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British Embassy  
Dublin

Despatch No.6.

29 November, 1966

Sir,

Valedictory Despatch.

Now that I am leaving Dublin after nearly three years, it may be helpful if I try to assess some of the very interesting developments which have occurred during this period in Anglo-Irish relations and in the balance and direction of politics as a whole in the Irish Republic.

2. Between the Republic and ourselves there is now greater respect and understanding than for a very long time. Across the Border, closer co-operation has become an object of Government policy both North and South. The sudden upsurge of militant anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland under the influence of the Reverend Ian Paisley has put a stop for the moment to open Ministerial exchanges, but I feel confident that this will only be a temporary setback. Nothing very dramatic has been achieved as a result of the many contacts between Northern and Southern Ministers and officials, but the barriers previously dividing opposite numbers are down and the habit of looking for areas of mutual interest has been established.

3. There is no reason to suppose that the recent resignation of Mr. Lemass from the office of Taoiseach and the succession of Mr. Lynch, formerly Minister for Finance, will affect the policy of the present Government in regard to North-South co-operation or friendship with Britain. Mr. Lynch is well disposed towards us, he shares Mr. Lemass's realistic attitude to economic problems and, being a much younger man, he should be even less inhibited than his predecessor by traditional animosities, which can still at times bedevil the handling of issues between the two countries.

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The Rt. Hon. Herbert Bowden, C.B.E., M.P.,  
Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs,  
Commonwealth Office,  
London, S.W.1.

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4. From the Northern point of view, the significance of the historic meeting at Stormont between Captain O'Neill and Mr. Lemass, on the credit side, was that for the first time the Republic had given practical recognition to the administration in Northern Ireland as a Government to be dealt with, and had by implication tacitly accepted both that Partition would last for a long time and that, if it were ever to be ended, this would have to be through friendship rather than hostility. On the debit side, die-hards in the North saw this new, deliberate rejection of traditional hatreds as a sinister threat to Ulster's constitutional safeguards. Immediately hostile reaction to Captain O'Neill's cordial gestures was forestalled by his clear public assurance that nothing but practical neighbourliness was intended and that there would be no tampering with Northern Ireland's position as part of the United Kingdom. But there were rumblings of anxiety among the Unionists. There developed in the North a suspicion that Captain O'Neill was too much of an idealist, that in preaching the brotherhood of man, and equality of rights even between Catholics and Protestants, he was going altogether too far and too fast. Some people there began to say that O'Neill was not really one of them. He was an aristocrat, an old Etonian and had served in the Brigade of Guards. He was a little detached from the ordinary people of the North. He was also secretive and there was no knowing how much further he would commit them without really sounding out the opinion of the man in the street. Ecumenism had already deeply disturbed the Protestant community as a whole, but especially in the North, where they had been brought up for generations not so much on Protestantism as on anti-Catholicism. Captain O'Neill had made a point of having Catholic priests on the platform with him on public occasions and this had shocked them even more than the kiss of peace between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope. Was he the right man to lead the Unionist Party?

5. At this moment the Reverend Ian Paisley began to be taken seriously. Reporting on these matters is not within my province but it is impossible to give a balanced picture of the present state of North-South relations without including Paisley in the assessment. According to newspaper report and comment, Paisley's antics, and the fact that he had inspired, whether wittingly or not, the

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formation of a militant force of Ulster Protestants with a programme of violence, were condemned by decent Northern Protestants. But the uncomfortable impression remained that he was striking a responsive chord deep down in non-Catholic Ulstermen. Originally trained for the Presbyterian Ministry, he had parted company with the main community to set up his own independent Free Presbyterian Church with the object of organising a more effective defence of Protestantism against the inroads of Catholicism than the established Protestant communities seemed capable of doing. So, whatever follies he might perpetrate, his heart was in the right place. When he was imprisoned for unlawful assembly his followers tried to set him up as a martyr. One woman testified that her husband, having mocked Paisley, had lost the use of his legs. There was good reason to fear that when Paisley was released Captain O'Neill's leadership would be severely tested.

6. Meanwhile, in the South, the main reaction to these developments was one of contempt. One Southern journalist spoke of the "sordid face of Ulster Protestantism" now being laid bare. Many feared that Protestant violence in the North might lead to counter-violence, first in the North and then in the South. Happily, Catholic and nationalist reaction in the North has been surprisingly restrained and these fears have proved unfounded. Some, including the Republican Minister for External Affairs himself, profess to draw encouragement from the Paisley phenomenon, as a sign that there is a movement of opinion in the North away from communal hatred, a movement which the reactionaries are trying to stem. All liberal movements have produced their episodes of violent reaction, they say. The hope has also been expressed in Dublin newspapers that religious and political discrimination, now exposed, as they put it, in the searchlights of the world, will somehow compel the British Government to intervene in Northern Ireland with results that could, in the estimation of this group, only be favourable to the eventual reunification of Ireland.

7. Paradoxically, despite the increasingly critical view taken in the South of what they see as imperfections in the North, it is fair to say that for most political observers in the Republic Captain O'Neill's stock is

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very high. Although his party stands for continuing union with Britain, he appears increasingly to thinking people in the Republic as the Northern leader most likely to break down communal prejudice, which he himself abominates as a negative and destructive force in Northern Ireland, and which the Southern Irish see as the main obstacle to Irish reunification. There was accordingly much anxiety in Dublin when divisions in the Unionist Party, sharpened by Paisleyism, led recently to a serious challenge to Captain O'Neill's leadership, and his emergence from this crisis with the Unionist Party re-united behind him was greeted with relief. There is respect here for Mr. Brian Faulkner, who was assumed to be the alternative leader, but less faith, from the Republican standpoint, in his alleged pragmatism than in the idealism attributed to Captain O'Neill. But Republican sympathy for Captain O'Neill is beginning now to be tempered perhaps by a certain impatience; they will expect his good neighbourly policy to show results in some form or another before long, such as, for example, in the abolition of certain inequalities of local representation between the Catholics and Protestants, or in the redrawing of constituency boundaries.

8. So far as Anglo-Irish relations are concerned, the first important development from the Irish point of view was the coming to power of the Labour Government. The Labour Party had always been thought more sympathetic to Irish problems than the Conservatives, and in any case they were, of course, politically opposed to the Unionists representing Northern Ireland at Westminster. There was some disposition to believe that the new Government would move the official British position on Partition some way at least in the direction desired by the Irish, but the Government in Dublin were clearly told that the British Government's position remained unchanged and that they would maintain an attitude of benevolent detachment until such time as North and South might come to them with an agreed scheme for Irish reunification.

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9. Then there was the negotiation of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement. Seen against the historic background, this seemed an almost unbelievable development. It was initiated by Mr. Lemass himself on the basis of a hard, cold assessment of the Republic's own material interests. The danger of economic isolation outside an all-European coalition had been recognised for some time, and simultaneous entry into the European Economic Community with Britain had been judged best because only thus would the Republic have a chance of retaining its specially advantageous trading arrangements with Britain. The Free Trade Area was specifically shaped to make possible the entry of the Republic into the European Community on these terms.

10. The political opposition in the Republic, led by Fine Gael, attacked the Government for not securing enough safeguards for the smaller Irish industries which were bound to go to the wall when the Agreement was in full force. They complained that the Government had, with reprehensible light-heartedness, committed the comparatively new and small industrial complex of the Republic to what could only prove to be overwhelming competition from their infinitely greater and more powerful industrial rivals in Britain. In general, however, industry in the Republic has given the Agreement a favourable reception, realising that sacrifices which will have to be made in the ten years allowed under the Agreement with Britain would in any case have to be made within a shorter period if Ireland's target of entry into Europe by 1970 were to be achieved. But the prospect of smaller industries going under will not be accepted by the present Government, with its slender majority, without a fight, as it makes them vulnerable in any bye-elections which may be held in sensitive industrial areas. The two Opposition parties, Fine Gael and Labour, say they will not form a coalition, so that bogey no longer threatens the Government, but Fine Gael, with a new, progressive, liberal manifesto, have lately made great progress with the electorate, as shown in the results of the Presidential election (see my Despatch No.5) and they may run Fianna Fail very close at the next General Election. Even if they came to power,

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however, there is no reason to fear that they would renudiate the Free Trade Area Agreement.

11. Lately the agricultural community in the Republic have begun to think that the Free Trade Area Agreement was over-sold to them by the Minister of Agriculture (as indeed it was) and he and the Government are currently under fire because Irish farmers have not reaped the immediate benefits he is thought to have promised them, but there is no general suggestion in industry or agriculture that the Agreement is bad for the Republic. In our estimation it is likely to bring a substantial increase of trade both ways, in excess of the rate of increase already recorded between 1959 and 1963, which was from approximately £100 million to £170 million in each direction.

12. The Republican extremists were foreseeably critical of the Agreement. The reaction of Sinn Fein was that, like the meeting at Stormont, it represented a betrayal of the Republican cause. They would have no truck with a peaceful, constitutional approach to the reunification of Ireland; uncompromising hostility to Britain was the only policy so long as the Border remained. They are without political representation at present, but are expected to make a big effort at the next General Election.

13. Meanwhile, the I.R.A., the militant arm of Sinn Fein, had carried out a number of acts of violence or protest against visiting British warships, against the visit of Princess Margaret and her husband to their relations in the Republic, against a holiday visit by some boy soldiers from the North, in fact against anything happening in the Republic which had to do with the British Armed Forces or the British Crown. This was in full accordance with what was known by the Irish Special Branch of current I.R.A. directives. At Easter this year, when the 50th Anniversary of the Rising was celebrated, I.R.A. violence was expected but none occurred. It appears that the I.R.A. leadership was anxious to play a leading part in the ceremonies and not to disturb their solemnity. There were some acts of violence during this time, including the throwing of a

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fire bomb into the house of my Military Attaché, but it seems that none of these was attributable to any organised group. Nevertheless the I.R.A. are said to retain a substantial membership and to be able to field 2,000 of their number with arms. The Governments, North and South, still take massive precautions whenever they think I.R.A. activity to be likely, and they keep in touch across the Border in dealing with this common threat.

14. In the Republic it is still the Government's policy to let the I.R.A. "wither on the vine" through lack of excuse for the "martyrdom" which they still believe will best advance their cause. These superannuated revolutionaries are still dangerous, but support for them is insignificant. They have been left behind. It is in our interest to co-operate with the Irish authorities so far as possible in avoiding unnecessary activities or visitations which would be bound to give the I.R.A. the spectacular opportunities they need if their recruitment, and indeed their membership, are to be maintained.

15. The very fact that the Free Trade Area Agreement has been concluded with the traditional enemy has the effect of counteracting such anti-British feeling as remains, apart always from the professional extremists. The removal of tension between North and South also helps in the same way. The British Government for their part have assisted this process very considerably by sending back the remains of Sir Roger Casement. The credit gained for us by this gesture is far greater than anyone at home can possibly imagine without special knowledge of the Irish scene. Our ready agreement to return from the Imperial War Museum, for the 50th Anniversary Easter Celebrations, the Republican flag which flew over the G.P.O. in Dublin at the beginning of the Easter Rising in 1916, has paid quite disproportionate dividends in goodwill.

16. A factor which has also greatly helped to improve Anglo-Irish relations is the growing familiarity, friendship and mutual respect between Ministers and senior officials of both countries. Irish Ministers respond warmly to any

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cordial gesture. I hope it may be possible in time to invite each of the senior members of the Irish Cabinet to visit Britain as our guests when suitable occasions present themselves.

17. Another move in the right direction has been the establishment of an Anglo-Irish group of M.Ps in the Inter-Parliamentary Union initiated by the Irish themselves. It should be our aim to exploit this development by expanding contacts between the two Parliaments.

18. Although the Irish as a whole accept that the Border will have to be lived with for a long time, eventual reunification of Ireland will continue to be the main objective of any Government in the South. Every development in Anglo-Irish relations and in co-operation between Northern Ireland and the South will be related in their minds to that ultimate object. Mr. Lemass confessed publicly that he could not see how or when Partition would end, but he thought it possible that some solution might perhaps emerge with the evolution of the European Community. Meanwhile, there is a frank admission on the part of Republican leaders that, apart from the conflict of religions and loyalties, the wide difference in social services between North and South is a formidable obstacle which must somehow be crossed if any progress is to be made. For example, fees are charged in virtually all secondary schools in the Republic, and only primary education is free. All schools are run by religious bodies of one denomination or another. The Government in Dublin have lately fore-shadowed a most ambitious scheme which will offer free education up to University level for all who cannot afford to pay for it, by the end of next year. The new Taoiseach has announced that education is to be given special priority. Some months earlier the Irish Minister for Health had announced that the Government were to introduce a State health scheme which, though far short of national health arrangements in the United Kingdom, would go some way to narrowing the gap. These changes are long overdue in the Republic on general grounds but I am certain that the immediate motive here is the Irish Government's determination to reduce as quickly as possible the differential between North and South.

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19. The comparatively new concentration of Fianna Fail political effort on social improvement is also motivated to some extent by the recent adoption by Fine Gael, the main hitherto traditionally conservative opposition party, of an entirely new liberal platform. This was obviously a deliberate attempt to get away from the old Civil War basis of Irish politics and to create a recognisable political image which would be attractive to young people with a progressive outlook. This switch caused deep unrest amongst the older members of Fine Gael but the party has closed its ranks behind the new leaders and its dissatisfied veterans have either removed themselves from the political scene or have acquiesced in their party's new look. Both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are now vying with each other in their appeal to youth.

20. Meanwhile, the Labour Party, whose thunder was being progressively stolen by the other two parties, has recently declared its intention, for the first time, to field a candidate in every constituency at all future elections. At the recent annual conference of the Party, Dr. Noel Browne, the famous former Minister for Health in Mr. Costello's Coalition Government, who brought down the Government with his controversial "Mother and Child Health Scheme", made a strong attack on the Government's current proposals to impose a measure of control on Trade Unions, saying he saw this as "a most insolent demand on the part of a Tory Government to ask us to make sacrifices in order to bolster up private enterprise capitalism in Ireland, in order to see that minority privileges are perpetuated, and in order to see that the minority continue to send their children to Clongowes, Blackrock and U.C.D.", the last three being the most respectable institutions of Catholic learning in the Republic! Here Dr. Browne, who belongs to the extreme left wing of the party, was reflecting the view now being put forward by Sinn Fein that Fine Gael and Fianna Fail are both Tory parties at heart and that they represent the new commercial ruling middle class in the Republic which is orientated towards Britain because its material interests lie in that direction.

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The picture that these extremists are trying to create, therefore, is that this Anglo-orientated commercial class is now taking the place of the old Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and that it will, in the pursuit of prosperity, destroy Ireland's Republican soul. Dr. Browne told the Conference, and Mr. Corish the Party leader, endorsed what he said, that the electorate was at last realising that today's problems could not be solved in terms of out-of-date political loyalties and that there was an opportunity to base Irish politics no longer on history but on up-to-date political and economic concepts. At the same time, he warned members that the Labour movement was at present grievously handicapped by the fact that many Trade Unionists still supported political parties which were opposed to Trade Unionism, instead of supporting the Labour Party.

21. This was all very true, but the fact remains that the labour movement in Southern Ireland, which ought logically to provide the alternative to the kind of government that both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael can offer, is sadly devoid of political talent or experience. Irishmen as a whole, in whatever walk of life, are fundamentally conservative in outlook, and this, combined with the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, has tended to deny to the labour movement the kind of support that it normally gets in other countries. The party made some small advances in the last General Election and may make a greater impression in the next, but it is difficult to foresee them gaining enough strength within the next few years to pose a serious challenge. In the foreseeable future, therefore, with no very clear distinction between the two major parties, we can expect domestic politics in the Irish Republic to continue to be based on personality and performance rather than on fundamental political or economic factors.

22. When I first came to Dublin in 1949, the Republic had been newly formed, every official speech began with a violent diatribe against Britain and no-one with any political pretensions dared be less than orthodox about the sanctity of the Irish language. Twice in three years the Embassy

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was bombed by the I.R.A.. The police knew the men who were responsible and where they might be taken, but no arrest was made. Seen against the political background of that time, this was no more than we expected. It has been most interesting for me to come back to Dublin after an interval of 14 years, and to serve as Ambassador at a time when the Republic has noticeably moved closer to Britain.

23. The main impression I take away is that the Southern Irish are growing up. The old men, who lived on their bitter memories, have nearly all gone, and the young men for the most part have begun to recognise and accept the facts of life. The new realism is reflected in general acceptance that the Border will remain for a long time, that Ireland's main hope of greater prosperity lies in greater dependence on the British market and that a policy of closer co-operation with Northern Ireland and Britain is accordingly one of enlightened self-interest. This realism can also be detected in increasing criticism of the present Government's policy on the Irish language. There are many enthusiasts still for the language but there is a growing awareness that the compulsory teaching of it must have a depressing effect on education. The extent of opposition to the confirmation of Mr. De Valera in office for a further term as President, cutting across party lines, was generally interpreted as a vote against the kind of leadership that has in the past tried to establish the separateness of the Irish race by building barriers round it, whether of language, culture or tariff. It can be argued also that the new commonsense can be seen in the choice of Mr. Lynch as Taoiseach rather than either of his two rivals, Mr. Colley or Mr. Haughey. Of these two, the former was De Valera's man, young in years but with the old man's belief in Ireland's Gaelic future. Mr. Haughey represented the hard man of business; ambitious, ruthless and rather cynical. Mr. Lynch, who did not seek office, was persuaded to accept it because he represented the middle way, a decent man whom everyone liked, with a filial respect for Irish tradition and language and a natural hope for Irish reunification.

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With him in charge, Irishmen could be sure that national issues would be weighed and dealt with on their true merits. The most complimentary judgement I can make about the Southern Irish is that this is now what they genuinely seem to want.

I have the honour to be  
Sir,  
Your most obedient, humble Servant,

**(SGD.) G. W. TORY**

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