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AMBASÁID NA hÉIREANN, LONDAIN.



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December 4, 1969

Secretary
Department of External AffairsUlster Defence Regiment Bill

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Attached are notes made by Mr Rush of his conversations

- (a) with Mr John Ryan, M.P. (one of the Left-wing Labour Party group who have been opposing the Bill) on 1/12/69;
- (b) with Mr W.K.K. White, the new specialist dealing with Irish affairs in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 3/12/69;
- (c) with Lord Longford on 3/12/69.

Kevin Rush
for Ambassador

Conversation about UDR Bill with Lord Longford

on 3/12/69

1. I had lunch by appointment with Lord Longford on 3/12/69.
2. He mentioned at the outset that he proposed to intervene in the Second Reading in the Lords on the UDR Bill. He said he presumed there was nothing that Dublin would wish to have said on its behalf on this occasion. I confirmed (in accordance with the briefing I had received by telephone on 1/12/69 from Mr Eamon Gallagher of the Department) that Dublin had nothing good to say about this Bill, and, therefore, deemed it best to remain silent on the subject.
3. Nevertheless, I went on to say, if well-disposed people in Parliament tried to make the Bill less bad from our point of view, we would, of course, be glad of that.
4. He then said he would like to discuss the matter in detail with me, and insisted, almost, on making an appointment with me for 5.15 p.m. on Friday, 5/12/69 at the Embassy.
5. He remarked that Mr Callaghan had, of course, been obliged to introduce this Bill as part of his understandings with Stormont. It was part of the arrangement for disposing of the B Specials as quietly as possible. It was necessary, therefore, to make the new force sufficiently attractive to the B Specials to entice them to join it.

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^{city}
The ~~bid~~ was, he said, that the British Government found it necessary, apparently, to placate such people, and the element they represented in the North of Ireland.

6. Accordingly, he felt that members of the Lords on the Government side had the right, and indeed, the duty to point out the obvious flaws in the Bill, while acknowledging that the Bill would have to be passed. He wished to know what I considered to be the worst flaws. I referred him to the points which had been made in my discussion two days previously with Mr John Ryan, M.P. (see separate report). My referring to the Commons debate led Lord Longford into a discussion of Miss Devlin's effect on the House of Commons. He said that hers has been a remarkable performance to date. He could remember no more effective newcomer in the Commons since the days of Nye Bevan. He remarked that Mr Michael Foot has been ^{tending} ~~moving~~ to support Miss Devlin's efforts very strongly, because he admires so much her contributions to the debates on the North of Ireland. He quoted also ^{words} ~~worthy~~ of praise, in quite different terms in each case, ^{of her} ~~her~~ efforts by Quintin Hogg and Mr Hugh Fraser, Conservative M.P., who is a son-in-law of Lord Longford.

7. Lord Longford appeared to think that Miss Devlin was the leader of the activist group in the Commons, which has been opposing the UDR Bill. I suggested that Mr Paul Rose and others were perhaps the real leaders, but he did not seem to agree with that opinion. He

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wound up the discussion by saying:

- (a) Mr Callaghan's methods and attitude towards the Irish question are still a little suspect;
- (b) Mr Wilson's attitude is probably much sounder from Dublin's point of view, but Mr Wilson (according to Sir Andrew Gilchrist, whom Lord Longford had met in Dublin recently) is "holding back until after the Election from the Irish affair";
- (c) Mr Rees-Mogg, editor of the Times being a Catholic, is really well disposed to Dublin's point of view;
- (d) Mr Quintin Hogg who had invited him (Longford) to dinner recently for the first time in several years, is also emotionally involved in a favourable way in the Irish problem, but is rather passé as a political force, even in the Conservative Party.

Kevin Rush

Kevin Rush

December 4 1969

Conversation with Mr W.K.K. White, Irish "Specialist"
at Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 3/12/69 about
the Commons debate on the UDR Bill

1. At the suggestion of Mr Eamon Gallagher of the Department, I mentioned to Mr White that the leading article in the Times (London) of 3/12/69 had created considerable interest in Dublin, especially as regards the last five sentences, i.e.,

"Still, Ministers rightly proclaim an ambition to recruit from both religious communities. In that case its name was tactlessly chosen. The application of "Ulster" to the six counties of Northern Ireland is resented by all-Irelanders, since three of the historic province's counties are in the Republic. And the combination "Ulster Defence" is alleged to possess an orange hue. When the Bill comes to the Lords the Government might try another name, if one can be found that does not give equal offence in the other camp".

2. Mr White responded immediately that "they" had been discussing this very point (which I understood to mean he and other officials in the F & C O and in the Home Office, where Messrs North and Ledwidge, in particular, are concerned with this matter).

3. They had agreed, he said, that it now seemed unfortunate that the naming of this new Regiment had not been more carefully considered. Perhaps the word "Ulster" should have been omitted. However, they

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all agreed it was now too late to make a change because the Government could hardly be expected to back down, after all the commotion in the Commons the previous night.

4. Mr White then went on to indulge in some "thinking aloud", as he is prone to do. Having some army experience himself, he said he was convinced it would have been much better - from the point of view of attracting substantial participation in the new force by the minority in the North of Ireland - had an innocuous title such as "Northern Ireland Defence Force" been used, and under that general heading the component battalions given the famous old ^{names} of former British Army Regiments, e.g., Royal Ulster Rifles, Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Irish Horse etc.

5. He was certain that many good Ulster Catholics had served in those famous regiments during both World Wars, and he was convinced that they, or their sons, would be attracted to join battalions bearing such historic names.

6. I remarked that I had heard it suggested in London, at some stage during recent weeks, that this new force might have some chance of recruiting the desired number of Catholics, if it were organised by battalions based in different parts of the Six County area. Thus, a Derry battalion might hope to have a majority of Catholics in its ranks, as might a Newry or South Down

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battalion. On the other hand, the Antrim battalion would, of course, be virtually 100% Protestant.

7. Mr White objected that he thought ^{any} ~~some~~ such arrangement would be unacceptable, since the ideal was to have Catholics and Protestants serving side by side in the new force as far as possible, i.e., within the same units.

8. He remarked, incidentally, that the Government were not at all concerned about Bernadette's opposition to the Bill, but were taking more seriously opposition from other quarters.

Kevin Rush

Kevin Rush

December 4, 1969

Conversation with Mr John Ryan, M.P. on Ulster Defence
Regiment Bill (Committee Stage)

Mr Ryan (who is identified with the CDU or "Left-wing" group in the Labour Party, which has been so active during the past year in support of the Civil Rights Movement in the North of Ireland) came to the Embassy, by appointment at 4 p.m. on 1/12/69. A few days previously it had been arranged that he would come here for a briefing on Dublin's attitude towards the UDR Bill, and that Mr Kevin McNamara, M.P. (who has the same general political coloration) would accompany him. In the event, Mr McNamara did not turn up, presumably because the debate on the Committee Stage had already started at 3.30 p.m. in the Commons. The Embassy's report to the Department of 27/11/69 had asked for material for this briefing. A few vital points were received by telephone on the morning of 1/12/69 from Mr Eamon Gallagher. These points were put to Mr Ryan when he called to the Embassy, and discussion developed as follows:

Rush emphasised at the outset that the whole concept of creating a British army force of any kind in any part of Ireland was obviously repugnant to Dublin's basic policy. Accordingly, Dublin could not be expected to have anything favourable to say about this new force, no matter how it might turn out. On the other hand, if well-disposed M.Ps succeeded in having the Bill improved by appropriate amendments, then, of course,

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a bad situation would be that much less bad. For instance, if, after all the debating was over, the Bill emerged with sufficiently strong provisions to ensure that the members of the proposed UDR were actually and always to be kept strictly under the control of regular British army officers (who would, in turn, be answerable, in practice, only to the British Ministry of Defence in Whitehall), then, obviously, the position in the North of Ireland would be less bad than at present (with effective control of the B Specials still very much a question). Likewise, if, as a result of the debates in the Commons or otherwise, it eventually transpired that a reasonably large proportion of the UDR consisted of recruits drawn from the minority in the North of Ireland, then again the position would be less bad than at present.

Ryan said he appreciated Dublin's position. As a person professionally engaged in market research he was very conscious of the psychological importance of the debate in the Commons as regards the future recruitment of the UDR. He realised that, if desirable amendments were pressed very hard in this Committee Stage debate (as he fully expected they would be pressed, even if that involved keeping the House in session "until 3 a.m."), and if the British Government persisted in pushing the Bill through unamended, then it might

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well transpire that the minority in the North of Ireland would become very suspicious of the UDR and refuse to take any part in it. That was a real risk. On the other hand, he and his friends in the Commons, felt obliged to keep pressing for the amendment of certain glaring faults in the Bill as it stood after the Second Reading. Specifically, they would be pressing for

- (a) a reduction of the total force from 6,000 to 4,000 men;
- (b) the imposing of an age limit of 50 years at entry into the force (which, he reckoned, would debar almost two-thirds of existing B Specials);
- (c) elimination of the clause permitting members to keep arms in their homes;
- (d) alteration of the title of the Regiment to some title less partisan;
- (e) some provision which would prevent the top officers being taken over wholesale from the B Specials;
- (f) provisions which would make the new force identical, as far as possible, with a Territorial unit of the British Army.

Rush remarked that any of the amendments, if adopted, would certainly make the UDR less unpalatable to the minority in the North of Ireland.

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Ryan continued by developing a concept ^{of his own,} i.e., that there should be a joint force on both sides of the Border. His reasoning seemed to be that the real threat which justifies some kind of military force along the Border is the existence of both the UVF and the IRA, both of which are extremist military organisations with access to plenty of weapons. In order to cope with the real threat of ~~outrights~~ ^{outrages} on both sides of the Border by one or both of these dangerous organisations, he considers that a joint force of British and Irish army elements, working closely together, preferably on both sides of the Border jointly, but, if necessary, on either side of the Border separately, but in close co-operation, would best meet the real needs of the situation.

Rush replied that that was certainly an interesting concept. ~~To mention~~ ^{It} reminded him to mention that, at the beginning of the crisis in mid August, Dublin had pressed strongly for the adoption of a joint military force to deal with the outbreaks of violence in Belfast, Derry etc., or if a joint force were not acceptable to the British Government then, as an alternative, a U.N. peace-keeping force.

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Ryan resuming said that he thought a joint force along the Border, such as he envisaged, would be a first practical step - and a vital point - in that co-operation which he felt must be regarded

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as necessary and desirable from now on as between Dublin and Belfast (apart altogether from London). Whether one talked of a federal solution or not, he added, one must envisage increasing co-operation between the Dublin and Belfast regimes, if any progress at all is to be achieved in Ireland in the immediate future.

Rush remarked that he had been very impressed by the speech made by Ryan at a private meeting of an Anti-Colonial Committee of the Labour Party during the Party Conference at Brighton on 2/10/69, a speech in which Ryan had conceded that the reunification of Ireland in some shape or form - rather than the securing of British civil rights for the minority - was the only ultimate solution to the problems of the North of Ireland.

Ryan conceded that his whole outlook on the problems of the North of Ireland had, indeed, undergone a radical transformation during recent months on the lines indicated by Rush. He added that he now realised, following the violence and bloodshed in Belfast, that the constitutional structure erected on the basis of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920 was now discredited and totally outmoded. What is needed now, he said, is to get rid of the 1920 Act lock, stock and barrel, and to work out a new relationship conforming to the contemporary

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facts of the situation as between London, Dublin and Belfast. That, however, would be a long-term matter, whereas the UDR Bill was the immediate problem. He hoped Mr Rush would be present to hear the debate that night in the Commons.

Rush explained that he was always eager to attend these debates in the Commons on the North of Ireland situation. The fact that such debates could now take place following the overthrowing of the "Parliamentary convention" which prohibited such debates until quite recently was, of itself, a matter for satisfaction. In addition to that, he confessed that he enjoyed, of course, very much seeing Mr Ryan and his friends in action, and fighting so nobly in such a good cause. He asked to be remembered to Mr McNamara.

KR

4.12.69