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Visit by American Ambassador

Note:-

1. Ambassador Shannon, accompanied by Mr. Charles Rushing, Counsellor, called on the Taoiseach today, by arrangement. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Nally.
2. After some preliminary conversation, the Ambassador said that he had called to convey the invitation of President Carter to the Taoiseach to visit the United States during the second half of the year. There had been some preliminary contacts on this subject. As an official visit, it could be expected to last about three days in the United States.
3. The Taoiseach said that it was likely that the European Council during the Irish Presidency would take place in Dublin on 6th/7th December so that it would be necessary to keep the period immediately before that free. He would ^{consider} some time in late October to mid-November as being, perhaps, the most suitable.
4. The Ambassador enquired as to whether the Taoiseach would envisage undertaking much travel during the visit. The Taoiseach said that, on all his experience, such travel would be inevitable but that it would take place after the official visit, rather than before it. He would envisage a stay of about a week in the United States, of which three days could comprise the official part of the visit. He said that he had been in the White House on two occasions before - once in 1970 in connection with the 25th anniversary of the United Nations and again in 1972.
5. The Ambassador enquired as to whether he or Mrs. Lynch had any preferences or aversions which it would be useful to know in connection with the visit. For example, was there any objection to travel by helicopter. The Taoiseach indicated that there was no such objection.
6. The Ambassador then said that the normal procedure was to accommodate official guests, on the night of their arrival, in Williamsburg. The following morning they would be flown to the South Lawn in the White House. There, the President and Mrs. Carter would meet the Taoiseach and Mrs. Lynch. The visit would develop from there.
7. The Ambassador then went on to enquire as to whether the Taoiseach had any views as to the likely timing of the British general election. The Taoiseach said that during his visit to Mr. Callaghan before the Brussels Council on the EMS, there had been some discussion on the question of why the Prime Minister did not have the election in October. Since then, the difficulties on the wages front appeared to have made his situation more difficult and it could be that the Prime Minister would opt for sometime in the late Spring or early Summer - rather than October, when he was statutorily due to relinquish office. However, the Prime Minister had, of course, not discussed the subject with him during the visit.

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8. The Ambassador enquired as to whether we were planning to prepare the mind of the British public in any way on the subject of Northern Ireland, in connection with the forthcoming British election. The Taoiseach said that there were no particular plans for this at present. The SDLP would be bringing Northern Ireland in as an element but the Irish Government, as a Government, could not interfere in elections in another country. In any event, the domestic issues were what was most likely to be highlighted. These bread and butter issues, rather than the situation in Northern Ireland were most likely to be the dominant issues.
9. Our great fear was that so long as there was no political initiative, on the part of the British, the ~~paramilitary~~ could take over. There was no political forum now on Northern Ireland, except Westminster. The new Bill giving extra seats to Northern Ireland had caused considerable apprehension here. He had conveyed this apprehension to the British Government and would be glad to get whatever support we could on the subject. When he had met Mr. Callaghan, in September 1977, he had pointed out to him the danger of increasing Northern representation from 12 to 16 or 18 seats in the Commons and the Prime Minister had said that there was "no scintilla of a move" towards integration, implied by the new legislation. The former Home Secretary in Northern Ireland, Mr. Rees had described the suggestion as "unreal". Nonetheless, the Government here were not completely assured. The new legislation was not conducive to reconciliation so far as the large minority of the population in Northern Ireland, not interested in Westminster, were concerned. The Taoiseach continued that it was his wish that whatever Government emerged after the forthcoming election should have sufficient strength to take a worthwhile initiative on Northern Ireland. Inactivity on the political front could only mean a repetition of the past.
10. Mr. Mason's five point plan for a Northern Assembly had been acceptable to no organised group in Northern Ireland. This had become very clear, even in the fall of 1977. Since then interest had waned even further. There were grave dangers in this lack of initiative.
11. The Taoiseach had stressed this continually. What existed now was a negative guarantee, given by way of statute, statements, the Downing Street declaration etc. This guarantee formed a bulwark against which Northern Unionists could stand, making no move and no concessions. It was against this background that the Loyalist workers strike in May 1974 had brought down the Northern Ireland Executive in direct contravention of the wishes of the British Government at that time. The Taoiseach said that he had stressed repeatedly that it would take nothing from the honour of the British or of the majority in Northern Ireland if the British were to declare their interest in the unity of Ireland. In fact, such a declaration would not be a long step from their present stance but Mr. Callaghan had disagreed and they had both agreed that this disagreement should be recorded.
12. The Taoiseach then went on to welcome the Carter statement of September, 1977. He said that it was a valuable indication of American interest. But action under that statement - and under the

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sort of programmes and announcements which Speaker O'Neill, Senators Kennedy and Moynihan and Governor Carey had sponsored - there could be no real movement in the absence of a positive British initiative. The absence of this initiative meant that all other things just had to be held in abeyance. The four men he had mentioned had made a most valuable contribution to the situation by holding down what could have been a highly emotive reaction among the Irish in America.

13. On this, the Taoiseach said that the way in which the flow of funds to NORAID was increasing had given rise to some apprehension on the part of the Government here. American legislation - the Foreign Agents Registration Act - required that funds contributed to bodies like NORAID had to be declared to an American department. Recent declarations seemed to indicate an upward trend in the flow of funds towards NORAID. This was explained in two ways -
 - (1) first of all, the lack of political initiative in Northern Ireland and
 - (2) the exploitation of the H Block situation.
14. On the question of security, the Taoiseach said that there was no diminution in security co-operation as between the two Governments. In fact, at no stage had any British Government said that they were worried about the degree of this co-operation. They had, in effect, expressed full satisfaction with the way in which it was being operated. However, security was only a part of the answer. It did not show how hot the fire was getting under the pot.
15. The Ambassador said that, in his understanding, the British were willing to go along with the idea of unity if it were the wish of the majority of the population in Northern Ireland. They felt that to declare an interest in it in advance of such support would only agitate the Unionists and could lead to serious conflict.
16. The Taoiseach said that this was only condemning the North to repeat the past. The negative guarantee led to a negative situation. People could talk about a military victory. This might be possible superficially and in the short-term but it could never serve as a long-term basis for a solution. The present troubles arose from the lack of equal rights in Northern Ireland. This situation had improved somewhat in recent years but it still was not all that might be wished. For example, the report of The Equal Opportunities Employment Agency - under the ex-Alliance member, Mr. Bob Colper - had indicated some serious deficiencies. Similarly, the fear of prejudice among the police, which had come to be allayed to some extent, was revived by the recent prosecution of members of the RUC for kidnapping a priest and other similar crimes. What had been happening was that the violence under the surface in Northern Ireland had been exploding every decade. During the present decade the explosion just had never simmered down.
17. The Taoiseach went on to say that he recognised the difficulty of taking an initiative now but after the next election, if no

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initiative were taken, there could be grave danger. He said, that at present, Northern Ireland was costing the British tax-payer something like £800m. and possibly more - the British public were not conscious of the extent to which they were paying increased taxation to support the Northern situation.

18. The Taoiseach reiterated that he would be very worried if nothing happened soon after the next election in Britain. Some of the things said by Tory spokesmen made him uneasy. They seemed to suggest a return to Unionist dominance. They were saying also that never will Northern Ireland be anything but part of the United Kingdom. This sort of statement was not only unrealistic but made life very difficult for people like John Hume who were trying to build up understanding and acceptable institutions in Northern Ireland. The whole situation was bristling with difficulties. Now, it was ^{quite} relatively - and he used the word advisedly - because there was no way of saying that the troubles were over. In fact, the bombs which had gone off just recently in the United Kingdom illustrated this. Nothing saddened him more than this sort of activity. It was a great pity to see the Irish cause being used in that way in British territory. The Government here deplored it. This sort of activity did nothing to help their aspiration towards unity.

19. The Taoiseach then went on to say that what he had been talking about raised the issue of what the United States should do. There was no point in just waiting around. Something must be done towards reconciliation. There must be a way of getting a shared Executive in Northern Ireland. It did not matter what word was used - "powersharing" had become a dirty word, but however the situation was described, partnership, co-operation, or otherwise, there must be participation by the minority community in the institutions of Government by which they were ruled. The Unionists said that they would not share power with republicans whose objective was union with another State. But they, in their turn, had failed miserably in the past in trying to rule Northern Ireland on a one-party basis.

20. Recent developments here had improved our "Community" in the medium-term future. Our economy was improving rapidly. Just over 10 years ago the average GDP per head here was approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of that of Northern Ireland. Now it was line-ball or perhaps a little more. Similarly, social welfare services here were not as far out of line as with Northern services as they had been in the past. If our joining the EMS succeeded, these disparities could change even more in our favour.

21. What was happening economically was being supported demographically. For example, the information was now that over 50% of the population in Northern Ireland under the age of 15 belonged to the minority grouping. The Ambassador enquired as to whether emigration did not equalise this tendency. In reply, it was indicated that, in so far as information was available, that the patterns of the past seemed to have been changing.

22. The Taoiseach said that the territory west of the Bann was

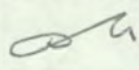
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particularly troublesome. The sort of co-operation which had been developed following his meeting with Mr. Callaghan was helping in this situation and we would be pressing ahead with it, in co-operation with the EEC, as far as possible.

23. The Ambassador enquired as to progress with the EMS negotiations. The Taoiseach said that the proposal had reached an undesirable impasse. A solution seemed to be getting pushed further and further back. It could be that it might even go to the European Council in March - we would regard this as a highly undesirable conclusion.
24. There was the further difficulty that because of the argument (spend between Parliament and the European Council, the Commission could/ only one-twelfth of their 1978 budget for each month in 1979 - until the argument was resolved. This would mean that some of the transfers to us under the EMS could not be paid - certainly until the difficulties were resolved. The Taoiseach then went to speak of some speculation which had emerged on the subject of the weaker industries under an EMS regime. It would be a great pity if the present difficulties were to undermine the whole exercise.
25. At this point, the Taoiseach indicated that he had to go to another engagement. After the usual exchange of courtesies, the meeting concluded. It had lasted from 12.20 to 12.55 p.m.


19th January, 1979.

Copy to Secretary - Department of Foreign Affairs - for information