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Reference Code: 2000/6/662

Title: Brief note by J. G. Molloy, Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain, on meeting between George Thomson, minister responsible for European Affairs in the Foreign Office, and Dr. P.J. Hillery, Minister for External Affairs

Creation Date(s): Dec 1969

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 7 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

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SecretNOTE

The Rt. Hon. George Thomson, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the Minister responsible for European Affairs in the Foreign Office, received Dr. P. J. Hillery in his room at the Foreign Office on Wednesday, 10th December, 1969. Mr. Thomson was accompanied by Sir Andrew Gilchrist, British Ambassador to Ireland, and by Mr. W. K. K. White of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Dr. Hillery was accompanied by Mr. H. J. McCann, Secretary, Department of External Affairs, and myself. (*Mr. Molloy, Ambassador in London*).

Mr. Thomson said that he was glad to have the opportunity of having a talk with Dr. Hillery outside the programme arranged for that day's Ministerial Talks on the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement. He, in particular, wished to take advantage of the opportunity to discuss the situation in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Hillery referred to the speech which had been made some days before in Letterkenny by Mr. Neil Blaney, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and to the statements subsequently made by the Taoiseach and Mr. Faulkner of the Northern Ireland Government. Dr. Hillery said that, as stated by the Taoiseach, the policy of the Irish Government was not to attempt to use force to reunify the country; he could confirm that the speech made by the Taoiseach in Tralee represented the policy of the Government. Mr. Thomson said that he welcomed this assurance and that he thought that the speech made by

Mr. Blaney had been "rather silly". Dr. Hillery said that the Irish Government considered that, in matters relating to Northern Ireland, they had a great deal to offer and a right to be consulted. He suggested that the British Government should think more of consulting the Irish Government, who would be very helpful. The Irish Government was well informed of the position in Northern Ireland and of the strength of the reaction to be expected from the die-hards there. He hoped, therefore, that arrangements could be made for discussions between the two Governments on the situation.

Mr. Thomson said that there would be no difficulty in agreeing to Dr. Hillery's suggestion; they would, indeed, be glad to discuss the situation with the Irish Government and would wish to keep the Irish Government fully informed of the steps being taken by them. He emphasised, however, that there is "a presentational difficulty", that a number of tight-ropes had to be walked; he, therefore, thought that meetings between British and Irish Ministers to discuss the Northern Ireland situation should be held only under the cover of more general talks, such as the trade talks which were taking place today; no meetings between British and Irish Ministers should be publicly announced as meetings to discuss the situation in the North of Ireland. Such talks could be arranged "as a side issue" and through diplomatic channels. Mr. Thomson said that each country had, and must have, a different outlook on Northern Ireland; they differed particularly in outlook on the constitutional position. He, therefore, said that he would be glad if the respective positions on the Constitution should be taken as read and that the discussions should be confined to the other problems, such

ad discrimination, reforms, etc; he thought that such discussions could effect a new climate. Dr. Hillery said that the fear of a Paisley backlash was always in our minds although, perhaps, the force of the Paisley movement, although well armed, may be exaggerated. Dr. Hillery also said that he considered that "our own extremists" had been quietened by the actions taken by the Irish Government. On the question of reforms, Dr. Hillery said that he was very doubtful regarding the decision to describe the new regiment as the "Ulster Defence Regiment"; the use of the word "Ulster" and "Defence" was emotive and, to some ^{minds} ~~means~~, indicative of what Paisleyism stands for. The use of the words "Ulster Defence Regiment" was provocative and the action taken about the recruitment of B Specials to the Regiment appeared to him to have been stupid. In reply, Mr. Thomson said that the purpose was to make the new regiment "a khaki force and not an Orange force". The naming of the regiment had been considered by the Cabinet who, as Dr. Hillery would appreciate, would be sensitive on this question because of the possibility of a Black and Tan connotation. Mr. Thomson added that the question of the B Specials, whatever the name given to the regiment, would be controversial. Mr. Thomson said that if the B Specials had been disbanded they would have gone underground and, with the arms then in their possession, would have provided a new threat. Dr. Hillery said that some hope had been expressed that the police should have been reorganised on a county basis. Mr. Thomson said that the position, at the time, facing the British Government seemed almost impossible of

solution and tremendous credit must be given to the Home Secretary and to the Hunt Committee for coming up with suggestions in such a quick time; the great hope was to get Catholics into the ranks of the forces. Some of the credit for the winding up of the B Specials and the getting rid of the Northern Ireland Chief of Police and his replacement by a Chief of Police from London was due also to the Six County Government.

Dr. Hillery said that he had hoped that the B Specials would have been disbanded; he queried the necessity for setting up another force, particularly when the British army was in control of the area. When Dr. Hillery enquired as to how the name of the new regiment had been decided upon, Mr. Thomson did not give a direct answer but said that there were deep emotions and irrationalities on both sides; we should, and must, remember that there was a great mass of decent Protestants whose co-operation would be needed to carry out the reforms; a lot of patience and luck would be required; if the British Government failed in its efforts to solve the situation, they would be faced with a very difficult problem. Mr. Thomson said that every effort should be made to curb extremists on both sides. Sir Andrew Gilchrist drew attention to the reference in Mr. Blaney's speech "to our people in the North of Ireland" and said that such statements were very unhelpful. Dr. Hillery said that such a statement as Mr. Blaney had made was not in accordance with Government policy.

Mr. Thomson said that he thought that very good progress had been made on the question of reforms; peace had returned to the streets and, although they were not

complacent, things were becoming much quieter and the right atmosphere was being created for progress in the reform programme which had been pressed on the Northern Ireland Government; the latter Government had been made aware that all the civil and other rights of United Kingdom citizens must be enjoyed by every citizen in Northern Ireland. Mr. Thomson said that good progress had been made on, for example, One Man - One Vote legislation, the appointment of an Ombudsman, the setting up of a Community Relations Ministry, the appointment of a Catholic Chairman of the Community Relations Board and the allocation of housing by the Central Housing Authority. Mr. Thomson said that he hoped that all would agree that the reforms which had been, and would be, introduced went ahead as quickly as possible. In this connection, he said that the Taoiseach's Tralee Speech had been most helpful.

Dr. Hillery suggested that Section 5 of the Government of Ireland Act should be amended to include the terms of a recent Motion of the Council of Europe on Human Rights; if this were done, it would give every citizen of Northern Ireland an entitlement by law to his rights. Dr. Hillery said that there were difficulties and that a solution of the problem would have to be in the long term; it was essential that there should be a union of wills and hearts; force would not be used by the Irish Government and the eventual re-unification would take some time. He said, in reply to Mr. Thomson, that, although references had been made to a solution on a federal line, it was not the only alternative. Dr. Hillery suggested that there should be consultation

at Parliamentary level; he was very keen to see a beginning to such Parliamentary meetings; there were also other fields such as tourism, business and commerce, in which co-operation between the two parts of the country could be increased. Dr. Hillery said that there were still extremists on both sides but, in his opinion, mostly in Northern Ireland, who were antagonistic towards such co-operation. He, nevertheless, thought that co-operation will be better in the future and, by such co-operation, we should find a way to the re-unification of the country and the implementation of the needed reforms. Dr. Hillery expressed the view that it was a pity that no great leader seemed to be emerging in the North of Ireland to guide the way to more co-operation, reforms and re-unification; there was a great need for such a leader to emerge. Mr. Thomson said that there ~~was~~ still great difficulties to be overcome, that the Home Secretary had been very helpful and that the problem could never be solved by direct rule from Westminster; a lot depended on meeting the fears, justified or not, of the moderate majority in the North of Ireland. Dr. Hillery said that the line adopted by the Taoiseach had involved him in political risk because it was possible that the line being followed might only result in the status quo being left unchanged. Mr. Thomson said that what had been done in the way of reforms was irreversible; there would be no turning back from implementing the necessary reforms. Mr. Thomson stressed that British Government policy had not been attacked by the Tory Party; having supported the line adopted by the Labour Government it would be very unlikely that they would make any changes, should they

*Mr Thomson said
that he was
confident on
this point
and*

ever become the Government.

*Minister raised
Special Powers Act.
He has been asked
raised the revival
of the Public Order
(Amendment) Bill
in Stormont after
it appeared to
have been let lie
H.M.*

Reference was made by Mr. Thomson to the special Powers Act concerning the abolition of which hopes had been expressed in the debates in the House of Commons. He said that the British Government did not like to see the special Powers Act continued; it would take some time, however, for the troubles to be over and he referred to the fact that the Dublin Government, and even the Westminster Government, had somewhat similar legislation. In this connection, Mr. McCann said that it was incorrect to suggest that the special Powers Act could be compared with similar Irish or British legislation. Mr. McCann also pointed out that there was such legislation as the Flags and Emblems Act in the North of Ireland which was objectionable.

Mr. Thomson said that he was happy to have discussed matters with Dr. Hillery and that he looked forward to closer consultation between the two Governments on the situation in the North of Ireland by way of talks between Ministers and through diplomatic channels.

J G MOLLOY
Ambassador

12 December 1969