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25 June, 1991

Mr. Dermot Nally
Secretary to the Government

Dear Dermot

Meeting between the Taoiseach and Prime Minister Major -
Friday 21 June 1991

I enclose herewith my record of the discussion at dinner in Downing Street on Friday night.

I have reconstructed this record from notes taken (with some difficulty) at table. I am satisfied that it is a reasonably full account although not necessarily a complete record of all of the exchanges. Please feel free to correct it where you consider appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Noel Dorr

Noel Dorr
Secretary

c.c.

✓ PSM
A/Secretary Murphy
A/Secretary Barrington
A/Secretary Gallagher (on return)
Ambassador London
Permanent Representative Brussels

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M. Keenan
25/6
to O'Halligan
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Minister for Foreign Affairs There is a wish in the Commission to weaken national Governments so as to develop the European Community.

NORTHERN IRELAND (2)

Brooke (to MFA) I need to know your movements next week. We could have an explosion in relation to the Northern Ireland talks (i.e. the Unionists insistence on suspension of the talks scheduled for 16 July). I am going to be holding my ground.

There was a good deal of stuff in your press today about "protecting the Agreement". That has made it more difficult.

Taoiseach I have carefully avoided mentioning the Agreement. We are showing total flexibility up to and after the 16 July.

Brooke I am sure you have not said anything wrong but the difficulty is that more than one paper is saying that the reason was to "protect the Agreement". That is damaging. We have a problem. It would be easier if it had been done on the basis of saying we have an agreement and there is work to do (Mr. Brooke's point was that it appeared that there had been briefing from the Irish side to the Irish papers which went beyond simply confirming the adherence by both Governments to the date of 16 July for the next Conference and indicated that the reason for holding to this was to protect the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Mr. Brooke believed that this had a damaging effect.)

Taoiseach If it would help we would not insist on having a meeting of Strand Two before the 16 July. //

Mr. Brooke noted this.

Brooke My aim is to keep it in play rather than to have an explosion. The Unionists line in the House of Commons last night was that they had been offered ten weeks (of a gap). They only got three and they need another seven. The trouble is that this would take you into August. I have no intention of meeting them on that point (i.e. meetings in August?).

Taoiseach Our attitude is to be as flexible as necessary after the 16 July.

Brooke What would be your reaction to a formulation which said "we allowed a gap in meetings of the Conference to have talks and now there will be a gap in the talks in order to have a Conference"?

(Taoiseach and Minister for Foreign Affairs seemed to find this possibly alright and there was some further discussion on the point.)

Taoiseach At this next Conference we must fix the date of the next Conference again.

Brooke I have some sympathy however for the Unionists position that it is unwise to break the momentum of the talks.

Taoiseach We could go to Strand Two after the September Conference. H

Brooke But the position is that I as Secretary of State have to decide when it is time to move to Strand Two.

[The Secretary of State referred to "completing" Strand One. The Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out that this was an incorrect formulation since Strand One would not end when Strand Two opened.]

Brooke But I have to decide that we are ready to move to Strand Two and I have to bring them with me.

Taoiseach You mentioned suspending the talks while the Conference takes place?

Brooke It will be a considerable asset if everyone wants to go on.

Taoiseach But they have no other avenue - they have nowhere to go.

I thought your position in the House of Commons was splendid. The thing is - so long as you don't seek to make holding the Conference conditional on suspension of the talks.

There was at this point some discussion of arrangements for the press and it was decided to get copies of the communique and distribute them to journalists outside some five minutes or so before the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister went out to answer questions.



N. Dorr
Secretary
24 June, 1991