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NOTE OF A MEETING WITH MR CHARLES PRICE, US AMBASSADOR, ON
5 NOVEMBER 1984

1. Sir Stewart
2. Mr Carroll
3. POL/2

Present:- Secretary of State
Mr Price
Mr Reams (US Embassy)
Mr Lyon
Mr Sandiford



Mr Price said that his recent trip to the US had been very useful. He had had dinner with the President and Mrs Reagan. The first thing the President had mentioned had been the Brighton bomb, and he had known that Mr Price had been in Brighton on the day of the explosion. The President had shown his concern about the bomb, about the shipment of arms from the US to the IRA, and about financial support from the US for the IRA. The President was concerned to know how the message could be got across to the tiny minority in the US who provided support for the IRA that they were not helping the victims of suffering but helping to create new victims.

2. Mr Price said that in his meetings with Federal officials he had been given detailed operative information, and had been quite satisfied that co-ordination between the agencies in the US, the Republic and the UK was satisfactory.

3. Mr Price explained that there was a strong sentimental attachment among many Americans to their Irish ancestors. He illustrated this by reference to the St Patrick's Day Parade which had been instituted in Kansas City, Missouri, about six years ago. This had so grown in popularity that on the most recent occasion over 100,000 people had paraded to an area near an Irish bar for general celebration.

4. - Mr Price said that he had spoken three times on the radio, and twice on TV, in the UK recently on the issue of banning NORaid, and thought he had said all he usefully could.

5. The Secretary of State thanked Mr Price for all that he had done, and for the statement he had issued following his recent visit to the US. The Secretary of State added that anything the President

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could say publicly to discourage assistance to the IRA would be helpful. Mr Price confirmed that the US Administration wished to do all it could, and referred in passing to Mr Schultz's recent comments on action against terrorism.

6. Mr Price referred to expectations about the forthcoming Anglo-Irish Summit, and speculated that these might be greater than they had been before the Brighton bomb. The Secretary of State said that a slightly difficult phase was in prospect, since the Dublin Government had, at least until recently, apparently persisted in the hope that at least the "joint authority" option of the Forum Report might find favour with the UK Government, despite the clear statement by Mr Prior in the Commons debate on the Forum Report and other documents on 2 July that none of the three options were feasible. The Secretary of State added, however, that the Prime Minister had considerable liking and respect for Dr FitzGerald, and that both would be trying hard to be constructive. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister was cautious about the scope for progress.

7. The Secretary of State said that, during his own recent visit to Dublin, he had had good discussions with Irish Ministers, but thought that they were perhaps a little disappointed that joint authority continued to be excluded as an option. The Secretary of State and Mr Price agreed that some of the reported recent expectations about the Anglo-Irish Summit appeared to be somewhat exaggerated.

8. Mr Price referred briefly to a radio phone-in programme on which he had appeared, when he had been asked whether the US Administration favoured the unification of Ireland. Mr Price had said that, by contrast with statements by Mrs Ferraro, the current Administration in the US did not regard itself as having an invitation or obligation to seek to act as broker to a settlement of the Irish question.

9. The Secretary of State said that, in his own discussions with the Party Leaders in Northern Ireland, he had found the Unionists and the SDLP talking about different things. The Unionists were apparently prepared to make considerable concessions to the minority, in pursuit of arrangements for devolved government. The SDLP, however, appeared to be no longer interested in such possibilities, and put

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emphasis instead on securing an Irish dimension, by which they meant the involvement in some way of the Government of the Republic.

10. Mr Price asked what the Government of the Republic could do to improve security measures. The Secretary of State said that that Government appeared to believe that it was already doing all it could in that direction, but ^{they thought} that they needed to be involved in other ways if the problems of the North were to be resolved. In reply to a further question from Mr Price, the Secretary of State explained that UK Ministers visiting Dublin were commonly asked to comment on a variety of points, some relatively small, about security policy and practice. This in turn led to suggestions that some form of joint security commission might be established, to deal with such issues on either side of the border. But it was still far from clear what might come of all this.

11. Discussion turned to industry and commerce. Mr Price said that he had been impressed, not only by the levels of support given to investment in Northern Ireland, but also by the abilities and productivity of the workforce and by the amount of US investment which took place despite the lurid picture often portrayed by journalists or broadcasters. The Secretary of State agreed that there was far more normality in Northern Ireland than was always acknowledged, and that a lot of hard work went on in ways that were not always reported. He agreed, however, with Mr Price that the growth in the population led to increasing numbers seeking work. Moreover, the De Lorean affair had led to a certain amount of cynicism about the benefits of attracting speculative investment. Mr Price mentioned that there had been encouraging news about certification for the Lear Fan project. The Secretary of State agreed, but added that the delays which had occurred had caused significant financial problems, and that the future of the project was unclear. On the other hand, the recent announcement of Japanese investment in production of cigarette lighters was welcome.

12. Mr Price turned to discussion of Dr Paisley. The Secretary of State commented that he had met Dr Paisley quite often since taking up his post, because of Dr Paisley's chairmanship of the Agriculture Committee of the Assembly. In that role Dr Paisley was practical and courteous. The Secretary of State added, however, that he had not encountered Dr Paisley in circumstances of

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constitutional controversy, and quite understood that Dr Paisley was liable to be more excitable on such occasions. The Secretary of State found it difficult to know whether Dr Paisley was content to be a significant figure within the current arrangements, or whether he would be prepared to make the considerable concessions which would be needed to make possible any form of devolved government in which Dr Paisley could take responsibility for government.

13. In reply to a question from the Secretary of State, Mr Price explained that he might visit Northern Ireland in late spring. He had been very pleased with his previous visits to Northern Ireland, and with the way in which the Shorts contract for the USAF had turned out. In his recent discussions with US officials, he had emphasised his wish to be informed of developments on comparable contracts which might be of interest.

14. The Secretary of State referred to the wish of the RUC to obtain Ruger guns. Mr Reams explained that, technically, the licence to provide the guns was still pending, that having been the arrangement made when Mr Tip O'Neill and others had applied political pressure against the supply of arms to the RUC. Mr O'Neill's stance had been caused in part at least by a wish to avoid being outflanked by Mr Biaggi. Even a recent proposal to ship blank ammunition had been the subject of recent controversy. Mr Price agreed with the Secretary of State that timing was critical in handling such issues, but added that the present moment was not the most propitious for making progress. It was agreed, however, that Mr Lyon would keep in touch with Mr Reams on the subject.

15. The Secretary of State said that he might give consideration to visiting the US in 1985. The Ambassador commented that the near future might be quite a good time to make such a visit, in view of the concern about terrorism aroused by the Brighton bomb. The Secretary of State and Mr Price agreed to keep in touch about such possibilities. In addition, the Secretary of State encouraged Mr Price to keep him informed about any influential visitors from the US who might be interested in visiting Northern Ireland. Mr Price mentioned that he had been concerned about the recent visit by US Bishops to Northern Ireland, but thought that in the event the visit had turned out well. The Secretary of State agreed, and explained that he had met the Bishops himself for a short discussion.

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Graham Sandiford

G K SANDIFORD
Private Secretary

6 November 1984

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