

E.R. 30/3

FM - Forum paper

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MUFAX ROOM
STORMONT HOUSE ANNEX

43/2

PC 78/2

- ① Sir Ewart 30/1/2
- ② Mr. Carr 7/2
- ③ PC 1/2



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NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND THE IRISH AMBASSADOR IN NIO LONDON ON 3 FEBRUARY 1984

The Secretary of State received Mr Noel Dorr, the Irish Ambassador, on 3 February. The call was at the Ambassador's request. Mr Lyon was present.

The Ambassador said that he was speaking on behalf of Mr Barry, the Irish Foreign Minister. They had had indications that the Secretary of State might be considering making a substantive speech putting forward new ideas at the inter-parliamentary union lunch which he was hosting on 8 February. Mr Barry had considerable reservations; the Irish Delegation would not be composed of people who might influence the Forum, and the timing of such a speech could seriously damage the Forum's work. In that context, the four party leaders in the Forum had met the previous day. They had agreed the skeleton of the Report. It would have three main sections. The first would describe the position of each of the parties in the North and the South. The second would outline in broad terms the principles and realities which needed to be taken into account, including the importance of identity, stability and security. The third section would include an admission that while the cause of Irish Nationalism required reunification, this was not the only approach. It would then proceed to an examination of three possible scenarios, purely for illustrative purposes, and deliberately keeping the options open. The key section of the report would be the second one setting out the principles, but he recognised that it would be important to strike the right tone in the third section. The Report was still expected at the end of February or in early March.

The Secretary of State said that he did not intend to say anything new or substantive at the IPU lunch. But he was concerned that Mr Hume might be generating a false sense of optimism. The Government wished to respond positively to the Report, but could only do so if the Report was phrased in a way that avoided

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a barren repetition of the nationalist line. If the three scenarios the Ambassador had referred to were unification, federalism and joint sovereignty, it would only be possible to discuss the third if it was first made clear that the first two were ruled out. There was considerable suspicion among Unionists of a slippery slope into unification. He had made clear in the House of Commons and on a number of other occasions, including the BBC radio programme on 31 January, that it would be necessary to set aside the question of the border for, in Mr Powell's phrase, the foreseeable future if progress was to be made. This would entail a willingness to amend articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. He recognised the difficulties such an amendment would involve, but if this could be achieved it would be possible to consider areas of joint responsibility (which phrase he preferred to joint sovereignty, whose definition was at best unclear) joint administration and perhaps some coming together of the law. In any event, it was important that the Forum Report should pave the way for further discussions. A hard-line Nationalist document would jeopardize this. Another possibility might be an interim Report setting out the principles which could be discussed, leaving the Forum in being. But he would not want this to be seen as an excuse for avoiding substantive discussions.

Handwritten notes:
+ referendums
gives authority

The Ambassador, concluding this part of the discussion, said that he understood the Report would refer to joint responsibility, and not joint sovereignty. He doubted if the Forum would refer specifically to amending articles 2 and 3: he hoped this would not put fruitful discussions in jeopardy. His own view was that if it were decided to amend articles 2 and 3, a referendum might not necessarily fail, but it would need very careful handling and to be seen as part of a package of measures. He would report their discussion to Mr Barry, whom he thought would wish to speak to the Secretary of State on the telephone in the next few days.

The Secretary of State referred to security issues. He had had a useful meeting with Mr Noonan, the Irish Minister of Justice, although the Minister had been rather nervous. He was broadly

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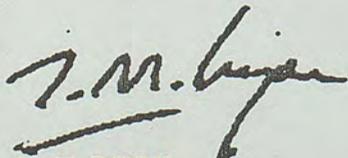
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content with the outcome. He hoped it would be possible to have a further meeting with Mr Noonan in due course. The Secretary of State's security advisers had been reviewing border security. It was likely that as a result he would decide in the next few weeks that quite a number of border crossings should be closed. This should not be seen as a reflection on security in the Republic, but rather as a necessary response to the particular circumstances of security in border areas in Northern Ireland. Crossings which were made from the South by terrorists were usually made by terrorist on the run from Northern Ireland. Closing border roads would make more difficult their return to the Republic after committing crimes in the North, and would provide a necessary measure of reassurance to the local community. The views of the local community would of course also be taken into account. If it was possible to provide a more settled security situation in Northern Ireland, this helped prospects for political developments. He would keep the Irish in touch with his intentions on border security measures.

The Ambassador said that Mr Noonan was understandably sensitive about proposals which appeared to cast aspersions on the operation of security in the Republic. He hoped any measures taken could be seen as improving security and not as a response to demands from Unionist politicians. He hoped too that the Secretary of State would take into account the sensitivities in the Republic and the views of people living along the border.

Concluding the discussion, the Secretary of State said that the Prime Minister had been very supportive in his handling of the Hennessy Report on the Maze escape, and in particular on his own position. The Prime Minister continued to take a close interest in the prospects for political developments in Northern Ireland and they worked closely and harmoniously on these matters.


J M LYON

Private Secretary

3 February 1984

Mr Boys Smith
Mr Reeve - ::
Mr Wood

cc PS/SofS (L&B) - M
PS/Mr Scott (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
Mr Brennan
Mr Bourn - M
Mr Angel

