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Reference Code: 2002/8/78

Title: Letter from Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs HJ McCann to Secretary of the Department of the Taoiseach NS Ó Nualláin, providing material to be used in answer to Dáil Questions on the proposed establishment of a fulltime battalion of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Creation Date(s): 15 June, 1971

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 6 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

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Se fhreagra chun:—
(Agus) any reply to:—

AN RÚNAÍ
(The Secretary)

faoin uimhir seo:—
(quoting:—)



AN ROINN SHÓDAÍ EACTRAÇA
Department of Foreign Affairs

BAILE ÁTA CLIAË, 2.
Dublin, 2.

15 Meitheamh, 1971

Rúnaí
Roinn an Taoisigh.

I am to refer to minutes S.9361 Y of 9th and 10th June and other communications concerning the following Dail Questions:

To ask the Taoiseach if any information has been received from the British authorities concerning the proposed new fulltime local armed military force in Northern Ireland under the operations of the British Army.

- Deputy Desmond

To ask the Taoiseach if he has had any discussions with the British Prime Minister regarding the proposed formation of an army battalion in Northern Ireland within the Ulster Defence Regiment; and, if so, if he will give details.

- Gerard Lynch,
Michael Begley

To ask the ^{Taoiseach} ~~Minister for Foreign Affairs~~, if, in view of the widespread alarm caused by the announcement from British army headquarters in Lisburn that the British Ministry of Defence is considering the formation of a fulltime army battalion within the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Government will now take effective steps to bring home to the British authorities the dangers inherent in such a move; and if he will make Britain aware of the growing resentment in this country at some of the policies and actions of the present British Government in relation to Ireland.

- Deputy R. Ryan

To ask the Taoiseach if he is aware of the proposal to form in Northern Ireland a special army battalion within the Ulster Defence Regiment; and, if so, if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Gerry L'Estrange

To ask the Taoiseach if, in view of the considerable concern over the reports that a new battalion is to be set up in Northern Ireland, he will seek assurances from the British Government that such a force, if established, will not be a para-military one.

- John O'Connell

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(Aua) } any reply to:—

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(quoting :—)



AN ROINN GNÓDAÍ EACTRAÍCA
Department of Foreign Affairs

BAILE ÁTA CLIAIC, 2.
Dublin, 2.

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To ask the Taoiseach if there have been any recent discussions with the British Government concerning the proposed reorganisation of the Ulster Defence Regiment; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Liam Cosgrave.

To ask the Taoiseach whether any communication has been conveyed to the British Government on their proposal that a fulltime force should be raised from amongst the present UDR; whether any such proposal was raised by the British Government in previous meetings; and whether he will state the Government's attitude to this development.

- Michael O'Leary.

It is suggested that these questions be taken together.

I enclose herewith a note in relation to the project of establishing a fulltime UDR battalion. It will be seen that it is this Department's view that the idea should be opposed without qualification. In addition to the content of the attached note it is the view of this Department that the creation of a fulltime locally recruited armed force in the North could not be restricted to one battalion; there would be pressure to increase its size and the end result would, given the actual circumstances in the North, be a sectarian and sizeable armed force. In such circumstances attempts by the British Government to impose serious institutional reform in the North would risk being frustrated by the existence of an indigenous army even though it remained under the control of Westminster.

The Chargé d'Affaires at the British Embassy, Mr. John T. Williams, was received by me today on the instructions of the Minister and advised that the idea of creating a fulltime locally recruited battalion of the UDR was considered to be inadvisable and to be capable not merely of antagonising still further the minority in the North but of frustrating the possibility of genuine reform in the North. In my further remarks to him I said that I considered that it revealed a certain degree of bankruptcy of political will and ideas in London in dealing with the Northern situation. Our Chargé d'Affaires in London is being instructed to make a similar démarche to-day.

A suitable reply to the above questions might run as follows:

The Government's views on the question of creating a fulltime locally recruited battalion of the UDR have been conveyed to the British authorities.

It would be preferable, in this Department's opinion, if the Taoiseach could avoid direct public criticism of the proposal at this time. The feeling is extremely tense in the North on both sides and advantage might be taken of any remarks the Taoiseach should make to switch attention from the main problem now looming up before Mr. Faulkner i.e. of what to do about Orange parades. If, however, the supplementaries require the Taoiseach to go further than the above suggested reply he might find it sufficient to say something like the following:

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AN RÚNAÍ
 (The Secretary)

faoin uimhir seo:—
 (quoting:—)



AN ROINN SHÓDAÍ EACTRAÇA
 Department of Foreign Affairs

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 Dublin, 2.

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We would, of course, deprecate anything which would increase community tension in the North or endanger the implementation of the Downing Street guarantee.

I would also refer to the following question put down by Deputy O'Leary:

To ask the Taoiseach whether it is his intention to reply to Mr. Faulkner's speech of 2nd June in which he criticised life in the Republic.

A copy of the official text of Mr. Faulkner's speech of 2nd June is enclosed herewith together with an analysis made of the earlier newspaper account of the speech. It is the opinion of this Department that the Taoiseach should not respond to Mr. Faulkner's speeches except at times of his own choice. A suitable form of reply might be the following:

It is my custom to express the Government's views on the North, on North/South relations and on Anglo-Irish relations at times when I think it appropriate. I have no intention of varying from this.

Rúnaí

The UDR

The first mention of the possibility of creating a fulltime battalion of the UDR was made in the Sunday Mirror of 6th June. It might have been reckoned at the time as kite-flying by the British Army which appears to be thoroughly fed up with its functions in the North. Debates have since taken place in Stormont and at Westminster on the subject and it now appears that it was discussed between Faulkner and the British Government some time ago. Both debates are revealing.

At Stormont Mr. Faulkner said "the whole population at this time should have as its top priority the end of terrorism" and went on to say "it is clear now to the public that the British and Northern Ireland Governments are determined to take any initiative that they may believe to be right on the advice of the security forces to bring the present terrorist campaign to an end".

Thus Mr. Faulkner has nailed his flag even more firmly to the thesis that the principal problem in the North is terrorism. In this respect the debate, including some of the remarks by the Unionist back-benchers, is back to where it was in March when Major Chichester-Clark decided that he had had enough of it.

The Westminster debate was much more important and was fortuitous in the sense that the debate on the armed forces was due to come up yesterday. Lord Balniel said that as part of their continuing review of the role of the security forces in Northern Ireland and because of their wish to improve recruiting they were considering the possibility of raising a fulltime battalion of the UDR. He said that no decision had yet been taken on the matter, that it was still at an early stage of consideration and legislation would be required. This drew a long response from Mr. Roy Hattersley who was formally Minister of Defence for Administration and is now Deputy Labour spokesman on Foreign Affairs. He said that there was growing desperation in the Unionist Party; senior Ministers freely spoke about what must be done to preserve the Government in office as if this were the only obligation on the people of Northern Ireland. He added that he was in favour of the survival of Mr. Brian Faulkner though he saw no good in him except that what came after was likely to be a good deal worse. He wanted a categorical assurance that the Army would not be subjected to the political pressure now building up (obviously he meant from the Unionist right-wing). He said that confidence in the UDR would certainly be dissipated if the UDR was made an instrument for the carrying out of political decisions. In closing the debate for the Government Mr. Johnson Smith said that the Northern Ireland Government had a very real responsibility and interest in security and he thought they were entitled to express their views on the way security should be maintained. He said that there had been changes since 1969. There now was a situation where communal rioting on any significant scale was a rarity but the Army was being engaged in increasingly vicious attacks. He said that the Government were aware of the misgivings people had about a fulltime UDR unit. They considered setting up a fulltime battalion because they thought it could possibly help the security forces. Its principles would be the same as those applied to the UDR.

There are some things not said in these debates which are also relevant. The British Army is fully stretched in maintaining about 10,000 troops in the North. The duty is not a popular one and difficulties appear to have arisen in regard to re-enlistment. Britain's position in Europe and elsewhere, in the military sense, is undermined to a degree by the Northern situation.

has also been suggested in the newspapers that the purpose of a fulltime UDR battalion would be to combat the IRA. This does not square completely with the notion that it is essentially a force for use outside the cities as the IRA strength is clearly now within the cities as distinct from the situation in 1956-62. If police barracks are regarded as strategic points a fulltime UDR battalion might very well be employed in protecting barracks within Belfast. This would quickly bring it into contact with the local people and the results are easily foreseeable.

It is believed that the Catholic proportion in the UDR has gone down to as little as about 16%. This would probably disappear altogether if a fulltime battalion were created in the present mood of public opinion. Consequently the UDR would end up as a sectarian force.

I am satisfied from the arguments used by Roy Hattersley that people like Hume must have been in touch with him before the Westminster debate. They would presumably be in touch with other Labour Party leaders as well. It is likely, given the trend of the debate to date, that the Labour Party will split with the Conservative Party on Northern policy if this issue is pursued.

So far as our views are concerned, in relation to the Government's general policy, the following points would seem to be valid:

- (i) we would be opposed to the creation of any locally recruited fulltime armed force in the North under the control of the Stormont Government;
- (ii) neither would it appear to be in the interest of the Government's policy that there should be a locally recruited fulltime armed force in the North controlled by Westminster. There would appear to be two sound reasons for this:
 - (a) if the British Army are in difficulties because of the Northern problem it is in our interest to keep them in that condition until such time as Britain comes to the right political conclusions;
 - (b) the minority feel sufficiently terrorised by the current tactics of the British Army especially in Belfast; their reaction to a fulltime UDR battalion would almost certainly be greater and more widespread violence;
- (iii) insofar as a locally recruited fulltime armed force would tend to give comfort to the perennial attitudes of the Unionist Establishment it requires to be resisted by us so as to encourage Unionists to begin to think in other directions;
- (iv) the insistence that terrorism is the real problem in the North is something to which we take fundamental exception. We are entitled to oppose the new development on that ground alone;
- (v) General Tuzo's remarks on a BBC interview last night appear to suggest that the British Army's job is to hold the ring until political solutions are found. Similar remarks were made by his predecessor, General Freeland, about a year ago.

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If these remarks come down to the creation of a locally recruited fulltime armed force then it could be suggested that the necessary political decisions are still being avoided - or, worse, that there is no intention of making them;

- (vi) the credibility of the Government's general policy (in public opinion here and among the minority in the North) could be sapped if a sectarian force is again created in the North.

There are certain to be Dáil Questions on this subject next week and it would be advisable to consider now what action should be taken.

If the views expressed above are accepted then it becomes necessary to consider expressing these views to the British authorities without delay so as to be in a good posture for Dáil Questions.

In addition we might consider whether to alert the Labour Front Bench (Mr. Wilson, Mr. Healey etc.) of our profound objection to this idea so as to ensure their support in Westminster. We might also consider letting the Opposition in Stormont know our final position so as to encourage them in their fight against Faulkner on the matter. We should also consider "leaks" to reliable journalists.

9.2.71