

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

PC 72/8

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B)
 PS/Mr Patten (L&B)
 PS/PUS (L&B)
 PS/Mr Bloomfield
 Mr Chesterton
 Mr Merifield
 Mr Carvill
 Mr Reeve
 Mr Lyon
 Miss Elliott
 Mr Bickham
 Mr N Hamilton, DOE
 Mr G Hewitt
 Mr Buxton

FRANK MILLAR UUP

I had lunch today with Frank Millar. His pride had already been dented by the refusal of the RUC to let him park his car inside the grounds of Stormont House, so he spent the first part of our meeting in a violent diatribe against the "colonialist system" as he saw it. He was particularly critical of the views (reportedly) expressed by the Secretary of State in the "News of the World" and by Mr Parris in today's "Times" about the calibre of NI politicians. If British politicians made such disparaging comments about the calibre of local politicians, then they could not expect the latter to treat them with any respect and engage in dialogue with them.

2. Once his spleen had been vented, we moved on to a more substantive discussion of the possible impact of an Anglo-Irish agreement on the political scene in the Province. Millar is convinced that an agreement will be reached: his "best guess" at timing is the latter part of October. Although he did not (fortunately) press me for details of a likely agreement, his judgement was that it would have to be substantial in order to secure Dr Fitzgerald's signature and SDLP agreement.

3. Unionists would have to react. Although Millar emphasised the need to channel dissent into political channels, he dropped heavy hints that the UUP could not allow itself to be outflanked by the "wilder elements" of the DUP when it came to reflecting loyalist opposition. He pointed to that party's link with loyalist paramilitaries and said that a repeat 1974 scenario was not impossible. He accepted, however, that at present there seemed to be little popular support for a campaign of massive civil disorder. He did point out that in 1974 the popular groundswell did not really get underway until action had been taken by relatively few.

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4. In the circumstances of an Anglo-Irish agreement, Millar said that the main objective of Unionist politicians would be to deny the SDLP "a double victory". They would, therefore, be unlikely to be accommodative towards devolution ideas which involved a "power sharing" element. The only model capable of meeting their needs would be one of majority rule - with any necessary safeguards for the minority as an afterthought. In these conditions, the "liberal" UUP wing, which had originated the "Way Forward" approach would be submerged. He doubted also whether, politically, the SDLP could afford to participate in any form of power sharing executive. It would involve supporting a system they had constantly criticized and the prospect of Seamus Mallon having to defend the RUC was laughable (so, incidentally, was this line of argument).

5. Millar's conclusion was that the Government would have no alternative but to continue with direct rule. There could be agreement to nothing else - despite its shortcomings. He also thought that, if the Anglo-Irish talks broke down, we would have to continue direct rule in the face of an SDLP collapse and Unionist triumphalism. He thought that the Government had missed its opportunity to achieve real progress some nine months ago. At that time there were real prospects for squeezing movement out of the Unionist community. He appeared surprised (hardly genuine) when I pointed out that we had attempted precisely this but had been told by Unionist leaders that they had to wait to see the outcome of the Anglo-Irish talks.

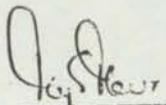
6. Other points of interest were as follows:

- a. District Councils. Millar confirmed that Unionist councillors on all 17 majority dominated councils were being encouraged to follow the Craigavon example and get themselves involved in High Court cases. Money would be raised to pay possible individual surcharges. The objective is to make local government unworkable and "hold up to international ridicule" the Government's policy on Sinn Fein.
- b. UUP/DUP Task Group. The establishment of the group represented an attempt to up-stage the United Loyalist Front. As noted above the UUP wish to keep the political protest away from paramilitary channels. Mr Ross had been appointed to the Group as Party chief whip (and the only MP not on holiday at the beginning of August!).

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7. I may, inadvertently, have caused some embarrassment to Millar in discussing the group. I mentioned that the Secretary of State had said that he would be prepared to see Messrs Robinson and Ross after his return from holiday. This came as a great surprise to Mr Millar. The group had discussed (at Mr Robinson's suggestion) at their first meeting whether there would be any advantage in seeking to see the Secretary of State. They had decided against the idea. Millar was, to put it mildly, disconcerted to hear that a request had been made. We may hear more of this.



R STREEVE

Political Affairs Division

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