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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

Rúnaí

*Head at your leisure
Dn/s*

As the Department of Foreign Affairs have pointed out in their paper for this morning's Government meeting, the murder of Lord Mountbatten and the other members of his party and the killing of the British soldiers at Warrenpoint are having a very adverse effect in Northern Ireland, in Britain and internationally. We need to do whatever we can to ~~account~~^{offset} for the adverse effects on the international image of Ireland and to defuse the anger in the North, so as to deflect, as far as possible, any reprisals that may be under consideration by Loyalist Para-Military organisations. As pointed out by Foreign Affairs, the British are likely to press for further specific innovations in the security field - or at least to brief their media that they are so pressing. The view hitherto here has been that most of the innovations they have suggested present major difficulties of a constitutional or practical nature. We may be able to announce certain changes of an operational nature but these are unlikely to have any major impact on public opinion in the North or in Britain.

There have been suggestions ^{from} that a national Day of Mourning, presumably on the lines of that declared following the Bloody Sunday killings in Derry. This is scarcely appropriate for a number of reasons. However, I would like to reiterate my suggestion that the Government might consider an informal approach to the Catholic Church authorities for the ~~delegation~~^{declaration} of a national Day of Mourning or ~~atonement~~^A on a forthcoming Sunday, possibly even next Sunday. This would be seen as quite suitable ~~for~~ the context of the forthcoming visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, for which the Church already has an extensive programme of preparation. If the initiative came from the Church - which, of course, is organised on a 32 County basis - the difficulty of apparent admission of association with the Warrenpoint killings which could be involved in any Day of Mourning declared by the State here would not rise. Obviously, it would be desirable, if at all possible, if any such day could be announced and held on an inter-~~change~~^{church} or ecumenical basis throughout the whole country, North and South. One could have some hope that a major national gesture of this sort would go far towards off-setting or deflecting the adverse effects to which I refer above.

*Tánaiste
did not
pass on
message in
approach*

Dn/s

W. Kiernan

28th August, 1979