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Title: Minutes of a meeting at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office between Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain Donal O'Sullivan and Eamonn Gallagher of the Department of Foreign Affairs on the Irish side, and Stewart Crawford and Kelvin White of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and others on the British side, mainly relating British concerns about Irish republican Army activities in the Republic of Ireland, and Irish concerns about religious discrimination by employers in Northern Ireland.

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Meeting at Foreign and Commonwealth Office24th May, 1971Present

British side: Sir Stewart Crawford, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
 Mr. Philip Woodfield, Home Office
 Mr. Howard Smith, UK representative in Belfast
 Mr. Kelvin White, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
 Mr. Thorpe, " " " "

Irish side: H.E. Dr. Donal O'Sullivan, Ambassador, London
 Mr. Eamonn Gallagher, Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Ambassador opened by saying that he looked forward to his first first opportunity of meeting Mr. Smith and hoped that Mr. Smith would be able to give us his initial impression of Belfast. Sir Stewart Crawford said that this would be done but first he wished to refer to the statement made by the Taoiseach on Friday, 21st May. It was, he said, an unhelpful statement; it misinterpreted the situation and took a partisan line. The authorities were doing their best to keep the peace in the North. The Taoiseach's statement was an unfortunate departure from his customary attitude and could only help extremists. It would encourage a hostile attitude towards the British Army. A telegram had gone to Ambassador Peck in Dublin that morning asking him to express dismay and regret. The Ambassador replied that he considered that the Taoiseach's statement was justified. The Taoiseach had refrained from accusing the British Army of misbehavior although he had satisfactory objective evidence of this. It would be a pity if the British took a hard line in relation to the Taoiseach's statement; its content did not warrant the interpretation being put on it. Mr. Gallagher said that a number of Parliamentary Questions had reached us on Friday morning. One of them came from a very reasonable spokesman for the Opposition who referred in his question to the "savage brutality shown by British troops to the civilian population in Belfast on Thursday 20th May". Rather than waiting until Wednesday and being required to give a specific answer to that kind of question the Taoiseach had taken time by the forelock and issued a statement which avoided any reference to brutality so as to take the heat out of the subsequent Dail Question Time on Wednesday 26th May. Sir Stewart remarked that Westminster also received Parliamentary Questions asking, for example, what we were doing about IRA camps in the Republic. They were very careful in their replies to these not to create embarrassment. They certainly did not want to get into public bickering with us. The Ambassador said that we shared this attitude and practice but, at a time when it appeared once again that the whole political bandwagon in the North was rolling in the direction of blaming the minority for everything, the Taoiseach felt it essential to put matters into their correct perspective. The fact was that intimidation inside Gallaher's factory on Thursday morning attracted people to the factory in protest against the intimidation and the protestors were assaulted by the security forces. We had evidence about this from reliable people - not from people who continually shout their heads off and whose allegations we normally disregard. It was important to draw attention to the risk of ignoring grievances as ~~to~~ to do so would gradually let leadership of the minority slip from moderates to extremists. The Taoiseach's statement was partly designed to counteract this and was, in our view, helpful to moderate leadership. Mr. Smith, asked to comment by Sir Stewart, said that the starting point was the Reid affair and subsequent funeral. Councillor O'Kane had examined the situation at Gallaher's and was satisfied that no one was being sacked and no one being held

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hostage in the factory as rumour had alleged. The crowd wanted to get at the shift workers coming off duty and had to be restrained. It was clear beyond doubt that things would have been much worse if there had not been a quick action by the troops. There was no evidence of getting at the minority in all this as we seemed to think. Mr. Gallagher replied that, while it is admitted all round that facts are difficult to get at in the North, it was well enough known that factories like Gallaher's, Harland & Wolff, Mackies and other major industries in Belfast employ a minimum number of Catholics. Some of them seem to employ none at all. Intimidation within factories was virtually routine at times of tension in particular. We had enough experience of this to know better than to accept denials from management about their discriminatory employment practices and the existence of intimidation in a place where denial and abuse of authority was commonplace for 50 years. It seemed more sensible to us to believe that allegations of intimidation are usually more accurate than are the denials. Sir Stewart closed off the conversation on this subject by asking Mr. Smith to respond to the Ambassador's earlier request for his impressions of Belfast.