

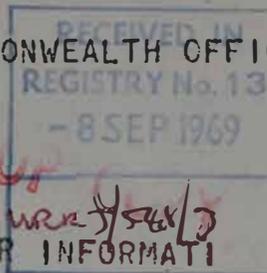
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CYPHER/CAT 'A'

ROUTINE DUBLIN

TEL NO 250

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TO FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE
5 SEPTEMBER, 1969

(78)

TELNO. 250 TO FCO REPEATED FOR INFORMATI

TO UKMIS NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON.

I HAD A LONG TALK YESTERDAY WITH ERSKINE CHILDERS, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. WE MET EN FAMILLE AT A LARGE COUNTRY HOUSE IN WICKLOW WHICH HE WILL INHERIT ONE OF THESE DAYS FROM ITS PRESENT OWNER, HIS UNCLE ROBERT BARTON (89), THE LAST SURVIVING SIGNATORY OF THE TREATY OF 1922. THE TAOISEACH HAD BEEN THERE THE PREVIOUS DAY, TO COMPARE NOTES ON THE SITUATION AND TO DISCUSS A MEMORANDUM ON NORTHERN IRELAND WHICH ERSKINE CHILDERS HAD CIRCULATED TO THE CABINET.

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2. THE MEMORANDUM APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A PLEA FOR CAUTION, FOR A REALISTIC APPRECIATION OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE NORTH AND FOR A GRADUAL APPROACH DESPITE THE TEMPTATIONS OF A SUDDENLY CHANGED SITUATION. ERSKINE CHILDERS DREW MY ATTENTION TO LYNCHS HIGHLY IMPORTANT REITERATION OF THE IRISH PLEDGE NEVER TO SEEK THE REMOVAL OF THE BORDER BY FORCE OF ARMS, THIS, HE CLAIMED, SHOWED LYNCHS ADHERENCE TO A MODERATE LINE.

3. WHEN I INSERTED A COMMENT THAT THIS RESTRAINED ATTITUDE WAS NOT ALTOGETHER SUPPORTED BY LYNCH'S MOBILISATION OF HIS ARMY ON OUR BORDERS, ERSKINE CHILDERS AT FIRST REPLIED THAT IF A NEED FOR INTERVENTION ACROSS THE BORDER FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS HAD DEVELOPED, PERHAPS AS THE RESULT OF A CONTINUED EXPOSURE OF THE POPULATION TO B SPECIALS AND A HESITATION TO USE BRITISH TROOPS, THEN LYNCH WOULD HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF A GRAVE DERELICTION OF DUTY IF HE HAD NOT BEEN IN A POSITION TO ACT. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF THE I.R.A., HE SWITCHED WITH A SHRUG TO THE ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION, THAT A DISPLAY OF SIMULATED ACTIVITY WAS PROBABLY THE ONLY WAY OF ENSURING THAT THE I.R.A. DID NOT RESORT TO GENUINE VIOLENCE. (I WAS STRONGLY TEMPTED AT THIS POINT TO ASK WHETHER THE DEAL THE OVERT GOVERNMENT HAVE QUITE OBVIOUSLY MADE WITH THE I.R.A. HAD YET BEEN RECORDED IN WRITING, BUT I REFRAINED).

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4. WE THEN RETURNED TO HIS MEMORANDUM, IN WHICH (HE SAID) HE HAD POINTED OUT THAT HATRED AND BIGOTRY AND DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE IN THE NORTH FORMED A LONG TERM FACT OF LIFE, SO THAT ANY IMMEDIATE POLITICAL ASSIMILATION OF THE SIX COUNTIES BY THE REPUBLIC WAS QUITE IMPRACTICABLE. ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS POINTED IN THE SAME DIRECTION (HERE HE USED WHAT I THOUGHT WERE GROSSLY EXAGGERATED FIGURES ABOUT THE EXTENT OF OUR SUBSIDISATION OF THE NORTH) BUT THAT WAS A PROBLEM WHICH NEED NOT BE INSOLUBLE SINCE IN ANY CASE THE BRITISH WOULD NOT WISH TO CONTINUE THOSE SUBSIDIES FOR EVER. HE WAS MUCH MORE CONCERNED WITH THE SOCIAL ASPECT, AND HERE TWO THINGS WERE REQUIRED OF THE REPUBLIC: FIRST THAT PRESENT SOCIAL LEGISLATION BASED ON A RIGID OBSERVANCE OF OBSOLETE OR OBSOLESCENT PAPAL DOCTRINE IN SUCH FIELDS AS DIVORCE AND BIRTH CONTROL SHOULD BE MODIFIED: SECOND, THAT AN URGENT PROPAGANDA PROGRAMME TO BRING ABOUT UNDERSTANDING AND FRIENDSHIP SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE NORTHERN PROTESTANTS (ERSKINE CHILDERS IS THE ONLY PROTESTANT IN THE GOVERNMENT AND IS THEIR EXPERT ON THE SUBJECT) BY AN ORGANISATION SET UP FOR THIS PARTICULAR TASK.

5. I COULD NOT RESIST SAYING AT THIS POINT THAT THE IRISH HAD THE ORGANISATION READY MADE, ONLY IT WAS AT PRESENT ENGAGED IN AN ENDEAVOUR TO PLACE BEFORE THE WORLD A BLATANTLY HOSTILE, PREJUDICED AND UNTRUE ACCOUNT OF THE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR OF THE BRITISH IN THE NORTH IN RECENT WEEKS. WE HAD NOT SO FAR TROUBLED TO PROTEST BUT WE NOTED WITH INTEREST THE READINESS OF THE IRISH TO HOLD OUT THE HAND OF FRIENDSHIP IN PRIVATE AND TO ABUSE US OFFICIALLY AND ATTRIBUTABLY IN PUBLIC. ERSKINE CHILDERS SAID AT ONCE THAT IT WAS HIGH TIME FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO CLOSE DOWN THEIR ILL-ADVISED PROPAGANDA BEFORE, AND HE WENT ON TO CRITICISE THE UNFAIR PRESS AND TELEVISION REPORTING IN THE SOUTH OF NORTHERN EVENTS.

6. WE THEN REVERTED TO THE PROBLEM OF THE NORTH AND I ASKED IF LYNCH WAS TRYING TO MAKE IT GO AWAY BY A PIECE OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONJURING, REPLACING WHAT HE HAD OFTEN DESCRIBED TO ME AS THE LAST BRITISH COLONY WITH THE FIRST IRISH

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ONE, AND WHETHER THE PRICE FOR KEEPING PAISLEY OUT OF THE DAIL MIGHT BE TO LET MISS DEVLIN IN - IN THE CONTEXT OF WHAT HE HAD JUST DESCRIBED AS THE CAPITALIST -ECONOMY REPUBLIC, WERE THE NORTHERN CATHOLICS REALLY ALL THAT MUCH MORE ASSIMILABLE THAN THE PROTESTANTS? TO SUCH QUESTIONS I GOT NO USEFUL ANSWER, EXCEPT THAT A FEDERAL STRUCTURE, WITH TWO SUBORDINATE (DUBLIN AND BELFAST) ASSEMBLIES AND A SUPERIOR ONE WOULD RENDER THE PROBLEM MORE MANAGEABLE.

7. ERSKINE CHILDERS PROFESSED TO BE HORRIFIED THAT I HAD NOT HAD A SINGLE INTERVIEW WITH HILLERY SINCE HE TOOK OVER EXTERNAL AFFAIRS. I SAID I HAD NOT RECENTLY RENEWED MY REQUEST FOR A MEETING SINCE I DOUBTED IF I COULD HAVE ANYTHING HELPFUL TO SAY TO HILLERY IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES : IT WAS ONE THING FOR ME TO LISTEN TO AN OLD FRIEND FLOATING IDEAS OVER A GLASS OF WHISKY AND TO DISCUSS SUCH IDEAS WITH HIM ON A BASIS OF JUST SUPPOSE, AND QUITE ANOTHER TO SIT ACROSS A DESK FROM HILLERY IN IVEAGH HOUSE. SIMILARLY I DID NOT SEE THAT ANY GOOD RESULTS COULD FLOW FROM AN EARLY ATTEMPT AT HIGH LEVEL CONTACTS.

8. FOLLWG WORD UNDERLINED COMMENT: I THINK THE CABINET IS SPLIT BETWEEN THOSE WHO REALLY THINK THEY HAVE US ON THE RUN (TWO OR THREE), THOSE WHO SEE THE MORASS THEY ARE STRUGGLING TO GET INTO AND WOULD WELCOME A ROPE FROM US (TWO OR THREE), HALF A DOZEN DON'T KNOWS, AND LYNCH TRYING TO KEEP US ON THE RUN AND EXTRACT A ROPE AT THE SAME TIME.

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SIR A. GILCHRIST

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