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SEC 46/6
-7 JUN 1988
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Mr Spence
Sir Kenneth
has seen

cc PS/PUS (B)
Other members of AIGG
Mr Daniels
Mr Kirk
Mr J McConnell

Please MUFAX
to Mr Spence - M

① Mr Spence 14/6
② PA 5/1/88

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1747
06 JUN 1988
MUFAX ROOM
STORMONT HOUSE ANNEX

ANGLO-IRISH STEERING GROUP - HANDLING THE IRISH

As promised, I attach a paper on the above subject. It closely reflects points made in the discussion at the last meeting of Mr Burns's Political Development Group. It contains few surprises, though I have tried to bring it up to date in terms of what we have since learned about Irish grievances, and what we think we know about Mr Haughey's character and state of thinking on Anglo-Irish matters.

2. The issues addressed are, however, urgent. Two major encounters with the Irish are likely for this month: the Conference and, possibly also, a summit at Hanover. Meanwhile, the McGimpsey case starts on 14 June, with the possibility of, at any day thereafter, the Irish saying or doing something that will damage our interests or complicate further the handling of the Review. In the longer term the case may even produce a verdict which could provide Mr Haughey with an excuse, if he wants to take it, for dumping the Agreement.

3. The main problem now, I suggest, is to ensure that we do get our act together, and soon, for if the Hanover meeting degenerates in to the major encounter fought on the North German plan since 1945, I fear we may win the battle, but lose the war. The Group may wish to address two questions:

- a) Is the attached paper broadly on the right lines? If not, what should our approach at Ministerial, as well as official levels be? and

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b) What is the best way of convincing Ministers, including the Prime Minister? Stage 1, for instance, might be a revised and more sharply focused version of my paper, to serve as a covering submission/steering brief for the forthcoming meeting of the Conference; Stage 2 might be the advocacy of our approach in the briefing to be prepared for a/the summit. (This would fall, in the first instance, for the FCO to draft in consultation with the NIO. But some reinforcement of the message might be needed: the possibilities include supporting minutes to the Prime Minister from the two Secretaries of State; and/or the kind of Ministerial meeting floated in some recent correspondence.)

4. I should be happy to follow up with a revised draft (or drafts) taking account of points made in the discussion.

(Signed by P N Bell)

P N BELL

6 June 1988

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E.R.**HANDLING THE IRISH**The Problem

There is much to play for in Anglo-Irish relations over the coming months: the objectives for which we signed the Agreement remain intact; Irish support will materially assist our search for political progress in the North; the working of the Conference must be reviewed under Article 11 by the end of the year; there are a number of difficult problems on the horizon whose negotiation the Irish can, if they chose, make much easier for us. Yet, despite considerable recent successes, the events of the first three months of this year continue to cast their shadow; and our relationship remains under strain. The problem, therefore, is to determine how best now to get what we want from the Irish; and to restore Anglo-Irish relations to at least the healthier state they were in at the turn of the year.

The Current State of Play

2. In many respects, Anglo-Irish relations are in a surprisingly good state. The most recent meetings of the Conference have been constructive and forward looking while the likely agenda for the forthcoming meeting contains several items from which both sides ought to derive legitimate satisfaction: the publication, for example, of the Fair Employment White Paper; the securing of an EC contribution for the International Fund. Quiet progress also is now being made towards the establishment of an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Body. Also, following the recent meeting between the two Attorneys General, the impasse on extradition appears to have been overcome, although individual cases will continue to present problems.

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3. Unfortunately, neither the Taoiseach nor the Irish administration appear to see the situation quite so favourably. Mr Haughey's own views appear to be those expressed in his recent speeches in the USA, where the litany of Irish grievances was presented in an especially unhelpful way. The Taoiseach is (or was) inclined to see the events of earlier this year as a deliberate conspiracy against his country, and there is further evidence to suggest that his natural 'green' and emotional sides are now coming to the fore. Since his position in Dublin is, politically, exceptionally strong, this is potentially bad news for us. At the same time some senior Irish officials at least appear to believe that the Agreement is a good idea being blown by the 'insensitivity' of the UK Government in regard to Ireland.

4. This might matter less if we were not currently seeking major improvements in security cooperation. Or if we did not desire more enthusiastic endorsement for a range of our policies, notably on Fair Employment, both in Northern Ireland, and the US. We must also not forget that our efforts to enhance confidence in the administration of justice and the security forces depend crucially on Irish support at a time when the Gibraltar inquest, to say nothing of the construction that will be placed on whatever the Home Secretary decides in the matter of the Guildford and Woolwich bombers, will revive Irish suspicions. Equally, we are going to need a sympathetic approach from the Irish Government if damage from the McGimpsey case (opening next week), whether in terms of what the Irish say in court, or of the courts verdict, is to be kept to a minimum. Close mutual understanding with the Irish is also essential if our political development initiative is to make headway.

5. Fortunately, there is evidence that the Taoiseach has not yet determined his attitudes either to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, or to the Article 11 Review. The possibility thus remains of influencing his thinking, as it develops, on lines that tend to support our interests. But how? There seem basically three approaches, discussed in turn below.

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6. In order to get what we want from the Agreement, there is an argument for saying we ought to do more, both procedurally and in substance, to assuage current Irish dissatisfactions, otherwise they may conclude, in the words of a senior Irish official, just as that "Sunningdale was a good idea blown by the failure of a British Government; the Agreement is another one being similarly blown". In practice, this would mean (and the list is not exhaustive), that we are prepared demonstrably to treat the Irish genuinely as 'equal partners', and take them, perhaps at some risk, as far into our confidence as we possibly can. In particular, since this is the day-to-day touch stone of our commitment to the Agreement, we ought to exploit more fully the resources of the Secretariat; be prepared to acknowledge more fully the role of the Irish influence under the Agreement in bringing about the positive measures we are taking in Northern Ireland; going further than we are at the moment to meet Irish recommendations concerning appointments under Article 6, the Irish language, or West Belfast; and, perhaps most important, take more seriously Irish concerns about the security force harassment. We might also handle them more sensitively in areas where presentational concessions would really cost us very little - for example, giving an advance copy of the Fair Employment White Paper to the Secretariat as well as the DFA.

7. There is some way we could go down this road. Collectively, we may sometimes give, unintentionally, the impression that only security co-operation matters to us, and that we do not trust the Irish not to betray confidences. Unless we can convince the Irish that we do take them seriously, they are less likely to give for instance our fair employment proposals their blessing in Northern Ireland; help us negotiate successfully what ever difficulties emerge from the McGimpsey case or the Gibraltar inquest; let alone make it possible for them, in domestic Irish political terms, to meet us in the security

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co-operation field. However, current Irish discontents betray no cognition, for example, of the service we have performed in standing up to the unionists, or the political risks inherent in our fair employment legislation. On the other hand, the consequence of boosting in public the role of the Irish in the Conference and the Secretariat, and meeting their requests in contentious areas, irrespective of the real merits of their recommendations eg on appointments, would be some form of joint authority. Nor is there any final guarantee, that if we did do everything the Irish currently seek from us, they will be any more ready than at present to appreciate - or to meet - our legitimate requirements of them. Thus, while there is certainly some scope for the display of greater sensitivity, simply falling in with their wishes cannot be the whole of our strategy.

A "hard" approach

8. In fact, the Irish record leaves much to be desired: they have not for example yet delivered as much as they could in the security field; and their unilateral modification of the rules on extradition last year was not less offensive for being comprehensible in terms of Fianna Fail politics. Equally objectionable, and illustrative of Irish attitudes, was their reaction to the McAnespie shooting and, the way in which Mr Haughey chose to present his litany in the grievances in the USA. We must, therefore, keep up pressure on the Irish on matters of a special importance to us, as well as, when necessary, continuing to remind them that, for us, the Agreement is not a stepping stone on the road to some form of united Ireland.

9. Nevertheless, the "big stick" approach may now becoming subject to sharply diminishing returns. Infuriating though the Irish response may be in a number of areas, and excessive though their expectations are of the role of the Conference and Secretariat current Irish thinking, including that of the

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Taoiseach has been strongly coloured by earlier events this year. Moreover it reflects political realities in the Republic which would probably prevent more rapid movement on the more sensitive areas, say, of security cooperation or extradition - even if Fianna Fail and the Taoiseach were more emotionally wedded to the Agreement than they are. There is, therefore, a strong case now for holding that an over-emphatic approach, especially if concentrating exclusively on security, is likely to prove unsuccessful both in the narrow security area and in winning Irish support in other areas.

The best of both approaches

10. Both sides have particular interests of their own, not shared by the other. Nevertheless, the range of our common interests is considerable, and extend from (moving from our end of the spectrum) defeating the IRA; the fostering of political development in Northern Ireland; building confidence in the administration of justice and the security forces in Northern Ireland; to, towards the Irish end, promoting the welfare of Nationalists in the Province. The very fact that these objectives are intimately related and can scarcely be achieved independently of each other provides the key to an approach based on a recognition of common interest (without in any way ruling out hard, even robust talking when the need arises.).

11. Such an approach would have the following two main characteristics (relevant both to the handling of the agenda for the next Intergovernmental Conference as to any Summit in the margins of Hanover):

- (a) a requirement to give due weight to Irish sensitivities; what we know about the psychology and thinking of the Taoiseach; and political realities in the Republic. So that, as a general rule, whatever we seek must be presented in a way which goes with rather

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than against the grain of their political culture. (A corollary is that we must sometimes discount Irish reactions that strike us as hysterical, owing to the greater salience for Dublin of Anglo-Irish issues);

- (b) a recognition that while pressing for improved security cooperation remains our primary concern, success here is more likely if we demonstrate that we do recognise the wider dimensions of the Anglo-Irish process; and are also concerned about eg nationalists' welfare or confidence in administration in the security forces in Northern Ireland as they are. Fortunately, Ministers are now able to demonstrate that significant progress is being made not only in such important areas as Fair Employment, but also in securing of an EC contribution to the International Fund (for which the Irish perhaps deserve the lion's share of the credit); and in terms of wider Anglo-Irish relations, given the quiet progress now being made towards a possible Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Body. These successes can be paraded in addition to the kind of measures the Secretary of State cited in his speech in Oxford last year.

12. To sum up, we are more likely, therefore, to secure our particular interests by treating the relationship as one in which there is more to be gained by cooperation to our mutual advantage, than by "point scoring" of either government against the other. In this exercise, style is likely to be every bit as important as weight and force of argument.

Conclusions

13. Although Anglo-Irish relations remain under strain, the Taoiseach does not appear to have finally made up his mind on Anglo-Irish relations generally, or to the Anglo-Irish generally

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Agreement. It is important, therefore, that we ensure that our tactics are best judged to secure our objectives, while there is still chance of influencing Irish attitudes positively; and before the two major encounters of the coming weeks: the Intergovernmental Conference next week, and a possible summit at Hanover before the end of the month.

14. Tactics based either on conceding current Irish demands, or single mindedly focussing on our primary objectives are likely to be less successful than an approach which profits from the lessons of the first three months of this year. Most important, on our side, remains the need to give due weight to the Taoiseach's own sensitivities, and the political climate in Dublin; to avoid an exclusive concentration on cross-border security cooperation, which should be matched by a demonstration of what we have, and are continuing to do in areas to which the Irish for their part attach particularly high importance. In general, the Anglo-Irish process is more likely to deliver the kind of objectives for which we signed the Agreement if it is treated more as an exercise in cooperation, than confrontation. This approach applies equally to the handling of the specific agenda of the next conference, as to the more strategic issues likely to feature at the forthcoming summit.

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