

CONFIDENTIAL

38

Mr. Le Tocq

Ireland: the R.A.F. Jubilee

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this letter to be copied to the appropriate people in the Ministry of Defence. The incident reported is another instance of the Irish Government's unwillingness to offend extremist opinion.

(R.C.C. Hunt)

16 September, 1968.

cc. with enclosure to: Mr. Rob:

Mr. Allinson ✓

*Ekran PA 21 2/2 25/1
WA 17/9*

*B.u. noted for Mr. Allinson in two weeks. P
12/9.*

Mr. Le Tocq

Any further news on the IRA threat from Dublin?

*W. Allinson
2/x*

Mr. Allinson, WA 8/4

*I have none. P.A.
3/x*

CONFIDENTIAL



British Embassy

Dublin.

3/1
1/3

9 September, 1968

Dear Robert,

I am giving a large party on 13 September in connection with the Golden Jubilee of the R.A.F. The guests include representatives of the very numerous Irishmen who have served in the R.A.F., members of appropriate Embassies, and a number of people who have helped over the welfare of R.A.F. and other British service personnel and pensioners in the Republic.

2. I also invited the Irish Minister of Defence and several leading officers from the Irish services. It would be normal for them to accept, especially as they are all people with whom I am personally on the best of terms; but they have all refused, the refusal having been laid down by the Minister of Defence himself.

3. The explanation does not lie in anything which has happened in this country but in an incident which took place in Northern Ireland some three months ago. The Irish Chief of Staff, General Mac Eoin attended in Belfast a party given by the Air Officer Commanding Scotland and Northern Ireland in order to celebrate the R.A.F. Jubilee; such contacts are normal and reciprocal. On this occasion, however, the General's visit was given considerable publicity and numerous photographs appeared first in British and then in Irish newspapers showing him on friendly if not convivial terms with the military representatives of the former (?)

R.C.C. Hunt, Esq., C.M.G.
Commonwealth Office.

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CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL



- 2 -

enemies of Ireland.

4. The adverse effect of this publicity was considerable. There was widespread hostile comment and a series of questions in the Dail which were uncomfortable for the Minister of Defence and for his Chief of Staff.

5. It has been carefully explained to me in private that the refusal to attend my party is not intended to mark any change in policy or to signify displeasure in any way: it is merely that the Department of Defence cannot at present expose itself to the risk of further adverse criticism.

6. The Irish also point out en passant that the recent subordination of the R.A.F. in Northern Ireland to an area commander hundreds of miles away in Scotland will have led to matters concerning the activities of the area commander, while in Northern Ireland, being handled by people unaware of the delicate relations which exist between the North and South on certain subjects; so that a keen Press Officer may have thought that in giving wide circulation to photographs of General Mac Eoin hob-nobbing with the ancient oppressors he was helping forward the cause of Anglo-Irish relations; whereas in fact he was doing the precise opposite.

7. This is a minor episode and a minor setback; I daresay it will not be long before it is forgotten. But it may be just worth your while to draw attention to it at an appropriate level in the Ministry of Defence.

Andrew Jellicoe

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