

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Reference Code:	2021/51/561
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Section, Box

Courtesy Call on the Taoiseach by Ambassador Jean Kennedy - Smith, 10.30 am, 3 July, 1997

Pl. cc Section Rv 8/7

Ambassador Smith thanked the Taoiseach for seeing her and noticing the portrait of John Redmond, asked if the Taoiseach would be keeping the portrait in his room. The Taoiseach replied that he didn't think that he would, but he had a certain admiration for John Redmond. He was an admirer of Lemass and Parnell. Particularly Lemass because he was responsible for hugely significant developments in the sixties, such as industrial development, inward investment and our application to join the European Economic Community. Subsequent Taoisigh had built on his initiatives.

Today's meeting with Prime Minister Blair is to determine what progress can be achieved. On Drumcree there has been no give on either side. There has been no progress in the last year. The North report has not had any statutory underpinning and there has been no dialogue between the parties.

The Taoiseach continued that he had met the Orange Order and the residents of Garvaghy Road and he believed there was no hope of dialogue or accommodation. The Secretary of State had genuinely tried but will have to impose a solution. The situation is very dangerous because hard-liners from the LVF have joined , and are now members of , the local lodges.

The Ambassador asked if Sinn Féin was pushing the situation and the Taoiseach replied that, even if this were the case, everybody in the community supports the stand against the parades. The residents are totally united. The previous British Government should have been making efforts to move the situation forward last November/December. These last minute efforts should not be necessary now.

If a parade is forced through the Garvahy Rd. nationalist areas will erupt. If there is no parade there will be Loyalist violence. The best solution would probably be to re-route. There is not going to be a compromise. If a parade is forced through it will up the ante on the Ormeau Rd. and in Derry.

If we get through this period the talks process will move. Sinn Féin are writing to Quentin Thomas looking for clarification on key issues, particularly decommissioning. If this letter can be answered satisfactorily and if we get through these weeks, progress can be made. There is a good opportunity, but it would be better if the situation was not so difficult at this time. It would be premature to say that there is a good chance of a ceasefire now. The Mitchell Report was based on confidence and voluntary decommissioning. Decommissioning should not be insisted upon.

The Ambassador raised the issue of Articles 2 and 3. The Taoiseach said that the two Governments must look at the bigger picture. There was an understanding on Articles 2 and 3 with the previous British Government and this would still apply. Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. An overall settlement would be put to the people , North and South , at the same time. As part of an overall settlement ,the need for constitutional change has been agreed by the Fianna Fáil party. The May deadline for the conclusion of talks would appear to be optimistic.

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The Taoiseach was not overly impressed by the British Prime Minister's Belfast speech , though some aspects were positive. Talk of devolution in the Scottish or Welsh mould is not applicable in Northern Ireland. The SDLP also support this position.

We will be working through, in the next few months, where we would like to end up. This will not be just a Nationalist consensus. We will talk to other parties, including the Alliance Party and the British Government.

The Ambassador asked if there was a danger of a split in the IRA.

The Taoiseach did not see a danger of a split. However there will be a disaffected rump. He believes that Mr. Adams and Mr. McGuinness are very much in charge.

The Irish Government are trying to avoid major difficulties with the British Government. However we just cannot live with a forced march on the Garvaghy Road. If the British Government make reasonable efforts they will receive the support of the Irish Government. We have no information on what they will do. Both he and the Minister for Foreign Affairs refrained from giving interviews since they spoke on Tuesday. He does not want to up the ante.

The Taoiseach said that he had a lot of contact with the Orange Order in the last six months and while he thought that they may seem like reasonable people they also have their extremists.

There was a brief discussion of the Harryville situation with the Taoiseach and the Ambassador expressing their belief that the local Clergy had handled the situation well.

The Ambassador was accompanied by Mr. Dick Norland at the meeting.

Paul Mc Garry
3 July, 1997.

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