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Meeting of Dr. Hillery, Minister for External Affairs, with Press Officers held September 16, 1969, at the Irish United Nations Mission, New York.

Present: Dr. P.J. Hillery, Minister for External Affairs,
Mr. H. McCann, Secretary of Department of External Affairs,
Mr. C.V. Whelan, Consul General, New York,
Mr. T.P. Kennedy, Press Officer, New York,
Mr. B. Cronin, Press Attache, Washington,
Mr. P. Comyn, Press Officer, Boston,
Miss Maeve Fitzgibbon.

Ambassador Cremin was present for discussion of press liaison at the United Nations.

The following is a summary of the principal points made during the discussion:

1. Publicity objectives:

The Minister explained that the present target of publicity should be to affect British opinion with a view to bringing about official talks on the situation in the North of Ireland between the Government of Ireland, the British Government and probably the Stormont Government. We should realize too that we wish to unite with the people in Northern Ireland and not make this impossible by our campaign. Our activity in the United States should be aimed at encouraging the Americans to influence the British to start talking with us on the North. The point could be stressed that we were obliged to have recourse to the United Nations because the British refused to talk with us about a solution for the situation. There was annoyance at the establishment of the field hospitals and the movement of troops but they did not seem to resent so much our U.N. activity. The British probably regretted they had not talked with us at an earlier stage and may now be inclined to do so. It would be better not to go into detail as to what would be discussed at such talks. A study was being made of theoretical solutions which could be discussed if talks were agreed upon, but a federal solution should not be over-stressed until the study was completed and further decisions made. Publicity should not be too strongly critical of the British Government and it might be advisable to avoid extreme criticism of Stormont at this stage, in view of the objective of getting talks under way. The Minister stressed that the Press Officers should operate in accordance with the political guidance that will be extended by the Embassy and Consulate heads.

2. United Nations activity and the role of publicity:

The Minister and Secretary explained the procedural position in relation to the inscription of the item "The Situation in the North of Ireland" on the agenda for the current U.N. General Assembly session. The Minister indicated that publicity would be undesirable at the present very delicate stage when consultations were taking place to secure inscription. Tactical policy could change from day to day

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depending on the way the General Committee was likely to deal with the request for inscription. It was likely at the moment that civil rights in the North would be stressed rather than partition but the emphasis could vary as the situation developed. If and when the item is inscribed on the agenda, publicity possibilities might arise but these would have to be carefully considered in relation to their effect on the attitude of other delegations at the U.N. Otherwise the Minister agreed that Mr. Kennedy should maintain liaison with U.N. correspondents and visiting Irish press representatives during the period of the Minister's stay. Ambassador Cremin considered that a useful job might be done in ensuring that the press would report accurately and thus avoid a repetition of the misreporting which the New York Times correspondent had perpetrated on the occasion of the recent Security Council meeting.

3. Improvement in liaison with Department and G.I.B.:

The Press Officers expressed concern at the seeming lack of liaison in the case of the New York Times correspondent, Thomas Hamilton, who obtained an interview with the Minister, but who did not appear to have been contacted by the G.I.B. to encourage a more favourable line of reporting. Reference was made to the unfortunate remarks of Deputy Maurice Dockrell about Protestants in the Republic being treated as "household pets" and to inaccuracies of Hamilton about censorship and emigration. The Minister explained with regard to Hamilton's interview with him that he had met Hamilton quite accidentally and agreed to give him background information but found that he was being interviewed in a very searching way and perhaps for this reason it had not been possible to arrange for liaison between the Department and the G.I.B. The Minister added that the Department had however supplied Hamilton with special briefing material, particularly on economic aspects of the unity question, and he said that the Department should send copies for information and for use by the Press Officers. The Minister agreed in general that efforts should be made to ensure that visiting correspondents are contacted as soon as possible after arrival and a suggested program be prepared for their consideration.

4. Invitations to publicists to visit Ireland:

The need to encourage selected editors, reporters and columnists to visit Ireland at this time to develop further publicity on the situation was recognised. The Secretary said that any recommendations approved by the Embassy would receive speedy consideration, possibly including payment of expenses where indicated. As regards requests for interviews with the Taoiseach and other Ministers, this would have to be considered on an individual basis. In the case of a particularly high-level interviewer, a special recommendation for the Taoiseach's consideration might be made but there was no question of such interviews being granted as a matter of routine.

5. Headquarters for publicity activity in New York.

The advantages of using New York as headquarters for publicity activity with regular

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visits to other areas were noted. The Secretary said that he would discuss the matter with the Charge d'Affaires a.i. in Washington. It was recognised that it was important that the Washington press corps, the Washington Post and the Washington Star, the National Press Club and other such institutions in the national capital should continue to be cultivated.

6. Publicity in Canada:

It was agreed that Ambassador Warnock should be consulted regarding a proposal that Miss Maeve Fitzgibbon, who is now available for press work, be assigned to make a preliminary survey of publicity needs in Canada. If this assignment is acceptable, Miss Fitzgibbon will report first to the Ambassador for briefing.

7. Proposed visit of Minister, Dr. Hillery, to Boston.

This proposal was occasioned by several local factors: the disappointment in Boston at the failure of Miss Devlin to keep her engagements there, the proposed national conference to be held there in October by the radical National Association for Irish Justice and the general passive attitude of the traditional Irish organizations on the issue of the North. The Consul General in Boston and Mr. Conyn, the Press Officer, had put forward this proposal so that advantage might be taken of the interval before the NAIJ conference to present the Government's viewpoint and to secure support for our policy objectives. The Minister agreed in principle but it was decided that a decision as to whether he could visit Boston at the weekend of the 27 and 28 September should be deferred until Friday, September 19 as he might have to return to Dublin after the General Debate speech if new policy decisions have to be made. (After the meeting, the Consul General at Boston reported that the NAIJ conference had been put back to October 28 and thus the timing of the Minister's visit to Boston in late September or early October is not now so urgent).

8. Visits of other Government Ministers:

Mr. George Colley, Minister for Industry and Commerce and Minister for the Gaeltacht, will arrive in New York late Sunday, September 21 and will depart for Dublin on Wednesday evening, September 24. He had indicated that he wishes to set aside Monday, September 22, for meetings with the Press Officers. He will be engaged in trade promotion functions and meetings with other business contacts on Tuesday, September 23 and Wednesday September 24. A reception to be given by the Consul General on the evening of Tuesday, September 23, will enable leaders of the Irish-American community in the New York area to meet both Dr. Hillery and Mr. Colley. Mr. Charles Haughey, Minister for Finance, is expected in New York Sunday evening, September 28. He will be accompanied by Mrs. Haughey and it is understood that he will be staying in New York through Monday, September 29. The Minister, Dr. Hillery agreed that arrangements might be made in consultation with the two other Ministers for meetings with senior editors of Time or Newsweek or The New York Times. Dr. Hillery understood both Mr. Colley and Mr. Haughey would be available to take

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advantage of any publicity opportunities of this kind.

9. Possibility of visits to North America by high ranking personalities from Ireland:

The Minister indicated that a visit by the President would not be feasible at the present time. The question of a visit by the Taoiseach to publicise the situation in the North of Ireland had come up but it was decided that it might better take place in conjunction with a visit for some other official reason. Visits by such personalities as Mr. Ben Briscoe; Mrs. Frances Condeall former Mayor of Limerick; and Mr. F.H. Boland were suggested as having potentialities for good publicity and the Secretary, Mr. McCann, indicated the Department would examine these suggestions and the names of personalities who might be sent.

10. Proposed major public relations campaign:

A suggestion put forward by the Press Officers for the organization of a public relations campaign in the United States was considered to involve too many problems for immediate decision or recommendation. The suggestion is that a new nationwide organization be established in the U.S. with local committees and that it engage in fund raising on a professional scale with a view to undertaking advertising, both in the press and in the broadcasting media, and other public relations activities on a deliberate, planned and sustained basis. Membership of the organization would not be restricted to Irish-American personalities but would include representatives of labour unions, civil liberties groups, the Quakers, etc., thus forming a broad spectrum of support for civil rights in the Six Counties. It was agreed that the Press Officers might submit a detailed proposal. It was understood that a projected campaign of this kind would be self-funded, not requiring financial support from the Government of Ireland, but would have to operate within control of the Government.

11. Request from American Congress for Irish Freedom for financial support for an advertisement on Human Rights in the North of Ireland.

This request involved a subscription by the Government of Ireland towards the placing of an advertisement in one of the New York daily newspapers (the morning Daily News or the evening New York Post) which would cost approximately \$3,000 for a full page. The advertisement would summarise the conclusions of the Report of the International Commission of Jurists. The ACIF would hope to have about \$1,000 and would need a further \$2,000 in order to place the advertisement. The Minister agreed that this was not the best way in which to spend money in publicising the Civil Rights position in the North. Furthermore there were other objections, since it would mean that the Government would be subsidising the activities of a particular organization in the U.S. and it might be necessary for the advertisement to indicate the source of its financing in accordance with the U.S. Department of Justice regulations on foreign government lobbying and public relations in the U.S.

12. Fund raising and the Irish Red Cross Society:

It was reported to the Minister that difficulties were being encountered in giving advice, when requested, to Irish-American societies and other groups who wished to

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raise funds for relief in the North of Ireland. In accordance with the instructions already received, our advice was that such funds should be sent to the Irish Red Cross Society which was the agency through which all Irish Government funds for relief were being channelled. Unfortunately, reaction to this suggestion was very negative arising out of the bad image which many Americans have of the American Red Cross. In one case in Boston it was decided to send no funds to the Irish Red Cross but rather to forward them to Cardinal Conway. The New York State Board of the AOH has also decided to forward a large donation (of the order of \$10,000 or more) to the Cardinal. In another case a written request has been received for advice from an organization in New Jersey which hopes to raise \$10,000 and it has already made clear that the Irish Red Cross would not be an acceptable channel for receipt of the funds in Ireland. It was pointed out by the Secretary that organizations associated with the Catholic Church such as the AOH might prefer to forward funds to the Church authorities in Ireland. At the same time it was clear that there was a definite problem arising out of the negative view of the Red Cross in general which existed in the U.S. Despite the excellent record of the Irish Red Cross Society, it was extremely difficult to persuade Americans to send voluntary subscriptions to the Irish affiliate of this organization. The Minister considered that this difficulty should be brought to the attention of the Government and the Secretary requested the Consul General to inform Mr. Ronan, Assistant Secretary, of the Minister's view.

CHARLES V. WHELAN
CONSUL GENERAL

Consul General.

cc: Embassy Washington/Ottawa
P.M.U.N.
Mr. McCann
Consulates Boston/Chicago/San Francisco,