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Title:	Copy letter by CV Whelan, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Embassy of Ireland to Great Britain, sent to HJ McCann, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, reporting on a meeting with Kelvin White, head of the Ireland Division at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, at which the former presented an aide-memoire from the Irish government calling for a withdrawal of British troops from Catholic areas, the ending of internment and a declaration of Britain's intention to achieve a final settlement in Ireland.
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CONFIDENTIAL

1st February 1972

Dear Secretary

In accordance with your instructions, I called last evening on Mr Kelvin White, Counsellor and Head of the Ireland Division at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and handed him an Aide-Memoire (copy attached). I also gave him a copy of the statement which had been issued in Dublin on behalf of the Department of the Taoiseach from which the terms of the Aide-Memoire had been taken. Mr. White received me at 5.30 p.m. and I was with him for slightly over an hour.

Having read the documents I gave him, Mr. White said that perhaps it was not correct for him to comment on the terms of the Aide-Memoire but he proceeded to give his reactions to the statement issued in Dublin. He was particularly critical of the opening paragraph and said that we were prejudging the results of an enquiry which had now been decided upon. To dismiss any version of the event that was in conflict with our Government's view was surely the very essence of prejudgment. In reply, I pointed out that the British Army spokesmen had already made statements which were in flagrant contradiction ~~to~~ the accounts of impartial and unprejudiced observers. At this point, Mr. White took up the detailed report which had been received from the G.O.C. Northern Ireland and which appears in "The Times" today. He read it out to me and when he had finished asked me whether we were not

-2-

prepared to accept that the Army had merely returned the fire of gunmen and nailbomb throwers. I said that our Government had their own reliable sources of information, backed ~~out~~ by the accounts of neutral observers such as newspaper men and that these contradicted the Army statements. At this stage Mr. White asked me whether I was saying that the Army was telling lies. If so, there was not much point in our continuing to discuss the matter.

At this moment the telephone rang and when we resumed our conversation I pointed out that the Army's record in regard to accounts of previous incidents involving deaths of civilians did not lend credibility to their account of the events in Derry on Sunday. It was not a question of my saying that the Army was telling lies but of the rejection by Irish people and neutral observers alike of the Army's efforts to rid itself of blame. Besides the fact that the British Government had now announced an official enquiry proved that public opinion in Britain and indeed in the world outside, demanded an investigation other than that carried out by the Army itself. Mr. White maintained that the Army record must be accepted. He enquired whether I would be prepared to withdraw my previous remarks if the official enquiry proved that all those who had been shot were either gunmen or nailbombers. I refused to accept this challenge based on a hypothetical outcome of the enquiry and Mr. White moved on to the other matter set out in the statement which I handed him.

He said that it seemed to him that we were now lecturing the British Government on how they should carry out policy within the United Kingdom and this was hardly acceptable. The call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Derry and Catholic ghettos elsewhere was, in any case, not a move that would contribute to the

-3-

solution of the problem. The demand for the cessation of harassment of the minority population was equivalent to putting the proverbial question "When are you going to stop beating your wife?". He claimed that the measures which had been taken by the British Army in the North had met with considerable success in reducing terrorism and in substantial arms finds. I pointed out, however, that, successful though the military measures might have been, the manner in which they had been carried out had completely alienated the Catholic minority. We had considerable argument on this point, Mr. White maintaining that the troops were highly disciplined and well controlled under extreme provocation, while I reminded him of several individual incidents in which members of the Army had behaved in either a reckless or brutal fashion. The issues of internment and road cratering came up and Mr. White produced from his desk a graph purporting to show that the combined effect of internment and cratering had been to reduce substantially the amount of explosives involved in bombing incidents. His effort to justify these measures by apparent scientific evidence was, I pointed out, open to challenge on various points. Even if the figures were correct, the possibility of a change in IRA policy was not taken into account. Combining the two measures with the reduction of explosions in a cause-and-effect argument hardly constituted firm evidence that either one on its own had brought about the apparent result. What was clear again, I suggested, was that even if the measures in question were successful in a military sense, the minority population had been harassed and provoked to a degree which had led inevitably to their present alienation from both the authority of Stormont and of the Army and Police. There was now evidence that large sections of the Catholic population were living

-4-

in fear of British Army raids. Mr. White suggested that fear was not so much their dominating feeling as hate resulting from a loss of pride and dignity experienced in the course of Army searches.

As regards the end of internment without trial, Mr. White suggested that the security situation must improve to the point where violence would virtually cease before internment could be ended. I pointed out that there had been several suggestions as to how internment could be phased out, by bringing charges in cases of definite evidence and by releasing those against whom there was none; or by setting a timetable for the end of internment and releasing a substantial number forthwith, as suggested in "The Guardian" that morning. Apart from the deterioration in community relations that had been brought about by the internment policy the possibilities of fruitful inter-party talks had come to nothing because of the insistence on maintaining and extending internment. We had some argument on this point, Mr. White claiming that violence was already increasing before internment and that the measure itself had enabled the British Army both to neutralise individual terrorists and to obtain a vast amount of information for further reduction of terrorism. I pointed out that we were back to the point we had reached earlier, namely, his emphasis on military successes while the complete alienation of the Catholic minority had been brought about by the actions of the military. As regards the role of the Paratroopers Mr. White claimed that they were a highly disciplined force and were unlikely to engage in breaches of professional Army conduct. I replied that no doubt they were highly trained and disciplined

-5-

for particular tasks and suggested that they had been given a role in Northern Ireland in confrontation with civilians which did not constitute the tasks they had been trained to carry out.

Finally, Mr. White said that he had no particular comment to make on our proposal that Britain declare its intention to achieve a final settlement of the Irish question and that a conference for that purpose be convoked. He pointed out that the Government had already accepted proposals for inter-party discussions at Westminster followed by talks with the political parties in both parts of Ireland. Did we mean that the conference should be called solely for the purpose of bringing about unification? I pointed out that unification had not been specifically referred to but that our Government's policy is that it is the only long-term solution that will bring peace and prosperity to the whole of Ireland. Within that general context the conference would presumably seek immediate interim arrangements to enable the majority and the minority communities in Ireland to reconcile their differences and to move towards unity. As regards the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland it was now clear that they would never again accept domination by a Government of the representatives of the Unionist majority. Mr. White did not discuss these particular points in detail but merely reiterated his view that the British Government would be prepared to talk about a future settlement if the other parties to such talks were prepared to come forward.

In general, Mr. White deplored what he called the decision of our Government to make its demands public and thus engage in a diplomatic conflict through the media. The possibility

-6-

of Mr Faulkner moving towards a more flexible position would now unfortunately be thwarted. He referred in this context to Mr Faulkner's recent remarks about a coalition Government on the lines of the wartime Churchill Cabinet. We could hardly expect Mr. Faulkner now to withhold a strong reaction to our public demands. Mr. Heath, for his part, had to consider his position and what British public opinion might expect him to say in reply to such a statement from our Government. I pointed out that whatever pressures Mr Heath might be under, they were nothing compared to those at present being experienced by our Government. We hoped that the British Government would give very serious consideration to our proposals and would not reject them out of hand. This would only lead to a further deterioration in the present ~~and~~ lamentable situation. On the other hand a considered reply by the British Government would help to ease the situation and to reduce the present tension in Ireland, North and South.

Before we concluded I emphasised to Mr. White that we would expect an official British Government reaction to the proposals set out in the Aide-Memoire. In the meantime, I would convey his personal reaction to my Government. He would understand, of course, that several of the points about which we had discussion and argument were outside my immediate instructions, but I had endeavoured to represent so far as possible the present views and mood of the Irish Government and people. We exchanged remarks of regret on the present condition of relations between

-7-

the two countries, Mr. White remarking that "we had both lost and the only people to have gained were the IRA". We agreed to keep personally in contact.

Yours sincerely



C V Whelan

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AIR-MEMOIR

The Irish Government consider that it must now be clear to the British Government that their policies in Northern Ireland are misguided and that what is now required are:

- (1) the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Derry and Catholic ghettos elsewhere and the cessation of harassment of the minority population;
- (2) the end of internment without trial; and
- (3) a declaration of Britain's intention to achieve a final settlement of the Irish question and the convocation of a conference for that purpose.

The Irish Government are satisfied that nothing less can bring about peace. They also believe that these proposals will put an end to violence.

31st January 1972