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reaction to Irish demarche in relation to
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AMBASÁID NA HÉIREANN

EMBASSY OF IRELAND

WASHINGTON, D. C.

P.R. 33/69

R.2/4 I

28 August, 1969.

ConfidentialNorthern Ireland: State Department Reaction

An Rúnaí,
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha.

Attn: Assistant Secretary Seán Ronan

Further to my cable number 159 of 26 August, 1969 in connection with recent events in Northern Ireland, I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of the State Department Note dated 26 August, 1969 received in reply to my demarche of 15 August, 1969 which was made on the instructions of the Department contained in your cable 139. You will observe that while expressing distress at the human suffering involved in the present situation in the Six Counties the Note states that "the Government of the United States has no appropriate basis to intervene with regard to the domestic political situation or civil disturbances in other sovereign countries!" This in effect accepts the British contention that the situation is an internal British matter.

2. Accompanied by Mr. John Lawton, Third Secretary, I went to the State Department at 4 p.m. on 26 August, 1969 at the request of Mr. George S. Springsteen, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. The Bureau of European Affairs is in the charge of Assistant Secretary Martin J. Hillenbrand, who is away at the moment and Mr. Springsteen is Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau for some three years past. Mr. Mortimer D. Goldstein,



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Country Director for Ireland, conducted us to Mr. Springsteen's office and remained during the interview.

3. Mr. Springsteen began by saying that he had asked me to call to see him so that I could receive the reply of the U.S. Government to the Note which I had handed to Acting Secretary of State Johnson on 15 August, 1969 about the Irish Government's request for U.S. support for its proposals arising out of the crisis in Northern Ireland (vide my report P.R. 31/69). Mr. Springsteen then handed me the Note. Having read it, I said I would communicate the reply to the Government. I thanked Mr. Springsteen for the expression of sympathy in the Note with the victims of the violence in the Six Counties. I added, however, that I had hoped for a different reply and now hoped that in the light of more information on a changing situation the U.S. Government would be able to re-consider the matter later. Mr. Springsteen said that the U.S. Government were relieved to see the signs of peace in recent days and they hoped that this would continue. He mentioned discrimination in jobs, housing and franchise, conceding implicitly that these were grievances to be remedied. I said that the history of Northern Ireland since its establishment has been periods of peace interrupted by outbreaks of violence, that this time the rift in the community there was very deep, people had been killed and that it was clear a permanent solution was called for, as had been proposed by the Irish Prime Minister, Mr. John Lynch.

4. Mr. Springsteen agreed that the trouble was deep but claimed that the United States was restricted in what it could do. I said that the ultimate problem was a political one, similar to the political problem which preceded American independence from

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Britain, and could not be settled by limited ad hoc measures.

At the time of the Boston Tea Party less taxation or more representation for Americans would not have provided a definitive solution vis-a-vis England. Independence from England was the solution then.

5. Mr. Goldstein, who is also Country Director for Great Britain, referred to the Taoiseach's statement about reunification of the country being the ultimate solution and said that this seemed very difficult of attainment having regard to the formal assurances given by the British in 1949. The situation was that Britain would not change the constitutional status of the North without the consent of the duly elected legislature in that area. He asked, in these circumstances, how long it would take to bring about a solution.

6. I commented that the situation was continually changing. The map of the world and of British possessions had changed a lot in 20 or 30 years and many things that seemed impossible then were later found quite feasible and acceptable by Britain and others. I said I hoped the U.S. authorities would continue to keep the matter under review and that they would be able to reconsider their attitude in the future in the light of additional information. Mr. Springsteen agreed that they would watch the situation. "What the future will bring, we'll see", he said.

7. At this point Mr. Springsteen referred to press reports about the increase of staff at the Embassy and Consulates to include press officers. I confirmed that this was so but said that the officers concerned were not recruited from private industry (as Mr. Springsteen had mentioned) but from semi-State organizations



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like Bórd Fáilte and Aer Lingus. The object was to increase the flow of factual information particularly in friendly countries.

8. At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. Goldstein in a personal aside mentioned a criticism from a Civil Rights man (Mr. J. Bryan Garrett) of which he had heard to the effect that the pamphlet produced by the International Commission of Jurists exaggerated in describing Northern Ireland as totalitarian and a police state. Mr. Lawton suggested that part of the answer to that criticism could be found in the booklet on the Burntollet Ambush by Bowes Egan and Vincent McCormack, a copy of which we left with both Mr. Springsteen and Mr. Goldstein together with the Department's stencilled memorandum on the Situation in the North of Ireland.

9. The atmosphere of the discussion was friendly throughout. Neither Mr. Lawton nor I made any reference to Congressional action or opinion, such as the Eilberg draft resolution (my cable number 153). The crucial point seems to be to get the support of the Executive arm of the U.S. Government - which in this instance means the State Department and the White House - for the Irish Government's current concrete proposals. It is the Executive, for example, which instructs the delegation at the United Nations. It seem prudent therefore to respect the State Department's sensitivity in relation to Congress.

10. This week the fund-raising tour of Miss Bernadette Devlin, M.P., is keeping American attention to some extent on Northern Ireland though the press coverage is not on the same scale as during the Minister's appearance at the United Nations last week. Ninety per cent of the content of her publicity on set occasions, as distinct from impromptu addresses to picket lines, seems to be good from our point of view as you may have observed from the tape which I made



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of her "Meet the Press" interview with N.B.S. last Sunday and despatched to the Department on 26 August, 1969.

11. I have a slight impression that under the impact of events the Executive is a bit more "open" now than in the recent past, more ready to look at new information and to reconsider an attitude. However, there is something like a traditional State Department assumption that Ireland by geography and history belongs within the British sphere of influence, and that unspoken assumption will take a lot of changing.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Seán Ó Riada', is written in the center of the page.

Chargé d'Affaires a.i.