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SECRET

Conversation with David Goodall

I saw Goodall at the FCO while in London on 28 September 1984.

He said that the Prime Minister had read his note of the last Nally/Armstrong round and had commented to Armstrong: "Aren't you going a little fast?". The tone of the question was anxious rather than critical. She has asked for a meeting with Hurd, Howe, Armstrong and Goodall for some day this week to review progress.

Prior had had a long talk with Thatcher at the time of his departure. He had told her that the approach that was being discussed in the Nally/Armstrong channel was essential. This had had a useful effect.

Howe was keenly interested in the current discussions and wished to be helpful. Goodall asked me to tell this to Minister Barry for whom Howe has a high regard and with whom Howe wishes to discuss progress in detail. He said that Howe's influence with Thatcher was considerable. I said I was sure my Minister would welcome this and that I understood that both Ministers had already found opportunities to pursue those issues together. Goodall said that Howe had commented favourably in writing on the degree of progress he felt had been made at the last Nally/Armstrong round. At Howe's request they had prepared a brief on current exchanges for use by him in a discussion Howe hoped to have with our Minister on the EC Ministerial visit to Costa Rica (they had also arranged through our Embassy for the supply of a quantity of tea of a certain brand!).

Goodall said that, as coordinator of the papers now in preparation, he was having considerable difficulty with Departments on his own side, particularly the NIO. Four officials in the NIO, Andrew, Brennan, Bourne and Burns (and the departed Angel) had been "in the know" for some months. Their attitude had been one of total opposition. During

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earlier months they had felt the whole exercise was "mad" and that he and the undersigned in particular were "unhinged". He felt that they were now beginning to feel, albeit with reluctance, that the two sides were "in business". Their advice would probably continue to be essentially negative.

It was because of this situation that he had felt that the notion of an "exchange of papers" between the two sides at the next round would be useful: this enabled him to demand of the NIO, not an analysis setting out the "thousands of reasons" why the approach now under discussion would be unthinkable from the British side, but rather papers incorporating the approach in a form which could be handed over to the Irish side i.e. to devise ways of implementing the approach rather than reasons for not doing so. Even so, there would still be considerable obstacles and difficulties. We talked briefly about some of the individual items.

On "Devolution" he said that the officials in the NIO strongly disagreed with Prior's conviction that devolution would be possible as part of the package: they believed that the unionists would simply refuse to operate a devolved government in the context of an Irish dimension such as was now being contemplated. His own view was that whether or not the unionists would be prepared to operate it, the possibility of devolution should be fully incorporated in the package. I said I understood we shared his own approach but that we would be slightly more optimistic than the NIO about the possibility of getting a system of devolution going: it was a question of devising both sticks and carrots of sufficient pressure.

On the Joint Security Commission he said they were having difficulty in giving the Commission full control of the appointments and the issuing of guidelines. They were trying to solve this problem.

On the Court, they had brought in the permanent head of the Lord Chancellor's office. I said to him that I had reason

to believe that he (Goodall) might have been wrong in thinking that Lowry had been opposed to the Joint Court idea; his opposition, I said, had been to the Single Court. Goodall admitted that that could well be the case.

On the Parliamentary Tier a paper already exists in the NIO. They will rehash this. (Note: I have reported that the British Ambassador mentioned the existence of this paper to me about two months ago. Both Goodall and the Ambassador mentioned that there is no doubt that Powell has been shown or told about this paper: hence his repeated charge that London and Dublin are cooking up a deal involving a Parliamentary Tier which would both weaken the Union and bring the SDLP into the Assembly.)

On the Statement of Principles/Objectives he said he is working on this himself. I said Noel Dorr might be in touch with him about it.

On security it emerged that there was a degree of misunderstanding on his side about procedure. He had the impression that we would be exchanging papers at the next round on this topic. I said he was wrong on this: it had been agreed that we would each widen the circle to include an expert/experts on security on the next occasion and that papers on this topic would only be exchanged after our next meeting. He said this would be agreeable to his side.

He read out to me a section of his report for the Prime Minister on the last Nally/Armstrong discussion on the topic of security. There was in it an indication of interest on the Irish side in widening the RUC to include an element of community policing. There was also a similar indication in relation to Armstrong's idea of a separate anti-terrorist force comprising Gardai and RUC and possibly working in a cross-border area under a Commander(s) appointed by the two Governments. I said that while I would not exclude a

development of the first idea as being of possible interest, he should not assume any interest in the second idea.

On procedure he said that Armstrong would be in touch with Nally about fixing the time and place. It now seemed to be unlikely that a meeting could take place before the 16th October. It would be a two-day meeting at a Government establishment in the countryside. On the British side the participants would probably be: Goodall, Goodison, Andrew (new) and Bourne (new). While the British side were working to produce a full set of papers (not now necessarily including a paper on security) by then, he felt that that would not be achieved in all cases. He also favoured an overall "framework" paper which would draw the various elements together in a single political framework. He said that the papers on the British side would not have to be cleared by the Cabinet but probably by Thatcher, Howe and Hurd meeting together.

Goodall said that Howe fully understood the nationalist emphasis in the Minister's speech as being useful and, from our point of view, necessary. He had personally written a favourable commentary for Howe on the Minister's Oxford speech. I said that it seemed to me that Hurd did not fully appreciate this point.

M. Lillis

1 October 1984

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