

Jc 736

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E.R.

M.P. Palmer
Mr. Judd
To see
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NOTE OF DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MR MASON AND MR JUDD AND IRISH MINISTERS ON FRIDAY 5 MAY IN DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, IVEAGH HOUSE, DUBLIN

The series of meetings began at 10.55 a.m. with a private session between Mr Mason and Mr Judd and Mr Micahel O'Kennedy and Mr David Andrews in Mr O'Kennedy's room. Mr Donlon (DFA) and Mr Pilling were present to take notes.

1.2 After exchanging preliminary courtesies, Mr O'Kennedy outlined the proposed programme for the day. He emphasised that as far as the Irish were concerned there was no particular time by which the talks had to end. He thought that it would be appropriate for the Secretary of State, as the guest, to take the first press conference. The Secretary of State said that the programme was quite acceptable to him. He had had a joint press conference on his last visit to Dublin and this might have been more helpful on this occasion but it was a matter for Mr O'Kennedy to decide. Mr O'Kennedy said that he was afraid that the media would seek to play him and the Secretary of State off one against the other at a joint press conference.

1.3 Mr O'Kennedy said that he thought that it would be useful to run over the general background in the private meeting. Detailed points could be picked up more formally later. After Downing Street there was a general expectation that there would be continuing co-operation between the two countries and he saw this meeting as part of that. But it had to be acknowledged that certain things had arisen, views had been expressed and there was a feeling in Dublin that the two countries were not really on the best of terms. He had said in the Dail yesterday that there had been misunderstandings in the past. As a result of this meeting he hoped that it would be possible to report progress on the economic front and to make new commitments on security. On politics it would be possible to exchange views to help to give a better understanding of each other's position. Downing Street had not really presented an opportunity for that.

1.4 On the security front he had to say that the Irish Government had been very concerned that without any notice at all to them the Secretary of State indicated that those responsible for La Mon might have come South. It had provoked a severe reaction in Dublin. He believed that there was the closest co-operation between the two police forces. There could be no doubt about his Government's political commitment to deal with the security problem. It was surprising that any reassurance was needed because it was so obviously in the best interests of his Government. The IRA were looking for a long-term role for themselves at the expense of the Irish Government. There need be no public or private apprehension about their commitment against the IRA. They were very concerned that the UK Government showed any doubt about this. Whatever proposals the Secretary of State made for greater Border co-operation he could be sure that they would not just be listening but also wanting to do something about it. There was good co-operation and he hoped that that would always be publicly acknowledged. In the House of Commons last week an Opposition member had asked for more co-operation on over-flights. There was already good co-operation on this score and the Irish Government thought that he might have been told so. In this private meeting he hoped that it would be possible to agree on a positive approach. We must work to defeat terrorism and work on where we should go from there.

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1.5 The Secretary of State said that there had been irritants on both sides: the use of figures like 2%, references to the wider use of the Border and references to Irish unity. Some of them were not going to be resolved. When the Prime Minister had met the Taoiseach they had agreed to differ. There were bound to be differences but they need not be continuing irritants. This would spoil co-operation. One problem was that an answer to a question in the House of Commons seemed capable of causing widespread reverberations in the South as much as anything because of the way the press treated it. After La Mon he had simply said that those responsible might possibly have gone to the South because of the wave of revulsion against them in the North. Mr O'Kennedy said that even to refer to it as a possibility caused a serious problem in the South.

1.6 The Secretary of State said that it was a pity that it had become a story. It was necessary to guard against it happening. For example no-one in the UK had reacted against Mr O'Kennedy's further recent references to 2%. We must not allow newspapers to get in our way. Mr O'Kennedy said that it was a fact of life that the media in the South picked up anything to do with the North. The Secretary of State said that he studied Irish newspapers very carefully but he had been surprised nevertheless by the reaction to Dr Shirley Summerskill's recent remarks in a House of Commons Committee.

1.7 Mr O'Kennedy said that he accepted that it was necessary to hold one's peace as much as possible. Before Dr Summerskill's remarks they had avoided references to extradition. His Government had taken exception to the suggestion that they had been under pressure from their European partners. The subject had not even been raised in Brussels. In Continental Europe extradition was different than in the UK and in Ireland. Ireland was not out of line with everyone else. The United Kingdom was the exception rather than the rule. Dr Owen and Mr Judd had not raised the issue with his Government. Any references to them being weak on terrorism were bound to cause a reaction. The Irish had helped to firm up the recent document on terrorism in the EEC. At the Council the Taoiseach had worked to make it more positive.

1.8 The Secretary of State said that when a Minister was asked a direct question on our policy on extradition it was necessary to state what it was. It had been stated now by several UK Ministers. Mr Judd said that at FCO Question Time he always said that the Irish Government were well aware of our position. There had been no pressure because we considered that our view was well known.

1.9 Mr O'Kennedy said that even if there was an implication about Irish policy on extradition from the back benches in the House of Commons it would be necessary for the Irish Government to react to it unless a UK Minister had corrected the implication at the time. In general the Irish Government avoided debates on Northern Ireland. There had been the Taoiseach's end of year interview but that could not be avoided and he was bound to be asked about the North.

1.10 The Secretary of State said that that interview had stopped the talks on the framework and had caused us a lot of concern. Mr O'Kennedy said that according to his information it was not true that the Taoiseach's interview had stopped the talks. The Secretary of State said that Mr O'Kennedy had been misled. It was only necessary to consider what Harry West had said. Mr O'Kennedy said that it was not necessarily a matter of cause and effect. It could have been that West was simply looking for an excuse to break off the talks.

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1.11 The Secretary of State said that Mr O'Kennedy was entitled to his view but the talks had been going on. The Official Unionists had been moved from an intransigent posture. The talks with officials were continuing when Mr Lynch gave his interview. He hoped that it would be possible to persuade the parties to return to the table but this would not be helped if there were a further demand for Irish unity from the Irish Government. Mr O'Kennedy said that his Government had not been and would not be responsible for a demand for Irish unity. What had been picked up from the interview was the reference to amnesty although Mr Lynch was the last person to want to give succour to the terrorists.

1.12 Mr O'Kennedy said that it would be a help if the two Governments could meet regularly. One of the central themes of his Government's policy was to show an understanding of the Unionist position. He recognised that their good faith would not always be accepted. They had been reasonably encouraged by the private response from Unionists in the North. There had been appreciation for the Irish Government's recognition that the Unionists had got to be consulted and considered. The Secretary of State said that it was helpful if that was the Irish Government's view. Speeches on Irish unity frightened the Unionists and undermined the Irish Government's own long-term aim. Mr O'Kennedy said that Irish unity was the only possible long-term basis for peace. His Government were convinced that there could be no real move until the United Kingdom Government accepted this and said so.

1.13 Mr O'Kennedy went on to say that the difficulty was to win respect from an element in society which had been consistently held down. The Fair Employment Report had show the extent of the discrimination. We must try to give a sense of confidence to this element or they would be a breeding-ground for trouble. The Secretary of State said that the report had drawn on old figures from 1971-2. The work that had been done since then should be recognised. There was an Act on fair employment, an Agency and an Ombudsman. Mr O'Kennedy said that he gave due credit for those achievements and he recognised that it would be a long and difficult haul. Nevertheless it was important to understand how it came about that the minority were so deprived even if there was some improvement now.

1.14 The Secretary of State said that coming back to the question of unity, there were two distinct national aspirations in the North. The two Governments had, therefore, had to agree to differ. There could be no declaration of intent on Irish unity from his Government. Mr O'Kennedy interjected to say that his Government had never used that phrase. The Secretary of State said that in Northern Ireland the violence now came mainly from the PIRA. Speeches on the goal of Irish unity could bring West and Paisley together by frightening them. That would mean trouble for everyone in Northern Ireland including the minority and an end to any prospect for political progress. Mr O'Kennedy emphasised that his Government sought unity only in a context of agreement and peace in relations with the United Kingdom, within the North and in North/South relations. The Secretary of State said that the Taoiseach's recent reference to 'consent' had been helpful. If the flavour of consent was in a speech on unity, any harm would be minimised. Mr O'Kennedy said that that was what they aimed for in their speeches. Sometimes what was said was not properly understood. The Irish Government was more ready to talk to the Protestants than the other way round. He wanted to create a climate that would allay fears although he accepted that it would not be easy. It was a fact that the Border - partition - had created two sheltered societies: a monolithic Catholic society in the South and an in-built Unionist majority in the North. This was bound to lead to antagonism.

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On security the Irish Government were a little sensitive to any suggestion that the Border was their problem. They had committed considerable resources to controlling the Border. There was good co-operation between the police forces. Many problems flowed from the existence of the Border. We had to look for ways of making antagonisms diminish. It was striking that this was the first time that he and the Secretary of State had been able to come together to understand and analyse each other's point of view. The Secretary of State recalled that they had been trying to hold a meeting since January and would have met before Easter but for the former President's death. Mr Judd said that it was unfortunate that the media placed no emphasis on the fact that both countries were members of the European Community and had a great deal in common.

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