

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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AMBASÁID NA hÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

4 February 1983

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Dear Martin

I had lunch earlier this week with Harold McCusker MP in the course of which he made a number of points which may be of interest. He had just returned from a visit to Israel which he laughingly admitted was largely a holiday but during which he called on the Israeli equivalent of the Institute for Strategic Studies. He has since his return used material given to him there to stir up comment in the Newsletter and elsewhere on alleged PLO/IRA links and has generally sought to give the impression of having been on a heavy fact-finding trip. He said that his contacts expressed themselves in critical terms regarding Irish Middle-East policy, which they attributed, surely playing to their audience, to the State's unreformed Catholic ethos. On a practical level he said that he was enormously impressed by their information retrieval system which, as far as Ireland was concerned, was extremely comprehensive.

As regards the situation within Northern Ireland, he shared the general view that the Assembly would continue at least until the next British general election. He said that the problem for the OUP continued to be how to avoid being outflanked by Paisley. He expected the DUP to maintain their present profile of high responsibility for the immediate future, thus pressurising the OUP into a more active role within the Assembly and its committees than at least some in the party would wish; the fear was however that at some future date of Paisley's own choosing the DUP leader will announce that, having tried to work within the system, it is now clearly an undemocratic charade and his party is therefore withdrawing from the Assembly, thus obliging the OUP once again to follow lamely

*Mr O'Hara*

*Re note 'y'*

*Mr. [unclear] Mr. Clarke  
Can you get relevant cutting in re X. CC PSM*

*Woff*

*7/2*

*PSS*

*Mr. Henry*

*Mr. [unclear]*

*(2 copies)  
Mr. O'Callaghan*



in its wake. McCusker said that the alternative approach which he supported was for the OUP to table during the next 2/3 months a proposal for the transfer of devolved power, recognising that 76% of those elected are now taking their seats. If this failed either within the Assembly, or through the unwillingness of the British Government to recognise it as being in compliance with the Act, then at least the party's position within its own community would be maintained.

When it was put to him that such an approach would inevitably fail on this criterion of cross-community support and be bound to be rejected by the British he made it plain that in the last analysis if the involvement of the minority in government was the price of devolution then it was too high a price and it would not be paid. Taking up a theme which he has pursued in his recent Fortnight article, and elsewhere, he said in effect that eventually in Northern Ireland one community would have to impose its will on the other, and he was confident regarding the outcome of such a confrontation.

He indicated that he himself did not intend to take office on the Assembly committees; he also said that if the Assembly were to be disbanded he would not be a candidate for any possible replacement body but would concentrate instead on his Westminster seat. As already reported he expected that Beggs, the former Mayor of Larne who defected from the DUP to the OUP, would be the party's nominee as chairman of the economic development committee; Graham and Martin Smyth were two others he mentioned as in line for appointments. He commented that despite some press reports to the contrary he thought Ken Maginness would be their candidate for chairman of the unofficial security committee.

He said that the agreement with Kilfedder which enabled the OUP to withdraw its boycott of the committees had



come about following agreement between the Official Unionists and Alliance on a motion critical of the Presiding Officer. According to McCusker, Kilfedder acceded to certain constraints on his freedom of action in return for the withholding of this particular motion. McCusker observed that knowing Kilfedder's vanity, the accommodation was likely to amount to no more than a temporary truce.

He also said that although arrangements have not yet been finalised he hopes to undertake some speaking engagements in the U.S. during March.

Yours sincerely

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