

CONFIDENTIAL  
SAVING TELEGRAM

TOP

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY No. 13 18 SEP 1969
WRRS/218/B

BY BAG

PRIORITY DUBLIN TO FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

TEL. NO. 24 SAVING

17 SEPTEMBER 1969

CONFIDENTIAL

Wemy  
19/9/69  
PC

Addressed to F.C.O. Saving Telegram No. 24 of 17 September.  
Repeated for information to: U.K. Mission, New York and to Washington.

Interview with Taoiseach

I had an hour with Lynch yesterday evening (Sept. 16) at his suggestion. Our conversation was remarkably straightforward and friendly throughout and I think we should assume sincerity.

2. I began by asking Lynch what impression I ought to give in London of the current official Irish attitude to developments in Northern Ireland.

3. Lynch replied with expressions of approval and admiration for the performance of Mr. Callaghan in the North and of hope for the establishment of peaceful conditions which might now be brought about.

4. I asked him why, if the "Callaghan" programme on civil rights seemed so good in his eyes, his Government should choose to blackguard us at the U.N. precisely on this civil rights issue.

5. Lynch professed to be offended and shocked by "blackguard" and then dodged my question by a long, uneasy and not always plausible defence of his sabre-rattling policy, army mobilisation etc., arguing that he had done the least possible which would suffice to contain public opinion and prevent I.R.A propaganda successes; I for one should know the potential of this criminal but partition-engendered element. His strong initial public reaction to trouble in the North had been justified by results, in the sense that it had defused the I.R.A and enabled him to restrain the more warlike members of his Cabinet.

6. I said/

6. I said let the sabre-rattling go, an irritating gesture but not my immediate concern. My question to him related to current Irish policy. Was continued Irish pressure on us at the U.N. intended to ensure our effective implementation of the "Callaghan" reforms, or was it a considered step on the road to end partition?

7. Lynch did not answer me directly. He said that the present U.N initiative had been set in motion some time ago, that the Irish had committed themselves to it as a result of the line taken by the Foreign Secretary and by Lord Chalfont excluding the Government of the Republic from any voice whatever in the affairs of the North, despite the absolute accuracy of the warnings given by Hillery; Hillery had twice come back from London with hurt feelings. In any case, the Irish were not putting the British in the dock, only Stormont and its fifty years of undeniable injustice.

8. I repeated that Stormont was not the target shot at in New York by the Irish, only the British.

9. Lynch commented that he hoped the resolution to be proposed by the Irish in New York would be moderate, mild, and forward-looking, not condemnatory.

10. I asked whether, once Hillery had played his present hand, we could expect the Irish to relax and to await the fructification of the Northern reforms which Lynch had already commended.

11. Lynch replied more or less in the affirmative: he called my attention to his own attitude of restraint throughout the period of stress and to the similar attitude which he had enforced on his Cabinet and on his party: despite obvious temptations, no rabble-rousing meetings had been organised except by fringe and illegal elements. He had prevented his Cabinet colleagues from making any public speeches, a remarkable achievement, and he intended his own next speech to be more mild and helpful than any he had made so far.

12. But I/

DUBLIN TO F.C.O: TEL. NO. 24 SAVING

12. But I was not to imagine from this that the Irish Government could be told by Chichester-Clarke or by Stewart or by Chalfont to keep its nose out of the affairs of Northern Ireland. I could take it for certain that as long as he Lynch was Prime Minister he would continue to take a close and public interest in what happened in the North and there should be no illusions on this point in London: no Irish Prime Minister could do less and survive, given the feelings about the unity of Ireland in the Republic today.

13. I asked for elucidation on this point. Was I not right in thinking that in Lynch's own opinion the South was quite incapable of "taking over" the North in the foreseeable future?

14. Lynch confirmed this view and expanded on lines which are now familiar about the financial and social adjustments in the South which would be necessary before there could be any question of bringing the two sections acceptably together. But however long the period of adjustment, the South would never abandon the right, a right enhanced by recent events, to say its say over Northern affairs and to try to make its views effective. What was needed was for some degree of consultation with Britain to be conceded.

15. After a long discussion I asked if Lynch's position was that since the South now intended to interfere, effectively if possible, in Northern affairs, we might as well adjust ourselves to this situation in some way or other. Lynch said this was more or less right. What worried him was the difficulty of effective consultation. If he came over to see Mr. Wilson or Mr. Callaghan, both parties would immediately be surrounded by TV cameras and interviewers; he himself would have to say something which might do harm and our ministers would no doubt feel compelled to reiterate the old story about the border not being in question. He now felt that more use might be made of the diplomatic channel. He had noted with satisfaction a suggestion that his Ambassador in London would meet  
Mr. Oliver Wright/

CONFIDENTIAL

- 4 -

Mr. Oliver Wright.

16. Lynch ended by asking me to assure Messrs. Wilson and Callaghan that he and his Cabinet were sincere in wishing for a truce to riots and anarchy in the North, that though the presence and involvement of British troops was fundamentally unacceptable in Irish eyes, their remarkable success (lucky in that extremists had not shot any of the soldiers) had been noted and was welcomed if it went towards the genuine establishment of social justice in the North.

17. Sidelines.

(a) Lynch thought the Hunt report would be a key document. Catholic police for Catholic areas was an absurdity. It might seem odd, but he wondered if a beginning to a united Ireland might be made with a cross-posting of police between North and South.

(b) The preparations for Irish unity, even if they began now, would be a long-drawn out process of stage-by-stage development. He had had estimates of from 7 to 15 years for the achievement of economic and social reconciliation and rather favoured the longer figure.

Sir A. Gilchrist

F.C.O. DISTRIBUTION:

W.E.D.

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION:

NORTHERN IRELAND (including  
Belfast) [22]