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Title: Letter from Gerald Sweetman, T.D. to Dr. Patrick Hillery, Minister for External Affairs, regarding a conversation he had concerning Northern Ireland with Peter Kirk, Conservative M.P. Includes reply from Dr. Hillery.

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DÁIL ÉIREANN
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH, 2.
(Dublin, 2).

24th November, 1969

Dear Paddy,

I think I should tell you that I had an informal discussion in Paris on the 20th inst. with Peter Kirk M.P. (Conservative) the Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe. I indicated to him that I was disturbed by the apparent "slide back" of the Government of Northern Ireland, evidenced by the approach to the "Ulster Defence Regiment" and that it appeared to be the B Specials again - a rose by another name. He naturally referred to the "firm control of the force by the G.O.C." and went on to say "you know, of course, that setting up this force was the price we had to pay to get the reforms through".

I contented myself with saying that I wanted to warn him I might have to raise the matter in the future and I was worried there might be another explosion and if there was, this time it would be far worse as the position of the moderates was being undermined by actions such as the issue of early invitations to the B Specials to join the new force. He condemned that action as utterly stupid and said he would take an early opportunity of passing on my views. He added that he was disappointed to hear that uneasiness was stirring again as he had hoped they were making progress. I rejoined that I accepted his sincerity but I had so often in the past seen desire for reform expressed in a crisis, and then watered down as a result of extreme pressure, I felt this was happening now in Northern Ireland.

No other British delegates were present at the meeting of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. P.J. Hillery, T.D.
Minister for External Affairs,
80 St. Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2.

30914/438

P.S. Hillery
1/12/69
Mr. Hillery
1/12/69

1 Nollaig 1969

Dear Gerry

Thank you for your letter of 24th November 1969 which I read with great interest. I will be glad to have a word with you on the whole question sometime in the near future. Perhaps we could have a chat some afternoon when I am over in the Dáil.

Yours sincerely

P. J. HILLERY

Mr G. Sweetman T.D.
Dáil Eireann