

Transcript by  
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PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY MR. TOM KING,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND,  
ON TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 1986

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MR. KING

We had, this morning, the sixth meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference here today. As I think people now understand, these conferences follow on work that has been done in various sub-groups on a number of the matters under discussion.

Today's conference was interesting, particularly because we were able to hear reports from the Chief Constable and the Deputy Commissioner of the Garda, who have now reached the first stage in much closer cooperation. We saw the fruits of that in substantial agreement being reached on elements in improving arrangements for the exchange of information and developing liaison structures between the two forces and their work is continuing into other related areas and they will be reporting further to the Conference.

While I obviously cannot go into details about these matters I am satisfied they mark a very encouraging progress report in the security forces in both the Republic and in Northern Ireland in their increasingly close cooperation in the work to combat terrorism.

We also talked about issues regarding relations between the minority community and the security forces.

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We talked about measures to encourage confidence in the administration of justice.

We also confirmed our intention to bring into line with the parliamentary legislation for the United Kingdom the situation of what are known as I-voters, which is a point that had been raised with us.

We also discussed issues regarding the Irish language and while we made clear that of course in Northern Ireland the situation is not for instance comparable to that in Wales, there is no question of any move towards any bilingual society, nonetheless we recognise there are those who care very much about the tradition and culture of the Irish language. It has always been our policy to seek to respect that and we discussed and included in the communique certain ways in which we sought to give recognition to that.

I think it was a helpful meeting and it shows the ways in which we are seeking to work together and also how we are seeking to work together in some of the economic fields, not least in seeing how we can improve communications, road communications, between Belfast and Dublin.

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(NOTE: QUESTIONS ARE NOT VERY AUDIBLE BUT I HAVE DONE MY BEST. JAMES LEE)

QUESTION

Could I direct your attention to.....the Conference discussed relations between the security forces in Northern Ireland and the Community and the Irish...put forward further views of ways in which the confidence of the northern community in the security forces could be enhanced. Could you tell us what those were, what the further views were?

MR. KING

Yes. One of the areas which I think it is known we have been looking at for some time is introducing a new police complaints procedure and, of course, this is in line also with developments that have been taking place in the rest of the United Kingdom. We will be publishing very shortly now our proposals in a draft Order and those proposals are ones in which the Irish Government have views because they themselves are introducing new proposals for - and I think through the Dail at the moment - new proposals for a police complaints procedure.

That was one of the items. Other items: they have always been interested in the policy that we introduced in 1976 of police privacy. In other words, to try and ensure wherever possible with military patrols, khaki patrols, that there was a police presence in sensitive areas and that is an area of interest which it has been our policy to pursue for some years.

Another area which is not directly related to the

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Conference but is obviously one of interest is the question of a code of conduct. Now that is something to which the Chief Constable has been taking a particular interest now and launched his work in fact well before the Anglo-Irish Agreement but it obviously relates to the area of the confidence of the community, the minority community in the security forces and that work which is the responsibility of the Chief Constable, obviously where he would be consulting with the police authority and with the police associations. They are interested in progress on that because they see that as a very valuable initiative on his part.

QUESTION

.....did you actually give them any commitment.....  
backed up at all times.....

MR. KING

No. This is a policy that we launched in 1976, that was ten years ago, that we started on this, and it is important to remember what it is; that in certain areas, as we know, police can patrol themselves, they are actually escorted by the army. In other areas, army patrols have a police presence, but the particular areas obviously are those in sensitive areas of the minority community where we have always believed it desirable to have a police presence, not least because it is more acceptable in terms of law and order, in terms of a policeman being in the lead with the military as it were in aid of the civil power.

QUESTION

(inaudible)

MR. KING

Storker (phon.)

The report was mentioned because obviously there has been a lot of publicity about it and I made clear exactly the position as I have made clear in an answer that I gave in Parliament this week, which is that we are very concerned indeed that the presence absence of Mr. Storker does not impede in any way the progress of the Storker investigation. The team that was working for Mr. Storker is of course still in place and Mr. Samson, who has taken over, the team will be working for him and we obviously attach great importance to that work being concluded at the earliest possible date.

If I may just make this clear, of course, having said that, it is the responsibility of the Chief Constable and he has referred the report to the Director of Public Prosecutions, but I know the Chief Constable is himself very anxious indeed and I am sure he is right in that respect, to wish to see these enquiries completed at the earliest possible date and whatever action is then deemed appropriate to be taken.

QUESTION

Did the Irish voice any concern that Mr. Storker was taken off this report before he was investigated, before he was proved guilty or otherwise?

MR. KING

No, they merely underlined quite clearly the amount of interest and concern that they receive and that comes to them through the nationalist minority community, the concerns about this whole case, and I think that everybody shares the concern in this respect: that there are now a lot of allegations flying around which are extremely disquieting and that in the face of all the rumour and innuendo that there is it is very important indeed that these matters are brought to as speedy a conclusion as possible and that if there are to be, for instance of the DPP, prosecutions or action that he proposes, that these matters should be dealt with as speedily as possible, and I think that I know nobody, a responsible person, who dissents from that view.

QUESTION

Did the Irish side raise the question or did you <sup>merely</sup> come out with your explanation?

MR. KING

No, they asked about the position.

QUESTION

Were they happy with your explanation?

MR. KING

I made quite clear what the position was and the importance - and everybody agrees in the present situation - that it is absolutely vital that this matter is cleared up and that, instead of the present rumour and innuendo, we actually

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can have a clear statement of the position and if there are charges to be made, if there are prosecutions, that these are made quite clear as soon as possible.

QUESTION

Were the Irish worried .....

MR. KING

Yes, I think there is a certain impatience but we did have before us some concrete achievements today. There is no doubt that anybody who has had an opportunity to see something of the work that has now been done, and more work will come forward very shortly, the amount of work that has gone on in developing cooperation between the RUC and the Garda is very impressive and I think that I certainly feel that this is a very significant landmark in the development of that cooperation. I am very conscious that when we first signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement a lot of people were inclined to say: "Well, it has all been tried before. They will never really get any better cooperation." Anybody who has had the opportunity now to talk closely to members of the police forces, senior members of the police forces involved, beginning to see, and I think some of them are beginning to see for themselves the potential that can exist for the future and offers the best prospect we have ever had for getting to grips with some of the worst features of cross-border terrorism and that is obviously very important indeed

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to every single person north and south of the border.

QUESTION (inaudible)

MR. KING

This is where we discussed some of the progress and I said, for example, something on which they put forward their views, in which they are interested. We shall be publishing within a month a draft Order on a completely new police complaints procedure. Now that is important. That is something not only of interest to the minority community; that is of interest to every member of both communities in Northern Ireland and I think that is an important development.

QUESTION (inaudible)

MR. KING

Any concerned Unionist who knows the price that this province has paid from the scourge of terrorism and so much of that, terrorism which is operated close to the border, and from which often men on the run or resources can come across the border, that people know that this has been one of the problems that we have not tackled effectively in the past. I am not going to disclose any of the particular measures, any of the particular arrangements and you will understand precisely why I will not. What I have said, and I say this quite clearly, is that I am satisfied now that we are embarking on a period of

much closer cooperation than there has ever been between the  
police forces north and south of the border.

QUESTION (inaudible)

MR. KING

Well, I think everybody who knows the way in which I deliberately avoided taking actions which many might have thought were very justified, whether it was over for many months the behaviour of the Assembly, and the fact that the Assembly was not discharging its proper functions, when I gave them every opportunity to come and talk to me, to make clear that my door was open to anybody who wished to come and discuss issues with me, that they have received to do so; I do not think anybody can ever accuse me of being provocative in these matters and I just say that anybody who even for a moment entertains those sort of exaggerated charges...that people are all too fond of fling around in the political maelstrom that we occasionally see that passes for democratic politics occasionally in this province.. that actually if they just like to read the communique, just look at what is there and just decide quite honestly what is provocative, what is offensive to Unionists, what is actually unacceptable in anything is there...I have heard a comment that John Hume has made in the past about our inviting any Unionist to stand up and say in what way anything that has happened under the Agreement has actually diminished him or damaged his interests, and I have never heard that question answered yet, and what I do say is that the purpose of

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this Conference is yes, to tackle the problems of cross-border terrorism and to vastly enhance the potential for cooperation between the Government of the Republic and ourselves in the United Kingdom in tackling the problems of terrorism across the border and in Ireland.

That is part of the purpose. The other purpose is also to make sure that the minority feel that within Northern Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, their voice is heard and respected and although they are the minority and although the majority's views will obviously tend to be the most important in most respect, the minority view will be listened to and respected. And anybody who reads these communique honestly and objectively knows that that is what we are doing and that is what we are trying to do and deal fairly, and I hope that is a pretty clear answer. That the idea that the conference we had today and the communique is any way provocative, that is absolute rubbish.

QUESTION (Inaudible)

MR. KING

What we said in this is that to work together against those who use and support violence. We mean exactly what we say.

QUESTION

(inaudible)

MR. KING

No. That is an operational matter for the Chief Constable.

QUESTION

Is it likely that there will not be further...marching season is over?

MR. KING

I think what people do not understand is that the Conference works. We have a framework of sub-groups and the Conference meets on a regular fairly frequent basis, but when there are further matters to discuss, depending on the progress of the sub-groups. That is the basis on which we work. We are going on steady, not terribly erratic or exaggerated way, but steadily, I think, making progress in a number of worthwhile areas.

QUESTION (INAUDIBLE)

(re UDR)

MR. KING

My first answer was immaculate but I will add to it in this respect: that it is our policy, but obviously it has got to be conditioned partly by resources, whether people are available, and the problems of operational difficulties that can exist from time to time, but the policy is that we should increasingly have police presence with army patrols.

QUESTION (INAUDIBLE)

MR. KING

No. We were not talking about humps and holes, but economic cooperation in these areas and trying to help over difficulties. There are going to be, I think, some quite real problems over seeing ways in which we can reach agreement on what is a sensible way to improve communications through the island of Ireland. Obviously, the routes through Northern Ireland are very important, not . . . least, if I may say so, for Irish industry and trade with the use that some of them make of the . . . Stranraer Ferry as well and so these are considerations that are important to them as well.

QUESTION

Was there any discussion regarding EEC aid..(inaudible)

MR. KING

That sounds a bit confused, but I do not know anything about that story, and we did not actually discuss that particular point, and we did not discuss EEC aid.

QUESTION (INAUDIBLE)

MR. KING

No, because we had already made clear what our position was on that. It came up before and we made clear at that time that we were waiting for . . . further progress of the Public Order Bill through Parliament and that we were then going to see

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- when that Bill had completed its parliamentary process - to look at it and see what implications Great Britain legislation might have for Northern Ireland, and that is the position we made clear.

QUESTION (INAUDIBLE)

(re mention of Irish Extradition Treaty)

MR. KING

Yes, we did not discuss it in the Conference, but obviously I think it is fair to say that the Irish Government recognised our keen interest in seeing that treaty achieved and that the final version of the treaty was one which I think they were sympathetic, but they must speak for themselves about that, but certainly obviously I think people begin to see and maybe do not always realise whether it is connected, but it is interesting to note that since we signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, we now have got the signature of the Irish Government on the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, we now have the Senate Committee approving by a majority of 15-2, and that includes all those who might be considered traditional Irish Nationalist supporters in the Senate, support for the extradition treaty, with that coming on to the floor of the Senate obviously now with a very much better chance of success than some of the commentators when I was in Washington would ever allow we had.

QUESTION (INAUDIBLE)

MR. KING

I do not know how many people would feel that the last month or so of the Assembly has been a marvellous investment for the democratic process, when so many of those elected topx it have felt unable to continue to take part in it in the way that it was being conducted, and I will just say this about that:

Simply no justification exists for that at all. You might seek to argue that case if all doors were closed and if there was no opportunity for anybody to put forward their views. I have made absolutely clear that I am more than ready to sit down and discuss with Unionist leaders their concerns. I have made quite clear that I am prepared to do that outside any reference or ambit of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That I am prepared to do it without any preconditions. That I understand the difficulties that there would be in entering into formal talks. Therefore, I have made clear that I am prepared to have discussions which would not be talks at this stage but just discussions to see if there is any ground on which we could work.

Now, any fairminded person I think listening to that would say: "What more actually do people want to have to actually sit down and start talking?" and I say, as I have said before, that in the end, anybody who cares about the future of this province knows that it is by talking now that we find our way through; that there has got to be talking sooner or later - the sooner it happens the better - and that if instead, there is any suggestion of people taking to the streets, and if

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that means confirmation, that that will be doing enormous damage to the position of Northern Ireland, to its position in the Union, because it will cause great offence throughout the rest of the United Kingdom if that were to happen, and it would do great damage to not only people now who are looking for jobs, hoping to stay in jobs, but to the prospects of jobs for their ~~kids~~ youngsters, for their kids and successive generations, because it is the easiest thing in the world to destroy jobs. It is the most devilishly difficult one in the present situation to try and create them.

QUESTION (INAUDIBLE)

(Asking for assurance re Mr. Storker)

MR. KING

You know perfectly well I cannot obviously answer that question. There is an investigation taking place. I am not privy to the information in any way; that this is being conducted on behalf I think of the Police Authority in Manchester, but that is anyway not within my responsibilities in any way, and that obviously I am quite unable to comment on any of the questions that you ask.

QUESTION (INAUDIBLE) (again re Mr. Storker)

MR. KING

I am obviously not able to comment. That must be the judgment of the people concerned. It is quite a separate matter

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which has nothing to do with the problems with which Mr. Storker was concerned obviously in the investigations he was conducting in the province and I cannot comment at all on those matters affecting Manchester.

QUESTION

But you do acknowledge the amount of public suspicion here?

MR. KING

I have already made clear my absolute recognition of the importance of the enquiries being pursued with the utmost urgency, otherwise people are able to ask questions like you did and to spread rumour and innuendo that spring from them and the only answer to that is to get the truth and to get the facts out and that is what you are interested in and that is what I am interested in.

QUESTION

Do you expect that inquiry to be concluded in a matter of months?

MR. KING

I cannot answer that.

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