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HONIP(69) 8COPY NO. 313rd July 1969NORTHERN IRELAND: POLITICAL SUMMARY FOR
THE PERIOD 25TH JUNE-2ND JULYMemorandum by the Home Office

1. The civil rights movement resumed its campaign of public demonstrations with a rally in Strabane on 28th June. About 3,000 people took part; speakers included Miss Bernadette Devlin, M.P., Mr. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Labour Member of Parliament in the Irish Republic), Mr. Eamonn McCann (one of the leaders of the People's Democracy), Mr. Austin Currie (Nationalist Member of the Northern Ireland Parliament) and Mr. Frank Gogarty (Chairman of the Civil Rights Association). The main theme was unemployment, but Mr. Gogarty claimed that demonstrations would continue until the Special Constabulary was disbanded and the Special Powers Act repealed. Mr. McCann attacked Opposition members at Stormont (including Mr. Currie) for agreeing that the timetable for reform was reasonable (see paragraph 3 of HONIP(69) 7). Mr. Currie appears to have made a spirited reply, and Miss Devlin attacked the speakers generally for adopting a sectarian attitude. There was no disorder except on the platform.

2. An Orange parade was held in Dungiven on the same day and was also attended by about 3,000 people. Civil rights posters and bunting had been strung across the streets in advance, but were cut down by Orangemen taking part. Scuffles took place when photographers attempted to take pictures, but otherwise the parade passed peacefully. Leaders of the civil rights movement had urged their followers not to interfere, as part of their campaign for the right to demonstrate whatever the demonstration's purpose.

3. The civil rights demonstration which had been planned to take place in Newry (paragraph 11 of HONIP(69) 6) failed to materialise. It is now likely to take place on 5th July, and attempts may be made to follow a route part of which was proscribed in January.

4. Supporters of the civil rights movement in Dungannon picketed South Tyrone Hospital on 27th June when the Governor, Lord Grey, opened a new building. They allege discrimination against Roman Catholics (paragraph 7 of HONIP(69) 7).

The Northern Ireland Government

5. Mr. Patrick Kennedy (Republican Labour member for Belfast Central) and Mr. Currie challenged the proscription of the "United Irishmen" in the Northern Ireland House of Commons on 25th June.

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The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Porter) said that it was the only publication which was banned by regulations made under the Special Powers Act, and that in the past it had approved the activities of the Irish Republican Army. He repeated the pledge which the Prime Minister (Major Chichester-Clark) gave on 22nd May that certain of the regulations would be withdrawn as soon as this could be done with safety.

6. The permanent Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, appointed under the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1968, has given statutory notice that it intends to consider making its first report, and consequently to commence forthwith a general review of all the 52 constituencies in Northern Ireland. Under the Act, the report must not be submitted before 28th November 1973 or after 28th November 1978. The Commission has announced that it is prepared to consider representations from political parties, local authorities, groups of parliamentary electors, or any individual parliamentary elector. The members are the Honourable Mr. Justice Lowry (Chairman), Mr. H. E. Campbell, M.A., M.A.I., M.I.C.E., and Mr. F. C. Hopkirk, LL.B.

7. The proposals of the Northern Ireland Government for the reorganisation of local government were published in a White Paper on 2nd July. A summary is given in the Annex. The main feature is the replacement of the present total of 73 separately elected authorities by a single tier of 17 local councils. The proposals appear to have the broad support of the Unionist Party, although some members are thought to favour a smaller number of six or seven authorities, based on the existing counties. It has been pointed out that the smaller number might prevent Roman Catholics from gaining control of any of the new councils.

8. The Prime Minister, Major Chichester-Clark, visited Londonderry on 30th June and toured the Bogside before lunching at the Guildhall with members of the Londonderry Development Commission. Members of the Londonderry Housing Action Committee picketed the Guildhall and obstructed his car when he attempted to leave. Placards were waved and some shouting took place, but there was no violence.

9. Northern Ireland officials met a deputation from the Protestant and Catholic Encounter Society on 26th June. The Society was formed in March 1969 with the objective of healing the divisions between protestants and catholics and includes clergymen and laymen of both religions. It is non-political. The deputation proposed the formation of a community relations board; a subsequent statement said that the proposal would be carefully considered.

The Ulster Unionist Party

10. Mrs. Anne Dickson, Unionist member for Carrick, has alleged extremist infiltration of Unionist constituency branches. A leading article in the "Belfast Telegraph" notes that the right wing has been in the ascendant since Capt. O'Neill's resignation; points out that the leadership cannot afford to move further to the right; and urges the leadership to take a stronger line with constituency associations. It adds that a second pro-Union party is no longer unthinkable.

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11. In a speech to East Down Young Unionists on 1st July, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. John Taylor, is reported as saying that a "dangerous and sinister" trend had been evident in the last months of Capt. O'Neill's leadership. "Control of influential positions within the Party has been gained by liberal and radical elements, but this problem is now being adequately overcome and control is now returning to men and women who are Unionists before anything else." Opposition members may attempt to have the speech debated in the Northern Ireland Parliament.

The Orange Order

12. The Secretary of the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast has claimed that 1,000 Scottish members of the Order, as well as Canadians and Americans, will take part in the Orange Day celebrations on 12th July. He also stated that he has dealt with 400 applications for membership in the last four weeks.

13. The (Church of Ireland) Archdeacon of Dromore, the Ven. S. B. Crooks, has said that "the restoration of the Orange Order to its true function of a true religious organisation" would be of advantage to both Church and State during the present situation in Northern Ireland. He thought the Order's present link with the Unionist Party might be to the detriment of both.

Telegram from Senator Kennedy

14. Senator Edward Kennedy sent a telegram to Mr. Gogarty on 25th June expressing support for the civil rights movement. A statement by the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland criticised the telegram as interference in the domestic affairs of another country; pointed out that no member of the Kennedy family has ever visited Northern Ireland; and suggested that a better contribution towards solving Northern Ireland's problems would have been to encourage greater investment by United States firms.

15. A group of members of the United States House of Representatives has asked President Nixon to express to the United Kingdom Government their distress at what they allege to be discrimination against Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland.

General

16. The restraint shown by both sides at Strabane and Dungiven gives ground for hope that violence may be avoided during the critical period leading up to Orange Day on 12th July, but the march in Newry must give rise to some concern if it is to follow a route part of which was previously proscribed. The demonstration at Strabane also showed that the leaders of the civil rights movement have become divided between those like Mr. Hume, Mr. Cooper and Mr. Currie whose concern is to remove what they believe to be genuine grievances and who are prepared to co-operate with the Government to this end, and those like Mr. McCann and Mr. Farrell who seem to favour agitation for its own sake or wish to destroy the existing system altogether. In the weeks to come the latter are likely to become increasingly isolated, with a possible danger that they will resort to provocative action which could lead to retaliation from the protestant extremists and so to violence. Reaction against the civil rights movement as a whole and against the Government's present programme for reform might also follow.

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1. This Annex summarises a White Paper "The Re-shaping of Local Government: Further Proposals" (Cmd. 530) which was presented to the Parliament of Northern Ireland on Wednesday, 2nd July, 1969.

Areas

2. The principle has been adopted of a local area based on the Boroughs and main historic towns together with suburbs, villages and the surrounding countryside. There will be sixteen of these, broadly as follows:

Newtownabbey-Hyde Park-Ballyclare-Carrickfergus
 Larne-Coast Road-Ballycastle
 Antrim-Ballymena
 Lisburn-Finaghy
 Coleraine-Ballymoney-Limavady
 Londonderry Development Commission area
 Strabane-Castleterragh
 Omagh
 Clogher-Dungannon-Cookstown-Moneymore
 Enniskillen
 Craigavon
 Armagh-Tandragee-Keady
 Newry-Warrenpoint-Rostrevor
 Newtownards-Downpatrick-Kilkeel
 Bangor-Holywood
 Banbridge-Hillsborough-Castlereagh

together with the City of Belfast. The total number of local authorities will therefore be reduced from 73 to 17. The principle of unitary or one-tier local government is foreseen.

3. Electoral boundaries are to be reviewed by an independent statutory commission, with public hearings wherever and whenever they are required. Elections are to be on the basis of universal adult franchise.

Functions

4. The functions proposed for the area councils include the normal range of local physical services: local planning, housing, sewerage, roads, private streets, clean air, litter, sanitation, burial grounds, playing fields, swimming pools, parks, gardens and so on, as well as the usual civic functions and the representation of local opinion. The social services at present administered by county and county borough councils will require further examination but the Northern Ireland Government believes that this notion of a clear dividing line between the functions of central and local government needs to be challenged.

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Finance

5. A Working Party is to be established for standing consultation between central and local government on the financial aspects of re-shaping; and several possibilities are put forward for examination. They include levy, precept, offset and centralised rating.

Management

6. Proposals include a new post of Chief Executive under each Council; a Regional Advisory Unit for organisation and methods; an Interim Staff Commission to help and advise in the transition from the old system to the new; and other practical measures of management and administration.

General

7. It is expected that the Paper will be debated in the Northern Ireland Parliament in the Autumn. Comments and suggestions are invited before legislation is prepared.

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