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FROM: C G MACCABE
 POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
 4 August 1993

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
- PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Ledlie - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Steele - B
- Mr Cooke - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Rickard - B
- Mr Quinn - B
- Mrs Collins - B
- Mr Caine - B

UNDER/ 1144/8
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 - 5 AUG 1993
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Mrs Kenny

PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L) - B

CONVERSATION WITH KEN MAGINNIS MP ON 3 AUGUST

I lunched with Ken Maginnis in Dungannon yesterday, picking up an engagement arranged some time ago. Conversations with Mr Maginnis tend to be desultory and this one was no exception, so this note records only those aspects of it that are of general interest.

Ministerial meetings

2. Mr Maginnis said he was reasonably satisfied with his meeting with the Secretary of State on security on 22 July. Unfortunately, David Trimble had been at his most objectionable (which, as Maginnis put it, was saying something) and Maginnis feared that his nit-picking performance had irritated the Secretary of State and Sir John Wheeler. Maginnis regretted this and hoped it would not affect Ministers' resolve to adopt the measures he and his colleague had advocated. He was particularly worried about morale in the RIR and had recently discussed the matter with the Chief of Staff, and was due to see Commander RIR next week. As regards Maginnis' meeting with Michael Ancram on 28 July, on reflection he thought he had said too much about economic matters and not enough about politics. Nevertheless, it had been a useful exchange and taken in the round he was satisfied with the outcome.

Political Development

3. Mr Maginnis confirmed that the UUP were very pleased with themselves at present and felt that they were "playing a blinder" from a position of strength. He recalled a conversation we had some months ago when he had told me he believed a NI Select Committee was on its way, but that its introduction should be delayed until the Talks process had come to a natural end, to give the process every chance of success. He said this point had now been reached and that he expected the announcement of a Select Committee shortly. Not for the only time during the conversation, my response was to say he must know something I didn't.

4. I asked about the various media interviews with Jim Molyneux during the last few days when he was variously reported to have said that a devolved administration would be introduced in Northern Ireland within two years; and that the UUP could live with the A-I Agreement as it withered and died. On the first point, Mr Maginnis said he had told Molyneux this was a misjudgement: whilst a devolved administration was naturally desirable to an avowed devolutionist like himself, it was not a top priority and realistically might take five or ten years to establish. On the second point, he referred to comments by Jim Nicholson in that morning's News Letter "correcting" the impression that the UUP could live with the Agreement. It may well be an irrelevance that would wither and die, but while it lived, the UUP would oppose it root and branch.

5. Mr Maginnis said he was convinced the way forward was a combination of improvements at Westminster for the governance of Northern Ireland, together with enhanced powers for District Councils. He brushed aside my objections to this strategy - which were principally that it ignored the Nationalist agenda and, therefore, that the SDLP and the Irish would not wear it - asserting that they would if they were tested. John Hume was a lost cause, but thankfully, Maginnis argued, his days were numbered. Seamus Mallon would also play hard to get, but in Maginnis' opinion, neither of these men represented the authentic views of moderate grassroots Nationalism. He knew plenty of members of the SDLP who

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would welcome enhanced powers for District Councils, and would work enthusiastically. They included Eddie McGrady, Mark Durkan and Vincent Currie, Chairman of Dungannon Council last year. I disagreed with this and said that even if he was right about Hume and Mallon - and I thought he was wrong - the collective reaction of the SDLP as a Party, and the individual reaction of the vast majority of those who constituted it, was certain to be very negative to the sort of internal/integrationist arrangements he envisaged. And I was sure the Irish would also be hostile. Maginnis said I might well be right regarding the Irish, but what could anyone expect with a "Republican" like Spring in charge of external affairs? HMG needed to stand up to them and if they did they might just find that the Irish were paper tigers. As his personal contribution to this desirable démarche, Maginnis asked if I could arrange for him to meet Martin Williams so that he could "put him right about O hUiginn, O'Donovan and the rest of them down there". I said I was sure Mr Williams would be happy to have a chat with him and would follow this up. Maginnis added that Chris McGimpsey had met Martin Mansergh recently to impart some home truths but it was an unequal match and Mansergh had run rings round him. Maginnis was now eager to join the fray.

6. I told Mr Maginnis that Michael Ancram would shortly be engaging in a further round of talks and that the Party Leaders were at the top of his list. The meetings would provide an opportunity for some straight talking and I hoped it would not be missed. I suggested that if what Maginnis had told me was now UUP policy then Mr Molyneaux should make this clear to Michael Ancram. Maginnis said this was good advice and promised to pass it on to Molyneaux. He repeated that the UUP were eager to make progress and that this would only be achieved by the kind of gradualist approach they had been advocating for a long time.

Political movement

7. Mr Maginnis introduced this topic by asking me if I knew that "the NIO's peace proposals had been rejected by the Provisional Army Council on a split vote, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]". I said I knew nothing of the

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part; there were no negotiations with Sinn Fein or PIRA. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Maginnis said his information came from an impeccable source and that those involved on HMG's side were misguided in the extreme. Talk of a response to a ceasefire, whether a short or long one, only encouraged the terrorists. Whatever the PIRA "doves" might say, experience had shown that when the security forces' guard was dropped PIRA took the opportunity to re-equip and re-group. I was obliged to contradict Mr Maginnis again, recalling that when I was closer to the security side of the Office than I was now, during Christmas ceasefires all terrorist activity, offensive and "defensive", had stopped. Maginnis' predictable response was that this just showed how little the NIO knew about counter-terrorism.

Comment

8. Although I did not get as much out of this meeting as I had hoped to it did give an interesting insight into the current attitude of the UUP, albeit refracted through the medium of Ken Maginnis. Throughout the conversation I tried to shake Maginnis' belief that the SDLP would somehow fall into line with UUP thinking; and if they failed to, that they, and the Irish, could be disregarded. Undoubtedly this lack of realism has a lot to do with the UUP's feeling that they are very close to HMG at present, and to the Prime Minister in particular. Their ideas, as recommended by Maginnis, largely ignore the Nationalist requirement of parity of esteem and, as Eddie McGrady put it recently, the need to convince Nationalists that they are no longer trapped in an alien land. Maginnis dismisses all this as Humean hyperbole and seems to think that the "ordinary decent Nationalist" will settle for much less than his political leaders. I am afraid he will be proved wrong.

9. Finally, I think Mr Maginnis' remarks about political movement were in the nature of a fishing expedition.

[signed]

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