

NOTE OF MEETING IN DUBLIN BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE
AND MINISTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND:
27 JUNE 1979

Pre-Meeting Session

Before the meeting itself, the Secretary of State lunched with Mr O'Kennedy (who had just arrived from Brussels) and Mr Collins while officials talked over lunch in a separate room. During the officials' lunch, the PUS was invited to describe the political scene in Northern Ireland following the two recent elections (General and EEC). He explained how Ian Paisley was now perceived as the Loyalists' leader and how demoralised the OUP, and in particular Harry West, were. The recent escalation in attacks against the UDR, RUC and RUCR had made Mr Paisley all the more vociferous and demanding - indeed the increased support for him shown in the elections was more a reflection of general concern over the security situation than a cri de coeur for political movement.

2. Irish officials, in particular Mr Swift, said it was difficult to see an improvement in security preceding a political settlement. A political 'go slow' would fan the flames. The Irish Ambassador said the Alliance Party's lack of success had been most disappointing and the current backdrop was not encouraging. The SDLP were in some disarray, though John Hume's election to Europe was a brightspot. It was generally accepted that reconciliation and compromise in the North was some way off.

3. On security, the PUS outlined the changed nature of PIRA activities - PIRA now operated in small professional cells and were less dependent on popular support. So far as their political aims were concerned, Gerry Adams had now made it clear that they were virtually anarchists and were as much enemies of the Dublin Government as they were of Westminster. Mr Donnelly said the PIRA's new structure and modus operandi were well known in the South and the Garda were doing all they could, in conjunction with the RUC, to bring them to book. But the Garda had to have regard for case law and were frequently frustrated by a fear of habeas corpus writs and evidential difficulties. Mr O'Rourke added that Ministers and officials in the South as well as the Garda had been angered by the constant criticism of their efforts and asked that this be damped down. There was no doubt good intent in the North too but violence continued. Mr Swift admitted that there could be some over-sensitivity in this area but suggested that this should not be ignored. References in a recent speech by the Secretary of State to the Irish Government being prepared to do its best, in the future tense, had annoyed some.

4. The PUS said that both Governments were under fire for alleged inaction, and it may be that there was scope for improvement on both sides. The new Secretary of State had made it clear that the RUC

were to be given every assistance to combat terrorism - they were to be exempt from staff and expenditure cuts for example - and this expression of support and commitment to law and order would encourage the force in its every-widening role. The PUS hoped that there could be increased liaison with the Garda, for example on intelligence gathering and exchange. An important feature of police activity against the well-trained hard core would have to be painstaking surveillance.

5. At this point, officials rejoined Ministers for the main meeting.

6. Ministerial Meeting

Mr O'Kennedy began by apologising for his late arrival and the inevitable curtailment of the meeting. However he and Mr Collins regarded the session as an opportunity for a preliminary discussion which would be a forerunner to regular meetings. The fact that the Secretary of State had come to Dublin within his first 2 months in office was taken as recognition by him of the role which the South could play in tackling the problems of the North. It was clearly important for the two Governments to develop a good working relationship - Fianna Fail would be in Government for at least another 3 years and the Tory Government had at least 5 years in front of it.

7. The Secretary of State thanked Mr O'Kennedy and said that he did indeed recognise that, while HMG had responsibility for Northern Ireland, the Government of the Republic had an interest. He too hoped the meeting would be the first of a number. His Government had made it clear in both the Conservative Party Manifesto and the Queen's Speech that they were committed to establishing some form of devolved government in Northern Ireland and his Party's credentials were good in that respect. Inevitably however he was still at the listening stage. He had seen all the major political parties and would now be moving on to more private sessions to try to find ways of coaxing party leaders out of their traditional positions. It had been clear that they recognised the political strength of the new Government and were putting it to the test. Their present positions were probably extreme and incompatible because of the 'double minority' syndrome. He was not convinced however that the EEC elections had shown that there had been a greater polarisation recently - the results were possibly the first manifestation of a situation which already existed.

8. The Secretary of State said that what must be clearly understood was his intention to move forward positively and patiently but not precipitately. Although his Government would be in power for some years to come, a solution could not be devised in a week or a month - it would almost certainly fail and prove extremely damaging to political stability in the Province. Any new scheme would need to be formulated with great care and he would therefore be grateful to Irish Ministers if they would not make public statements about unity or even "power-sharing" since Unionists in general, and the DUP in particular, were forced into their corners by such talk. A second area where Mr O'Kennedy

Government could help was security, since terrorism increased fears in both communities: within the majority community any suspicion, however ill-founded, that the Republic was not using all its resources to tackle PIRA heightened fears and worsened the chances of political reconciliation. The Secretary of State's aim was therefore to reassure both communities in the Province and move gradually to a political forum acceptable to both.

9. Mr O'Kennedy said he was grateful for this frank analysis. His party had recognised the political realities in the North when they came to power in 1977 and they had been anxious to identify areas where they could help. However they had not been convinced of the commitment of the Secretary of State's predecessor to a 'partnership' Government in Northern Ireland - Mr Mason had appeared to believe that direct rule was a moderating influence but had now been shown to be wrong. That was not to say that the South expected immediate initiatives, despite the new Government's strength. The political talks the Secretary of State had been having were an initiative in themselves: it was important for him to be seen to be active, involved, and impartial. The deals between the former Government and the Unionists had been immensely damaging.

10. Mr O'Kennedy went on to say that he and his colleagues did not pronounce on unity for the sake of it - statements were often taken out of context and were often in reply to direct questions in any event. If asked, they would have to say that, once the North had been stabilised, they would like to see both parts of Ireland reconciled. He hoped the Secretary of State had taken the point that political instability was the fundamental problem, and that terrorism was just a symptom.

11. The Secretary of State said that in his view security and politics were intertwined - they had to be tackled simultaneously. On security he started from the position that both Governments faced a common problem and both were committed to defeating terrorism. But both were under criticism and it was right that they should examine possible areas for change and improvement. He described the isolation of PIRA in recent years and referred to their declared aim of overthrowing Governments wherever they may be. It was clear that a co-ordinated campaign against them was the best way forward.

12. Mr Collins said that, despite the best efforts of his Government and the Garda, the strengthened PIRA organisation had the upper hand. The Commissioner had reviewed the strength and operations of all border divisions but the extent of their success varied. Their record was good in Donegal but not in Monaghan. The Commissioner had increased intelligence effort in many areas but there were few leaks from the new tightly-knit cells. Morale in the force was a problem and the constant criticism and even abuse heaped on the Garda from the North and at Westminster did not help matters. The Glover Report had been especially damaging, and some of the Chief Constable's remarks were unfortunate. Matters had reached the point where the Garda were criticised if they found a bomb factory

for allowing terrorists to operate in the Republic at all! So far as his Government was concerned, they were anxious to co-operate with the North and certainly did not want to see the feared Protestant backlash but it was difficult to see what more could be done.

13. The Secretary of State said he was certainly not anxious to decry the efforts of the Garda but would like to suggest some areas where new arrangements might be effective. He was sure that Ministers would agree that any terrorist movement across the border was too much and for this reason he would like to see a greater intelligence operation on both sides. Secondly he hoped that there could be more co-ordination in operations and patrolling on both sides of the border. He was aware that the Chief Constable had asked for a Regional Crime Squad and asked whether the new Task Force of which he had heard was regarded as a step in that direction. Mr Collins said the Task Force would not be in the border area on a permanent basis but that they would be concentrating on terrorist-type offences like hi-jacking and kidnapping. (He was reminded by the Secretary of State and the FUS that the Chief Constable's wider ranging proposals were still on the table: what was really required was a permanent anti-terrorist squad covering intelligence gathering, surveillance and investigation.) So far as surveillance and intelligence gathering was concerned Mr Collins said that it should be recognised that it took 25 police officers to watch one man round the clock - this was accepted throughout Europe - and such operations were therefore enormously costly in terms of manpower. Nevertheless the Garda Commissioner was examining this problem and the Government would try to help over resources. He had to say though that the freedom of movement of terrorists in South Armagh caused concern in the South - it was almost a no-go area and terrorists had a clear run through of up to 20 miles on their way to the border. Both forces were working closely together and more effectively in Donegal/Londonderry. Nevertheless Mr Collins fully accepted that the border, by its very length, was an important factor in terrorist activity.

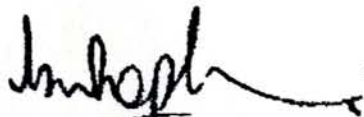
14. The Secretary of State took note of Mr Collins's comments and asked about the work of the Garda away from the border. This seemed a third area where more resources might produce results, inhibiting PIRA training, planning, and 'equipment' storing and preparation. Mr Collins said that the CID had been augmented through the country and they had had a number of recent successes, including the discovery of a bomb factory in County Galway. This expansion of CID effort would continue.

15. The Secretary of State's fourth suggestion was the participation of RUC officers in the interrogation of suspects in the South about terrorist offences in the North. He explained that the RUC would be happy to have Garda officers at interviews where the situation was reversed, and hoped that there could be a reciprocal arrangement. Mr Collins said that he would have this looked at, but if the eventual answer had to be 'no', he hoped it would still be possible for RUC officers to be close by for consultation, perhaps at the police station itself. The Secretary of State said he was grateful for this suggestion and would relay it to the Chief Constable but he would like to leave the question of actual participation in interrogation with Mr Collins for further consideration.

16. The Secretary of State concluded on security by referring to INLA and inviting Ministers to consider the desirability of proscribing them in the South.

17. On economic matters, touched upon only briefly, Ministers agreed to continue their present co-operation and to encourage local communities to work together on common problems. Mr O'Kennedy suggested that this co-operation should not only operate on the border however - there was scope for joint action in industrial development and tourism.

18. Finally a joint communiqué was agreed and Mr O'Kennedy thanked the Secretary of State for being so ready to acknowledge the legitimate interest of the South in the North and their commitment to help. He hoped that this would be reflected in statements at Westminster. The Secretary of State and the two Ministers agreed that they should meet again soon to review progress on the matters discussed. Meanwhile, on the security points, the Chief Constable and the Garda Commissioner would liaise over the operational implications.



M W HOPKINS

28 June 1979

cc	PS/S of S (B)	M
	PS/Ministers (L&B)	M
	PS/PUS (L&B)	M
	PS/Sir R Kidd	M ✓
	Mr Stowe	
	Mr Hannigan	M
	Mr Marshall	
	Mr Burns	M
	Mr Lane	M
	Mr Parker	M
	Mr Mayne	
	Miss Kelley	
	Mr Gilliland	M
	Mr Buxton	
	Mr Davenport	M
	Mr Gee	M
	Mr Cowan	
	Mr Wilson	
	Mr M C Hall	
	Mr Corbett	
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27 June 1979

JOINT COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO DUBLIN

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Humphrey Atkins MP, had discussions in Dublin today with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland, Mr Michael O'Kennedy TD, and the Minister for Justice, Mr Gerard Collins TD.

The Ministers discussed a wide range of topics, including the political situation in Northern Ireland, security co-operation and North/South economic co-operation. The meeting was the first between the new Secretary of State and members of the Republic's Government.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to co-operative action by the Irish and British security forces against terrorism and pledged the support of their Governments to measures which would lead to a restoration of peace and political stability.

The talks lasted for two-and-a-half hours and were conducted in a cordial and co-operative atmosphere. Both sides look forward to further contact at an early date.