

COVERING SECRET

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WESTERN EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1



9 May, 1969

*Dear Robin,*

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I enclose a copy of the despatch from H.M. Ambassador Dublin about the Irish Republic and the North, which you may like to have for your personal use.

2. You will see we have upgraded the classification. This is to take account of the sensitivity of the information in paragraph 12(i).

*Yours ever,*

*Christopher*

(C.D. Lush)

R. North, Esq.,  
Home Office,  
General Department,  
Whitehall,  
London, S.W.1.

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BRITISH EMBASSY,

1/6

DUBLIN.

28 April, 1969

SUMMARYTHE IRISH REPUBLIC AND THE NORTH

1. Irish freedom based on violence. (Paragraphs 1 to 3)
2. The quality of the freedom of the bourgeois republic and a comparison with the North. (Paragraph 4).
3. The Irish Government's (secret) sympathy with the Unionist Government in keeping down public disorder, and its (open) sympathy with the Civil Rights demonstrators, because they are Catholics. (Paragraph 5).
4. Influence of the increasingly Marxist Sinn Fein/I.R.A. complex in driving the Irish Government to take up a position in Northern Ireland which will involve support for Civil Rights principles which it rejects in the South. (Paragraphs 6 - 10).
5. How the reluctant Irish Government could be goaded into an active policy. (Paragraph 11).
6. The forms this activity might take, including reference to the United Nations. (Paragraph 12).
7. Some side issues, including a note on Miss Bernadette Devlin's social security benefits. (Paragraph 13).

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BRITISH EMBASSY,  
DUBLIN.

1/6

28 April, 1969

Sir,

THE IRISH REPUBLIC AND THE NORTH

I have the honour to submit the following survey of the present attitude of the Government of the Irish Republic towards recent developments in Northern Ireland.

2. I should like to begin with the statement I heard Mr. Callaghan make at the end of his speech in the Commons on 22 April with regard to violence in Northern Ireland: "Freedom will not grow out of the barrel of a gun". I know very well what the Home Secretary had in mind in making that remark; and yet I was not in the least surprised to hear this comment in a Dublin pub: "And when in holy Ireland did it ever grow out of anything else?"

3. I am sure that if Miss Bernadette Devlin had spoken after instead of before the Home Secretary, she would have made the same point; her brilliant review of the situation in the "Observer" of 27 April is centred round "the gun" and the threat of death. (The longer version of the interview as published in the Irish Independent stresses this morbid aspect even more ).

4. What sort of freedom has grown out of the barrels of the guns of Easter, 1916? The freedom of an easy-  
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The Rt. Hon. Michael Stewart, M.P.  
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going bourgeois republic, socialist in theory but capitalist in practice, growing in prosperity but not backward in corruption, submissive to the Roman Hierarchy in its educational policy and neglectful of its social obligations to its less fortunate citizens. With such a background the governmental establishment\* has found it increasingly easy to make friends with people in equivalent political, social and financial positions in the North, so that many of the Unionist leaders in Belfast are well known in Dublin and are well regarded here. Miss Bernadette Devlin was not wide of the mark in describing Messrs. O'Neill and Lynch as the two arch-Tories of Ireland.

5. The Southern Tories, the Dublin Government, would naturally be expected to feel sympathy for the efforts of their Northern friends to keep down the rabble who demand better voting and better houses and who carry their demand into the public streets. They do feel such sympathy; just as there is a new Public Order Bill before the Parliament at Stormont, so is there one before the Dail in Dublin, they are not widely different in origin and character. But there is a serious complicating factor, in that the Northern "rabble" are nearly all Catholics and have up to now been counted as Irish nationalists who wish

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\* One can perhaps distinguish three forms of "establishment" in Ireland: the governmental, which looks after administration and big business and the law, and hobnobs with the Hierarchy; the social and cultural, a strange semi-blend of the Celtic twilight with the old classics - and-Georgian-hunting-and-shooting ascendancy; and the I.R.A. The three do not mix.

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to see a united Ireland. Thus the Dublin Government - almost as vulnerable to action in the streets as Stormont and almost equally deserving of it - is torn two ways: it wishes the streets in the North to stay peaceful, lest the infection should spread to theirs; and yet it can hardly refrain from encouraging and supporting that side in the North which is Catholic and Dublin-orientated.

6. There might appear to be a way out of this dilemma, in that the Civil Rights and Catholic leaders in the North (not least through the voice of Miss Devlin) have repudiated any wish to bring the North into union with the present Governmental system in Dublin. Cannot Mr. Lynch and his Fianna Fail party, in view of this attitude on the part of their former friends, do a little tacit repudiation in their turn?

7. The answer is no - because of the existence of the I.R.A. and of the out-dated emotions to which it can still appeal. In earlier surveys (my Despatch 1/2 of 5 July 1968 and 1/6 of 12 December 1968) I explained how the I.R.A. by its record of murder and martyrdom in pursuit of Irish patriotism and unity was in effect above the law, and how it purported to represent the soul of Ireland.

8. That soul as represented by the I.R.A. is increasingly a socialist one, going back to Connolly (shot by H.M. Government on 12 May 1916) and to his near-Marxist principles. Such principles are propagated in public by Sinn Fein, the overt and legal arm of the illegal I.R.A., and they have an important bearing on the attitude of the whole Sinn Fein/I.R.A. complex to the ending of partition (see the second of my despatches referred to above). That attitude was defined recently by one of its leaders as follows:-

/"Mr. MacGiolla

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

"Mr. MacGiolla said it would be made clear that Republicans did not ask the people of the North to come into the existing 26-County State. They would not wish this fate on anyone. They asked the people of the North to join with the people of the 26 Counties in abolishing both states, which served only British imperialism, and in establishing a democratic socialist republic for the whole of the island in which the workers who created wealth would decide how and where it was used."\*

9. Thus it will be seen that while the overall principles of Sinn Fein/I.R.A. are anything but palatable to the Irish Government, that Government nevertheless feels itself compelled by the political history of Ireland to strike an attitude on the partition issue which will show it to be as patriotic as the I.R.A.

10. We may now summarise the position of the Irish Government as follows:-

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\*I may remark in parenthesis that Miss Devlin's attitude to partition as disclosed in her speeches and interviews co-incides exactly with that laid down in this Sinn Fein document. Indeed, it is credibly reported in yesterday's Sunday Times that two of the top men in Sinn Fein - they hold equivalent rank in the I.R.A. - visited Miss Devlin's constituency last month with a view to running a Republican candidate of their own, but were so satisfied with Miss Devlin's principles that on April 1st they decided not to interfere but to let her go forward to glory in a direct fight with a Unionist competitor.

CONFIDENTIAL

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- (i) for fear of encouraging militant "Civil Rights" activities on their own territory they will keep as far away from direct intervention as possible and will continue to pray for the survival of the Stormont Parliament and for moderate reforming Unionist leadership therein;
- (ii) for fear of the I.R.A. in its patriotic role, they will be compelled to appear to intervene or meddle.

11. However, one cannot count on the Government of the Republic remaining in all circumstances ingloriously on the sidelines, making deliberately ineffective gestures from time to time. Here are one or two possible developments which might goad them into a more active policy:-

- (a) the violent suppression of disturbance in the North in which nationalist and Catholic Irishmen are involved, particularly if suppression takes place at the hands of the hated B-Specials (whether the said constables were under Stormont as at present, or under Westminster control).
- (b) Any attempt by H.M.G., supposing they were to assume power in the North, to secure Southern Irish co-operation in the arrest of I.R.A. or other murder groups who might "execute" British soldiers in the North. (Such murders would count as "political" offences, and extradition from Republican territory would be automatically excluded).
- (c) Possibly (I am not sure about this), the continuation of Northern Ireland's representation in the House of Commons if the Government of Ireland Act were suspended, might be made into a grievance.

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CONFIDENTIAL

12. Supposing the Government of the Republic to be so goaded, what action would they take?

- (ii) The frontier might be closed, more as a gesture than with any practical object in mind.
- (iii) Another possibility is the manipulation by some direct or indirect means, with a view to influencing the attitude of H.M.G., of Irish voters in the U.K. (It will be recollected that an Irish Cabinet Minister made a powerful intervention in the recent Ulster general election).
- (iv) Perhaps the main Irish gambit, to be used only when a really serious situation involving bloodshed has actually developed, would be a renewed appeal to the U.N. This would not be merely the "personal communication to U Thant" which was the only outcome of last week's journeyings by the Foreign Minister, but a full-dress attempt to provoke discussions and secure the passage of resolutions, the procedure involved being in all probability the one arising out of a "threat to peace". Similar action might be taken at the Council of Europe. It is not for me to suggest what support the Irish might be able to mobilize in New York or Strasbourg from delegates fresh from the impact of skilled television reporting.

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13. That really concludes my survey; but the following footnotes, which I have not been able to fit into the main body of this despatch, may be of interest:-

- (a) The public here regard the events in the North as providing wonderful and moving television entertainment. In today's "Irish Times" the regular T.V. critic concludes his survey of recent reporting of Ulster events with a paragraph beginning "Entertainment it is". People feel themselves on the touchlines and do not wish to get involved in the game.
- (b) Miss Bernadette Devlin has become an all-Irish television heroine; the fact that I actually listened to her maiden speech in the House of Commons has done a great deal for my prestige in Dublin. The content of her speeches passes almost unnoticed; and yet her continued references to "the gun" and to probable killings have provoked one serious and sincere press comment, an editorial from today's Irish Independent, of which I attach a copy.
- (c) Miss Devlin in her "Observer" contribution tells how "life made her a Socialist" and of her bitter resentment at the attitude of the civil servants in Northern Ireland who contemptuously paid out the Devlin family social welfare benefits. "We were entitled to the money". Yes indeed; and the money (using information provided by Miss Devlin herself as the basis for a rather careful calculation) will have amounted over the years to about £7,400. Now, if the Devlin family had lived in Southern Ireland, their receipts would have been of the order of £2,900. The contrast between those

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two figures goes some way to explain the obvious reluctance of Catholics in the North to commit themselves enthusiastically to "union now".

- (d) In my earlier despatch about the I.R.A., written some months before the outbreak of trouble in Northern Ireland, I mentioned how official Irish attempts to prevent access to publicity by the I.R.A. were being frustrated. This process has continued, and the I.R.A. now scarcely needs to wear its Sinn Fein mask to obtain publicity in Irish newspapers and on Irish television, while English newspapers are delighted to print the tendentious and misleading material which "Army Headquarters" are always ready to issue.

14. I am sending copies of this despatch to New York and Strasbourg.

I have the honour to be  
with the highest respect,  
Sir,  
Your Obedient Servant.

A.G. GILCHRIST

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