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CONFIDENTIAL

12th September 1969

Dear Secretary

In reply to your letter of the 10th instant, I give below, as requested, my personal views as to what the policy or aim of the Government should be in relation to the north of Ireland in the light of recent developments.

In general, I think that the aim should be to ensure that the policy we adopt will not impede the speedy introduction of the necessary reforms in the north of Ireland, viz. civil rights, universal franchise in local elections, abolition of gerrymandering, reform of police and security forces. Although we are convinced that the Partition of Ireland is basic to the present unrest in the Six Counties, this view has been rejected by the British Government and by the majority of well-informed commentators here; constant reiteration of the Partition issue is regarded as constituting an impediment to the speedy introduction of the necessary reforms, and as a distraction; the immediate great need is to ensure that our attitude and statements on Partition should not be seized upon as a pretext for ^{delaying} the ~~introduction~~ and implementation of the reforms. We have made our position clear in public statements on the Partition issue, and perhaps it would be advisable to "play down" further references to this issue in any public statements. In my view, continued

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re-affirmation of our view on this issue could become progressively more detrimental to our ability to exercise influence with London and Stormont. The view here in political and journalistic circles, even amongst the most well-disposed, is that it is unrealistic for us to highlight the Partition issue at the moment; our doing so has been regarded in some circles as opportunist and provocative. Our action in setting up field hospitals along the Border, and in calling up the army reserves, and our bringing the question to the United Nations were also regarded in the same light.

The decision to raise the matter at the Security Council, and the further decision to apply to have the item inserted on the agenda of the forthcoming U.N. General Assembly are regarded as more anti-British than anti-Stormont decisions. The British attitude to the United Nations is not favourable, due, no doubt, to U.N. attitudes and actions in relation to Gibraltar, Rhodesia, etc. In my view, should the item "The situation in the north of Ireland" be placed on the General Assembly agenda, the emphasis in the documents to be submitted by us and in the addresses at the General Assembly should be on the civil-rights and reforms issues with only incidental references to the Partition issue.

In my view, we should, in pressing for the speedy implementation of the necessary reforms in the north of Ireland, not go so far as taking the attitude that the Stormont Government should be abolished. The alternative

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to the present Stormont Government is direct control from Westminster. Such a change would, in my opinion, put the possibility of an ultimate solution of Partition much further ahead. It would also prevent the possibility of a solution on federal lines, which we have already more than once suggested. If we can use our influence to have the necessary reforms introduced, and a "reformed Stormont" established, there would be the prospect of the position of the minority being substantially improved, and the prospect in time, even through sheer weight of numbers, of the minority increasing its position and influence.

I think it would be advisable for a meeting to take place between the Taoiseach and Prime Minister Wilson, but I would recommend that such a meeting should not be requested before the forthcoming return visit (October 8th-9th) of the Home Secretary to Belfast, and before the evidence of the results of the working parties set up by the Home Secretary is available. In informal discussions I have had here with a junior Minister of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, I have been informed that the idea of tripartite talks between London, Dublin and Belfast is to be floated, the talks, however, not to take place "for a few months". It was also hinted to me that it would be advisable for the Taoiseach to begin a correspondence with Prime Minister Wilson immediately, so that each would have full knowledge of the other's thinking before any tripartite talks took place. It was further hinted to me that we should not

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allow the question of the recognition of the existing regime in Northern Ireland to be a stumbling block to such talks - the Lemass/O'Neill and the Lynch/O'Neill meetings in Dublin and Belfast had not been prevented because of this question.

It is emphasised here that the Labour and Tory Parties are in agreement on the British Government's present policy on the north of Ireland. Any "interference" from us, which would be regarded as jeopardising the chances of a settlement of the present situation through the Callaghan measures, would be greatly resented, particularly, and obviously, by the Tory Party. It must be kept in mind in this connection that there is a distinct possibility of the Tory Party forming the Government at the next General Election. We understand informally from the Conservative Central Office that Tory Party Headquarters have had little or no correspondence or representations from members of the Party, even those of the extreme right. It is not anticipated that the situation in Northern Ireland will be debated either by way of a resolution, or the making of a Party statement from the platform, at the Tory Party Conference commencing in Brighton on 8th October. On the other hand, from informal contacts with Labour Party Headquarters, we have been informed that a statement on the situation in the north of Ireland, which will be debated and voted on, will be made by the Home Secretary at the Labour Conference on 29th September. There is the

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possibility also of an emergency resolution being put ^{to} by the Conference, which could, of course, contain "more meat" than the statement on the question of reforms and possibly also an incidental reference to the issue of Partition. We are keeping in touch with Labour Party Headquarters in the matter.

As regards our policy on information on the situation in the north of Ireland, I should say that, as the Department is already aware, the distribution of the documents "The situation in the north of Ireland" and "The story in pictures of the north's distress" has been regarded here as anti-British, rather than Anti-Stormont, particularly, the second document, the text and photographs of which were construed as casting unwarranted aspersions on the British troops. The condemnations which have appeared in newspapers such as the Daily Telegraph, the Guardian and the Sun of certain aspects of our publicity campaign have also been expressed in letters and telephone calls to the Embassy from members of the public in Britain. The London offices of some of the semi-State agencies, e.g., Aer Lingus, Bord Fáilte and Coras Tráchtála have expressed concern about these developments. The effects of the publicity campaign, with what appears to be an anti-British tinge, could so antagonise British people as to affect the major campaigns of the Irish tourist, travel, export and industrial development agencies.

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I think that it is very important that our policy should positively assist the British Government to restore peace and to push ahead with the necessary reforms in the north of Ireland by encouraging the minority to put their trust in the efforts being made by the British Government to assist them, at the same time emphasising our interest in undertaking to support strongly, with the British Government, the grievances and complaints of the minority. If the British Labour Government fails to deal successfully with the present crisis, it could be obliged to suspend the rule of Stormont, and thereby "freeze" the Six Counties into a United Kingdom framework. If matters were to develop in this way, and if the Conservative Party returned to power, the possibility would arise of a much more hard-line and reactionary solution being proposed.

In giving my personal views in this matter, I have, as requested by you, kept in mind that the aim of the Irish Government should be attainable and acceptable at home, and in Northern Ireland, and abroad. I doubt that a policy which is aimed too deliberately at securing the eventual unification of Ireland, which, at the same time, can be regarded as an obstacle or distraction to the immediate need of maintaining peace and securing reforms, will be acceptable in Belfast or abroad.

Yours sincerely

J. G. MOLLOY

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