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Confidential

Dear Berry,

The Taoiseach will be meeting the British Prime Minister in London on Monday week, the 19th instant, for a discussion on matters relating to the European Economic Community and other matters.

It is just possible that the Prime Minister may ask about the present position in regard to the so-called I.R.A. in Ireland, and, in case he does, I wonder if you would be so good as to let me have a brief note, for the Taoiseach's advance information, on the matter? A note (in duplicate) not exceeding, say, a foolscap page should suffice.

Yours sincerely,

n. s. O'Nualláin

Peter Berry, Esq.,
Secretary,
Department of Justice.



I.R.A. Organisation / Aide memoire

9. 12. 1966.

1. The estimate (December 1966) of the number of the I.R.A. who would obey military orders is about 1,000. This number has increased progressively from an estimated 650 in March 1962 when the organisation ordered a cessation of its campaign of violence.
2. Some isolated acts of violence have occurred since 1962 but nothing like an organised campaign has been conducted or been contemplated except where the organisation felt that they would lose too much face if they did not make a public showing: occasions, such as the visits of British warships to Irish ports (recruiting for the Navy) and the visit of members of the British Royal Family were regarded as extremely provocative necessitating some organised opposition.
3. A certain amount of drilling with firearms has been going on since 1962 but there is no more reason now than in any of the past 4 years to conclude that a campaign of violence is imminent or will commence within, say, the next 12 months. But occasions such as (a) the 1966 Easter Commemoration Ceremonies or (b) the Paisley sectarian riots might serve as an excuse for the recommencement of a campaign of violence if the organisation were otherwise ready.
4. The organisation is not yet in a financial position to maintain an organised campaign for any length of time. Individual acts of terrorism cannot be ruled out altogether but in 1966 the organisation has been evidencing a strong sense of military discipline amongst its members.
5. There were fairly strong signs during 1966 that a policy of force might be left in abeyance for a period of years while the military organisation and its political arm Sinn Fein would seek public support through the capture of a sufficiency of seats in municipal and Dáil elections. Leaders of the movement have been attending "education" classes conducted by persons listed by the police as members of communist organisations.
6. In parliament at Stormont on 10th November, 1966 the Minister for Home Affairs (Mr. Craig) said that while the I.R.A. in Northern Ireland had not ceased to exist their activities were no longer a matter of serious concern. As to this statement it is relevant to observe that it is unquestionably true that there is a strong recrudescence of ~~nationalist~~ feeling running through the country at present which might be reflected in violence again unless signs became evident that the large block of nationalists in the Six Counties will not be denied their fair share of public appointments and participation in public affairs.