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Copy No. .... of 13.

Penelope MURRAY

PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - M

cc: PS/PUS (L&B) - M  
 PS/Mr Bloomfield - M  
 Mr Brennan  
 Mr Carvill - M  
 Mr Merifield - M  
 Mr Gilliland - M  
 Miss Elliott  
 Mr Reeve - M  
 Mr Clark, RID, FCO

TALKS WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES: ANGLO-IRISH SPEAKING NOTE

The Secretary of State spoke to Mr Peter Barry on 30 May about the Secretary of State's intention to meet each of the political leaders in Northern Ireland in the next few weeks, and, among other things, to give the unionists leaders some indication of the nature of the discussions with the Irish. He undertook that the DFA would be informed nearer the time when the talks with the political parties were likely to take place, and the line we intended to take.

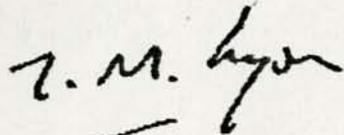
... 2. We ought now to be inviting the Ambassador to follow this up with the DFA. We have prepared the attached note on the Anglo-Irish talks which we propose to offer to the Secretary of State to draw on when he sees the party leaders. This version is principally directed to the unionist parties; some revision will be needed for Mr Hume (eg in paragraph 9). We do not suggest that the Ambassador should hand this note to the Irish. He ought, however, to have a copy so that he may speak to the DFA from it. We would ask the Ambassador to inform the Irish that the Secretary of State would be holding the meetings in the next week or so. We would also brief him to point out that if the Irish express any unease about the degree of information that we propose to give, he should remind them that Mr Barry told the Secretary of State on 30 May that they had been sounding out Mr Hume on detailed ideas which formed part of the talks: we too needed to sound out the unionists in particular, although we did not at this stage propose to go into very much detail.

3. The Ambassador would no doubt be grateful for a few days in which to fulfil this remit, and I should be glad to know,

E.R.

Copy No....of...13.

therefore, as soon as convenient whether the Secretary of State is content for us to brief the Ambassador on this basis and to pass to him the text of the note attached.



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J M LYON

11 June 1985

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## SPEAKING NOTE: ANGLO-IRISH TALKS

1. I recognise your interest in the Government's talks with the Irish Government and I want to give you now some clearer idea of what they are about. Inter-Governmental discussions of this kind must proceed on a confidential basis and I hope what you will treat what I have to say on that basis. (For Mr Molyneux - on a Privy Counsellor basis).
2. The principle of an Anglo-Irish dialogue was clearly stated in last November's summit communique. I have made no secret of it ever since. Talks have been progressing steadily but unhurriedly since then.
3. The dialogue has been conducted at both Ministerial and official level. It has had the Prime Minister's full approval. Officials have also acted on Ministerial instruction and have reported <sup>fully</sup> / to Ministers. Both I and Geoffrey Howe have been involved because, when it comes to relations with another sovereign Government, the FCO have a clear interest.
4. We have made it absolutely clear to the Irish that there can be no question of derogation of sovereignty or joint authority. Dublin now knows that it cannot expect any executive role in affairs in the north. The talks have been valuable in getting that message across.
5. But what I and Cabinet colleagues recognise (as I am sure you do) is that Dublin has an inevitable interest in events in the north; and that if we can create a framework for the Irish to put their views to us, they are more likely to reach us in a constructive rather than in a negative form. As I have said in public (eg on 20 January) we are seeking a more methodical basis for the interchange that we have with Dublin over the

north. We want to reassure the Irish that we recognise their interest and to ensure that we are fully aware of the viewpoint represented by Dublin's voice.

6. So that is what the discussions with the Irish are aimed at: devising a framework through which the Irish can be seen to be communicating with us on certain matters in the north, thereby helping to reconcile to the institutions of government those nationalists who would otherwise reject HMG as being unwilling to take account of minority views.

7. There has been a good deal of speculation on what these matters might be. I do not want to add to it. We do not yet know the shape of any final agreement. But the sort of areas we have been considering are those where we know the minority have a legitimate and particular interest: and where we incidentally need to secure the understanding and support of the Irish. I have in mind security arrangements, the reputation of the judicial system, cross border efforts on economic cooperation, social matters (particularly recognising the minority's identity) and political areas such as the involvement of the minority in appointments to public authorities. If we cannot make progress on devolution, the Irish may have views on that as well.

8. There is, of course, already some contact with the Irish on many of these matters. We are seeing, however, whether we can find an acceptable basis for formalising and regularising it. But what we will not do is hand over or share responsibility for any of it with the Irish.

9. As part of any agreement the Irish would make absolutely clear that they accepted that Northern Ireland must remain part of the United Kingdom for as long as the majority wish. That is a valuable - and indeed an essential - element in any arrangement. It offers you the absolute assurance that an agreement cannot be a back-door route to Irish unity against majority wishes.

E.R.

Copy No....of 13.

10. An agreement with the Irish would bring a number of advantages:

- (i) a more reliable means of knowing nationalist views;
- (ii) a closer understanding in the Republic of the realities of government in north;
- (iii) a more favourable environment for fully effective security cooperation with the south;
- (iv) a more favourable international reputation, which is important because coolness in relations overseas can have implications for security, inward investment and public morale;
- (v) clear acceptance by the Republic of Northern Ireland's status as part of the UK;
- (vi) greater readiness of the SDLP to consider options to political progress within Northern Ireland.

11. There can be no guarantee of success. The Taoiseach was not far wrong in forecasting a 50/50 chance of success. Agreement is difficult because the Irish would prefer more than we can give them. But that is no reason for breaking off the talks. There is every advantage in reaching an acceptable agreement within the terms laid down last November.

12. There is no set timetable. We will see how discussions progress and be guided by that. But one way or another, I would expect the outcome to be settled later this year.

13. Finally, I should emphasise that this is an east-west arrangement between London and Dublin. It does not commit any future devolved Government in the north. It will be for the local administration in the north to make its own arrangements - if any - with Dublin about matters transferred to it (as envisaged in 1973). So in the event of devolved government an agreement would have to be reviewed in that light.