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① Sir Ewart Bell

② Miss Davies

23/2

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MR BARRY, IRISH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, IN NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE (LONDON) ON 1 FEBRUARY 1983

The Secretary of State met Mr Barry in plenary session after lunch on 1 February 1983. Those present were:

Secretary of State
Lord Gowrie
Sir Philip Woodfield
Mr Brennan
Mr Angel
Mr Evers (PCO)
Mr Boys Smith
Mr Lyon

Mr Barry
Mr Donlon
Dr Kennedy
Mr Dempsey
Mrs Hennessey
Mr Burke



1. The Secretary of State welcomed Mr Barry and his colleagues. He was very pleased to have this opportunity to resume good relations with the Irish Government. He had had a long private talk with Mr Barry in the morning, but welcomed this opportunity for a general talk on any matters of common concern.

2. Mr Barry said that the morning's discussion had been helpful. It was important for him and the Secretary of State to get to know each other. There were many topics which they had covered, but he wished to emphasise the importance he attached to the UK Government doing what it could to help the SDLP improve their position in the community and their confidence in the face of the Sinn Fein challenge. He hoped also for a good working relationship between the two Governments and at official level with a view to making political progress in Northern Ireland and improving the present unsatisfactory situation there.

Encounter Organisation

3. The Secretary of State said that he hoped it would be possible to make early progress on the establishment of the Encounter Organisation. Sir David Orr had provisionally agreed to act as the British chairman.

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He hoped it would be possible for the Irish to respond to the paper setting out the UK view of the Organisation's development which had been given to the Irish in January 1982.

4. Mr Barry said that they had yet to approach a possible Irish chairman. He would certainly look again at the UK paper, but he would need to discuss it with his colleagues in Government before taking it any further.

5. In discussion, Lord Gowrie said that the British Irish Association were waiting to find out about the future of the Encounter proposal before deciding on their own future. Mr Donlon said he did not see Encounter replacing the BIA. Dr Kennedy said that he hoped the BIA and Co-operation North might be able to assist in establishing the new organisation.

6. The Secretary of State, summing up this part of the discussion, said that he did not wish to push the Irish too hard, but it seemed to us that it would be possible to make relatively easy progress on this proposal. If an Irish chairman were identified, he and Sir David Orr could get together to consider the operation and objectives of the organisation in more detail.

Prime Ministerial Summit Meeting

7. The Secretary of State said that the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach would be meeting in the margins of the European Community summit in March in Bonn. His own view was that the meeting should not be too long. It should be aimed at re-establishing a good relationship. The timing of a Prime Ministerial summit would depend on the outcome of that meeting, and on the possible timing of the UK General Election.

8. Mr Barry agreed that the Taoiseach would be able to form a view on a future summit after his meeting with the Prime Minister in March. He would expect the next summit between the two Prime Ministers to be held in Dublin.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

9. Mr Barry said that the position of the SDLP was a cause of concern. He hoped the UK Government could find ways of bolstering the SDLP, particularly in marginal constituencies where they had lost ground to Sinn Fein. It would help if Ministers refused to meet members of Sinn Fein: Ministers in the Republic would have nothing to do with those who espoused terrorism. It would help also if UK Ministers could make concessions on constituency matters in response to SDLP representations. The matter was urgent, since the SDLP position had to be strengthened before the next UK General Election.

10. The Secretary of State said that he appreciated the SDLP's difficulties. It was not true that Sinn Fein representatives had ready access to Ministers. They had been seen by only one Minister since the Assembly elections, and that was on a constituency matter when they had formed part of a wider delegation. But Sinn Fein put a good deal of effort into community politics; and the SDLP did not. While particular constituency matters had to be considered on their merits, he was ready to consider any proposals which the SDLP wished to put to him. He had accordingly invited Mr Hume to draw up a shopping list, without commitment. He had yet to receive this. He would also be shortly meeting an SDLP delegation to discuss public expenditure plans.

11. In discussion, Lord Gowrie said that he had had an early meeting with Mr Mallon on security matters. But the SDLP policy on abstention from the Assembly did not in his judgement help them effectively to represent their constituents, or their electoral prospects against Sinn Fein. They had yet to develop an effective mechanism for bringing forward their representations.

12. Mr Barry said that he accepted that his view of UK Ministers meeting Sinn Fein representatives had been a misconception. But Sinn Fein were representing that they were acting effectively for their constituents and their electoral prospects were good. The SDLP did not have the same recourse to illegal finance and found it difficult to keep up with the constituency work.

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13. Concluding this part of the discussion, the Secretary of State said that when he had last spoken to Mr Hume he was more optimistic about the SDLP's electoral prospects. He appreciated the need to help the SDLP, but Mr Hume's speech at the party's annual conference had not helped. Nor had his reported efforts to deter EC commissioners from visiting the Assembly. There was no truth in the suggestion that Sinn Fein were getting from the Government what SDLP could not. He would consider further whether there was anything more he could do to help the SDLP's position, and he invited Mr Barry to do the same.

The Unionists

14. The Secretary of State noted that some Unionists were intent on breaking up the Assembly. He hoped the situation would improve, but relations between the Official Unionists and the Speaker were very poor. At the root of the difficulties was the fact that the Assembly elections had broken the mould of Unionism in Northern Ireland. The Official Unionists were having to learn the hard way that they were no longer in the majority.

Assembly Security Committee

15. In response to a question by Mr Barry, the Secretary of State said that it was likely the Assembly would establish a security committee. It was non-statutory and would have no official powers. One advantage of it was that it would provide an outlet for those who felt strongly about the security situation. It would also enable him to see the committee less publicly in Stormont Castle rather than making public statements to the Assembly, as he had had to do when it was first established.

16. Mr Barry said that he was concerned that the committee would become a Unionist forum for the expression of uninformed attitudes, particularly on such matters as extradition.

17. In discussion, Lord Gowrie said that there was no foundation in the suggestion that the establishment of a security committee was the first step on the road to devolving security to Northern Ireland

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politicians. The legislation was quite clear that there could be no devolution without widespread community support. Mr Molyneux recognised this, and therefore wished to change the Act. The SDLP did not seem fully to appreciate their power of veto. They would have been in no danger had they joined the Assembly or its committees and indeed would have been able more effectively to represent their community. In the interests of assisting the SDLP, however, he suggested that the Secretary of State might invite the SDLP to a meeting on security shortly after any meeting he had with the Assembly security committee.

18. Mr Barry confirmed that there was no prospect of the SDLP joining the Assembly. But he undertook to pass on Lord Gowrie's suggestion to the SDLP.

Extradition

19. Mr Barry said that the 1976 Act was working well. He did not see that the present arrangements required significant amendment.

20. In discussion, the Secretary of State acknowledged that the 1976 legislation was working better than it had originally. But a number of terrorists were still able to operate from the Republic. It was hard to justify that the Irish had not yet signed the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism.

21. Lord Gowrie said that people in the North suspected the Irish of protecting those who had committed offences in Northern Ireland. The Irish Government had been prepared to take firm action against terrorists, and it was not clear why they cavilled at extradition. Action on this would have considerable significance for changing the attitudes of people in the North. He wondered whether it might be possible to include this issue in a general examination between the two Governments of security matters.

22. Mr Barry said that the issue also had symbolic significance in the South. It was feared that people would be returned to the interrogation techniques once operated at Castlereagh. Extradition

might be negotiable, but only as part of a major agreed package of measures. It would not be possible to act on extradition in advance or in isolation.

23. Concluding this part of the meeting, the Secretary of State and Mr Barry agreed that this needed further consideration.

Anglo-Irish Relations

24. Lord Gowrie asked whether the Republic had considered if it might be possible to allay Unionist fears in the North by a firm and binding recognition of their position. They were worried about being taken over, and the majority guarantee only held as long as they were in the majority. He did not consider it in the interests of the Republic to seek a united Ireland if it contained a vociferous and hostile Unionist minority. He had in mind not just dual citizenship but an arrangement whereby Britain would retain a degree of sovereignty in order to guarantee Unionist rights.

25. Mr Barry said he would need to give a good deal of thought to this. The present minority in the North had no such guarantee from the Republic.

Other Matters

26. In continued discussion the following points were made:

(i) Border Roads: Mr Barry said he would like all border roads re-opened to bring communities across the border together. The Secretary of State said that the amount of cross-border movement of goods and people suggested that the closing of roads was not a particular handicap.

(ii) Sydenham Airport: Mr Barry said that they were anxious to secure the use of Sydenham Airport for Avair. The sole stumbling block was providing a customs presence

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at the airport. He hoped the Secretary of State would be able to resolve this with his Ministerial colleagues.

(iii) Meetings of Attorneys-General: The Secretary of State said that he did not consider such a meeting needed to be arranged quickly.

(iv) Kinsale Gas: The Secretary of State said that it was important to make early progress on this project. Mr Barry said that Mr Bruton would be meeting Mr Butler on 3 February.

Conclusions

27. The Secretary of State and Mr Barry agreed the terms of a statement to the press (attached). Mr Barry said that he would be briefing the press after the meeting, but he did not intend to go into details of what they had discussed.

28. The Secretary of State said the he looked forward to a further meeting with Mr Barry, but it would be necessary to consider carefully the timing of the meeting, and its agenda. He invited Sir Philip Woodfield to discuss this further with Mr Donlon.

29 Mr Barry agreed. He said it was important not to raise false hopes of what might arise from their meetings.

cc: PS/SofS (L&B) - M
PS/Ministers (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell - M
Mr Brennan
Mr Bourn - M
Mr Angel
Mr Merifield - M
Mr Buxton - M
Mr Doyne Ditmas - M
Mr Burns

Mr Gilliland - M
Mr Abbott
Mr Blatherwick - M
Mr Boys Smith
Ms Drummond
Mr Evers (FCO)

J. M. Lyon
J M LYON
Private Secretary

1 February 1983

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MEETING BETWEEN MR PRIOR AND MR BARRY

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the rt hon James Prior MP, today met Mr Peter Barry TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs for [the Republic of] Ireland, at the Northern Ireland Office in London. The occasion was the first meeting between the two Ministers who had a cordial and wide-ranging exchange of views.

2. They agreed on the desirability of close co-operation between the 2 Governments in matters of common concern in the political, economic and security fields.

3. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was accompanied by Lord Gowrie, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, and the party was joined over lunch by Lord Belstead, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.