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D R A F T1Anglo-Irish Relations: Recent Exchanges

Secretary of State Hurd came to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Dublin on 25 October 1984. Following a meeting with officials at which the issues current in the Nally/Armstrong talks were not discussed and on which there is a separate note, Mr Hurd had dinner with the Minister for Foreign Affairs with no officials present. The Minister for Justice also attended the dinner. At the same time Robert Andrew, Permanent Secretary of the NIO, and the British Ambassador, Alan Goodison, (both are privy to the contents of the Nally/Armstrong talks) had dinner with Mr S. Donlon and the undersigned. By chance Mr Hume was meeting at about the same time in London with Mr Nicholas Scott, Minister of State at the NIO. As the three exchanges are interlinked and give clear evidence of a strategy by NIO Ministers and senior officials to scuttle any attempt at serious movement on either side, it seems appropriate to report on them together along with some other more casual contacts between Dublin and London in recent days.

Hurd

The dinner with Hurd followed exchanges with officials present (Mr Noonan was not present on our side) during which the Minister for Foreign Affairs raised a series of issues raised with him by representatives of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland. A separate note is available on these exchanges. Suffice it to say here that Mr Hurd was evidently ill at ease with the issues that the Minister for Foreign Affairs raised and relied on his Permanent Secretary to respond. An official on the British side remarked afterwards that the British side had been impressed by the seriousness with which the Minister for Foreign Affairs pursued these

issues; they had not hitherto realised at his level that the Irish habit of raising such issues was at the personal instigation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. It was also significant that during this session Mr Hurd insistently ruled out any restructuring of the RUC.

He maintained this line at the subsequent dinner and, moreover, excluded any possibility of standing down the UDR. He saw no possibility of a power-sharing executive for Northern Ireland and was opposed to most of the elements in the "package" that has been discussed in the Nally/Armstrong framework. He said that he understood that changing Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution might be too difficult for the Irish. In these circumstances he advocated dropping this approach and confining any initiative to greater cooperation in security with perhaps some consultative role for Dublin in relation to security within Northern Ireland. The Minister for Foreign Affairs ruled out any possibility of such an approach being recommended by him to the Irish Government.

The Minister for Justice felt that Hurd by the end of an exchange in which he was evidently finding no echo on the Irish side was becoming somewhat desperate.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs raised the question of a possible failure to agree at the forthcoming Summit and warned of the consequences this would have for the survival of the SDLP and, by extension, for stability throughout Ireland and in Britain.

Robert Andrew

The conversation between officials that was taking place at the same time followed a very similar pattern. A major difference was that Andrew did not suggest that the Irish side retreat from facing the problem of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution (presumably this was deliberately left to the political level). Another interesting feature was that Andrew was, as

the evening wore on and as his approach was finding no success with the Irish side, openly critical and resentful of the approach taken by Armstrong and Goodall, an approach he described as "academic". In reply to a question about NIO intentions in the event of a failure to agree at the Summit, Andrew said that the NIO would propose to Hurd that he make a number of moves on the question of identity. He mentioned the Flags and Emblems Act and the electoral legislation which was successfully used by unionists to remove former Senator Mallon from his Assembly seat. The Irish side made it plain that we saw no grounds for agreement arising from Andrew's approach and, moreover, that we found it to be fundamentally inconsistent with the approach we had been considering in the Armstrong/Nally framework.

Scott and Hume

When I met Hume yesterday he told me he had had a talk with Scott in London on 25 October. Scott had said that several members of the British Cabinet were beginning to realise that it would be extremely difficult and possibly dangerous for Dublin to face a constitutional referendum. Scott had said that London had been surprised that Dublin had unilaterally "offered" the referendum (Note: that, of course, is not true). In the circumstances an opinion was developing that Dublin should not be asked to attempt this task and that the Sunningdale formula could be adequate. From Hume's remarks I would guess that he (Hume) had welcomed this approach - he is very worried indeed about the dangers of a referendum. I asked Hume what Scott had "offered" in the absence of changes in Articles 2 and 3. Hume said that Scott had said that "joint" structures would be available in a variety of areas (unspecified).

I told Hume of Hurd's approach to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Justice. I put it to him that Hurd, Scott and the NIO were playing on the obvious reluctance of Dublin and the even more extreme reluctance of Hume to

contemplate a referendum and using it to undermine the possibility of any real movement. I reminded him of Thatcher's doctrine of a "basic equation" which she had outlined to her officials after the Summit with the Taoiseach and how her advisers had specifically ruled out the Sunningdale formula as inadequate. I put it to him that, in view of what Hurd "offered" in Dublin, the real "game" of the NIO was to create a situation in which they would not have to face anything that would make the unionists react and to be able to blame Dublin's timidity in the face of a referendum for a refusal to move. He saw the force of this but remained very sceptical of a referendum.

On the other hand, Hume raised with me Ambassador Dorr's idea of a common formula for the Constitution (instead of Articles 2 and 3), for the Anglo-Irish agreement and for a reformulated "guarantee", whereby both Governments would "guarantee" both traditions in Northern Ireland in identical terms. I had discussed this possibility with him a week earlier and apparently Dorr had raised it with him in London. Hume said that, depending on the wording, he saw merit in this approach.

Goodall

I spoke on the phone to Goodall by arrangement yesterday. He confirmed what Armstrong had hinted on Friday i.e. that we would not be coming over to prepare a common paper during this week. "There are", he said, "serious problems over here". I said I sensed as much. We have arranged to meet this evening in London: we are both attending a dinner given by Dorr for Prior.

M.J. Lillis

30 October 1984

c.c. Taoiseach, Tanaiste, Minister, Minister for Justice,
Attorney General, Secretary, Mr Nally, Mr Ward,
Mr Quigley, Ambassador, London