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Telegram No. 932
From: Embassy, London
Sent: March 11, 1941, 3 p.m.
Rec'd: 10:20 a.m.

**REGRADED
UNCLASSIFIED**

From Colonel Donovan for the Secretary of the Navy.

I went to Ireland as you suggested in your communication. Factors are many and there is no better narrative than in the communication dated February 7, 1941 to the Under Secretary of State from our Minister, David Gray. The pressure of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland is my idea the core of the situation at present. Through the medium of the Cardinal Primate of Armagh pressure is imposed on de Valera. MacCrory is a determined, eloquent Nationalist and vigorous man of 80 who relentlessly and openly repeats the litany of injuries and wrongs which the Northern Irish Government he claims is causing the Catholic minority to suffer. In this estimate I am sure I am right because I found that de Valera with me did not spend his time explaining the history of the relations between England and Ireland as he did with others, I have been told. On the contrary he and I came at once to the danger of invasion by Germany. De Valera seemed worried and disturbed and yet anxious that I understand that in this cause he and his government were friendly to England. He also stated that he was opposed and had been to the elimination by force of the partition issue as he felt that only by evolution could they have unity. He could resist invasion successfully and save England a diversion of troops if Ireland were properly armed.

The resistance of the people to any situation making available bases was referred to by him again and again, to their distrust of the intentions of Britain which even so far extended as to allow troops to land to resist known Nazi attack until actually the troops of Germany had come in, and the determination of the Irish people to remain neutral even over America's request.

In order that I should understand this he said he had requested the Cardinal to come from the North and discuss matters with me. There is no need for me to state what I said to both of them but I do believe that there are dangerous elements which may have consequences of a very serious nature to Britain's defense if not dealt with. It is my opinion that they can be dealt with if we and the British act rapidly.

Mr. Churchill telephoned me when I returned and invited me to Chequers. Menzies, who is the Prime Minister of Australia, was there. I expressed my belief to them that the center of trouble lay in the North and that this trouble was emphasized by de Valera's failure to permit the Irish people to be enlightened of what was taking place in the outside world, but I felt throughout that he would wish to be in on Britain's side if he were free. I was asked to express my views as to the remedy. I told them this was not a job of fighting but rather one of statesmanship: that the fear of the Irish that the proper arming would not be permitted by the British as they intended

Following this Menzies and Churchill agreed that I should go to Ireland this week and discuss the matter with de Valera. I am sure that our help in recognizing the Irish situation in England realizes how urgently these bases are needed.

3/12/41

Copy to Navy

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to seize the ports; that if force were used, it would be necessary in order to hold the bases for the occupation of Ireland; that this would be worse than non-use of the bases as it would play into the German hands, and it would mean diversion of British troops needed badly at home. In addition the situation in the United States would be endangered. Menzies agreed with all of this and said Irish Origin of his people are 23 percent and force would effect the opinion of the Australians.

I stated with emphasis (a) that some kind of contact should be established by England with de Valera, that there appeared to be a curtain of asbestos hanging between England and Ireland, that unless an appeal was made by means of a liaison between de Valera and Churchill to their amour propre the willing support of the Irish could not be gained, and that de Valera constantly referred to the absence of this liaison; (b) that the Prime Minister should look into the veracity of the complaints against the Northern Irish and that irritation whenever possible should be removed; (c) that opinions and speeches should receive publicity such as those of the 2nd in command of Cosgroves, Dillon, who is urging Ireland as an obligation to civilization and Christianity to join England and declare war; (d) that it should be seen to by us that Aiken, Minister of War of Ireland, be seen. Moreover we should see to it that American defense measures impress him, that you and other Cabinet members who have experienced war service talk to him, and that, as I made clear to de Valera, it should be emphasized to him that the United States was only furnishing with arms those countries of whose intention to help the democracies there was no doubt. (Aiken is possibly in America for other reasons. He is of the extreme left); (e) that if practicable General Scanlon's suggestion of several weeks ago be adopted to bring Ireland into our sphere, to carry our naval, military and governmental representatives to Foynes from Boston by air. It is necessary for us to get rid of the veil of unreality under which Ireland is living if we really intend to influence her. (f) In view of the fact that if anything is to be accomplished we must bring Ireland into our sphere and it might be a good plan, not an inconceivable one, to issue an invitation to de Valera to come to America.

I was told by the Prime Minister that he would investigate the complaints and would deal with anything wrong. Mr. Churchill also said although he was for a united Ireland he would not compel it. He stated that he would have to back up Northern Ireland and give support to this position should de Valera not come in. However, the situation would change should de Valera come in with Great Britain, in which case he would attempt to solve the matter using all this influence to do so. Churchill said that to arrive at a solution he would be willing to grant sufficient defense protection before a base was set up, and that likewise he would as a preliminary step towards a final arrangement establish an all-Ireland defense commission.

Following this Menzies and Churchill agreed that the former should go to Ireland this week and discuss the matter with de Valera. Everybody in England realizes how urgently these bases in Ireland are needed. I am sure that our help in securing the Irish bases is greatly hoped for.

WINANT

May 12
H1

This was the
report by the Munitions
of the British
War Cabinet
given by M.

On Thursday last, the 3rd April, I flew to Belfast, where I had a series of conversations with Mr. Andrews, the Prime Minister, and with other leading citizens. On Friday morning I proceeded to Dublin, where on Friday and Saturday I had lengthy discussions with Mr. De Valera and with several of his senior colleagues. In each place my attitude was one of enquiry, because I felt that to achieve any useful result I must aim at getting a real understanding of the various points of view. It would be impossible for me to give any detailed account of conversations which covered a total of many hours, and most of which in any event were of a confidential character, and I therefore propose to set out in this memorandum certain conclusions at which I arrived as a result of my talks. I emphasise that these conclusions are based upon inference rather than upon explicit statements, but I believe that they are accurate.

1. ULSTER

There is a very strong, and indeed bitter, feeling in Ulster about Eire. Though the whole of my own instinctive bias is in favour of Ulster, I was occasionally a little disturbed to find myself wondering whether the Ulster attitude is entirely a reasoned one. Just as there are some Protestants whose Protestantism is an expression of hostility rather than of faith, so there are undoubtedly Ulstermen whose loyalty to Great Britain seems chiefly founded upon a dislike of the South. These remarks do not, of course, apply to the majority of those who determine Ulster's policy, but at the same time the fact must be recorded that recruiting in Ulster is indifferent and that some comment is beginning to arise from the fact that the existing recruiting is greatly stimulated by a stream which flows from Eire into Ulster, a stream which has now got up to a volume of something like 650 men per month. There is among responsible leaders a strong feeling that conscription should have been extended to Ulster and that the refusal so to extend it was dictated by a tenderness for the feelings of the Roman Catholic minority in Ulster which they felt was unwarranted. This view, widely held, has no doubt affected recruiting. Another thing which is having its effect is the abnormally high unemployment, the figure being put at something like 45,000. Unemployment can easily have a depressing effect upon recruiting if the view becomes current that the man who enlists will after the war find his occupation gone. The Ulster unemployment is no doubt primarily due to the slackening of business at the linen mills, but there is a feeling that it could be substantially taken up if more use were made by the British Government of the munitions manufacturing potential of Ulster. Another related factor which I thought had something to do with the recruiting position is the fear that the recruit's civil job will be taken by somebody coming into Ulster from the South. It is not my business to discuss the policy of the British Government on these matters, but it can be argued that many of these factors

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could be dealt with if conscription were applied to Northern Ireland side by side with a law protecting the conscript in relation to his civil employment, and if at the same time the Ministry of Supply could with a certain measure of publicity investigate the industrial resources of Ulster. There are no doubt weighty arguments to the contrary, and my opinion may therefore be quite wrong, but I feel no doubt that the present position irritates Ulster and provokes avoidable comment in Eire.

I was informed quite unanimously that the unification of Ireland would be forcibly resisted by Ulster for three principal reasons:-

- (a) Ulster will not forgo its allegiance to the Throne
- (b) It refuses to be voted into neutrality by the Roman Catholic majority in the South
- (c) Ulstermen fear that their industrial establishments would be dissipated or weakened by the economic or fiscal policies of a united Irish Parliament.

2. EIRE

The people of this "distressful country", or at any rate those who govern it, are in a state of exaggerated self-consciousness. They are not very realistic in their approach to the problems of the war. They are ready to take offence. They resented the fact that Colonel Donovan's visit was only for a couple of hours. They feel, and I think with some justification, that their point of view has been either not examined or impatiently examined. These comments are specially true of De Valera himself. He interested me very much. He is at first sight a somewhat saturnine figure, particularly when he sallies abroad in a long dark frieze overcoat and a broad-brimmed black hat. Personal contact with him, however, indicates that he is educated, I think sincere, and with a mind in which acute intelligence is found to contain many blind spots occasioned by prejudice, bitter personal experience, and a marked slavery to past history. It was clear to me that, whatever the position may be in the provinces (as to which I know nothing), he has a large and fanatical following in Dublin. He is the "chief". The very clerks in the offices stand promptly to attention as he strides past. His Ministers speak with freedom in his absence, but are restrained and obedient in his presence. Some of these Ministers are possessed of more flexible minds than his, and I found them merry fellows, but in the last resort I am quite sure that his view will prevail. On the whole, with all my prejudices, I liked him and occasionally succeeded in evoking from him a sort of wintry humour, which was not without charm. His mind must be studied promptly but patiently if the Irish problem is to be settled. He professes to attach little importance to personal contacts, and is accustomed to deal with things from behind a barrier of maps, charts and records; but my own experience with him

indicates that, in fact, he responds to the personal touch and is not incapable of being affected by the right kind of approach. I will attempt to state his views, not as he precisely formulated them, because he is not given to precision in relation to modern events, but as I inferred them I think accurately, from hours of discussion, discussion which was confidential and as to the terms of which I would, therefore, desire not to be quoted:-

- (1) He is of the opinion that Britain's cause in this war is a just one and that the war was forced upon her.
- (2) He would like Britain to win and feels that 80 per cent. at least of the people of Eire, though they are by instinct distrustful of the British, would like the same thing.
- (3) He has no grievance against Great Britain, except that Ireland is still a divided country. He is, however, convinced that the present British Government is hostile and unsympathetic.
- (4) He tells a story of injustices to the Roman Catholic minority in Ulster, which after all is, in two of the six counties, a Roman Catholic majority. These injustices, to use his own phrase, "make his blood boil." Yet on examination they appear somewhat shadowy. There is the old controversy about a separate capital grant to Roman Catholic schools, which are, in fact, more liberally treated in Ulster than they are in Australia. There is the suggestion that Roman Catholics are prejudiced in employment. There is the statement that the Northern electorates have been so gerrymandered that inadequate minority representation in the Ulster Parliament results. This last seems of small moment, since the Ulster Parliament has a law that no elected member may sit without taking the Oath of Allegiance, and consequently this minority demand is for the right to elect members who will after election not sit in Parliament. This complaint is therefore a strange intellectual phenomenon, which could perhaps be found in no country other than Ireland.
- (5) This minority agitation in Ulster is, I think, largely fomented by Cardinal MacRORY, and De Valera is prepared upon pressure to admit that the anti-partition feeling is much stronger among the Roman Catholics of Ulster than it is in Eire itself.
- (6) When brought face to face with the fact, he recognises that Great Britain could not possibly throw Ulster into Eire if that meant that Ulster was also to become neutral and that Great Britain was to be deprived of even those bases which she now has. He infers from this, and admits reluctantly, that the unity scheme cannot very well be pressed during the war so long as Eire remains neutral.
- (7) He affirms, however, that there is a passionate desire in the Irish heart to be neutral in the war; a strange

passion to invade the average Irish heart but, nevertheless, one the existence of which he vigorously maintains. I questioned him repeatedly as to the reason for this and as a rule he slipped easily and skilfully into a discussion of past history; but with some regularity I found him coming back to another reason which struck me as much more comprehensible and much more capable of being dealt with. That reason was that "Ireland is defenceless," that "Dublin has practically no anti-aircraft guns," that "there is practically no air force," and that "the army is without modern equipment." In other words, I am quite sure that De Valera's neutrality policy is founded not only upon a traditional distrust of Great Britain, but also and perhaps principally upon fear of German attack, particularly from the air.

(8) He recognises that the British people are not likely to be willing to provide arms which may conceivably be used against them. He asserts that no possibility of such use will arise unless Eire is invaded by the British. This line of argument is, of course, well known, but I was left, after many repetitions, with a very definite feeling that, as this fear of attack is the principal obsession, the possibility of removing it by some material assistance on the munitions and aircraft side should be promptly explored. It may be improbable, but it is certainly not impossible that a country which wishes us to win should be willing to give us some assistance, provided we can reduce the risks involved in the giving of that assistance; and the right way to reduce those risks is to give the Irish weapons, not unconditionally, but as the price of co-operation.

(9) De Valera does not appreciate the immediate war problem. He stands in front of the map and cannot understand why naval bases in Ireland should be of the slightest importance to Great Britain. I found it necessary to explain to him the importance of air bases as a platform for fighting aircraft. He did not appear to have appreciated the immense significance of even a hundred miles in the zone of operations of fighters. I think he would understand these things much better if he had some of his own. He told me with great earnestness that with arms Eire could protect herself and therefore protect Britain's flank. But when I pointed out that the British flank was on the western and north-western approaches and that these could not be protected by a neutral, but only by belligerent ships and aircraft, I had the impression that this platitude came to him almost as a new idea.

(10) He firmly believes that the United States is coming into the war, but has not yet faced, though I asked him to do so, the effect which this would have on Irish American opinion.

- (11) He feels that Eire could supply more food-stuffs to Great Britain, but that Great Britain is prepared to go a little hungry in order to injure Eire.

The paragraphs I have written above contain, as I realise, much exasperating information. They may convey the impression that De Valera is an entirely impossible person. This is not altogether the case. He has in my opinion some fine qualities. His fixed ideas, like those of his people, cannot be removed by aloofness or by force. They can be removed only by a genuine attempt to get at their foundations by enquiry and, wherever possible, by understanding. To the outsider, like myself, and particularly to one who travelled seventeen thousand miles to confer with his colleagues of the British Government, it is fantastic to be told that De Valera and Andrews have never met, and that I have had more conversations with De Valera than any British Minister has had since the war began. I therefore suggest very strongly that the whole question of the defence of Eire should be looked at, that the Secretary of State for the Dominions should pay an early visit to Belfast and Dublin, and that if he receives the slightest encouragement he should invite De Valera and a couple of his colleagues to come to London for discussions with the Prime Minister and other members of the British Cabinet. I know that such a meeting would be welcomed by some members of the Irish Cabinet who are beginning to realise that neutrality has its defeats no less renowned than war; and I would be by no means pessimistic about the outcome. But even if such discussions failed, they would give a very different colour to any subsequent policy which it was found necessary to adopt in relation to Ireland and would be of great value in regard to world opinion.

R. G. M.

12/25/72



~~Most Secret~~

We have learnt from a most secret but entirely reliable source, which must on no account be compromised, that the Italian Minister in Dublin has reported a conversation with the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in which the latter said that although no immediate danger of a British invasion existed for the moment, it was difficult to foresee what complications there might be in the future. The Secretary added that a decisive attack by the Axis on the British islands should not be too long delayed and not later than the beginning of next Spring, because the main concern in governing circles in Eire lay in the possibility, which was considered to be more and more certain, that America would intervene in the war, which would render the position of Eire even more critical than at present. This conversation indicates, even under the most favourable interpretation, a tendency on the part of Mr. Walshe towards re-insurance with the Axis. The Italian Minister is extremely unreliable, but as it confirms the impression gained from previous reports you may care to show this message to the President for his strictly personal information as showing the unsatisfactory attitude of some at any rate of the Irish authorities in regard to this country.

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