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Oifig an TaoisighMEMORANDUM FOR THE GOVERNMENTNorthern Diocesan Relief Advisory Services.

1. It came to the notice of the Department of Foreign Affairs last July that plans were in hand for the establishment of diocesan relief advisory organisations in each Catholic Church diocese in Northern Ireland. These organisations have been and are being established by the church authorities in the North with a view to providing relief measures for the minority community in the event of:-
 - (1) a strike situation on the lines of the Ulster Workers Council strike last May but in which, through the exercise of discriminatory measures, the minority could be cut off from essential food supplies etc. (This did not happen in May);
 - (2) local pogroms affecting certain parts of the Catholic population; or
 - (3) full scale civil war.
2. The organisations have no connections with other relief groups and are under the direct control of the Catholic clergy - each diocese is being divided into parish units and the local parish priest will be the Chairman of the unit. Each separate diocesan organisation will have the common description of "Relief Advisory Service". It is understood that the intention of the church authorities in establishing relief structures for the minority is to pre-empt the possibility of the IRA assuming the leading role in such activity. The diocesan authorities are conscious that the IRA infiltrated similar organisations in the past and are doing what they can to minimise the risk of this occurring in the case of the newly founded organisations.
3. The first relief advisory organisation established has been in the Diocese of Down and Connor which, because it embraces the Belfast area, contains the most vulnerable minority populations. Belfast County Borough had a recorded Catholic

population of 91,400 at the date of the 1971 Census out of a total population of 357,000. The Falls and Clifton wards of the Borough contained 20,000 and 15,000 Catholics, respectively. The Lisburn Rural District in Co. Antrim had a further 28,000 Catholics. Bishop Philbin has appointed Rev. Fr. John O'Connor, Belfast, as Director of the relief organisation (DACRAS) in the diocese. DACRAS has to date been the most active of the diocesan relief organisations.

After consultation with the Taoiseach, the Minister for Defence agreed to see certain priests from the North. Only one of the priests, Father Moran, C.C., Crossmaglen, turned up for the meeting arranged for 6th August, 1974. A report on the meeting was supplied to the Departments of the Taoiseach and of Foreign Affairs. At the request of the priests, a second meeting took place on 8th August, 1974, at which Fathers Moran, O'Connor (of DACRAS), and Finnegan attended. Representatives of the Departments of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs also attended this meeting. On both occasions, the meetings took the same form, viz. a general discussion and a display at the Civil Defence School of improvised emergency feeding facilities, as developed for Civil Defence purposes. The display also included some military types of cooking equipment, and to demonstrate these, military personnel were in attendance at the School. The priests were given explanatory notes on the equipment as well as information on possible suppliers, cost, etc. A general outline of the arrangements for the reception of refugees from the North was also given to the priests.

It was conveyed to the priests that the meetings were to be regarded as strictly confidential and that any further contacts should be with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

4. From the discussions with the priests it would seem that the Catholic authorities in the North are endeavouring to deal with the relief problems that might arise in the event of any of the postulated situations, from their own resources of material and manpower rather than planning exclusively on the basis of large scale evacuation of the minority to the Republic. They envisage that it will be possible for Catholic ghetto areas to hold out for some time and receive Catholics from more vulnerable areas. However, if, as could be anticipated, the influx to the ghetto areas is substantial the priests consider that it will be necessary to organise the evacuation of fairly large numbers across the Border. With a view to ensuring that any evacuation went smoothly, Fr. O'Connor has raised the possibility of providing evacuation vouchers suitably authenticated by the relief organisation in each area. This question is the subject of continuing discussion with Fr. O'Connor.

5. DACRAS have been in contact with the Northern Department of Health and Social Services with a view to ensuring that supplies of food, bedding, blankets, bottled gas, etc. are available in selected depots for distribution to the minority population should the need arise. It is anticipated that the assistance of the Department will be forthcoming, as it has been given an official remit to prepare for situations of this kind. However, such assistance would be confined to supplies of the items mentioned - it is unlikely that they will be able to provide transport for the relief supplies or make electricity generators, etc. available. The relief authorities were to have discussions with British Ministers in relation to some of the needs which could not be met by the Department of Health and Social Services.
6. The progress of the other diocesan relief advisory services has been slower than in the more vulnerable Down and Connor diocese. Cardinal Conway was to convene a meeting of all the diocesan organisations for 30 September. No report is yet available as to whether this meeting took place.
7. In the discussions with Fr. O'Connor and the other priests it was made clear that while all possible advice and information would be given to them, and while there were facilities available to cater for large numbers of refugees from the North, there was no question of any active assistance by the Defence Forces in the event of any of the occurrences referred to in paragraph 1 of this memorandum. It also seemed to be envisaged by the priests that the purchase of emergency cooking equipment, etc. would have to be financed from the resources of each diocese. No question of financial assistance or the provision of supplies by the authorities in this part of the country was raised. Father O'Connor is quite clear on this score and it also seemed that all the priests had a clear understanding in these respects. However, information received by the Department of Foreign

Affairs would suggest that in some quarters in Belfast at least, there is an expectation that material assistance in the form of cooking equipment, etc. will be forthcoming.

8. At this stage, it is not possible to assess to what extent the diocesan organisations will be able to fulfil the role envisaged for them. Father O'Connor has indicated that adequate funds would be available from church sources to finance their preparations. However, it is conceivable that, in the event, the diocesan organisations would not prove equal to the demands that would be made upon them in any of the situations under consideration. If this happened, they might well turn to the authorities here for assistance, by way of finance, equipment and supplies, and there could well be an emotional wave of sympathy in this part of the country for the plight of the minority in the North and an associated expectation that material assistance would be forthcoming from the Government here. Having regard to these possibilities and to the expectations of material assistance apparently held in some quarters in Belfast the Taoiseach considers that the Government may wish to decide now on the attitude to be adopted. Father O'Connor of DACRAS is to meet officials of Departments concerned on 18th October, in order to satisfy himself as to the adequacy of our planning for the reception of refugees so that he will be in a position, as he has expressed it, to guarantee to his organisation that the South is prepared to help in a substantial way. At this meeting, he may ask whether the authorities here would be willing or able to give the diocesan organisations material assistance in the hypothetical circumstances just outlined.
9. The Taoiseach considers that, in any of the situations postulated in paragraph 1 above, and assuming a continuing British presence at the relevant time, the Government's

must be to
principal line of action *exert pressure* on the
British Government to protect the lives and property of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland and to ensure the maintenance of normal supplies of essential goods and services, or in the event of their being unable to do this in the case of some goods or services, to provide satisfactory alternative sources of supply. However, he considers that consideration has to be given to the possibility that the British Government may lack the will or the capacity to do this.

10. Despite this possibility, the Taoiseach is of the view that in any further contacts with representatives of Northern diocesan or other relief organisations, no indication should be given to them that material assistance in the North or finance will be available from the Government here. He also considers that, in view of the apparent misapprehension in some quarters in Belfast of the significance of previous contacts, officials of the Departments concerned should expressly signify to the representatives of the diocesan organisations that the understanding on the part of the authorities here is that what has been done, in relation to matters other than reception of refugees, is simply to advise them about equipment and improvised facilities, on the understanding that they would fulfil their own requirements. If any misapprehension on this score were allowed to persist it might discourage the diocesan authorities or local parish units from making the necessary preparations themselves. If, as is quite likely, on the basis of previous contacts with other Northern groups, an erroneous version of the contacts which have taken place were to become known to Loyalist groups they could well be misconstrued and could gravely prejudice political developments in Northern Ireland and relations with various political groups there. The Taoiseach wishes to affirm that all contacts with the Northern representatives in

question should be through the Department of Foreign Affairs who can arrange for any necessary liaison with other Departments.

11. While recommending that the attitude suggested above be conveyed in contacts with the diocesan relief services in the North, the Taoiseach nevertheless considers that it may be desirable that plans be put in hands to deal with situations in the North which would not give rise to wholesale flight of refugees to this part of the country but rather to requests for the provision of material assistance. A number of matters arise in this connection and these are being considered.
12. The Departments of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Finance and Justice have been consulted and agree with the submission of this Memorandum to the Government. The Department of Foreign Affairs agrees generally with the lines of policy suggested in paragraphs 9 and 10. It considers however that Fr. O'Connor and the Directors of other Diocesan Relief Advisory Services, when appointed, should be given, on a confidential basis and for their own information only, more detailed information on our facilities for the reception of refugees. It would also recommend that the Government decide to investigate what planning arrangements might be made for the furnishing of supplies to distressed and isolated Catholic communities in the event of a total breakdown and **failure** by the British authorities to provide essential **supplies**. The Taoiseach agrees that the Directors of the Diocesan Relief Advisory Services should be given such detailed information on our facilities for the reception of refugees as is necessary to enable them to plan effectively for their part in arranging evacuation in any of the contingencies which may arise. He agrees that the Government should decide to investigate what planning arrangements might be made for the furnishing of supplies to Catholic communities in the North in the circumstances indicated by the Department of Foreign

Affairs. As indicated in paragraph 11, a number of matters arising in this connection are being considered. The Taoiseach recommends that the Government request the **Interdepartmental** Unit on Northern Ireland to investigate and report on the matter. The Memorandum incorporates amendments suggested by the Department of Defence.

13. The Taoiseach seeks the agreement of the Government to the lines of policy suggested in paragraphs 9, 10 and 12 and requests the Government to decide that the Interdepartmental Unit on Northern Ireland be asked to investigate and to report at **an** early date, on what planning arrangements might be made for the furnishing of supplies to distressed and isolated Catholic communities in the event of a total breakdown and failure by the British authorities to provide essential supplies.