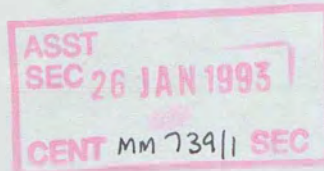


MSW/12/93/SH

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FROM: M J WILLIAMS
US(POL)



25 January 1993

1. cc *Mr Hanley*
Mr Mc Connell
Mr Mc Cusker
Mr McNeill
Mr Quinn
2. Talks
—

Mr Ho
Ms Murphy

cc PS/Mr Mates (L&B) - B
PS/Mr Hanley (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Ledlie - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr D J R Hill - B
Mr Cooke - B
Mr Dodds - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Brooker - B
Mr Rickard - B
Ms Lodge - B
Mr Archer, RID - B
HMA, Dublin - B
Mr Sibson, Cab Office

PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B

INFORMATION MEETING WITH MR SPRING, DUBLIN 22 JANUARY 1993

Summary

1. The Secretary of State had 45 minutes of tete-a-tete with the Irish Foreign Minister and Tanaiste, Mr Dick Spring (recorded separately). Followed by one and a quarter hours of plenary discussion and then lunch at the Irish Foreign Ministry in Dublin on 22 January 1993. Also present were, on the British side, Mr Fell, Mr Thomas, the Ambassador, and I; and on the Irish side, Mr Noel Dorr, Mr Sean O hUiginn, Mr Declan O'Donovan and Mr David Donoghue.
2. The Secretary of State said he wanted to establish a good and frank working relationship with Mr Spring, and stressed his wish to resume the Talks. He called on Mr Spring to do what he could to persuade both the Unionists and the SDLP to rejoin the Talks and to

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do so in a constructive spirit. Mr Spring responded cautiously on the substance, but positively in his approach. He seemed willing to meet the Unionists in order to reassure them, but gave no commitment over exactly what he might say to them. He would look at Articles 2 and 3, but said it was difficult for a new government to move on them at once.

3. When the Secretary of State mentioned the importance of co-operation over security, Mr Spring said he had no equivocation on security. The Secretary of State invited him to say that the proposed "peace envoy" was not a good idea, but Mr Spring said he would keep an open mind. When the Secretary of State raised extradition, Mr Spring said he was very conscious of the issue and recognised the common interest between Britain and Ireland.

4. Both sides welcomed the Talks as cordial and useful. They established a basis of understanding and the prospect of co-operation in the future.

Detail

5. Mr Spring opened the plenary talks at 11.45 by welcoming the British team, and saying that all on the Irish side including the Taoiseach accorded high priority to Northern Ireland. He was confident that good working relationships could be established. The Secretary of State responded by appreciating the welcome. He thought the two sides shared a common objective and approach, and he planned to be completely open with the Irish over objectives and means. He believed success was realisable, but would not assess the chances.

6. At the invitation of Mr Spring, the Secretary of State described the attitudes of Northern Ireland parties. All had signed the 16 November statement, but there had been some going off the boil since then. The Unionists were starting to be influenced by the May

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elections, and the Alliance were being strongly influenced by them. The UUs wanted talks but were being very cautious; Molyneaux would take no risks before 19 May. The alliance were ready for talks at any time. The SDLP would also certainly take part.

7. The Secretary of State went on that the UUs and the Alliance felt that they had had to make all the concessions, and there had been no movement in return, either from the SDLP or from the Irish Government over Articles 2 and 3. They were not far from despair over the prospects of resumption of talks. Molyneaux had said privately that the Talks were finished, but the Secretary of State was not sure that was his real view, and Maginnis had said in Parliament the previous day that the Talks were exhausted. The Protestant paramilitaries were starting to step up their activities.

8. In order to achieve the common objective of progress on the Talks, the Secretary of State said something was needed to counter the Unionists' attitude. He suggested that Mr Spring might invite Molyneaux for talks; Molyneaux might prefer to be represented by Maginnis. The DUs were unlikely to respond positively to an invitation; Robinson had been disappointing. Mr Fell noted that Robinson had failed to deliver Paisley, but felt that if the UUs had talks with the Irish Government the DUs might be forced to reconsider. The Secretary of State commented also that unless the Irish Government took a forward attitude on Articles 2 and 3 it would be hard to make progress.

9. In reply Mr Spring said that the new Government's programme on Northern Ireland was open and broad in its approach, and he thought the Unionists should read it in that spirit. He would try to convince them that there was an open door, and he was willing to see them, perhaps in a very short time; he asked the Secretary of State to help persuade them to do so. The paramilitaries were of very great concern to the Irish Government. Mr O hUiginn felt that Maginnis had little substance or credibility so he thought it better

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Molyneaux would talk to Mr Spring; Mr Thomas noted that in the Talks Molyneaux had stood by his deputies, but agreed that probably Maginnis on his own should not see Mr Spring on behalf of the Unionists.

10. Mr Spring said he intended to look at Articles 2 and 3 within the constitutional framework, and was willing to explore this in meetings with the Unionists. It was very difficult for a new Government to move overnight, and he would raise other constitutional difficulties with them. The Secretary of State said he recognised the Irish problem over constitutional balance. His Coleraine speech - which said nothing new - had confirmed he would never impede those working for a united Ireland. However he was very worried at the Unionist reaction to the speech, although this had been manufactured; the view had now taken root, even amongst the Alliance, that his job was like that of Mr Patten in Hong Kong. On the other hand, when his speech at the Rotary Club had mentioned Articles 2 and 3 Mr McNamara had said this had revealed his true colours. Mr Spring agreed that people would always read from a speech whatever most concerned them, and this confirmed the importance of the two governments keeping in touch.

11. Mr Spring said that he thought the Talks had in fact achieved a great deal of progress, although this was not yet commonly recognised. Their existing basis should be maintained. Clarity was needed on what the two Governments could achieve, and perhaps the liaison group should look at this. Mr Thomas commented that the liaison group was best suited to dealing with particular tasks, and cautioned against the governments moving too far on issues which needed the parties' agreement. Mr O hUigin suggested that the matter should be discussed at the IGC. He thought the liaison group could keep note of contacts with the parties, and explore thinking on the issue of constitutional balance, where the key discussions would be at political level. The Secretary of State said this was a valuable suggestion.

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12. Mr Spring asked about the significance of the local elections. The Secretary of State thought it important to follow up on the 16 November statement, in accordance with the 26 March 1991 procedures. He hoped that Sir Ninian Stephen would agree to return. It would not be possible to tackle all issues under Strand 4, and he would like to take up informal consultations. On this basis he saw no need to refer to the Elections; if the parties did so, discussions could continue on Strand 3. He did not want the process to appear dead in the water. Mr Spring felt that if the Talks were thought unlikely to be successful the parties would not want to be involved, but if success was thought possible the Elections would not pose any problem.

13. The Secretary of State noted that Strand 1 had reached an astonishing degree of agreement, but Hume's refusal to move from his opening position had been criticised within the SDLP and had contributed to the Unionists' irritation. Mr Thomas said that the principal problem was over the idea of external commissioners; the Unionists had been willing to negotiate on the idea of two tiers. Mr O hUiginn said that the powers of the panel had never been defined. Hume's concerns were not formalistic but practical and shared by others in the SDLP; there was the possibility of [redacted] like Denny Vitty getting onto the panel. The Secretary of State said that Hume had told him privately, as he had said in the Talks, that he would never agree to any form of elected executive; if he stuck to this line there would never be any progress.

14. When Mr Spring asked what could be done about the road block, the Secretary of State said the Irish government were in the best position to sound out Hume, whom the Unionists saw as intransigent and immovable. Mr Dorr recalled that nothing was agreed until all was agreed, which made people reluctant to move on individual points, rather than on the final package. The Secretary of State pointed out that there must be some indication of willingness to

*supports case for early
HSA.*

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...ve, and Mr Spring noted that there was urgency because the situation was not normal. Mr Fell commented that the trade-offs would not necessarily come within single strands, but between them.

15. Mr Thomas noted that HMG was not really involved in the North-South agenda, where much was to be done if the Irish government was in touch with the Unionists, for whom this was central to the process of reassurance. Mr O'Donovan said that the SDLP's fears were not only of Unionist domination in Strand 1, but also of Unionists' attitudes on North-South questions; the Unionists had started to consider these matters but needed to be pressed. The Secretary of State responded that he was happy to encourage them, but the difficulty was they saw this as a means to the Irish objective of a united Ireland; he thought a gradualist approach by the Irish government, area by area, would reassure the Unionists, but Mr O hUiginn thought the Nationalists would fear that if the Assembly operated by consensus the Unionists would block any further steps after the initial one.

16. The Ambassador noted that the Unionists were worried about the North-South institutions having executive powers. Mr Dorr said that an agreement which included a change of Articles 2 and 3 should remove the Unionists' fear of North-South institutions. A significant institution was needed to satisfy the SDLP without whose support the necessary referendum would not get through. The Secretary of State said that the Irish government might lodge with the Unionists the reassuring news that real consequences would follow from their agreeing to North-South institutions. Mr O'Donovan said that in order for a referendum to be passed there must be a guarantee that the North-South institution would not be blocked by Paisley, in return for having given up Articles 2 and 3.

17. The Ambassador said that the ability of HMG to guarantee the performance of the Unionists in the Assembly or the North-South institution should not be exaggerated. The Secretary of State said that Paisley should not be elevated to the status of an ogre; if

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The UUs supported a deal and the DUs were caned in the local elections it might be possible to proceed without the DUP. Mr Dorr said the Ambassador's point underlined the need for constitutional balance, not trying to balance constitutional movement with institutional changes. The Secretary of State said there was little further on this that HMG could do. He could not try to join the persuaders for constitutional change; he was not now persuading the one side to stay in the UK, and could not start persuading the other to leave. Mr O'Donovan and Mr O hUiginn pressed the point, but the Secretary of State said he was pessimistic about the chances of HMG going any further without provoking the Protestant paramilitaries.

18. The Secretary of State said he welcomed the present good co-operation over security, and referred to the recent Mullan Bridge incident and the arrest of Hennessy. He hoped that the new Irish government would understand and emphasise the importance of this in the fight against terrorism. Mr Spring said he had no equivocation on security matters; he had consistently spoken out against terrorism. There needed to be an even-handed approach against violence. The Secretary of State said he hoped Mr Spring would speak out openly in this sense; the border was PIRA's biggest resource.

19. Regarding President Clinton's idea of a peace envoy, the Secretary of State said he had commented that the most important thing was that the Talks should succeed; he hoped that Mr Spring would say that the peace envoy was not a good idea. Mr Spring responded that he would keep an open mind; the idea needed to be developed, and was being developed.

20. The Secretary of State remarked on the importance of extradition; there was a common interest in making it succeed. Britain's legislation on speciality was going through. Mr Spring recalled that he had been involved in extradition issues since the McGlinchy case. Mistakes had been made on both sides, but he agreed

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absolutely on the common interest. It was an ongoing matter which would receive attention at the highest level.

21. The Secretary of State referred to the SDLP proposals on security raised at the end of the Talks; the issue needed exploring, but it could wreck the nation if it was insisted on from the outset. Mr O hUiginn said that the problem was a real one, but the Secretary of State said the SDLP's prescription was not correct.

22. The Secretary of State said he recognised that everything possible should be done to promote confidence, and drew attention to the considerable package of measures recently introduced.

23. Concluding, the two sides agreed that the next IGC should be on 3 February, probably in London. The Secretary of State said that there would have to be a gap (although he personally thought this theology was ridiculous) to enable the Talks to proceed, perhaps after two IGCs. He had thought last autumn that a few weeks might have produced a result, and hoped that no more would be needed now. Mr Spring said the momentum had to be maintained, and there was not likely to be a problem over a gap.

[signed MJW]

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