

SECRET PERSONAL

Copy No 6 of 10

PS/PUS (L&B)

cc PS/SofS (L&B)
PS/Mr Scott (L)
Mr Bloomfield
Mr A W Stephens O/R
Mr Brennan
Mr Chesterton
Mr Bell

COURTESY VISIT BY THE IRISH AMBASSADOR ON 17 OCTOBER 1985

The Irish Ambassador, Noel Dorr, called on the Secretary of State yesterday. PUS and I were present during the discussion, which was almost exclusively about the Anglo-Irish talks.

2. The Secretary of State said that the new Anglo-Irish structures, if agreed, could begin with a "big bang" or they could start on a slow but sure basis. The former approach was dangerous in that the nationalist community would not be impressed while the unionists would be provoked. This was why he did not favour the continuous presence in Belfast of an Irish element in the Secretariat from the outset. Such a presence would create a target for those who wished to wreck the Agreement; and given that non-elected representatives would play a full part in the work of the Committee, the need for a high powered Secretariat, permanently in place, was much reduced. The Secretary of State referred Mr Dorr to the Prime Minister's letter to the Taoiseach of 4 October in which she said of the Secretariat "... I think we shall have to ask you to keep the Irish component as small as possible, and perhaps not leave it continuously in Belfast, at any rate until the new arrangements have settled down".

3. Mr Dorr agreed that any Agreement should not be heralded as a dramatic breakthrough. As for membership of the Committee, there were some ambiguities, but it was clear that it could meet at different levels with appropriate official representation. The Secretariat would not take decisions or even resolve differences;

SECRET PERSONAL

SECRET PERSONAL

rather it would dissolve differences, by pinpointing those areas where substantive decisions were required of the Committee and by ensuring that time was not wasted on matters where there was no real issue for decision. He did not accept that the question of a continuous Irish presence should be deferred at the start; any aspect of the Agreement that was not implemented immediately would become a test of strength between proponents and opponents of the Agreement, making it progressively more difficult to introduce.

4. PUS said that unionist opinion within Northern Ireland might not find it too hard to accept periodic Ministerial meetings supported by staff; this would in effect be putting what already happened on to a formal footing. However the permanent presence of Irish officials would be a novelty that would be much more difficult to accept. Mr Dorr said that the novelty point was precisely why this was so important to the Irish. If we were merely formalising what already existed, it would be difficult to persuade the minority that anything significant had been achieved. The Secretary of State said that the agenda for the meetings would in themselves constitute sufficient novelty.

5. The Secretary of State wondered what there would be for Irish civil servants to do at the outset. They would not be permitted to become some form of complaints bureau. Mr Dorr accepted that the Secretariat could not become involved in the process of investigation into incidents involving the security forces and nor could it become a focus of direct access for the minority community. He reiterated that there would be serious problems for the Irish if they did not have some continuous presence from the outset and stressed that they had readily agreed to appropriate limitations on the role of the Secretariat being made explicit in the Agreement. The Secretary of State said that he regarded the Prime Minister's letter as the bottom line on the Secretariat. It would be a grave mistake to have it continuously in Belfast from the outset; however the position could be reviewed once the dust had settled.

6. The Secretary of State emphasised that it would be very damaging if a Minister for Northern Ireland were appointed by the Republic.

7. Mr Dorr said that the Irish were still very concerned about timing, even though a date had been agreed; the dangers of serious

SECRET ²⁻⁴ **PERSONAL**

SECRET PERSONAL

leaks would increase as the weeks went by. The Secretary of State explained the difficulties caused by the Parliamentary timetable, the Paisley/Molyneaux meeting with the Prime Minister, Remembrance Day, the Prime Minister's foreign visits etc. He, too, would have liked an earlier signature date.

8. The Secretary of State said that an additional factor which would worry unionists was the insecurity of the present government in the Republic and the extreme comments made recently by Mr Haughey. Mr Dorr said that the present government had two years of its term left, was unlikely to fall in that period and that opinion polls could shift in that period away from Mr Haughey towards the coalition. But it was also worth bearing in mind that Mr Haughey had been a strong Minister of Justice, taking a hard line against terrorism and that as Taoiseach he had fostered a new approach on the "totality of relationships between these islands". In government he might not be inclined to rock the boat. Moreover other Fianna Fail politicians were anxious that Mr Haughey should not take too crusading a line on the north. As for the future, it would be of great significance that a formal international treaty had been entered into on this subject and registered for the first time; as a result successor governments would think very carefully before seeking modifications which might prove unacceptable to one part of the community in Northern Ireland.

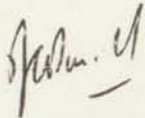
9. Turning to cross border security, the Secretary of State said that he had not been encouraged by measures proposed by the Irish.

Mr Dorr said that he was genuinely disturbed to hear this. He pointed out that the Ministry of Justice was opposed to the Task Force concept (not just in border areas) preferring to concentrate on getting the deployment of resources right and on maximising organisational efficiency. Nevertheless if the creation of a border Task Force was seen as having great

SECRET PERSONAL

symbolic importance, then this could be done. In any event, considerable resources were being directed into border policing.

10. Mr Dorr said that mixed courts remained a bone of contention. It was not that the Irish were suggesting that the court system or the judiciary were unfair in their treatment of the minority; rather it was a question of confidence. In response to doubts expressed by the Secretary of State about the Taoiseach's real commitment to mixed courts, Mr Dorr said that it was a pity that leaks had created an issue out of this, which made it difficult for both sides in the talks. The Secretary of State noted that the possibility of three judge courts and a better balance on the bench had also been discussed. He reiterated the point which he had made in Dublin that whatever undertakings there might be to discuss the issue, mixed courts were not a realistic prospect in the foreseeable future; and the very mention of them in the Agreement would make it much more difficult to sell.



J A DANIELL
Private Secretary
18 October 1985