

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2  
DUBLIN 2

Clen

For 519284 re

under 26 July  
Rm 2 10/76

Secret

2 June 1977

Dear Dermot

I enclose for your information draft minutes of a 8-6-77 recent meeting between the Minister and the Northern Ireland Secretary of State. The draft has not yet been cleared by the Minister.

Yours sincerely

Sean Wynn



3/6  
Taoiseach  
you may wish to  
see please  
4/6

Mr. Dermot Nally  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of the Taoiseach  
Government Buildings  
Dublin 2

P.S. A copy has, of course, gone to H/Justice

DRAFTMeeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs  
and the Secretary of State for Northern IrelandLondon, 26th May 1977Irish side:

Dr. Garret FitzGerald, T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs  
His Excellency Mr. P.J.G. Keating, Ambassador, London  
Mr. Seán Donlon, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs  
Mr. John Campbell, Minister Plenipotentiary, Embassy, London.

British side:

The Rt. Hon. Roy Mason, M.P., Secretary of State for Northern  
Ireland  
Mr. Brian Cubbon, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, NIO  
Mr. Douglas Janes, Deputy Secretary, NIO  
His Excellency Mr. Robert Haydon, British Embassy, Dublin  
Mr. Philip Mallet, Head, Republic of Ireland Department, FCO  
Mr. R. Ramsay, Private Secretary to the Secretary of State.

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The meeting began at 9.15 a.m. and concluded at 10.20 a.m.

1. The Minister congratulated the Secretary of State on his skilful handling of the recent strike. There was wide admiration in Ireland of the way in which the situation had been dealt with.

The Secretary of State said that the situation had been trickier than many reports had implied. Key problems had been the pressures exerted on bus services, oil tanker services, and, of course, at Ballylumford where adequate power resources had been maintained throughout. A breakdown in any one of these would have made matters very difficult to handle. The RUC performance had been superb and

this had got across to the population at large. There had been practically no need to make use of the Army. The incident of Mr. Paisley's arrest had been carefully handled in public relations terms by the police. He realised that there had been concern about possible damaging reactions and Bill Craig had been particularly worried. But they had read the situation rightly. One thing which had come out clearly from the strike was the very strong feeling in the Province about security. There were pressures that more should be done and be seen to be done quickly and he intended within the next two to three weeks to make a statement about measures designed to intensify security arrangements. Some of these had already emerged publicly through his talks with party leaders this week. The statistics in fact showed that incidents of violence over the first four months of this year were markedly reduced in comparison with the same period last year. The death and injury rates were both down by 50% and bombing rates by 40%. But public opinion was less impressed by statistics than, in particular, the murder or injuries inflicted upon a number of individual prominent citizens.

2. The Secretary of State outlined a number of areas in which security provisions would be intensified. He proposed to increase the RUC establishment. There would also be new weapons, vehicles and improved armoured protection for patrol vehicles. The RUC Reserves would be given "more interesting work" including participation in new divisional mobile patrols. They would, of course, remain under RUC control in all instances.

He wanted to see UDR strength increased. The force at present totalled some 7,500. He proposed to increase the UDR "comrades" - full-time UDR members - from the present level of 1,600 to 1,800 and this number might be further enlarged.

He also proposed to add another resident battalion to the present Army resident strength, allowing some phasing-off of four-month rotation contingents. Overall Army strength would be kept at the present 14,000 level. The Spearhead battalion would probably be withdrawn when the new measures were announced.

He would not be talking in terms of specific increases in SAS numbers but rather in terms of the intensifying of SAS-type activities in the Province as a whole. He was putting in hands a more intensive

study of cross-border security problems including the matter of infiltration of groups in the south Derry, Tyrone and Antrim areas. It would be useful to discuss this with us when the study was completed.

The recent comparative lull in IRA activity was due to a number of set-backs they had experienced including the failure of the Portlaoise hunger-strike and arrests of individual leaders. The strike had however given them a breathing-space to regroup and re-equip. A recrudescence of IRA activity in the coming months was not unlikely.

3. The Minister said that the Secretary of State's confirmation that Army strength would be maintained at present levels was important and had proved its value in countering talk of withdrawal. Similarly, the intended increase in RUC strength would be useful. He noted what Mr. Mason had said about the RUC Reserves. He was glad to have confirmation that any additional activities on their part would remain under RUC control.

Sensitive and difficult problems still remained with regard to the UDR and we were concerned about continuing convictions of UDR members for serious misbehaviour. Already this year there had been some eight convictions in the courts for offences of serious violence and the expression of judicial disquiet with present screening methods. It was also a source of concern that there now appeared to be very few British officers remaining in the UDR.

4. The Secretary of State said that the UDR remained of course under G.O.C. control. They had in general behaved well during the strike. Their call-up had allowed three Army battalions to be released to back the RUC. Only a handful of UDR members had showed "qualms" about their call-up. They had all turned out and performed their duties satisfactorily. The UDR was now being increasingly used for check-point duties and he mentioned that the Aughnacloy check-point was now manned by the UDR. He appreciated the problem had existed but screening was now very careful and thorough. He would let us have a list of UDR convictions so that we would know the relatively small numbers involved. It was a declining problem. The Minister said that it was regrettable that there had been insufficient public recognition of the statistical evidence of the

recent decline in incidents of violence. The dominance of the security issue ignored the hard evidence of improvement in situation. The Secretary of State emphasised that his statements on security issues would be very careful to reject any implication that the overall strategy on security matters was being altered. It was a question of intensification of existing measures.

The Minister remarked that it was important to keep a correct balance in statements on the security picture the essential ingredients of which were the Army and the RUC. On the latter, the Secretary of State remarked that Mr. Fitt's comments after the strike had been helpful and any further such comments from the SDLP side recognising the role which the RUC had played would obviously be valuable.

5. The Minister said that he understood this but it remained a difficult issue. There were still some areas outside Belfast, e.g. Dungannon, where the SDLP saw reasons for concern at the RUC's performance. He hoped that the RUC presence could be strengthened in border areas including South Armagh. Recent evidence from many sources indicated that the efforts on our side of the border had been extremely effective and were probably the major contributing factor in the improved situation in, for example, South Armagh. This evidence came not only from our own people but from sources in the North in both the minority and the majority communities. In fact, the regular British returns of incidents originating in the Republic indicated only ten such incidents so far this year though the real figure was undoubtedly a little higher. Garda/RUC co-operation was obviously working very well and the border situation was better than it had ever been. He hoped the cross-border aspect would not be used to divert attention from the real problems that existed elsewhere. The Secretary of State said that there was no question of passing the buck. Co-operation was obviously working well. It was a matter simply of looking to see if anything more needed to be done.

6. The Secretary of State also mentioned that the Queen's visit to Northern Ireland would proceed on the dates envisaged, 10th-11th August. In response to the Minister's expression of concern at this, given the period in question, the Secretary of State said that they were confident that problems would be avoided. The visit would not involve "conflict areas".

7. Turning to political developments, the Secretary of State said that Paisley was obviously not by any means off the scene but the fact that the DUP had put forward a greatly increased number of candidates in the recent local elections was obviously an important factor in its relatively successful performance. The DUP was, however, only the fourth of the main four parties in the North. It was still unclear what opportunities there were for political movement. He had no hard and fast ideas at this stage. He was holding talks this week with leaders of the main parties. After that it was intended that there should be private bilateral talks between his officials and individual party leaders. It was a matter of exploring the ground and the talks with the officials would be helpful in getting behind the party leaders to tease out the various strands of opinion within the parties. This would have particular interest in so far as West and the OUP were concerned. He was still very doubtful about any possibility of movement without some further recognition on the part of the SDLP of the role of the RUC. Fitt this week had given him some indication of back-tracking from his remarks immediately after the strike. The Minister confirmed that Fitt's remarks had not met with agreement from all his colleagues.

8. The Minister said that it was disappointing that West and Molyneaux were continuing to be so negative. Molyneaux' recent statement about the SDLP, in which he had equated the role of the Civil Rights Movement with that of the para-militaries, had been greatly resented by the SDLP. It led to the feeling that there was little point in trying to talk if this was the attitude on the Unionist side. The SDLP was, however, generally in good shape and the problems in the latter part of last year had been got over for the moment. In the aftermath of the strike and prior to the elections there had been some hopeful signs that political movement might be possible. He wondered how the Secretary of State viewed this at present.

The Secretary of State recalled the history of the Molyneaux proposal for an upper tier, a proposal on which he had been pushed by Powell. West had squashed this and made it clear that he regarded Molyneaux' action as a stupid mistake. The latest OUP manifesto had referred to the possibility of two or three councils. Ardill and Smyth have shown signs of moving along a more hopeful path and the

talks over the next few weeks might be helpful in getting through to them behind West.

The Minister remarked and the Secretary of State agreed that the idea of a number of councils was a clear non-starter and that the most promising possibility was likely to be that of establishing one council. The Secretary of State said that he would continue to make it clear that the basic objective was that of devolved executive government which would be widely acceptable within both sections of the community, be based on power-sharing and have genuine responsibility and functions. It was a matter of seeing whether a tier could be established between the local councils and Westminster. He agreed with the Minister that this might be a two-stage matter with a council without significant executive functions at first but to which executive powers could be devolved. There was already practical experience of partnership control in, for example, the Derry Council and in the Belfast City Council. The Minister raised the question of whether a council might handle some of the preparatory work on Northern Ireland business at Westminster. The Secretary of State said that this was a possibility. There was a Northern Ireland Committee at Westminster and some of its functions could be dealt with in Northern Ireland itself. But it was important that any interim arrangement that emerged should not divert efforts from the ultimate goal of devolved government on a power-sharing basis. He had no definite ideas for the moment and he wanted to see first what would emerge from the discussions that would go on over the next few weeks. This consultative procedure would hardly allow conclusions to be drawn before the general election in the Republic.

The Minister remarked that Northern Ireland was not likely to be a significant specific issue in the election in the Republic. The Government did not intend to make it so and the Opposition was unlikely to do so either.

9. The Minister raised the question of cross-border economic studies. The Communications and Fisheries Studies were under way but talks on other studies seemed to have become bogged down at official level. In particular he was anxious to see movement on the studies proposed for the Erne and Newry/Dundalk areas. These studies should be assessed not solely in terms of the economic criteria but in the wider political perspective and it was an important fact that both were receiving

interest and support from local councils North and South. A political input was needed to see that work was advanced particularly on the two additional studies he had mentioned.

The Secretary of State agreed and promised to look into the matter from his side. He thought in this general connection that recent meetings between some of his junior Ministers and Ministers in Dublin were encouraging.

10. The Minister referred briefly to the non-use of the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act and the adapted section 9 of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act. Given the recent prosecution statements in an Old Bailey case and police statements about "most wanted" persons taking refuge in the Republic, it was surprising that no evidence had yet been submitted which would allow the extra-territorial procedures to be tested. The Secretary of State said that they were conscious of the legislation - it was a matter of getting enough evidence to put it to use.

11. A brief statement for the press (copy attached) was agreed at the conclusion of the meeting.

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c.c. PSM  
PSS  
Mr. J.H.F. Campbell, London  
Mr. Ó hUiginn  
Mr. Swift  
Mr. M.J. Donnelly (D/Justice)  
Mr. D. Nally (D/Taoiseach)