

Memo proposes peaceful route to united Ireland

A MEMO prepared for the Government in November 1969 suggested it might be necessary to consider a different route for the Irish language in a united Ireland.

The Department of External Affairs memo also proposed a study of constitutional and statutory difficulties raised by issues such as divorce, birth control and other "disabilities" as part of steps to remove barriers to eventual unity.

The memo is just one of hundreds of

documents released under the 30-year rule at the weekend by the National Archives. As violence spread across the North, the memo said there were possibilities for adopting an attitude and a policy which could ease the way to the eventual reunification of Ireland.

It refers to a society whose origin was "dishonourable" and which remained fundamentally impotent.

But the document warns the same

By FERGUS BLACK

society contained a substantial body of people who were ardently committed to the preservation of their own personality and peculiarities "to the point of suicidal resistance if attacked direct".

Among its policy suggestions, the memo speaks of reunification through peaceful means and urges care to avoid action leading to complete direct rule

from Westminster. Suggesting different measures to remove barriers to unity, the document says steps should be taken that would tend to convince Northern Protestants they would enjoy full civil rights and equality in a united Ireland.

"It may be necessary to consider a different route for the Irish language in a united Ireland and to take a fresh look at the appropriate time at national symbols. Care should be taken to avoid

appearing to condone the activities of illegal organisations such as the IRA."

Information activity should include measures in Britain to influence prominent people in politics, top officials, journalists and through their public opinion on the desirability of settling the Irish question while a "soft-sell" campaign by officers with diplomatic training should avoid exaggerated or emotion-laden claims.

Stormont MPs asked Lynch for arms 'to stop massacre'

By FERGUS BLACK

THREE Stormont MPs came to Dublin in 1969 seeking an urgent meeting with Taoiseach Jack Lynch and demanding guns be sent to the North to protect Catholics in Belfast, newly released State papers reveal.

As violence flared across the North the late night visitors, who met a senior Department of External Affairs official, warned of a possible "massacre" of the Catholic population and suggested that a few hundred rifles could be easily "lost" and would not be missed.

So insistent were the trio on meeting the Taoiseach that the department official later phoned Rathfriland Garda station and suggested the guard be strengthened on the Taoiseach's house in Rathfriland in case the MPs decided to contact Mr Lynch there.

MISSING

A secret memo detailing the visit and the demand for guns is contained in six files of Government. State papers which were released by the National Archives last Saturday after they had been missing for a week before being discovered last week.

The Department of the Taoiseach files, containing over 2,000 pieces of paper, detail Government policy on partition and cover the period from September 1968 until December 1969.

They should have been



Jack Lynch: extra guard posted on home

released under the 30 year rule along with other files which became available on January 1.

But when queries were raising that the files were missing, the National Archives carried out a search and discovered the documents last Tuesday.

Yesterday, National Archives director Dr David Craig said the documents had been transferred in 1995 and were held for safekeeping in the archives since then. It was due to an oversight that the documents were not released last week.

The secret account of the late night visit by the three MPs — Paddy Devlin, Paddy O'Hanlon and Paddy Kennedy — was written by a senior official in the Department of External Affairs, but the Archives was unable to confirm the official concerned was then Department secretary Hugh McCann.

The trio went to the Department at 10pm on August 16, 1969, seeking an interview with the Taoiseach "for the purpose

of obtaining arms for the Catholics in the Falls Road area Belfast".

Spokesman for the group, Paddy Kennedy warned that the B specials were on the loose in Belfast, there was continuous sniping and people were being shot down.

More and more Catholics were being forced further up in the Falls, and soon the whole Catholic population of Belfast would be concentrated in this area and would be "massacred".

The account of the meeting continued: "If Irish troops would not be sent in to the North, then they would have to be sent in to leave without definite answers to these questions."

The trio told the official that "as regards guns, nothing need be done openly or politically — a few hundred rifles could easily be 'lost' and would not be missed".

The MPs were insistent on seeing the Taoiseach getting answers on troops or guns, but were told that their message would be conveyed.

VEHEMENT

They were told Mr Lynch was not available and that the request was a matter for Government and perhaps even for Daily decision.

"All three MPs reacted vehemently to this response saying that it was a job off and an exasperating attitude," Mr Devlin was more angry and emotional than the others and muttered about the government "being responsible for deaths."

How the centre held: News Analysis, Page Eight



Director of the National Archives, David Craig, with the file entitled 'Partition Government Policy' which was put on display for journalists

'No regrets' by O'Hanlon on plea for South's help

By NIAMH HOOPER

PADDY O'Hanlon, the only surviving Northern MP from a delegation named as having travelled to Dublin in 1969 demanding guns to protect Catholics in Belfast, yesterday declared he does not regret anything he did.

"I don't in any sense regret anything that I did in relation to that weekend. That is the way history is written and it is for historians to judge my actions on that particular occasion."

The SDLP party founder said he was concerned about the "Northern whinge or victim mentality" concept and we owed it not only to our children but we owe it to ourselves to move on and work on the new dispensation.

Catholics were being over-run by the guardians of the law in Northern Ireland at the time.

"Basically I've never forgotten the horror of those few days because what happened there was a place movement fomented by events in Derry in which the servants and the agents of the State, backed up by mobs, invaded two particular areas of Belfast — the Ardoyne and the Falls Road Dover Street."

"My recollection of the events was that fronting the agents were three Shoreland armoured vehicles with turret-mounted machine guns and throughout a sustained period of attack in a built up

urban area, they unleashed firepower of a voracious nature upon the population," he said.

In an interview on RTE radio yesterday, Mr O'Hanlon said he did not recall any word having reached him, Paddy Devlin and Paddy Kennedy to tell them the British army had come into the situation in the North.

"But undoubtedly at the time of the Dublin visits movement was taking place in relation to that particular matter," he said.

"It was quite clear that if troops were on the streets of Northern Ireland the British Government itself knew that things were totally out of control."

Haughey suggested dossier on key areas

FORMER Finance Minister Charles Haughey prepared a confidential draft for government ministers in 1969 suggesting the preparation of a dossier on measures to pave the way for a new constitutional relationship between the North and South.

Included in the proposals was a thorough examination of all major areas of Government activity.

It suggested nine Government departments including Industry and Commerce, Finance, Education and Health should be involved in carrying out several North/South comparisons on taxation, education and health.

Mr Haughey enclosed details of the draft along with a covering letter dated September 25, 1969 to Taoiseach Jack Lynch along with the suggestion that it might be sent to various ministers.

"The object, briefly, is to complete as quickly as possible a dossier of the practical problems that would have to be solved in the context of any moves to evolve a new constitutional relationship between North and South," wrote Mr Haughey.

The draft letter calls for a thorough examination to identify any practical problems that may have to be overcome if any worthwhile progress towards reunification was to be made. A start had been made by the Department of Finance which had completed a study of the financial implications of ending partition.

Minister warns of English aggression

BRITISH Home Secretary Jack Straw has warned of the dangers posed by English nationalism.

In a BBC Radio 4 interview to be broadcast tonight Mr Straw said the English are "potentially very aggressive, very violent" and will increasingly articulate their Englishness following devolution.

On the same programme Tony Blair's spokesman William Hague also spoke of the potential threat from English nationalism. "I think English nationalism is the most dangerous of all forms of nationalism that can arise within the United Kingdom, because England is five-sixths of the population of the UK."

Mr Straw said the English had used their "propensity to violence" to "subjugate Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Then we used it in Europe and with our Empire, so I think what you have within the UK is three small nations in terms of their population who've been over the centuries under the cosh of the English."

"Those small nations have inevitably sought expression by a very explicit idea of nationhood. You have this very dominant other nation, England, 10 times bigger than the others, which is self-confident and therefore has not needed to be so explicit about its expression."

He added that as we move into this new century, people's sense of Englishness will become more articulated due to devolution and because of the increasing impact of Europe.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Girl may have had meningitis

A 17-month-old baby has died of suspected meningitis in a Belfast hospital.

The girl was admitted to Craigavon Area Hospital at the weekend, where she was treated in the intensive care unit. She was transferred to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, but later died. Five children under the age of three are being treated in the North for meningococcal septicaemia.

Slogans 'sinister'

SINN Féin was bitterly criticised by a Northern Ireland Assembly member last night after his home was daubed with republican slogans.

SDLP man Eugene McMenamin from Strabane, Co Tyrone, woke to discover "Fate Youth", "IRA" and "Republican Youth" slogans painted on his home. He said it was a "sinister escalation" of recent republican criticism of him after he condemned the victimisation of a Catholic priest who had met the RUC.

Minister's niece killed

THE niece of Northern Ireland Finance Minister, Mark Durkan, was tragically killed in a road accident at the weekend.

Deirdre Durkan (18), from Edmondson Park in Derry, was a rear seat passenger when the Volvo car she was travelling struck a post outside Moymore. Police have appealed for witnesses. No other vehicle was involved in the accident.

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A tyrant, a crook and questions about Chancellor Brown's flat

Westminster Watch
By NICHOLAS LEONARD

TWO dead men, one a tyrant and the other a crook, will be the focus of political and media attention in London this week, demonstrating that the disruptive influence has survived from the last century into the new one.

The dead tyrant is Hitler. The controversial question of his role in the Holocaust is at the centre of an extraordinary legal case which will open in the High Court tomorrow.

The right-wing historian David Irving has launched a defamation action against the paperback publisher, Penguin, and the US writer, Deborah Lipstadt, over the references to him in a book called *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*.

The outcome of the case will hinge on whether Irving can demonstrate to the court that his controversial views on Hitler and the Holocaust were underpinned by reputable research and documentation.

The whole issue, 55 years after the ending of the Second World War, continues to be highly politically sensitive in the UK and elsewhere, as has been demonstrated by the furore this month over the decision not to prosecute a suspected Nazi war criminal but to allow him to go to Australia.

In recent years, there have been embarrassing disclosures about the dismissive attitude of the government in London during



Gordon Brown (left) bought a flat from one of the fallen companies owned by the late Robert Maxwell



the war to the initial reports of mass extermination of Jews, while in Germany, the Irving case could act as a new focal point for the revival of neo-Nazi activities.

The dead crook in the headlines in London this week is Robert Maxwell. The latest senior politician to be caught up in the aftermath of the scandal is the chancellor, Gordon Brown.

The revelation that he bought his London flat from the receivers of a collapsed Maxwell company is not, in itself, particularly awkward for Brown. Unlike his cabinet colleague, Peter Mandelson, he did not borrow funds for the purchase from the former Maxwell associate, Geoffrey Robinson, nor did he have any direct contact with the Maxwell empire.

But the revelation of the deal is profoundly embarrassing for Brown and for New Labour as a whole since it once again

highlights the tangled web of connections between Robinson, who had to resign as a Treasury Minister in 1998 because of the Maxwell loan affair, and members of the cabinet.

Robinson had been chairman of the group which owned the flat that Brown bought. Critics are finding it hard to believe that it was just a coincidence that the deal happened to take place spontaneously and that Brown was as ignorant of the recent history of the ownership of the property as he is now claiming.

The smear-by-association of Brown over the matter comes at a time when Robinson himself is under considerable pressure because of embarrassing disclosures about the finances of an engineering company called Transact, another former Maxwell offshoot, which has just collapsed. The sequence of events which led to the failure of Transact now appears to have started

during the period when Robinson was its chairman before he went into full-time politics and became paymaster-general.

Against this turbulent background, it is not surprising that Robinson is now said to be holding back from publishing his own memoirs. The heady days of last autumn when his allies were promising all manner of sensational revelations from him in the wake of his humiliating ejection from the cabinet, now seem a long time ago.

Robinson knows a great many secrets about his former cabinet colleagues and his autobiography, if it pulls no punches, clearly has the potential to be a best seller. It also has the capacity to create further havoc within the government and to encourage even more inquisitive questioning about Robinson himself, his political schmoozing, and his business affairs.

Tony Blair returns from his holiday in Portugal to find his government confronted by a widening gulf between its ambitions and its achievements.

The most blatant symbol of this gulf is the grandiose millennium Dome at Greenwich which was originally devised by the Tories but taken up with gung-ho enthusiasm by New Labour.

Like a large-scale parody of a political manifesto, the Dome is an extraordinary mixture of the sublime, the ridiculous and the banal. It has also achieved the bizarre feat of attracting far fewer visitors than hoped.

CONFIDENTIAL HELPLINE

The Eastern Health Board has established a confidential freephone helpline for parents/families affected by post-mortem examination practices and procedures at O. Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin.

The helpline will be operated by Eastern Health Board professional staff who will provide information, advice or counselling.

The confidential freephone helpline number is **1800-670-700**.

The freephone helpline number is available 2pm - 5pm Monday to Friday