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Comments on report of 4th March from the Ambassador, London

1. Major Chichester-Clark and others, and apparently also the new British Ambassador, Mr. John Peck, wonder whether "a sizeable proportion of the unemployed among the minority is really interested in work" etc. This is traditional Unionist propaganda, indeed traditional anti-Irish propaganda. Ambassador O'Sullivan's reply is correct but, as a point of useful information it could be added that wage rates in Derry, for example, are little improvement on social security payments and family men sometimes avoid work at such rates in preference to doing some "nixing". The most important point however is to take every opportunity of bringing home to British interlocutors that Unionist and, for that matter, British ideas on the minority - as British citizens in a United Kingdom "province" - are not likely to inspire them with much enthusiasm for contributing heartily to the economic well-being of the State unless they are free to work towards an end to their political and cultural impoverishment as well - the latter continues to be part of a deliberate Unionist policy which denies any merit, or funds, to Irish culture as such.

2. A strong hope is expressed that Paisley will be beaten in Bannside if there are four or more other candidates. This appears to me very odd. If, as one would expect, Paisley's vote is a solid one, the more candidates there are to share the rest the better chance Paisley has to win on a plurality.

3. Miss Devlin, to my mind, is a misguided young woman in political terms but she is not a principal leader in a Maoist/Trotskyist element in the North - whatever that curious combination might be. The extremist political leaders on the Left are Eamonn McCann, Michael Farrell and Cyril Toman and Bernadette is their victim - willing, no doubt, but nonetheless a victim. How Cruise O'Brien fits into this weird picture is beyond me. I draw attention to the paragraph on Miss Devlin both to underline the nonsense in it and suggest that we should not countenance such remarks from the British without suitable rejoinders about the mediaeval Unionist mentality and its results to date - not the best guide to Maoist/Trotskyist or to Devlin/O'Brien.

4. Mr. Peck suggests occasional visits by Northern Ministers to Dublin as his guests at Glencairn where they could meet their opposite numbers here - as an opening gambit. Gambits in chess are the offer of material for a greater ultimate gain. However, a peaceful approach to Irish reunification does not imply passive acceptance of British tutelage even in this form. I suspect that this suggestion - and the following one - are the content of Mr. Peck's call on the Ambassador. The British appear to wish to move from holding a security ring within the North to creating a political ring within which Northern and Dublin Ministers will both behave politely as guests of the Crown. Furthermore his staff will, no doubt, tell us all that it is good for us to know about the North from their frequent informal visits there. The road to Belfast - and the rockier one (for Unionist Ministers) to Dublin - will run through Glencairn. I suggest that it is not in our interest to welcome either of these proposals. Dublin's interest in the North is direct and Irish. We should handle relations ourselves even if this requires great patience, and a refusal of such assistance as Mr. Peck offers. Our and the United Kingdom interests are not the same and may risk near-term divergences anyway.

*ES*

11 Márta 1970