

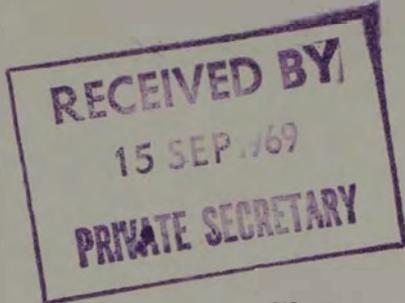
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UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND,
 Conway Hotel,
 Dunmurry, Belfast.

STORMONT CASTLE,
 BELFAST, 4.



13 September, 1969

Sir,

Ulster : September 13, 1969

I have the honour to submit some thoughts on the present situation in Northern Ireland, together with some suggested guidelines for future action. I send them and you will doubtless receive them with many a mental reservation. Events move so swiftly that a day is a long time in Ulster politics and this report could well be overtaken by events while it is still in transit. Moreover the experience of 18 days, since I took up my appointment as the Representative of the United Kingdom Government in Northern Ireland, while doubtless better than nothing, hardly gives me the authority to pronounce upon a problem which has baffled the keenest political minds for centuries. I can only hope that the process of clearing my own mind may be of use to others labouring in the same field.

2. Ulster is essentially a colonial situation. The present Protestant settler majority fears the unimpeded progress to majority rule of an eventual Catholic majority caused by the higher Catholic birthrate. At present the proportions in the electorate are about 65 : 35; already, I am told, the proportions in the primary schools are about 54 : 46. Most people who have given any thought to the subject assume a Catholic majority in about two decades. The Protestant settler majority also fears that the unimpeded progress to Catholic majority rule will mean not only the loss of political power within his own community, but his absorption into the larger society of Southern Ireland, alien in smell, backward in development and inferior in politics. What was the Reformation about if not to liberate political man from the tyranny of priests? It is a major flaw in the Cameron Report that so little credit is given to these fears, which are themselves the basic cause of the grievances which Cameron so scrupulously dissects; a flaw which will inevitably reduce the acceptability of a report otherwise so firm and fair-minded. None other than Mr. Eddie McAteer,

The Right Honourable
 James Callaghan M.P.,
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 London S.W.1.

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the Nationalist leader, has acknowledged this deficiency in his comment on the Report.

3. Moderates on both sides accept the inevitable with varying degrees of acquiescence and for varying reasons. Many Protestants, particularly the well-off, feel that they could live with a Dublin-style regime, particularly one which will have been ventilated and liberalised by two more decades of affluence. Many Catholics want a united Ireland and hope that two more decades of affluence will lift the South up to Northern standards of living and social benefits. Many would be prepared to wait and see, secure in the knowledge that they can always go to Britain or elsewhere if they don't like the future Ireland. Some will be dead anyway when the time comes and want peace and quiet meanwhile.

4. The extremists on both sides are fighting against the inevitable. The Protestant die-hards, of whom the self-styled reverend and doctor, Mr. Ian Paisley, is the natural leader, will fight against the advent of popery by gerry-mandering and discrimination until they are incapacitated by one means or another. The Catholic nationalists and republicans want a united Ireland and claim to want it now; they obtain no satisfaction from orthodox political activity when the prospect of power is two decades away. Since they are powerless to dislodge the Unionist majority, they get their kicks from goading it to the limits of endurance by a refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the state in which they live and earn their living, the person of the Sovereign, or the symbols of crown and flag.

5. The new factor in an old situation seems to be the arrival on the scene of the anarchists. The world-wide phenomenon of revolutionary youth, familiar on the campuses of Berlin, the Sorbonne and Berkeley, has found a base in Queen's University, Belfast and a ready-made field for exploitation in Catholic grievances. "Explosion in Ulster", price one shilling and sixpence, by Devlin and Co. sets it all down in black and white. In an already combustible situation, they provided the spark. They sought to create a revolutionary situation. They nearly succeeded. They may yet do so.

6. The best way to deal with both legitimate grievances and irresponsible activity is to redress the grievances and neutralise the irresponsibility by promoting a more just society in Ulster. (It is perhaps worth mentioning, in parenthesis, that "The Times" leader of 12 September describes these grievances as real, but "towards the bottom of the scale of human injustices".) To

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redress them is the purpose of the programme of reforms to which Her Majesty's Government and the Northern Ireland Government are jointly committed by the Communique of 29 August. But let us make no mistake. This programme of reforms should create in Ulster the same standards of law, order and justice as obtain in other parts of the Realm and it is meet and right that it should do so; but it will also be seen to smooth the way to the inevitability of first Catholic rule in Ulster and then a united Ireland ruled from Dublin and thus to the dismemberment of the Realm itself. Just as the stock market discounts the future trends of the economy, so political activity here is determined by the shape of the future. I believe that the Arabs have a saying that anything can happen except the inevitable. History will decide the future of Ireland. Meanwhile current politics will be governed by what people think the future will be.

7. In the present circumstances, time is needed : time for the Hunt Committee on the police and the Working Groups on jobs, housing and discrimination to report; and time for the necessary administrative and legislative reforms to take effect. The purpose of the extremists on both sides, none of whom wants orderly progress to law, order and justice in Ulster, is to deny time to the moderates on both sides.

8. This brings me to the barricades. The nature and purpose of the Catholic and Protestant barricades are quite different. In the recent disturbances in Belfast, the Catholics were the main sufferers and the Protestants were the main inflictors of suffering. It does not need a Scarmon report to interpret the evidence of one's own eyes. The Catholic barricades are manned for the most part by people who genuinely fear for their lives and property : their fears are however being artificially kept alive by the Catholic extremists who neither want the reforms to succeed nor Stormont to get the credit for them and deliberately kept alive by Protestant hooligans raising fire and hell. The Protestant barricades are largely barricades of protest against the Catholic barricades. They are manned by those who just hate Catholics, by those who prefer the excitements of lawlessness to the dullness of law and order, and by those who, for different reasons, do not wish Stormont to succeed in their reforms.

9. The first, immediate and essential thing is to remove the barricades, principally the Catholic barricades. The re-establishment of law and order is

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the essential pre-requisite to the establishment of justice. Justice is a Catholic interest; the involvement of H.M.G. in the U.K. is their best guarantee of obtaining it. Ideally, this process should be gradual enough and accompanied by enough military protection to reassure the Catholic moderates, but swift enough to take the wind out of the sails of the Protestant extremists. The General Officer Commanding has the almost impossibly difficult and delicate task of navigating between the Scylla of Catholic fears, both real and stimulated, and the Carybdis of Protestant bloody-mindedness.

10. In the last resort, however, force will, in my opinion, have to be used against the Catholic barricades. First because, so long as the barricades remain, a general lawlessness will spread outwards from them and infect ordinary life. Hooligans are already getting out of hand and the police are reluctant to intervene so long as the greater lawlessness of the barricades persists. Certainly this was a consideration uppermost in the minds of the Northern Ireland Cabinet when they met on the afternoon of Friday, 12 September. Secondly because, so long as the barricades remain, the Northern Ireland Government will find it increasingly difficult to contain the wild men in their own Party and among their supporters in the country. Both factors tend to undermine the authority of the Northern Ireland Government. In the last resort, it must suit the Catholics to be clobbered by us if that is the only way we can get justice for them.

11. It seems to me essential however to sustain the authority of the Northern Ireland administration. It is likely that only Stormont has any real prospect of carrying its own people with it as it institutes the reforms to which both Governments are committed. If the authority of the Northern Ireland Government is undermined in the short term, the Northern Ireland Government will fall and H.M.G. will be left without an instrument with which to put the reforms into effect. If the authority of the Northern Ireland Government is undermined in the medium term, H.M.G. will be left with an instrument which, even though it is still in existence, will not have the authority to carry the reforms against the opposition of its extremists. With the possible exception of Mr. Brian Faulkner, none of the present N.I. Government is so fond of power for its own sake that they will cling to office : on the contrary, altogether too many of them would be only too pleased to return to their offices and their farms and leave it to Her Majesty's Government to carry the can.

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12. My conclusions are therefore as follows :

1. The best hope of achieving H.M.G.'s aims for Northern Ireland lies in the programme of reforms to which both H.M.G. and the Northern Ireland Government are committed by the Communique of 29 August.
2. The best instrument for achieving these aims is the Northern Ireland Government itself since it alone, representing and elected by the majority in Ulster, has the reasonable prospect of carrying majority opinion with it.
3. The danger comes from the extremists on both sides; the main danger from the Protestant extremists, since they can exploit majority opinion and have no interest in the success of the reform programme.
4. It follows that our central purpose should be to support the Northern Ireland Government, both to keep the problem of Ulster at arm's length and because they alone can accomplish our joint aims by reasonably peaceful means.
5. This may entail the use of force against the Catholics. Obviously H.M.G. would wish to avoid having to make so repugnant a decision. But it would be the only way of ensuring that Catholic grievances were eventually redressed. H.M.G. might have to be cruel to be kind. And it would be better than the use of force against the Protestant extremists, however repulsive their attitudes and behaviour, since they are the majority community and confrontation with them would fulfil Lord Craigavon's prophecy that the eventual resolution of the Ulster problem would come when the Protestants fought the British Army. And that, I should think, H.M.G. would wish to avoid at almost all costs.

13. If the two Governments get through the present interregnum safely and are able actually to embark on the reforms which they have promised, it would be highly desirable to start a dialogue with the Government in Dublin about the redressal of the grievances of the North against the South. These are as real as the grievances of the Catholics in the North. If one set of grievances is redressed, it would be reasonable to look for a rather more constructive approach to the redressal of the other set.

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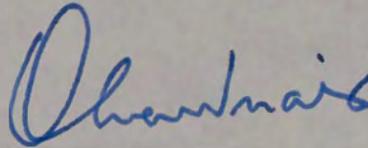
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But that is for the future. Ulster is still what one might call a stone's throw from anarchy.

I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Secretary of State for Defence, the General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland Command, and Her Majesty's Ambassador in Dublin.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
with the highest respect,
Your most obedient Servant,



(Oliver Wright)

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