

SECRET WARTIME VISIT BY IRISH ARMY CHIEF

THE Chief of Staff of the Irish Army, General Dan McKenna, paid a secret visit to Northern Ireland during the Second World War. Moreover, as secret Cabinet files released by the Public Records Office in Belfast reveal, the visit prompted representations to the British military authorities in Lishburn by the Stormont Prime Minister, Sir Basil Brooke.

On July 19, 1944, Sir Basil Brooke wrote to Lieutenant-General Sir Alan

Cunningham of the British Army Headquarters regarding the planned visit of General McKenna, a native of Maghera, Co. Derry, to inspect units of the Army Cadet Force at Holywood, County Down. Brooke's main concern was that the Irish Chief of Staff would be pressed in uniform during his sojourn.

He told Cunningham: "I was under the impression that the gentleman would come in mufti and simply be taken round to such sites as you thought

necessary for the purpose of maintaining liaison between the British Service authorities and Eire. However, he arrives in uniform and it is intended that he should make an inspection of personnel, then I feel that the consequences are open to very serious objection."

Brooke added that once the general's programme became widely known, "it might react adversely on the British services themselves". He expressed himself anxious that no im-

pediment should be put in the way of any plans being made from a military standpoint and accepted that "it is naturally a matter for the Imperial Government itself to decide how best co-operation between the Services and Eire can be secured."

"Nevertheless", the Stormont Prime Minister continued, "I feel strongly that if General McKenna visits Northern Ireland in uniform, it would be greatly resented by a large number of our people."

On the following day, according to a note in the file, General Cunningham called on Brooke to discuss the matter. "He agreed that the visitor should not come in uniform and such inspections as he may make would be entirely informal."

At the same time, British Army HQ decided to notify the press confidentially and "ask them to ensure that nothing was published."

The Cabinet file also reveals that General McKenna paid a further visit to the North immediately after the war. On September 29, 1945, the British GOC informed Stormont that the Irish Chief of Staff was coming to Lishburn HQ unofficially "to see a small exhibition of infantry weapons".

The writer added: "I understand the Prime Minister wishes to know unofficially of such visits."

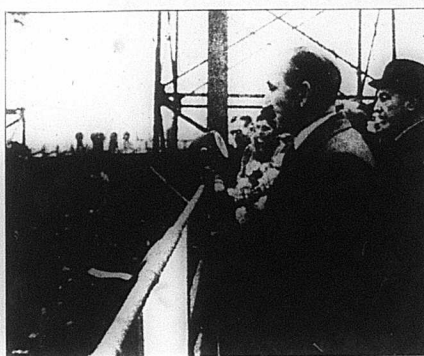
After that year, General McKenna and six Irish officers made a final visit to the North - to view the Ordnance Depot at Kinnegor.

disbanded from public office" and referred to the sectarian speeches of government ministers and the "flagrant system of gerrymandering."

Moreover, "the police force... is in the hands of a bigoted organisation allied to the Government and the Ku Klux Klan." The diplomat went on to list a number of eminent figures who had criticised the situation, amongst them General Hugh Gough, the Earl of Argyll and the Duke of St. Albans.

The Unionist Government's attention was drawn to the article by Sir Walter Smiles, MP, who urged the new Prime Minister, Sir Basil Brooke, to arrange a suitable reply. Smiles was assured by a government official that the Unionist Party's leading propagandist, Professor Douglas Savory, MP for Queen's University, would issue replies to the press in New York and London.

At this stage, however, the Government received a letter from Commander Oscar Henderson, the secretary to the Governor



• Sir Basil Brooke exhorting shipyard workers to increase their efforts in 1943.

NO PRESS ON UNITY DEAL

IN June 1958, Cabinet files reveal, Lord Brookeborough refused to meet a Sunday Express reporter anxious to discuss revelations in secret papers just released by the US State Department relating to Irish unity. Included was a letter sent by Mr Winston Churchill to President Roosevelt during the war "urging that if Eire joined the democratic forces, a Council of Defence for Ireland, which would lead to Irish unity, should be set up."

The journalist, Mr Penrycock Smith, wished to ask the Stormont Premier "if there was such a deal". However, as the files inform us: "The PM does not wish to see Mr Smith."

Eire's sympathy over Hitler's death exploited

THE Northern Government of Sir Basil Brooke was keen to take advantage of the propaganda opportunities created in Britain by the death of the German Minister in Dublin to offer his condolences on the death of Hitler. This is confirmed by yesterday's Cabinet releases by the Public Records Office in Belfast.

Following the Taoiseach's gesture on May 3, 1945, the Governor of Northern Ireland, the Duke of Abercorn, signalled his "great concern" to the Unionist Cabinet. He suggested that Sir Basil Brooke might arrange for a question on the matter to be tabled at Westminster by an MP, who was "preferably not one of the Ulster men."

Sir Robert Grandson,

Secretary of the Stormont Cabinet assured the Governor that arrangements had been made with a Tory MP, Sir Geoffrey Mander, to put down a question about de Valera calling on the German Minister in Dublin.

Meanwhile, on May 4, 1945, Sir Basil Brooke sent a statement to the British press rejoicing in the news of the Führer's death. "No one," he declared, "will expect me as an Ulsterman, as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and as a loyal subject of the King, to shed any tears over Hitler's death, much less to offer obsequious sympathy to any representative of the enemy."

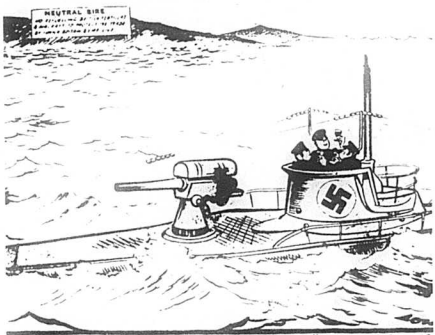
"That kind of thing," he continued pointedly, "may come down in Dublin but not in Belfast."

Brooke's statement won

the praise of the Northern Government's Agent in London, E. P. Northwood, who could offer a Stormont official: "It was a good thing as far as possible to take advantage of the occasion in that way to emphasise Ulster's position, although I can assure you that the distinction between Eire and Northern Ireland is now common property over here."

He described British press comment on Mr. de Valera's action as "small but definitely bitter", while "the comment of the man in the street here has been equally strong."

Northwood concluded: "The fact of the condolences was given widespread publicity and I am quite sure it did Ulster much good."



• Cartoon in 'The Nation' in New York, 1942.

Priest refused firearm permit

A application for a firearms licence for an Irish Army chaplain, who had previously served as a chaplain in the British Forces in the First World War, was rejected by the Northern authorities on the grounds that the applicant was "disloyal", according to a 1926 file, just made available in Belfast.

In March 1926, Rev. Colonel P. Bradley, a native of County Derry then stationed in Clonmel, wrote to the Northern Ireland Premier, Sir James Craig appealing against a previous decision by the Ministry of Home Affairs to deny him a permit for a shotgun.

"You may intend to do justice to Catholics," he told a bemused Craig, "but it is evident that the bigotry of some of your subordinates will prevent

you from fulfilling your intention". In particular, Colonel Bradley complained at the activities of Specials during raids on his family home, accusing them of threatening his sister and stealing his personal belongings, including his military riding boots and Sam Brown belt.

Referring to the discovery of "a flask of gunpowder" by police on a raid on his home, he explained to Craig: "Before going on active service, I left two ounces of powder in my powder horn. This he calls a flask of powder!"

A secret report on the file from District Inspector Gilligan of the RUC Special Branch revealed that the real reason for the government's refusal of a gun licence. This alleged

that Father Bradley and his brother "were known to have been connected with Republicanism", while their house had been used as an IRA meeting-place in 1922. Consequently, the report reads, the Commissioner did not consider that this was a case in which he could issue a firearms certificate.

Pointing out that Army chaplains' notepaper containing instructions to the IRA were discovered in a car in the vicinity of Bradley's home in 1922, the District Inspector concluded: "It is quite evident the writer of these letters is disloyal. Under the circumstances, there appears to be no reason why the Commissioner should reconsider his decision."

"But, personally, I have

Craig's regret over three 'lost counties'

THE unseemly of some Northern Unionists at their leaders' decision to abandon the three "lost counties" of the province in 1920 is confirmed in a letter to Sir James Craig released yesterday in Belfast.

Writing to the Prime Minister in December 1920, Mr William Armstrong stated: "Having regard to all the circumstances, I have no doubt that we did the best thing for all concerned when we left our Ulster brethren outside the six counties to sink or swim with the Free State."

"But, personally, I have

never felt quite happy with this result of our Ulster Covenant, and to solve my own feelings, I now enclose £50 to be used as you may think fit to assist any distressed folk in the area of Ulster outside Northern Ireland."

Craig despatched the remittance to Michael Knight, a Clones solicitor and Unionist supporter. He assured the Prime Minister that he would place the money at the disposal of a local committee "which meets once a month to deal with matters affecting our people."

County Monaghan



• Carson's covenant led to losing of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal.

Brooke needed 'B' money

A conflict of interest forced Sir Basil Brooke to turn down an appointment to the first Northern Ireland Senate in 1921, according to this year's Stormont Cabinet releases.

In June 1921, as the new Northern State was being established, Brooke, who was then County Commander of the Ulster Special Constabulary in Fermanagh, was informed by Dublin Castle that he must resign his salaried position before taking the oath as a new Senator.

Brooke at first suggested continuing in his policing role in "an honorary capacity". This was deemed impossible, however, by Colonel Wickham, the Inspector General of the RIC

in the North. "At the same time," Wickham wrote, "it would be a serious loss to the Special Constabulary were he [Brooke] forced to resign". He suggested that Brooke should resign from the Senate and seek re-appointment at a later date.

On June 30, 1921, Colonel Spender, secretary to the new Northern Cabinet informed Brooke that Sir James Craig was "a not a bit exercised" by his position. However, the Prime Minister foresaw strong opposition to any suggestion that a Member of the Senate might also be a salaried official of the Crown.

Finally, on July 1, 1921, Sir Basil informed Brooke that he had decided to

resign from the Senate "as I could not possibly afford to do this work in the Special Constabulary."

He explained: "I have to neglect my own place. It is more than an all-time job as, in addition to my office work, I am out visiting parades. As an instance, yesterday I started from home at 9.30 a.m., and reached the barracks at 1 p.m. I hardly fail to expect me to do all that for nothing!"

As a result of his decision to remain in charge of the USC, during the troubled period of the early 1920s, Brooke's chequered political career did not actually begin until his election to Parliament in 1929.

Paranoia over 'infiltration' by Southerners

impressions exist and I find there is no foundation for the reports which are being sensibly circulated."

The Minister produced figures which showed that the Catholic population of Northern Ireland had fallen by seven per cent since 1861, while Catholics comprised only 36.3 per cent of schoolchildren. Accordingly, he urged the

Prime Minister that alarmist reports should be contradicted wherever possible.

The Minister of Home Affairs continued to press the matter, however, and in August 1934, he circulated a memo proposing special legislation to require "Free State immigrants" to register with the police

authorities.

This would, he felt, effect a dual purpose. It would "afford the Government more or less authentic information as to the extent of infiltration" and, secondly, would enable the authorities to identify subversive elements. Nothing further was done, however, and the file reveals that by 1937,

the question was "in abeyance".

The issue was revived, however, in the wartime conditions of 1941 which witnessed a steady influx of Southerners, particularly skilled workers, to avail of the plentiful employment in the North. In March 1941, the new Stormont Premier, John Andrews, received a

sharp note from a Derry shirt manufacturer and leading B Special alleging that Southerners with republican sympathies were "infiltrating" Naval stores, guarded by our B men. Can you imagine a more ridiculous state of affairs?"

Andrews was quick to voice his concern at the situation in Derry to the Cabinet colleagues and the Admiral King who was responsible for the Naval stores in the city.

Nor was his fear assuaged by the report of his Minister of Commerce, Sir Basil Brooke, who warned him during a visit to the Maiden City that in the nationalist population, the German enemy "have a fifth column in the event of an invasion of Northern Ireland."

He went on: "I do not think that I am an alarmist but... if I was the general in charge of a German

invasion and I had such a portion of the population sympathetic with my object, I would use them."

On the situation of Derry Naval Stores, Brooke observed only: "It does seem slightly ludicrous that Mr. Kennedy has to supply B Special Constabulary Guards outside the buildings when inside there are potential enemies already established."

This prompted the Prime Minister to instruct his Minister of Labour, J. F. Gordon, to arrange that a period of Eire be registered for work "until a fixed period had expired. Gordon, however, pointed out that while some 2,000 Southern workers had been employed in Northern Ireland since March 1940, the bulk of these were skilled tradesmen whose labour was essential for the construction of aeroplanes

and shelters.

As criticism of the government intensified in Unionist quarters, a special Cabinet sub-committee was set up in February 1942 to consider the problem. At a meeting of this committee on February 5, 1942, Ministers felt that "there was no immediate problem of a serious character" from either the employment or security aspects.

However, William Lowry, KC, the Parliamentary Secretary at Home Affairs, pointed out that "the political difficulties arising out of absorption, even temporarily, of a number of Southern workers would have to be faced. Certain organisations would endeavour to keep them for political purposes."

"This was a problem," he remarked, "which had not arisen in the past, in which the Government would have to face in the near future."

THE deep-seated fear, amounting at times to near-paranoia, of successive Unionist governments regarding the "infiltration" of large numbers of Catholics and Nationalists from the South is graphically outlined in secret Cabinet files which have just come to light.

A large dossier entitled "Infiltration of Eire Workers into Northern Ireland", and covering the time-span 1934-43 underlines the anxiety which prompted the Stormont authorities to pass the Safeguarding of Employment Act of 1947.

The issue took an acute form in 1934 against the background of a virulent sectarian campaign by the "Ulster Protestant League" and the anti-Catholic speeches of Sir Basil Brooke and other leading Unionist politicians.

In April 1934, in response to a motion by Nationalist

MPs, alleging the violation of the rights of the minority, Lord Craigavon's Cabinet introduced a counter motion declaring that the employment of large numbers of Catholics entering Northern Ireland was prejudicial not only to the interests of law and order and the safety of the State, but also to the prior claim of loyal Ulster-born citizens seeking employment.

An unsigned note in the file from this period cited the refusal of 270 Catholic schools to recognise the new government in 1922 as "a good example of the Catholic Church with disloyalty."

In April 1934, the hardline Minister of Home Affairs, Sir Dawson Bates, informed his Cabinet colleagues that he had examined the feasibility of requiring persons entering Northern Ireland and

staying a considerable time to register. On legal advice, he had decided to defer the matter for the time being.

In August of the same year, the Minister of Finance, Mr. H. M. Pollock, wrote to Craigavon candidly about the whole question of "infiltration" from the Free State. He wrote:

"There appears to be a very prevalent opinion among our people that a certain amount of peaceful penetration from the Free State has been going on for some time past."

He had received letters from the playwright, St. John Ervine and the Unionist MP, Professor Corkey "who profess to be very alarmed at the dangers to us of this alleged infiltration."

But, Pollock went on: "I have taken some trouble to investigate fully the grounds on which such