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19 November 1987

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Assistant Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs

Study on the Consequences of Violence in Northern Ireland

Dear Assistant Secretary

The NIO have commissioned (in 1984 and 1985) two studies on the costs and consequences of violence. A further study, an update of the previous studies, has now been completed and the British side of the Secretariat has given me a copy (~~attached~~). I have asked for copies of the two previous studies.

The studies have been commissioned from the Centre for Conflict studies in the University of Ulster and are authored by Andrew Hamilton. The studies, or reviews, are, for the most part, based on published material (though the author says he has also used some unpublished material) on the general political situation, attitudes in both communities to a range of issues, including the Anglo-Irish Agreement in the case of the present study. It may be of interest to give a brief indication of some of the conclusions, especially since they reflect points made from time to time by our N.I. contacts. The studies are, of course, presented as "impartial" ones, in the sense that they are not produced by the NIO itself but are, rather, the work of an academic looking at empirical research and drawing such research together to get a picture of the overall political situation at present. There is, however, a fair amount of special pleading in the sections of the 1987 study.

The following report is a preliminary analysis (a fuller analysis will be incorporated in a general assessment paper to be prepared in the Secretariat in the next few weeks). The conclusions referred to under are chosen because they challenge some of our assumptions and/or because they are likely to commend themselves to the British as, at the least, useful political underpinning for a "sensitive" application of the Agreement between now and the review date.

Overall Conclusions

The study states that in relation to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, a stalemate situation may have been reached. This relates to a thesis advanced by Padraig O'Malley in an article in Fortnight magazine about 18 months ago. O'Malley argued that improvements in the security situation would be a key factor in the fate of the Agreement (as far as the British and the Unionists were concerned) and the alleviation of "alienation" in the nationalist community would be an equally important factor and one that required a certain pace of reform. If, however, there was no improvement in the security situation, the Intergovernmental Conference would be faced with the necessity to move slowly in the area of reform in order to placate Unionists. On the other hand, there would be a necessity to move quickly on reform to build on and conserve whatever reduction occurred in nationalist alienation. Such a situation could lead to stalemate, O'Malley argued, presumably on the grounds that the British would be persuaded to move slowly to take account of Unionist concerns and the Irish Government would want to move quickly to maintain nationalist support.

The study concludes that, given that O'Malley's stalemate situation may have been reached at this stage, "painful decisions" (this point is addressed to the British Government one assumes) will have to be taken on whether to move forward (and risk further Unionist "alienation") or to "pull back" and risk the political gains in the nationalist community. It

goes on to say that to allow the agreement to lie dormant would be the worst of all possible worlds, in the sense, presumably, that there would be no benefits to be reaped from such a strategy in the nationalist community while the Unionist community would still regard a "dormant" Agreement as a significant threat to them.

In relation to the longer term, the study notes that there is increased support for power sharing amongst Catholics while there is growing acceptance, if not strong support, among Protestants for such a solution.

Other Points of Interest

I Employment Equality

The issue of employment discrimination is possibly the most important single factor leading to Catholic alienation from the state. A survey in June 1986 showed that 33% of Catholics regard employment equality as the one change most needed to end the "troubles".

II Catholic Political Attitudes

The study, as noted above, quotes extensively to illustrate the primacy of the employment equality issue in Catholic attitudes to politics generally. In addition, the study concludes that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has had a major political impact on the Catholic community. There appears to be a willingness, the study notes, to give the British Government a chance to "deliver the goods", especially in terms of their socio-economic position. This change in attitude can only be attributed to what the study terms the Catholic population's perception that it feels, for the first time, that its "interests" are to be reasonably protected, or at least represented, by the involvement of the Irish Government in the Intergovernmental Conference". It goes on to state that this "short-term" benefit (with the possibility it enshrines of

reducing the Sinn Fein vote) would not remain open if the role of the Inter- governmental Conference (the "Irish dimension", as the report puts it) were to be diminished.

III Protestant Political Attitudes

The study has little new to say on Protestant attitudes. It concludes from a survey of the various polls and community studies that what emerges is a picture of a Protestant community which is confused and troubled and has suffered a major traumatic experience as a result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It seems that there was never a great belief that the protest campaign could bring down the Anglo-Irish Agreement. They remain implacably opposed to the Agreement and to Irish Government involvement in Northern Ireland. The Protestant community has turned on its leaders who, in turn, have no clear idea where to go. The study cautions against overstating differences between the Unionists and their leaders. The differences with the leadership are merely tactical. In general, they want to re-open communication with the Government and recognise that simple opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement is not enough. They are still unsure on what alternative to offer.

IV Segregation and Polarisation

Studies of a number of communities are used extensively in this section of the review. The general conclusion drawn is that the picture is a disturbing one, with an equal number of people in both communities (46%) believing that relations between the communities are worse than they were 5 years ago.

V Electoral Analysis

The section on Catholic political attitudes provides a brief analysis of the SDLP's and Sinn Fein's electoral preference. A recent study which advances two theories about the implications of the 1987 elections for Sinn Fein is mentioned

in the section on the political attitudes of Catholics. The two theories are:

- (i) that Sinn Fein is in irreversible decline, and its vote can be spueezed back to a core of some 50,000 - the H-Block vote of 1981;
- (ii) The Sinn Fein vote has stabilised at around 80,000 votes, and the SDLP has committed enormous resources and the British government has taken enormous risks simply to reduce the Sinn Fein share of the nationalist vote to the level which first gave rise to concern about Sinn Fein inroads into the nationalist electorate.

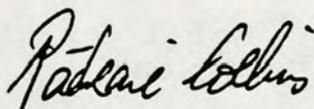
The second thesis is one much advanced by Stormont civil servants, the implication being that attempts to address nationalist alienation are unlikely to be rewarded with great success.

VI Law and Order

There is an extensive section on the level of political violence and on relations between the police and the communities. It concludes that there is little evidence that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has had any impact in reducing Catholic alienation from the institutions of law and order. Protestants have little expectations of beneficial effects from the Agreement in the security area while, at the same time, there has been some erosion (not amounting to alienation) of Protestant confidence in the police and the Courts.

I attach a copy of the conclusions section for ease of reference.

Yours sincerely



Padraic Collins