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FROM: T SMYTH
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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Mr's [Signature]

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
- PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Dodds - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Maxwell - B
- Mr Daniell - B
- HMA Dublin - B
- Mr Archer - B

DINNER AT STORMONT HOUSE: MONDAY 20 JUNE 1994

On 21 June Mr Williams hosted a dinner at Stormont House. The purpose of the dinner was to expose Mr O'Donovan and his colleagues from the Irish side of the Secretariat to some "traditional" unionist viewpoints and attitudes. Present from the Irish side were Mr O'Donovan and Mr Bassett, while Mr Maccabe and I accompanied Mr Williams. Other guests were Roy Bradford, Ulster Unionist Politician and now Mayor of North Down, the Reverend Norman Hamilton, Minister of Ballysillan Presbyterian Church and the historian ATQ (Tony) Stewart.

2. Throughout the dinner the atmosphere was convivial and relaxed but the exchanges were at times very "lively", with Mr Bradford in particular speaking very frankly about his perceptions of current Unionist thinking. nationalist outlook who would be sympathetic to the Irish Government's objective of a united Ireland. He clearly implied that these individuals would not have any membership of the

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Initially, discussions took place in small groups but eventually, when the wine had begun to flow more freely, Mr Bradford took centre stage and to a large extent dominated the remainder of the evening. On the current political situation, Mr Bradford said that it would be unfortunate if the Government were to repeat what were, in his opinion, the mistakes of the past in terms of seeing the "grand gesture" as a way to resolve Northern Ireland's problems. In this context he cited in particular Sunningdale and the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He went on to propound his thesis that movement towards a resolution must be incremental. As a first step, a local assembly could be set up at Stormont with, initially limited, executive powers. When this had bedded in and a degree of mutual trust and respect had been built up, there could then be a gradual move to the setting up, with the consensus agreement of the assembly, of bodies which would have a cross-border remit. He emphasised, however, that such bodies would need to be restricted to relatively non-contentious areas such as tourism, pollution control etc. Further, he did not envisage such bodies having any executive powers or being in any way autonomous.

4. Referring to the current discussions between the two Governments, he went on to develop his well known theme that to trade the dropping of Articles 2 and 3 for the setting up of cross border institutions with executive powers was too high a price to pay for most unionists and would undoubtedly lend to an escalation of violence by loyalist paramilitaries. In his view the importance of Articles 2 and 3 was greatly exaggerated. Despite the judgement in the Dublin High Court that they represented a constitutional imperative, everyone knew that, in practical terms, they could not be implemented; they were no more than an irritant.

5. Mr Bradford then went on to probe Mr O'Donovan about the involvement of the Irish Government, through the Secretariat, with appointment to various public bodies in Northern Ireland. He suggested that the Irish side's objective was to install on these bodies people of a nationalist outlook who would be sympathetic to the Irish Government's objective of a united Ireland. He clearly implied that these individuals would use their membership of the

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bodies to undermine Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom and would effectively be "fifth columnists". In response, Mr O'Donovan denied that this was the case. He said that, in proposing names to the Secretary of State, the Irish side was anxious to encourage the appointment of people of merit, admittedly of a nationalist outlook, who might otherwise not have come to the attention of those making the appointments. He further pointed out that, under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Irish Government had the right to propose names for consideration, but they had no right to insist on those persons being appointed. Mr Bradford did not seem convinced. He was at pains to emphasise that he had no problem with the appointment of Catholics to such bodies. On the contrary, he positively welcomed the increasing numbers of Catholics who were taking their rightful place in membership of these bodies, so long as they subscribed to the position of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. It was clear that he felt that people who believed in the concept of a united Ireland had no place within the membership of public bodies, and by implication, within the public service in Northern Ireland. Indeed, it was clear that Mr Bradford had no time for any attempts to recognise the nationalist identity in Northern Ireland or to take account of nationalist sensitivities. He pooh-poohed the idea of "parity of esteem". Rather, his view was that the unionists are in a majority and that "democracy" therefore requires that the British identity is the only one which should be "recognised" in Northern Ireland.

6. Mr O'Donovan then referred to the fact that in Northern Ireland lawyers aspiring to take silk had to swear an oath of allegiance although this was not the case in Great Britain. Neither was there any requirement that lawyers wishing to be Senior Counsels in the Republic of Ireland had to take an oath of allegiance to the state. He cited this as an example of where it appeared to nationalists in Northern Ireland that the system was "rubbing their face in it". Mr Bradford seemed amazed that anyone could possibly object to swearing an oath of allegiance if they wish to be a QC - "Damn it all, man, they are Queen's Counsel", he said. He contended that there was no need for an oath of allegiance in Great Britain or the Republic of

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eland since, in those places, "everyone knows where their allegiance lies".

7. While Mr Bradford hogged the proceedings for much of the time, the input of Norman Hamilton was, perhaps just as significant. Ministering as he does to a large working class parish in North Belfast, in an area adjacent to the Ardoyne, he has a considerable depth of knowledge about the thinking of working class urban Protestants. He confirmed that there was a significant growth in support in his area for loyalist paramilitaries and that, indeed, they were now in a position, for the first time, actually to pick and choose their recruits. While such recruits were almost exclusively young men, the degree to which support for the activities of loyalist paramilitaries within the more mature members of his local community had grown was a worrying trend. For the first time, he had experienced people whom he would not previously have considered to be extreme saying frankly to him that they hated Catholics. He went on to say that he thought that it would be a mistake to think of the situation in political terms only. While it was true to say that very many of those who were involved in the area were not regular church attenders, nevertheless there was an underlying religious aspect to their attitude which could best be described by the term "for God and Ulster". Although he frankly admitted that he was on the evangelical wing of the Presbyterian Church, Mr Hamilton was severely critical of the "for God and Ulster" syndrome which he said was closely identified with the DUP and Paisleyism. He felt strongly that there was a need to confront and face down this syndrome and that this could best be done by other evangelical Protestants. In this context he referred to the work of the group Evangelical Christians on Northern Ireland (ECONI), which had a YMCA base.

8. Mr Bradford picked up the theme of growing support for loyalist paramilitaries. He said that, while many unionists would, in the public, condemn atrocities such as the Loughinisland shootings, in private many of them would express, if not actual approval, an understanding of these actions. The basis for this viewpoint was

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at violence had appeared to work for Sinn Fein and the IRA and it could also work for the loyalists. He went on to say that support for the loyalist paramilitaries was not confined to working class Protestants but was increasingly being expressed by the middle-class business community. He told us of a prominent businessman, whom he claimed many round the table would know, but who he refused to name, who had expressed disappointment at the seizure of a large consignment of arms which had been bound for loyalist terrorists. This was a man who, in Mr Bradford's words, "would not be seen dead in an Orange Lodge", but who nevertheless had said to Mr Bradford: "if they care to visit me in Lisburn there'll be a few cheques for them here".

9. There was also some discussion, involving Tony Stewart and Roy Bradford about why the power sharing executive had failed in 1974. Mr Bradford was taking the line that the real problem was not power sharing per se but rather unionist fears of a Council of Ireland. However, Mr O'Donovan pointed out that an appendix to Brian Faulkner's biography contained the text of a letter which Faulkner had written to an associate in which he had emphasised that the crucial issue in relation to the fall of the executive was power sharing and not the Council of Ireland. In response to this Mr Bradford, while maintaining that the Council of Ireland was the real problem, rather grudgingly conceded that many unionists also found it very difficult to come to terms with the principle of sharing power with nationalists. Tony Stewart then ventured the opinion that the unionist opposition to power sharing had been tactical in that they saw this as the means to defeat the concept of a Council of Ireland.

10. One issue on which all three guests were agreed was that of the stance of the British Government at present. Mr Bradford, in particular, pointed out that the Irish Government was quite clearly on the side of the nationalists in Northern Ireland but that the British Government did not see itself as speaking on behalf of the unionist population. Rather, it adopted a totally neutral role. He felt, and the other two guests agreed, that this contributed

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significantly to the degree of isolation and alienation increasingly being felt by unionists.

11. In summary, this was a very useful exercise and there is little doubt that it gave Mr O'Donovan considerable food for thought.

[Signed]

T SMYTH

...in your minute of 23 June ...
...to speak to Mr Wallace this afternoon ...
...until Monday, so in his absence I spoke to
...Mr Miller.

I explained our concerns, as set out in your minute of 23 June. Mr Miller was already familiar with the issue, and while he remarked that on purely security grounds the case for providing continual protection was not particularly strong, he did not attempt to contest the wider political considerations (and indeed expressed some sympathy with them). He gave an undertaking that the situation would be reviewed first thing on Monday and that, whatever happened, protection would be provided as normal next week. If the RUC still wished to go ahead and withdraw the service, there would be no question of informing the Irish before further consultation with the RUC. I made the point that, in this event, the Secretary of State might well wish to speak to the Chief Constable.

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