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NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL REVIEW: 1-14 AUGUST 1983



A: INTRODUCTION

1. The main political interest in the period under review centred on the visit to Northern Ireland of a party of Irish Americans which included representatives of Irish Northern Aid (Noraid). There were a number of street disturbances throughout the Province on 7 and 8 August coinciding with 12th anniversary of the introduction of internment. On 9 August a British soldier was charged with the murder of a young man shot dead in West Belfast.

B: NORTHERN IRELAND

2. At the beginning of August, an 80-strong delegation of Irish Americans arrived in Northern Ireland at the invitation of Sinn Fein. The delegation included members of Noraid and representatives of various other Irish American organisations. Interviewed about the purpose of the visit, the delegation's spokesman, Mr Martin Galvin, said that it was a fact-finding exercise and claimed that although Noraid had "no direct links with the IRA" it supported "the IRA's struggle to win freedom for Ireland". On 6 August, the group toured South Armagh and were stopped at a roadblock near Crossmaglen by members of the IRA armed with automatic weapons. The delegation also visited Londonderry and West Belfast.

3. The presence of Noraid supporters in Northern Ireland was criticised by spokesmen for the UUP, DUP, SDLP and the Alliance Party. SDLP Councillor Mr Cormac Boomer said that if the delegation really wanted to help the people of Northern Ireland they should return to the US and try to persuade American industrialists to invest in the Province, while Mr Sammy Wilson of the DUP called on the Secretary of State to serve exclusion orders on the group. A statement issued by the Northern Ireland Office said that any attempt to deny the visitors access to Northern Ireland would have served the interests of those who support violence by suggesting that the Government had something to hide.

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4. On 7 August, the delegation took part in a march along the Falls Road to commemorate the 12th anniversary of the introduction of internment. Also present amongst the 3,000 marchers were 200 representatives of the Troops Out Movement. The crowd was addressed by Sinn Fein Assembly member Mr Danny Morrison, who warned that British soldiers in Northern Ireland had a choice either to "leave the North by boat or in a box". The following day was marked by serious street disorder in various parts of the Province with the security forces coming under attack from rioters throwing stones and petrol bombs. A number of arrests were made including that of Mr Stephen Andrew Lich a member of the Noraid delegation who was subsequently charged with riotous behaviour. Following Mr Lich's arrest, Mr Nicholas Scott, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office, declined to meet representatives of the delegation.

C: SECURITY

5. On 9 August, an 18 year old British soldier was charged with murder after a fracas between an Army foot patrol and a group of young men in West Belfast in which a man was shot dead. On Saturday, 13 August, there were two attacks at security barriers; one at Markethill where an RUC officer was slightly injured, and the second at Dungannon where an RUC officer was seriously injured. At Dungannon, two INLA terrorists were killed and three others escaped, though one was believed to be injured. It is suspected that Dominic McGlinchey (who is suspected of a number of serious terrorist crimes) was involved.

D: INTERNATIONAL

6. USA. On 10 August, it was announced that representatives of Northern Ireland's four main political parties had agreed to visit the United States later this year in an effort to promote inward investment in the Province. According to press reports the delegation would include Mr John Hume and Mr Ian Paisley but

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a spokesman for the SDLP explained later that Mr Hume had not yet agreed to take part in the visit. Other members of the delegation were named as Mr John Cushnahan (Alliance) and Mr Raymond Ferguson (UUP).

7. France. on 14 August, the French authorities discovered, hidden in a truck at Le Havre harbour, a considerable amount of ammunition and weapons en route to Rosslare, Ireland, presumably for the use of PIRA. The Irish driver and two French nationals were arrested.

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

17 August 1983

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