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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BÉAL FEIRSTE

BELFAST

5 November 1991

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Seán O hUiginn
Assistant Secretary
Anglo Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs

*Mr. Gorman.
B. Gorman
Mr. Gorman
You have told me
that DIFA have
X, P3 in hand.
h.k.*

PSM
PSS
Mr Nally
Mr. Gorman
Ambassador London
Councillor A1

Dear Assistant Secretary,

15.11.91

Nally/Butler Dinner

8/11

Robert Alston spoke to me informally today about the debriefing on his side.

Political Movement within Sinn Féin/IRA

The NIO had two matters which they had intended to air and which they believe the Prime Minister is likely to want to discuss with the Taoiseach at the Summit meeting. They had not done so because of lack of time. The first of these matters is political movement within Sinn Féin/IRA. As you know, Alston wears another hat as the head of the political contacts side of the NIO. It is apparent from him that the British continue to be interested in the debate going on within the republican movement but do not expect a clear signal until there is a consensus. They have publicly emphasised that nothing can be expected from them unless there is a clear signal. You may recall that Mr. Brooke said in a section of his Enniskillen speech which appeared to address Sinn Féin/IRA directly that "there is a need now for more positive gestures - gestures which can be recognised as such by the whole community and which would be welcomed..... but while violence continues, their (Sinn Féin) representatives and therefore the ideas they espouse, can have no place in the process of determining future relationships and structure in Northern Ireland, in the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland".

Alston said the absence so far of a clear signal one way or the other was itself encouraging since it showed that the hard men were by no means on top. In fact, the British believed the debate was "finely balanced". At present, however, "all channels are quiet" (he was referring here to British contacts with Sinn Féin through intermediaries and others, to Hume's contacts and to the discussions among paramilitary prisoners which Church leaders have been encouraging.) Alston thought the Prime Minister would be interested to have the Taoiseach's personal assessment.

Our relations with the Unionists

A second matter which the NIO had intended to air on Friday was the question of our relations with the Unionists. Again, this is something they think the Prime Minister may raise with the Taoiseach. What they have in mind here is a speech, interview or other gesture to the Unionists which would, inter alia, offer them reassurance on Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution and Article 1 (a) and (b) of the Agreement. I said that our relations with the Unionists were always of great interest to us and it was certainly our desire to improve them. I noted our frequently expressed position that everything is on the table and observed in passing that given the impact of recent statements by Mr. Brooke and, especially, by Mr. Hurd, our concern at present might be more to reassure Nationalists.

Prospects for a further round of talks

Alston said that the British were conscious after last Friday's meeting that they had not given us an answer on how they expected the prospects for a further round of talks to develop. He was conscious that the second tier of the UUP were showing more interest in talks at Westminster than he had allowed last week when he had passed on a briefing on discussion at a dinner hosted by Minister Mawhinney for the second tier of the political parties. The NIO would have a better idea of the Unionist position, especially of the DUP's, after Mr. Brooke meets the two Unionist parties. Alston added that Paisley had hinted at the recent meeting of the DUP with Mr. Brooke on security that the DUP might want to see the British alone at some stage.

One of the points which the British took away from last Friday's discussion was that the timing of the Summit is close to the wire of agreement on a further round of political talks, if one is to be held before the British General Election, and that it will be important to consider how the Summit could be used to "change gear" and to avoid any impression of drift.

Security Cooperation

I mentioned John Chilcot's use of the phrase "fresh agenda" and said we were curious about it. Alston said his side had noted that Noel Dorr had taken it up. He thought what Chilcot had in mind was a general discussion between the two leaders of the problems posed by the security situation and nothing more specific than that. Although there was an interval of some weeks before the Summit and the possibility of a change of mind could not be ruled out, it was not the British side's intention at present to make any major proposal such as

for example, on internment, or to cause public debate or to delve into detail (this accords with what Chilcot himself said to me over lunch recently).

North/South Economic and Social Cooperation

X The British side will be considering whether there are particular matters which could be addressed at the Summit and, possibly, in the Summit Communique. They are thinking for example, of the Dublin/Belfast rail link and North/South trade. As I have mentioned in a separate letter on the next Conference, they have recently done a trawl of all ongoing contacts between Northern and Southern Departments and have made up a list 8 pages long. This exercise was not conducted specially for the Summit but it will inform the official brief and we may wish to consider undertaking a similar exercise. 1/4

Yours sincerely,



Declan O'Donovan
Joint Secretary