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W. O'Brien  
to see & keep - I am sending  
copies to London & Mr. Wally

Mr. Binke  
copy  
Mr. Wally  
copies on 12/8/15 and  
22/11  
23/19

NOTE

~~11/22/4~~  
~~11/26/1~~

Mr. Thom, British Chargé d'Affaires, called to see me at his request this morning about the meeting in Bangor to recruit for a third police force held last evening. He said that he felt that the importance of this meeting was very greatly exaggerated in the press; that it was a quiet and orderly meeting of just 200 people who wished to advance names for inclusion in a possible RUC Reserve. I said I could not exaggerate the concern caused by meetings of this kind among the Catholic population in the North and here in this part of the country. Ambassador O'Sullivan's approach to the Secretary of State yesterday had been on the explicit instructions of the Taoiseach and the Minister who shared this concern. It was not at all surprising that the meeting was peaceful and orderly; one would have expected it to be so. There was a considerable danger that a para-police force in which elements of para-military forces would be prominent would be organised. The threat might be small as he said at this stage, but it could quickly grow so that a situation would be reached which the British would consider uncontrollable, as they had the UWC strike.

Mr. Thom stressed that it was necessary to strengthen the RUC and to recruit members for this purpose in an RUC Reserve or auxiliary. I said that while we accepted the need to strengthen the RUC we had made proposals in the context of Sunningdale about a police authority. This, unfortunately, had lapsed. We saw a considerable danger that an expanded auxiliary of the type apparently envisaged would be flooded by ex-B Specials who, because of their previous training would have a great deal of influence, and who would be very difficult to control even though it was the intention of the authorities to put them firmly under RUC control and even if they were not to be armed.

The minority was in a state of very great anxiety. This could be seen from articles such as Devlin's and we had from our contacts with the Catholic population in the North ample evidence of this anxiety which was not confined to politicians. There was a considerable danger that this anxiety could be increased by the public appreciation of what was happening in meetings such as the Bangor meeting. This appreciation might differ from the

reality of the situation but it was a factor with which we had to deal. Anxiety, moreover, was not confined to the Six Counties but affected the political atmosphere in the South which had to be a factor in our evolution of policy.

Mr. Thom told me that he had been in contact with Frank Cooper and with Commissioner Flannigan this morning and that he would visit Belfast next week to discuss the matter further. He then enquired if the climate of opinion here was such as to jeopardise the Security meeting. I said that this was not the case as yet at any rate, but that we saw difficulties with regard to the timing since Mr. Rees had indicated a wish to come on 5th and 6th September. I had no official position to put to him on this at this stage but it appeared to me, as it appeared to Ambassador O'Sullivan, when he was talking to the Secretary of State, that this would be very difficult due to absences on leave of the Ministers and officials primarily concerned. We would feel, I was certain, that the best time for such a meeting would be late in September.

I took the opportunity to mention again our concern about publicity of such a meeting and our feeling that if it were to be effective it should be held without publicity.

Mr. Thom then referred to the proposed meeting of officials and asked could this be held in the first week in September. I said that I felt that it would be difficult to have it in the first week in September and that the most probable date would be the second week. This would, again, be due to staff difficulties. There were problems inasmuch as, to some extent, there was a feeling that the decisions to be taken at this meeting were essentially political and not administrative decisions. He put it to me that what would be possible at such a meeting would be to define the limits of the problems which Ministers should decide and said that he felt that the establishment of some form of improved communications system would avoid some of the incidents between police and the military in the North. He asked when would they hear from us on this. Would they hear within the next week or so? I said that I thought any reply on this was likely to come at the end of the month.

He then enquired if the Guards were feeling aggrieved about the situation between themselves and the military in the North. I said that there had been a series of incidents along the length of the Border in which the Guards had felt themselves insulted on many occasions, ~~but they were not~~ put into

physical danger as they had been at Crossmaglen. This inevitably caused resentment and acted as a grit on the working of the machinery. He again reverted to the fact that a communications network would help to overcome the danger of these incidents. I said that I accepted this but that even with a communications network one could foresee difficulties and that, in fact, on one occasion when Guards were held hostage by a military patrol the patrol had not been able to get in contact for instructions because it lacked equipment.

K

16 August 1974

cc: Ambassador D. O'Sullivan, London  
 Mr. Dermot Nally, Dept. of the Taoiseach