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Title: Report written by CV Whelan, Department of Foreign Affairs, of a meeting between Garret FitzGerald, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the British Ambassador to Ireland, Arthur Galsworthy, at which discussion centred on the current situation in Northern Ireland during the UWC [Ulster Workers' Council] strike, the Northern Ireland Executive, and the Council of Ireland.

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Handwritten: J.A. McCann
2715

Handwritten: 1 Secretary
2 Treasurer
This looks reasonably hopeful.
21/5

Handwritten: Clear
18/06
21 May 1974
Brow

Meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and British Ambassador, morning of 21st May, 1974

X 19 understand now that "something has been worked out" which is being put to the three parties in the Executive. Their views on the package will be known later this evening.]

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4.30 PM.

1. The Ambassador arranged to call on the Minister again this morning to report on the situation in the North overnight. So far as the U.W.C. strike is concerned, the army had opened 5 or 6 main access routes into Belfast during the night and they had succeeded in removing road-blocks on main thoroughfares. The British Government had now been obliged to commit the army. They would have liked the strike to have been broken by public opinion and would have preferred to have involved the RUC in the security operation. That is why they were holding the army back. However, the army is now engaged but the authorities still wish to avoid a confrontation. Therefore today the army will engage in "steady work rather than spectacular assault work". It was still not clear how solid is the support for the strike among Protestant workers. It could crack overnight but then again it could harden.

2. The Ambassador then asked the Minister whether we had received details of the agreement reached last night within the Northern Ireland Executive. The Minister said that we had received some reports but did not think they had reached agreement. Continuing, the Ambassador said that the Secretary of State and Mr. Frank Cooper had joined the Executive meeting yesterday afternoon. Mr. Rees read to them the statement which was about to be made in the House of Commons by Stanley Orme, Minister of State, and urged them to come to a positive decision on the Council of Ireland. At 7.30 pm Brian Faulkner and Gerry Fitt had informed Mr. Rees and Frank Cooper that they had reached agreement on implementation and that they would be meeting again this morning to finalise the matter. The only difficulty had been with Roy Bradford. The Ambassador understood that the agreement was one involving a phasing arrangement for implementation. The Minister enquired as to what extent the report

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Given by Messrs. Faulkner and Fitt represented the views of the full Executive. The Ambassador said that they were reporting on the Executive discussions and not on their own views. He went on to say that since the agreement is likely to be finalised during the day, he expected to be instructed to convey the agreed proposals to the Minister and this would probably occur during the afternoon.

3. The Minister said that this news was encouraging. It went beyond what we had from our contacts. The Ambassador confirmed further that Frank Cooper had probed the matter and was assured by both Brian Faulkner and Gerry Fitt that there were no points of disagreement. The Minister said that this was certainly good to hear in view of the Unionist Assembly Party's backbenchers' statement which, however, was not so bad on a second reading, if one read it carefully. The Ambassador stressed again the intervention by the Secretary of State and Mr. Cooper who "burst in on the Executive meeting unheralded to make it as dramatic as possible". They said:- "You've got to reach agreement". They then withdrew. This occurred at 2.30 p.m. and some 5 hours later the news of the agreement was conveyed as related above.
4. It was agreed that nothing should be said to the press at this point. The Minister expressed concern at some reports of yesterday's meeting which went into detail that he had not himself given to journalists, although he had been questioned on leaving the Department after the meeting and had replied in general terms. It was pointed out that some details of yesterday's meeting were inaccurate and were therefore probably based on earlier speculation about the subjects to be discussed. The Minister said to the Ambassador he was sorry if the reports caused any embarrassment. This was accepted by the Ambassador without any indication of concern.

C.V. Whelan

21/5/1974.