at this meeting, wish to discuss their proposals for intervention by the Irish Army in Northern Ireland in certain circumstances. The Taoiseach has directed that this memorandum summarising recent events and setting out certain background information should be circulated to his colleagues in the Government with whom he wishes to discuss the attitude to be taken at the meeting with the SDLP delegation on 22nd November.
3. The subjects discussed at the meeting on 20th August were summarised in the memorandum for the Government dated 3rd September. For ease of reference a note of the discussions at that meeting is attached (Appendix 1). At the meeting the SDLP members stressed -
 - (1) the sense of isolation and alarm among the minority community in the North;
 - (2) the view that Dublin had ceded its position at the negotiating table in a Northern settlement in falling in with the view of the British White Paper The Northern Ireland Constitution that it was for the Northern people themselves to decide on their future; and in the frequently held view that the SDLP were coming to Dublin too often and thus frightening or offending loyalists;
 - (3) the opinion that these views and moves had weakened the position of the SDLP (who were the only group in the North without a military or para-military backing and

who must, therefore, look to Dublin for their support), and called into question the concept of Dublin as the second guarantor of the minority in the North. Now, as the SDLP believe, that the British, as the first guarantor, were pulling out of the North, it would be necessary to ask Dublin to act in its role as guarantor;

- (4) their anticipation that British withdrawal could follow on the elections to the Constitutional Convention - at which the Loyalist groups would, on present form, win a large majority of the seats. They would not yield on power-sharing, with an Irish dimension, which the SDLP hold must be expressed in some institutional form. (The SDLP have expressed no clear view as to what sort of an institution they would accept for this purpose.) The loyalists would, perhaps, not yield on power-sharing at all. This could, the SDLP feel, be the occasion for the British (having used their best efforts), to withdraw - on an agreed basis or otherwise, perhaps leaving some form of administration dominated by a "democratically elected" majority in the North;
- (5) in these circumstances, the SDLP feel that their strategy should be devoted to attempts at splitting the Unionist monolith - so that extremists do not win too high a proportion of the seats at the Constitutional Convention. One way of achieving this might be to get the British Government to spell out the consequences of withdrawal from Northern Ireland or of a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI). The attempts at splitting the loyalists was, perhaps, a futile exercise and the SDLP were considering whether they should fight a Convention election at all. They could be on to a "hiding for nothing".

These points were reiterated at the SDLP Party Conference held in Bunbeg, Co. Donegal, on 24th-25th August, when, if anything, the question of Irish Army intervention in Northern Ireland was emphasised even more strongly.

4. On 6th September, the Government approved of the policy lines to be laid down by the Taoiseach in his discussion with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Wilson, on 11th September, in relation to Northern Ireland. These policy lines were that -
- (1) the SDLP should not be encouraged to think in terms of military intervention from here: and that the Security meeting (held in Baldonnell on 18th September) should be such as to afford the maximum practical results in the North and South, in counteracting violence; and
- (2) it was essential to impress on the British the importance of securing power-sharing in the North, with an Irish dimension.....It may well be necessary to press on the British that they should bring home to loyalist politicians the full implications of British disengagement

from the North, including the loss of the protective British security umbrella and of subsidies and other payments of the order of £400 million a year or approximately half the total product of Northern Ireland.

5. These lines were followed by the Taoiseach, so far as Northern Ireland was concerned, in his discussions with Mr. Wilson on 11th September and again on 1st November. The communiques issued after these discussions affirmed the commitment of the two Governments to the objective that both sections of the community in the North should share power in Government. The communique issued after the meeting of 11th September stated -

"The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister confirmed that any enduring political arrangements must take account of the special relationship that exists between the two parts of Ireland. This Irish dimension will be the subject of further consultation between the two Governments and also with elected representatives in Northern Ireland."

The Taoiseach affirmed these principles again in his speech on the confidence motion in Dáil Éireann on 3rd October when he said -

"These two principles are non-negotiable so far as the two sovereign Governments are concerned, and indeed so far as all political parties in Great Britain and this country are concerned. No other system of regional government for Northern Ireland is conceivable in the light of the history of the area over the past 50 years." (Dáil Debates Vol. 275, No. 1, Col. 58).

Following this speech, loyalist politicians attempted to get a boycott of Irish currency under way and have threatened a boycott of Irish goods in the North.

6. Other developments since the decision by the Government of 6th September, 1974, include the holding on 10th October of the election to Parliament in Westminster. At this election, the SDLP obtained 22% of the valid poll, as against 58% for the loyalist groupings comprised in the United Ulster Unionist Council. The SDLP obtained about the same percentage vote as in the Westminster election in February, 1974: the UUUC obtained a higher percentage. The moderate

Alliance, Faulkner Unionist and Northern Ireland Labour Parties did badly in the October election. On the result of the election, and allowing for the difference between the direct vote system used in it and the proportional representation system to be used at the election to the Constitutional Convention, the likely outcome of a Convention election would be -

UUUC	46-48
SDLP	18
Faulkner Unionists	5
Alliance	5
Republican Clubs	2

7. Further, since the last meeting with the SDLP, the campaign of sectarian assassinations has been stepped up, to an even greater degree than may be apparent from newspaper reports, and is creating widespread fear and despondency among the minority population. Action by the British security authorities, so far, appears to be ineffective in dealing with the near impossible task of counter-acting these random killings. The violence of the protests against "internment" has also contributed to the general atmosphere of disruption. Reports indicate that British Army action is taken largely against minority areas, from which the IRA, in their campaign against the Army, draw whatever support is available to them; and this too does nothing to improve feelings.
8. These developments are likely to have increased even further the SDLP concern that whatever solution there may be to the problems should involve action by the Irish Army in Northern Ireland. On this point the conclusions of an Interdepartmental Committee representative of the Departments of the Taoiseach, Defence, Finance and Justice, in their report of July, 1974, on Implications of Substantially Increasing the Numbers in the Defence Forces are relevant. This report indicated that the numbers in the Defence Forces were as follows -

<u>Force</u>	<u>Establishment</u>	<u>Strength on 30th April 1974</u>
Permanent Defence Force	14,231	11,333
Forsa Cosanta Aitiúil	22,646	16,219
First Line Reserve	No establishment	About 1,000

NOTES:-

The figure for Permanent Defence Force strength includes about 1,000 in the Naval Service and Air Corps. It also includes about 800 recruits in training, about 700 men engaged in training the FCA, Command Staff, apprentices, bandsmen and other non-operational elements. When these categories are excluded, there are about 5,500 men operational in the Army.

9. The Report indicated, in brief, that -
- (1) for their present tasks the Defence Forces were insufficient and that an increase to the level of the full establishment would be justified, at a cost of £13 million annually for extra pay, equipment etc.;
 - (2) in the event of widespread violence in the North, affecting the maintenance of security here, but not involving our intervention in the North, an increase to 20,000^{men} would be required, at an extra cost of over £39 million annually for pay and equipment, plus substantial additional expenditure on barrack accommodation;
 - (3) in the event of widespread violence in the North, involving our intervention, the Committee concluded that limited intervention by the Defence Forces in any part of the North would inevitably result in whatever violence was occurring in particular areas there spreading to all areas - and would also affect the South;
 - (4) to exercise complete control in Northern Ireland would require a force of 60,000 troops for a military-type confrontation alone - not taking into account measures to maintain essential services such as electricity, food supplies and water for which a very much larger force would be necessary. The additional cost for pay, equipment and accommodation of a Defence Force of 60,000 men would be substantially more than £220 million a year.
10. The Committee indicated that given the rate of recruitment achieved after the intensive recruitment campaign begun in October, 1973, it would take two to three years to build up to the establishment of about 14,000. The only way of getting higher figures would be by a national appeal by the Government and an intensive public relations campaign. Even these measures would be most unlikely to achieve a rate of intake sufficient to raise the Army strength to 20,000 - and steps other than voluntary recruitment would be necessary.

A call-up of the FCA would just about bring the Army strength up to 20,000.

11. Recruits taken into the Army would not be effective soldiers for at least six months. There would also be, inevitably, other delays. The Committee concluded that, in their view it would not be possible to bring about a substantial increase in the Permanent Defence Force without measures which would clearly indicate intentions to people in the North, in Britain and in this part of the country. Such measures now or in the near future could affect the current attempts to reconstitute a power-sharing administration in the North and affect the results of elections which might be held in the North in the next few months. They would be certain to cement loyalist solidarity and to draw Protestant support away from the Faulkner Unionists and the Alliance Party - (this is happening anyway). Such action would also swell numbers in the para-military forces on the loyalist side and greatly reduce, if not entirely eliminate, any element of impartiality remaining in the RUC and the UDR. This, in turn, would facilitate a further build-up of para-military loyalist groups.
12. At their meeting on 18th July, 1974, the Government decided that further studies should be undertaken by the Inter-Departmental Unit on Northern Ireland of the possibilities of military and other intervention by the Republic in specified situations and on certain assumptions, and of "flashpoint" areas in the North, the location of essential services etc. Though these studies are not yet concluded, the work done so far shows no reason to modify the broad conclusions in the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee, summarised in paragraphs 8 to 11 of this memorandum. The main points are that -
- (1) intervention by the Irish Army in any part of Northern Ireland would be likely to lead to violence in all parts and that in this violence there would be no hope of substantial help for Catholics living deep inside Northern Ireland, in particular, in Belfast and North Antrim;

- (2) this intervention could not guarantee essential services, such as electricity, water and perhaps even food supplies;
 - (3) the effect on the economy of the South and that of the North, in terms of employment, living standards, lost investment, etc. could be catastrophic.
13. The following points bring these conclusions out in more detail. Of the population of about 1,500,000 living in Northern Ireland, approximately 1,022,000 are Protestant or other similar denominations and 478,000 are Catholics. The Catholic population can be divided into those living in areas which are -
- (1) predominantly Catholic. By and large, though not exclusively, these areas lie to the West of the Bann and outside the northern part of Counties Armagh and Down. They contain approximately 233,000 Catholics and 217,000 Protestant and other denominations. Derry, with 33,000 Catholics inside the city boundary, is the largest conurbation in the area;
 - (2) predominantly Protestant. These areas contain about 245,000 Catholics and 805,000 Protestant and other denominations. Belfast with about 150,000 Catholics in the city and environs is the most important conurbation in the area.
14. The intensity of feeling between the two groupings in the population varies greatly from area to area. In rural areas, the groups have lived together in reasonable harmony and divisions may be on grounds other than religion, for example, the ownership of property, social status, etc. However, on experience, this harmony can be easily shattered. The almost equal division of the population as between the two groups would ensure that if widespread trouble did break out, it would be prolonged and bitter, between two almost equally balanced forces. Intervention from here would probably in the end bring some sort of "victory" to the minority grouping. In the area east of the Bann, where the Protestants are in a majority of more than three to one, are comparatively well organised and armed, and where it would be impossible for Irish Army intervention to succeed quickly, the minority population of almost $\frac{1}{4}$ million persons could well be decimated in any situation of extreme violence, before the

force of greater numbers in the whole island began to tell. It is not possible to estimate rationally the other damage to the economy and the future of the island that could result from this type of confrontation.

15. These considerations omit any question of intervention by the United Nations or other international organisations. The question of this intervention was considered by the Inter-Departmental Unit in their July Report. The Unit concluded that there was not much hope of practical help from this direction.

16. In these circumstances, the Taoiseach considers that the line to be taken with the SDLP delegation on ²²~~19~~th November should be on the basis of the decision by the Government in relation to his meeting with Mr. Wilson on 11th September i.e. that the SDLP should not be encouraged to think in terms of military intervention from here. It might, he considers, be pointed out to them, if they press the point, that circumstances require that the threat of Southern intervention in the North, in co-operation with the British Army or otherwise, is at its most potent if kept in the background as an implication rather than expressed verbally or by action. Northern loyalists fear this intervention and must bear it in mind, in their policies, as a contingency, as we do. The reality of intervention, if it did come about, could be less fatal for them - and more fatal for any aspiration to unity - than a continuation of present policy. The exercise of overt threats of Southern military involvement could well create such involvement - and would seem, in any event, to run directly counter to the strategy of "splitting the Unionist monolith. Such threats only solidify that monolith. Further, the hope of intervention in a substantial way from the South is the basis of much of the IRA campaign. To give this hope substance by using it in any election or other campaign is only to give further support to the IRA. It is only by

understanding the futility, at best, and the catastrophic nature of the consequences of such intervention, that the theoretical backing for the IRA strategy and the continuance of their campaign of violence can be weakened. The assassination campaign has revealed their fatal weakness as "protectors".

17. It might well be mentioned that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Lynch, holds similar views on the question of Army intervention in Northern Ireland. In a radio interview on Sunday, 30th June, 1974, he said -

Mr. Lynch: "We just don't have the resources. We haven't got sufficient troops. We haven't got sufficient arms and if there were such a situation I believe that we would have to seriously contemplate the engagement of United Nation forces because that is after all the purpose of the United Nations, to avoid conflict, to avoid crisis situations that would lead to conflict and I think the United Nations then would have a role to play if the British wanted to withdraw, if they declared there was a withdrawal they could no longer maintain the position they maintained of the United Nations charter and we went to the United Nations in 1969/1970 asking for some intervention. The British under the charter said this is our territory, therefore we don't want a United Nation intervention. The United Nations were then obliged not to interfere. I think a contrary situation would apply if Britain did withdraw but however, that is something that would have to be examined.

Olivia O'Leary: Would you force the issue by, for instance, taking over Border towns?

Mr. Lynch: That is a question I couldn't answer in the present circumstances. I believe it would be wrong policy by forcing the issue, taking over border towns. If we try to do that. Some people may have suggested that from time to time. You must remember the thousands of Catholics who are living in ghettos in Belfast surrounded by thousands of Protestants, many many more thousands of protestants, loyalists, many of whom are known to have arms and I think it would be a very serious situation for these people in these ghettos."

18. The SDLP are a dispirited Party and the way in which the message suggested in paragraph 16 is got across will need careful consideration. It could be that the Party could

break up - leaving the minority without representation or with representation only through other and perhaps more violent groupings. Another possibility is that the Party may not contest the Convention elections next Spring. The Government may wish to have certain considerations before them when dealing with this possibility.

19. The Convention elections next Spring are likely to produce a Loyalist majority. The Convention could then -
- (1) go about its business to reach conclusions on the basis of a power-sharing administration. The greatest obstacle to this is the Loyalist insistence that they will not share power with "Republicans";
 - (2) attempt to form an administration without power-sharing but still within the United Kingdom;
 - (3) declare its intention of seeking "independence for Ulster" either with or without the agreement of the Governments concerned;
 - (4) prove utterly abortive and break up, without any conclusions or recommendations.
20. The first of these options is the best, so far as we are concerned and the Taoiseach considers that policy should obviously be directed to achieving it, as far as we in the South can influence events. An important obstacle to power-sharing is the insistence on an Irish dimension being expressed in some institutional form. On this, it is worth recalling that the Taoiseach and the Leader of the Opposition have said repeatedly that the unity of Ireland is to be achieved only by peaceful means and with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. The requirement of the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland to unification implies, a fortiori, consent of that majority to the institutions by which they will be governed. After the violence of recent years it is unlikely that this consent will be forthcoming at any bargaining table over the next few years. It must be earned - not extorted. It may be that the SDLP are using the requirement of an institutional expression of the Irish dimension as a bargaining counter but insistence on it in

the teeth of violent Loyalist opposition may well produce the same result as earlier this year - when opposition to the concept of a Council of Ireland destroyed the power-sharing Executive.

21. The SDLP are also apparently using their attitude to policing and the RUC as a further bargaining counter. This is not a matter in which the Irish Government are directly concerned in the same way as they are in relation to the Irish dimension. It is noteworthy, however, that the SDLP attitude, which may not be supported by all members of that Party equally, is a point of considerable grievance - even bitterness - on the Loyalist side. This may well be what the SDLP want and it is for them to decide their policy but the question of whether their attitude is counter-productive in present circumstances would need careful consideration.
22. On the second possibility mentioned in paragraph 18, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Wilson, has stressed again and again, in his discussions with the Taoiseach, that legislation in Westminster would be necessary to give legitimacy to the conclusions of the Convention. Mr. Wilson has said that neither he nor his Government, nor indeed any Party in Westminster, other than the Ulster Unionists, would contemplate legislation to set up an administration in Northern Ireland which was not based on power-sharing.
23. On the third option, Mr. Wilson has said that between now and the Convention election they will be putting up a "barrage" of facts, figures and argument to indicate the lack of viability of an independent Ulster. He has stressed the interest of the British Government, constitutionally, in seeing that, in fact, "Ulster" does not become independent because, as he has indicated, this would be a precedent for the break-up of the United Kingdom. In these circumstances, it does not seem likely that any move towards independence would receive

much encouragement from the British. The only way it could come about, on a present view of possibilities, would be in opposition to their wishes. This would have the most serious consequences for Northern Ireland not only from the financial point of view in that they would lose the £400 million or so they at present get annually from the British Exchequer, but they could well face insurmountable difficulties when they came to seek recognition from the European Economic Community, United Nations and other international bodies. This is altogether apart from the question of whether the area would be viable at all, as an economic unit in modern conditions - any more than, say, on a different scale, the Aran Islands. These questions are being considered in more detail by the Inter-Departmental Unit on Northern Ireland, following the Government decision of 18th July, 1974, that detailed studies be made of the implications of negotiated repartition and of negotiated independence for Northern Ireland.

24. The ^{fourth} ~~third~~ possibility - an abortive Convention - would, at best, lead to a continuation of direct rule. It is, however, impossible to conceive of this being maintained, in its present form, for an indefinite period. Even without the experience to date, which bears out this conclusion, first principles would indicate the impossibility of governing an area like Northern Ireland without effective participation from the people of the area. If, therefore, direct rule were to continue, it would be likely to require a form of supporting administration which would draw on representatives elected from the area. The representatives elected to the prorogued Assembly may well be regarded, even now, as having lost their mandate. It is more than likely, therefore, that any attempt to form an administration, if it could be undertaken at all, would be based on the representatives elected at the Convention elections. If the SDLP do not participate in these elections they may well - as they may wish - stultify any efforts to get

representative local administration in Northern Ireland.

The Taoiseach considers also that it might well be wise at the meeting on Friday with the SDLP to ask them to try to concentrate their minds on what happens if the Convention breaks down - or, is not held because of non-participation by them. The failure of the Convention could well give an impetus to the British desire to get out - if it did not constitute the final push. The Government themselves may well be in a better position to discuss the matter when they have before them the reports of the IDU on the question of repartition, negotiated or other independence for Northern Ireland, treatment of refugees etc. on which the Unit is at present working.

25. This memorandum does not consider in detail the question of a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, which is dealt with in Discussion Paper No. 2 of the IDU. Such withdrawal, if it comes about, is not likely to be undertaken over a long time or with suitable periods of notice being given by the British. If it happens, it is most likely to happen suddenly and -
- (1) the different groups, each in their own area, would attempt to establish their own superiority, with bloodshed and suffering on a massive scale. The reference by Mr. John Taylor, in a recent speech, to the need to "remove Republican agitators from Ulster soil" is expressive of this feeling;
 - (2) the disruption would not be confined to assassination and fighting but could be extended to essential services, cut off so as to starve or freeze the population out of particular areas; and
 - (3) violence would not be confined to Northern Ireland but would almost certainly extend to the South and, perhaps with less certainty, to British cities.
26. Copies of this memorandum have been sent to the Departments of Defence, Finance and Foreign Affairs.
27. The Taoiseach seeks the agreement of his colleagues in the Government to pursuing the lines of policy outlined in paragraphs 17, 20 and 24, in the forthcoming meeting with the SDLP and in dealing with the problem of Northern Ireland generally. He will also wish to discuss the question of the Government delegation to meet the SDLP.