

EDITORIAL IN THE "WASHINGTON POST" - 31 JANUARY 1976

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IRISH RELIEF AND THE GUNMEN

The political murders continue in Northern Ireland and currently the rate seems to be rising. A share of the responsibility, unfortunately, belongs to Americans. They donate money to the Irish Northern Aid Committee, and it seems quite clear that the money is used mainly to buy arms for the gunmen. According to the British Government, five out of every six guns seized by police in Northern Ireland are made in the United States. Most of them are new, and one in particular - the Armalite semi-automatic, a vicious weapon with a high rate of fire, sold openly and easily in this careless country - has become standard issue among the Provisionals of the Irish Republican Army. Some Americans still consider it an act of Irish patriotism to contribute to this peculiar kind of relief and turn a blind eye to the ultimate use of the money. But they might usefully consider the judgment of Garrett FitzGerald, the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic, who said, "Every dollar bill contributed to agencies such as the Irish Northern Aid Committee contributes to the killing of Irish people."

Today we publish, on the opposite page, two statements on this subject. Mr Walsh's view is one that, although widespread in this country, became obsolete more than half a century ago when the Republic of Ireland got its independence from Great Britain. He evidently sees the Provisionals as defenders of freedom, in the tradition of Lexington and Concord, struggling to wrest their land from the British Army. Certainly the Provisionals themselves have no such dewey-eyed vision of their purpose.

The reality in Northern Ireland is that two thirds of the population is Protestant. The Protestant irregulars are precisely as bigoted and violent as the Provisionals, who are Catholic. The British troops these days are mainly trying to impose a peace between them. The Provisional strategy is to wear down the British,



inducing them to withdraw; the Protestant gunmen would then fall on the Catholic neighborhoods of Northern Ireland with terrible effect, because they outnumber the Catholics, and as the mayhem continued the Republic of Ireland to the South would eventually be drawn into the fighting. That, according to the skewed dreams of the Provisionals, would result in the unification of Ireland. The Irish Republic itself, of course, vehemently opposes every element of this scheme, and particularly any resort to forced unification with the belligerent and hostile Protestants of Northern Ireland.

But the Provisionals are diligently trying to start a civil war and the money for "relief" is mainly being used to help them. There is no evidence here that would stand up in court. But the United States is the only place where large sums are being systematically collected, and there is little sign of its distribution among the widows and orphans of Belfast. In the years 1971-73 the Irish Northern Aid Committee filed statements with the Justice Department showing that most of the money went to a man named Joseph Cahill, who described himself as a leader of the Provisionals. He was picked up in 1973 by the Irish Navy on a boat packed with guns and explosives that he was apparently trying to land. There is no proof that he bought his cargo with the Committee's money, but the incident suggests the kind of company that the Committee keeps. The reader might also want to know that Mr Walsh himself is a registered agent of Sinn Fein party, which is the political arm of the same Republican movement of which the IRA is the paramilitary arm.

If you want to send genuine relief to Northern Ireland, you can do it through the churches or through the Irish Red Cross. They run responsible and respectable programs for people who actually need help. The other kind of relief, tossed with a wink into a collection box for unnamed recipients, is very likely to profit only the gun dealers and add to the burden of grief that Northern Ireland is already suffering.



By Post from D. Middleton



# Minister will move office to London

POL 35/139(3)

From Christopher Walker  
Belfast

The Government is understood to be planning big changes in the form of its direct rule of Northern Ireland to take effect if, as expected, the constitutional Convention fails to agree on self-government of a type acceptable to Westminster.

It is believed that enabling legislation will be introduced quickly once it becomes clear that the present phase of attempting to find agreement among local politicians is at an end.

The final stage of the experimental Convention is due to start at Stormont tomorrow with the first of a new round of inter-party talks.

Hope of agreement on the crucial issue of power-sharing remains slim, although if the talks appear to be making progress the Government is prepared to add a maximum of a fortnight to the four extra weeks already granted to the Convention's recalled 78 members.

Mr Rees, Secretary of State for the province, has made clear that if the Convention fails the continuing of Westminster's direct rule is the only alternative in the short term. But in private ministers are adamant that the style of government will be markedly different from that in force since the collapse of the power-sharing Executive in 1974.

Over the past few weeks senior civil servants have completed detailed drafts of more than a dozen possible forms of direct rule. The one which will be chosen by the Cabinet next month is likely to embrace important features from several of the drafts.

One change regarded as a certainty, whatever the outcome of the Convention, is in the position of the Secretary of State. Under the present legislation he is expected to spend much of every week in the province and has his main office at Stormont Castle.

The new form of direct rule will allow the Secretary of State to operate from London, with a minister of state based permanently in Northern Ireland to handle everyday matters.

There has been strong sup-

port for such a move for some time from Mr Rees and his two Conservative predecessors, Mr Pym and Mr Whitelaw. All are known to have felt that the present arrangements cut them off too much from their political power base at Westminster.

The change in the position and base of the chief Ulster minister should make it easier for the Prime Minister to choose a suitable successor to Mr Rees, who this month completes two years in the job. After several false alarms, it is understood that Mr Wilson has recently guaranteed him a change in the near future.

Big changes are also expected in the extent of local government representation. It is likely that considerable efforts will be made to increase such representation and to establish some elected advisory committees to fill at least part of the political vacuum left by the absence of a regional government.

With the growing disillusionment among British MPs at the recent performance of Ulster politicians, the Government is aware there will be mounting pressure to cut the annual total of more than £400m of taxpayers' money now allocated to the province.

The amount of economic pressure imposed under the new form of direct rule will depend on how intransigent local politicians show themselves to be in the coming weeks.

Although direct rule would be theoretically indefinite if the Convention fails, the Government is anxious that it should not be seen, in the words of a senior official, "as a never-ending desert without any way out". In fact, ministers and their advisers are known to be considering establishing another Convention in 12 to 18 months' time.

It is recognized that by then some of the best known figures in Ulster politics will have retired from public life. Some would be sorely missed, but the prospect of new faces on the Convention benches is seen by officials as offering hope that the elusive compromise might be reached at the third attempt.

London march, page 2



PO235/139(4)

London Times

Monday February 2 1976

No 59,617

Price ten pence

# Big changes in Ulster if Convention fails again

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is expected to transfer his main base from Stormont to Westminster as part of changes planned to take effect if the recalled Ulster Convention fails, as expected, to agree on an acceptable form of self-government for the province. A minister of state would stay in Ulster to handle day-to-day matters. Other changes are likely to include the setting up of some elected advisory committees to fill part at least of the political vacuum in the province if it has to continue under a direct-rule regime.