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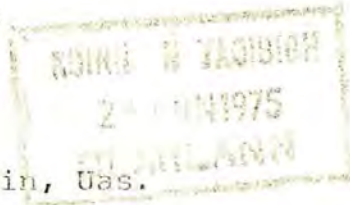


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ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ATHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

27 August, 1975



D. Ó Súilleabháin, Uas.
Secretary
Department of the Taoiseach

Taoiseach 27/8

The Minister has asked that a copy of a report of his discussion with Mr. Callaghan together with a note used as a basis for discussion be forwarded for the information of the Taoiseach.

Seán Donlon
Assistant Secretary

Note by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. G. FitzGerald of his Discussion with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Rt. Hon. James Callaghan 22.30 - 23.35 Saturday 23rd August 1974

We were invited to dine with the Secretary of State and Mrs. Callaghan at the house of his daughter and son-in-law, Peter Jay, in Glandore, together with the Leader of the Opposition and Mrs. Lynch.

After dinner the Secretary of State broached the question of Northern Ireland asking how we saw future developments there - how would the situation be there in five years' time!

The Leader of the Opposition led off with his analysis - not much hope of success at the Convention, and a very uncertain situation afterwards, in view of the strength of the para-militaries.

I agreed with his analysis.

The Secretary of State asked what we thought the British Government should do. I analysed the situation since the UWC strike, noting that the British Government seemed to have opted for a policy of creating uncertainty about the future, with a view to inducing realism on the part of the politicians - a policy that was necessarily uncertain in its impact, but which was perhaps forced on the British Government by the credibility problem created by the outcome of the UWC strike.

The Secretary of State said that he had disagreed with the handling of the Strike; the British Government should not have given in to the strikers, but should have sat it out.

I said that agreement on a system of power-sharing was unlikely to emerge in present circumstances, because the elected representatives of the majority section of the community believe that they can secure complete control of internal self-government by rejecting all alternatives; they count on a presumed lack of firm commitment

the British Government and/or Opposition to the existing policy of permitting internal self-government only on a power-sharing basis. The necessary pre-condition for acceptance of power-sharing in government by the elected representatives of the majority section of the community is thus likely to be the emergence of compelling evidence that the commitment of the British Government to this policy, and to the maintenance of law and order in Northern Ireland, is firm, and will be maintained for so long as may be necessary.

Peter Jay seemed to doubt whether the British Government could govern Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State dissented from this doubt.

I stressed the problem that would be created for us should there be a failure by the British Government to maintain control of the situation in Northern Ireland and to protect the minority. I said that this would pose a very great problem for us in view of the pressure that would then come on the Irish Government to take action to protect the minority, especially in East Ulster, which was beyond our power. The situation that could thus be created might be highly dangerous. Intervention by the Irish Army could not resolve the situation, and such a failure would threaten democratic government in the Republic - as could a refusal by the Irish Government to let the Army intervene.

The Secretary of State queried this. I pointed out the situation that had arisen after Derry, when mobs out of control burnt the British Embassy. In the kind of Doomsday Situation we were envisaging the position in the Republic could be much more serious. The Leader of the Opposition concurred with this, mentioning the problems he had faced in 1969. I referred to the danger to Britain and north-west Europe that could be posed by a vacuum throughout Ireland - a situation in which extra-European powers such as the Soviet Union, China or Libya could meddle.

Peter Jay asked whether there had been such interference to date. I replied that apart from the Libyan affair there had not been, so far as I was aware, significant interference.

Peter Jay queried the possibility of joint action by the British and Irish Armies in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State confirmed that this was a possibility in certain circumstances.

The Secretary of State said that the British Government would take the necessary action to deal with a doomsday situation; it would not abdicate its responsibilities.

Pressed by him as to how a political solution could be secured, I said that, given the general expectation that the British Government would not maintain its position, if it became apparent after the failure of the Convention that the British Government would stand firm, the Loyalist politicians would in time come to accept that the only way they could secure power in Northern Ireland would be accepting power-sharing.

Peter Jay asked would they not be deterred from this by the risk of being assassinated. I said that while politicians in Northern Ireland on both sides had shown themselves very sensitive to pressure of public opinion from within their own section of the community, they had not shown themselves to be easily intimidated; no one easily intimidated would have stayed in politics in Northern Ireland.

I pointed out, however, the problem posed for democratic politics in the North by the fact that the failure of the Convention could lead very quickly to a situation in which its members would cease to be paid, thus making it difficult for moderate politicians to remain active in politics. The Secretary of State's first reaction to this was one of amusement, but when I pressed the seriousness of the situation that could result, he accepted the point.

I pointed out that the balance of armed force in Ireland had moved in an adverse direction over the years. Since 1970 the paramilitaries had gained greatly in strength, possibly to a total of 20-25,000. In addition the new forces created by the British Government to replace the B Specials, which the Secretary of State had abolished, (viz. the UDR and RUC Reserve) had grown to 14,000 - more than the size of the expanded Irish Army. Whatever about the RUC itself, which seemed to prefer to stay out of politics and which might remain neutral until it saw who was going to win, these forces could not be relied on and would be likely to support the loyalists. The UDR, members of which were involved in the Miami ambush, were regarded by Vanguard as a force at their disposal - a fact which they did not bother to conceal from us.

By contrast the British Army strength had been sharply reduced, and the Irish Army, though 50% larger than five years ago, was still very small at 12,500. It could not be increased to a level that would afford us adequate security in a critical situation save by exceptional methods that would be likely to be seen as provocative in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State challenged this, saying that we could increase our Army to 20,000 without having this effect. I contested this, pointing out that an increase of that magnitude could not be secured by normal recruitment, but only by calling up reserves or by introducing some form of conscription, either of which could provoke a reaction in the North. The Secretary of State did not further contest the point.

The Secretary of State remarked that it was a mistake to have allowed the forces replacing the B Specials, which had numbered 8,000 to exceed 4,000. I agreed, saving that 14,000 was grossly excessive and highly dangerous.

There was some discussion about arms. The Secretary of State asked what was the position about arms in the Republic. I said that we had called in rifles etc. hoping thereby to encourage similar action by the British Government in Northern Ireland, which had not, however, taken place.

The Secretary of State then asked whether if, in the face of the kind of situation we envisaged, the British Government re-introduced internment for both sides, what would our reaction be? I said that in view of the unfortunate history of internment in Northern Ireland in 1971, when it was introduced in a one-sided way and with much brutality, designed to extort information from people who were not members of the IRA, this was a very difficult question. However, if we were faced by a doomsday situation and by a determination by the British Government to deal with it, and, if the situation were seen by the public in this light, I thought we could support this action - although this was very much a personal view. Maureen Lynch expressed a doubt as to whether Fianna Fail could support such a stand, and the Leader of the Opposition tentatively echoed this. However, when I re-stated the issue in the terms set out above, stressing the importance of how the issue was presented, he said that he thought that in those circumstances Fianna Fail could support such action.

The Secretary of State remarked that the whole Northern Ireland issue might have been resolved if Whitelaw had succeeded him immediately - a reference to the Maudling interlude of eighteen months. The Leader of the Opposition and myself agreed on the damage done by the Maudling period.

The Secretary of State asked what our reaction would be if, in the worst case, a transfer of the 200,000 in East Ulster to the Republic were organised, with adequate finance by the British Government. I replied that this would be unworkable and unacceptable in a north-west European situation. It would lead to a situation like Cyprus

or the Middle East, which could last thirty or fifty years, placing the security of Britain as well as Ireland at risk throughout such a period.

Maureen Lynch raised the question of a Statement of Intent. The Leader of the Opposition said that if the matter were being considered rationally, there could be a case for this, but that it would be dangerous in the present unstable and emotional atmosphere. I concurred with this.

At the end the Secretary of State mentioned his membership of the 'Irish Committee' of the Cabinet - I had a feeling that he was a bit unhappy either about it not meeting or about not having been able to attend it. He said the Cabinet would have to consider all these issues if the Convention broke down.

The Secretary of State speculated aloud - semi-humorously as to whether it might not be better for him to be Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Leader of the Opposition and myself indicated acquiescence in this proposition.

I feel that:

1. The Secretary of State is convinced of the importance of Britain staying and making a stand against the Protestant para-militaries, though he is conscious of the great difficulty for an Army of facing in two directions.
2. That we significantly reinforced this view with arguments put forward concerning the danger to Britain as well as Ireland should Britain not fulfil its responsibilities in Northern Ireland.

3. That as a last resort he has considered the 'repartition' solution with exchange of populations.