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1. Dr. G. FitzGerald, T.D. Minister for Foreign Affairs, met Mr. Merlyn Rees M.P., Secretary of State for N.I. and Mr. Stanley Orme, M.P., Minister of State at the NIO, over a working lunch at the NIO in London on 19 December 1974. The Minister was accompanied by Mr. Seán Donlon, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State was accompanied by Mr. Douglas James, Mr. J. Bourne and Mr. K. Jones of the NIO and Mr. B. Harding of the FCO. The meeting took place following an indication from Mr. Rees on 17 December that he would like to see the Minister when the latter was next passing through London. The following are my impressions of the main points discussed during the lunch.

2. Referring to newspaper reports of the contact between the IRA and the Protestant clergymen, Mr. Rees emphasised that the contact had not been inspired or suggested by the British Government but he had seen the clergymen the previous evening and they had given him a copy of the proposal which they had left with the IRA at Feakle (attached as appendix 1). The only comment he had made to the clergymen was that, as he had repeatedly made clear, he would respond to any improvement in the situation brought about by a reduction in violence. In reply to a specific question by the Minister, the Secretary of State said that nothing had been said in the course of the contact which suggested that the Irish Government would be asked to do anything specific at this stage. The proposal did, however, contain the implication that the IRA were seeking an all-Ireland rather than a NI convention. While Mr. Rees denied that the British were directly involved in talks with the IRA, - and one of his officials gave as his opinion that the exercise was a propaganda move by the IRA to regain sympathy which they had lost through the murder of the judges and the Birmingham bombings.



The IRA would stick to ceasefire arrangements for a few weeks and then announce that since the British had not responded sufficiently to this gesture they were being forced back into action in a situation where they might have regained some of the sympathy recently lost - the tone of the discussions on the subject gave rise to some doubt about Mr. Rees's assurances that the British were not directly involved in the current initiatives.

3. As far as the British side was concerned, the main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the security situation along the border, with particular reference to the Crossmaglen area and co-operation between the security forces on both sides of the border. A document on the border situation was given to the Minister and this is attached as appendix 2. From the British side, much was made of (a) lack of proper communications for dealing with situations involving hot pursuit across the border and (b) the alleged quantities of arms and explosives coming into NI from the Republic. In regard to (a), the Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out that there was a clear channel of communication from the RUC to the Gardaí and all the information available to him suggested that the Gardaí, and where appropriate Irish army units, responded promptly and efficiently to requests for assistance. He asked the British to instance any case where they had not been satisfied with the response. They did not do so but simply referred us to annex B of the document on border security. They also referred to what they regarded as the unsatisfactory situation where the British Army could not communicate directly with the security forces in the Republic but did not pursue this point when the Minister pointed out that the main problem of communication seemed to be one between the British Army and the RUC.

4. In regard to the alleged illegal movement of arms and explosives between the Republic and NI, the Minister pointed out



that these allegations were being made to newspapermen, Council of Europe delegates, etc. but since the beginning of this year - which is as far back as we had checked - no information had been passed to us through any channel about movement of arms, only once had information been passed about movement of explosives and this had turned out to be a false lead. We also pointed out that five times since 1 November 1974 we had asked the British to let us know when, where and through whom information had been passed about arms and explosives movements and since no reply had been received to this request, it was high time the British stopped their propaganda campaign against us. The British responded with vague references to the matters being discussed at the Garda - RUC working parties set up at Baldonnell and the Secretary of State made general statements about how the soldiers in Crossmaglen, many of whom were from his own constituency, frequently mentioned and showed him places in the Republic which were centres of IRA activity. It was difficult for him to expect soldiers to stay in Crossmaglen for the sole purpose of providing fodder for southern based terrorists. The Minister pointed out that the Crossmaglen problem was a NI problem and that there was no evidence to support the contention that the activity against the soldiers there originated in the Republic.

5. The general line of the discussion on cross-border security was that we were doing everything we could, that we would consider carefully doing anything else that might be requested, that the British should give us information about movements of arms and explosives if they had it and that they should cease their propaganda on this point. The Minister also availed of the opportunity to raise in strong terms incidents of misbehaviour by the army on the border. The incident at Gortmullan on 16 December and the hijacking of cars by British soldiers on the Crossmaglen - Castleblayney road were specifically raised. The Minister made particularly strong remarks about situations where



Gardaí or army units from here ended up being fired at by British security forces. If the objective of setting up Gardaí for such situations was to achieve improved communications along the border, it would not succeed and the British should be aware of the seriousness with which we viewed such incidents.

6. The Minister for Foreign Affairs inquired about the current British attitude to the power-sharing, Irish dimension principles and said we had noted with some dismay an effort on the British side to down-play the significance of the Irish dimension. Of its nature, this was something which was there and would not disappear. The fact that we had not been emphasising it did not mean that our attitude on it was changing. We simply thought it not helpful at the moment to push it since it would come up for consideration primarily after a power-sharing government was set up in N.I. The institutionalisation of the Irish dimension would then be a matter for discussion between the power-sharing Government in Belfast and the Government in Dublin. The Secretary of State replied that his Government's attitude to the two principles was as set out in the press communiques issued after the meetings in September and November between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister. There had been no change. On power-sharing, a discussion paper would be issued early in the New Year which would set out forms of power-sharing in other parts of the world, including Switzerland, Holland and Belgium but not the Lebanon. When the Minister pointed out that some of these systems did not provide for power sharing by law and would not therefore be appropriate precedents for N.I., the Secretary of State said he was putting forward a discussion document which would not specifically recommend or reject anything. The 1973 Constitution Act was not the only legal basis on which power-sharing could be built and at this stage no particular system should be ruled out.



7. The Secretary of State said he had now received the Gardiner report but had not yet read it. He hoped to publish it early in the New Year at about the same time as the discussion document on power-sharing. He would naturally respond, as he had frequently said, to any new situation brought about by a reduction in violence.

8. Other points discussed were:

- Kiltyclogher: the Secretary of State showed no familiarity with this problem but said he would look at it first thing next day;
- joint approach to EEC for funds for cross-border studies: again, the Secretary of State was not familiar with this topic. The Minister traced its history and pointed out that it was difficult to understand how decisions arrived at by politicians could be frustrated by civil servants. The Minister said that what was <sup>agreed</sup> ~~argued~~ was that Brussels should be asked to finance cross-border studies. We had suggested that the study should be done of the north-west area and the British had suggested that the study should be extended to include the mid-north-east. But nothing had yet happened. The Secretary of State said he would immediately look into the matter;
- Exclusion Orders which had been made relating to persons born in Northern Ireland: The Minister made it clear that we were not prepared to accept persons who had no connections with the Republic. The Secretary of State said that he thought that Irish citizens or persons holding Irish passports would not be prevented from entering the Republic. There was some reference to the alleged similarity between our position in this matter and that of the British Government in respect of the Kenyan Asians.



Seán Donlon

20 December, 1974



APPENDIX 1

The proposal left with the Sinn Fein representatives at Peakle was that the I.R.A. would consider that its requirements precedent to a permanent cease-fire were met if the British Government issued a policy statement which included the following:

- (1) H.M. Government solemnly re-affirms that it has no political or territorial interests in Ireland beyond its obligations to the citizens of Northern Ireland.
- (2) The prime concern of H.M. Government is the achievement of peace and the promotion of such understanding between the various sections in Northern Ireland as will guarantee to all its people a full participation in the life of the community, whatever be the relationship of the Province to the E.B.C., the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland.
- (3) Contingent upon the maintenance of a declared cease-fire and upon effective policing, H.M. Government will relieve the Army as quickly as possible of its internal security duties.
- (4) until agreements about the future Government of Northern Ireland have been freely negotiated, accepted and guaranteed, H.M. Government intends to retain the presence of the armed forces in Northern Ireland.
- (5) H.M. Government recognises the obligation and right of all those who have political aims to pursue them through the democratic processes.



THE BORDER SITUATION

Dr. Fitzgerald said to Mr. Rees that he would welcome strong action to deal with the security problems in the Crossmaglen area. The object of this memorandum is to describe the current situation in the Crossmaglen and border areas and to make proposals for joint action by the Irish and British Governments.

It has been clear for some time now that the level of IRA violence near the border has been increasing significantly. The figures attached at Annex A show as an example that during the past six weeks (1 November-18 December) there has been an overall increase of over 100 per cent over the number of incidents occurring during the comparable period six months ago. In addition the proportion of IRA activity occurring near the border has increased relative to the level of violence elsewhere in the Province during the last six months. This too is shown in Annex A. The use of the comparison over six months has not been specially selected to produce atypical figures. The same comparison would be clear if other periods had been taken.

Further facts are shown in Annex B where the major incidents occurring over the last six weeks are described in outline. The ones that are listed are the occasions where the terrorists definitely used the Republic as a base for their operations. Other incidents where it is not certain that action originated in the Republic have been omitted from this list. Another area



of concern is the movement of explosives over the border. We have clear evidence that almost all the bomb incidents in the North are caused by explosives and detonators which originate in the South. Some facts to substantiate this are at Annex C. It has been suggested that explosives manufactured in the South may be sold to firms in the North and subsequently stolen and used in terrorist incidents. But explosives imported into Northern Ireland must bear the Northern Ireland colour [pink] and the sale, distribution and use of explosives in the North is subject to close and detailed police supervision. It is, therefore, clear that all the explosive which is not coloured pink must have come from outside Northern Ireland.

The general conclusion that emerges from these facts and figures is that a considerable amount of terrorist supplies and activity originates from the Republic. Indeed it can be said that over a sustained period there is at least one incident every two days which is clearly mounted from the other side of the border. It is a great handicap to the security forces in Northern Ireland that terrorists can escape across the border; that they can lay mines and fire across this land frontier.

Cooperation with the security forces in the Republic has produced most valuable liaison and exchange of information to the benefit of both sides. The technical panels which were set up by the RUC and the Gardai after the Baldonnell meeting on 18 September are proving very useful. It would however be



very helpful if we were able to consolidate, extend and quicken the progress that is being made through these channels.

One of our recent security measures has been to reduce the number of routes which are available to terrorists by blocking some of the unapproved roads. We have kept the Republic authorities informed about these measures including our proposals for road closures along the border between south Armagh and County Louth/Monaghan. We are convinced that this is the only really effective method of inhibiting the movement of terrorists by unapproved roads across the border and welcome your support.

It would also be of the greatest assistance in dealing with the situation if the appropriate Irish authorities would arrange that

- (a) The Garda and Irish army patrols would concentrate on the unapproved roads in the Crossmaglen area: and, where the roads have been blocked, inform us, through police channels, if attempts to remove the blocks appear to have been made.
- (b) Regular check points will be established, whenever possible, on the approved roads to conduct searches of traffic travelling in both directions.

Following the meeting at Baldonnell, the Joint Committee on Advance Planning has been making encouraging progress. This would be an appropriate forum for an urgent examination of the



problems of the Crossmaglen/Forkhill area. In particular in that context we propose that the Panel should report soon on:-

- (a) Cross border communications between the security forces at Crossmaglen and the corresponding Garda/Irish army posts in the Republic.
- (b) Operational meetings at subdivisional (Superintendent/Chief Inspector) level. These meetings could exchange information and intelligence quite freely, the sole outcome of which could only lead to a better knowledge of who the terrorists are and how they operate. This in turn could only enhance our joint ability to halt the terrorists' activity.
- (c) Exchanges of specialist information, particularly of forensic science, mainly a police responsibility, and bomb disposal, mainly an army problem. The latter is, of course, directed solely towards saving life and the prevention of damage and it therefore merits special attention. We would particularly like this examination to concentrate on the control of explosives and detonators.

As you know the Crossmaglen area is one where the RUC and army work closely together. In this connection we should plan to make the necessary army advice by the participation of



certain staff officers in the work of the group on the lines previously explained at Baldonnell.

We are most anxious that we should pursue these matters as urgently as possible. Without positive action by the security forces of both sides working closely together the situation in Crossmaglen and the border areas will continue to be a constant source of anxiety and challenge to both Governments.

19 December 1974