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lll Secretary
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Some conversations on the occasion of the Trooping of the Colour -
Saturday, 14 June 1986

Dear Assistant Secretary

In accordance with the established tradition in London, my wife and I were invited by the Prime Minister to view the Trooping of the Colour Ceremony, along with Commonwealth High Commissioners and their wives, from the Prime Minister's stand at the back garden wall of No 10 Downing Street. We were also invited to the reception inside No 10 given by the Prime Minister and Mrs Thatcher for the Commonwealth representatives and their wives which follows the Ceremony. (This annual invitation to us and to our predecessors, which is not extended to other members of the Diplomatic Corps who view the Ceremony from another stand and do not attend the reception, derives I believe from the special status accorded to us in the 1949 Ireland Act where we are declared not to be "a foreign country"). The following notes on short conversations at the reception might be of interest.

The Prime Minister

As Mrs Thatcher moved about the reception my wife and I spoke to her for three or four minutes and thanked her for the invitation. She assured us (as she has in the past assured us and our predecessors) that we would "always be welcome."

After some social conversation, discussion moved briefly on to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the present situation. I mentioned her forthcoming meeting with the Taoiseach at The Hague on the occasion of the EEC Summit and said the Taoiseach was looking forward to seeing her.

She said "we must do something for the Unionists". She saw difficulties about the marching season ahead.

In reply I commented that there might indeed be some difficulties during the marching season but the best thing would be if both Governments held firm to the Agreement and its implementation - as indeed she had publicly said she would do - since implementation of the Agreement was, we believe the best way to bring peace and stability for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland.

She said yes to this and the point may have registered with her - but I would not vouch for it. She went on again - reflectively almost - to say that there was a need to do something for the Unionists - "we have done things for one side and now we must find a way to do something for the

other. We abolished the Assembly you know; and we could have a difficult time with the marching season ahead".

In the circumstances of a rather crowded reception there was not really an opportunity to go much beyond this. Our exchanges were not perhaps of great significance but may be worth reporting as an indication of her likely starting point when she meets the Taoiseach in The Hague on 26 June.

Charles Powell, Private Secretary

I had a short chat also with Charles Powell. We referred to the meeting between the two Heads of Government on the occasion of The Hague Summit. I understood that no time has been set as yet. However, Powell said that the Prime Minister's stay in The Hague on this occasion would be rather short (lunchtime on one day until lunchtime on the next?) so it might be well to keep this in mind in relation to the timing of the meeting.

Powell told me that they had received a very full account of the meeting in Dublin earlier this week and that Sir Robert Armstrong in particular had reported very fully on his meeting with the Taoiseach so that the Prime Minister will be aware of our views on the present situation. I said that it had been suggested at the official level Armstrong/Nally meeting that it would probably be well for the two Heads of Government to use the occasion of the meeting for a broad review of the political situation and political requirements rather than go into detail on specific issues. He agreed with this.

David Goodall

We had a largely social lunch with David Goodall after the reception. It might be worth mentioning however that he commented as we were parting that "opinion within the Northern Ireland Office" has been moving rather well and in a good direction recently. I said yes - that I understood that Michael Lillis had had a rather good meeting with Robert Andrew at the end of last week after his meeting with Goodall himself. Goodall agreed - but it appeared he had been thinking particularly of Tom King in his earlier comment. He told me (as I think Andrew told Michael Lillis) that Tom King has now very much modified his initial opposition to the idea of three judge courts and is indeed beginning to come round on the point.

I talked a bit briefly with Goodall again about the court issue and said that I thought that there was something of a failure on the Irish side to understand where the real objections lay. It seemed in some discussions as if four or five arguments were being used; and when we responded on one the issue then shifted to another - as if the real objection were not so much any particular argument but more the personal position of one or two people such as Lord Hailsham. I said that in a discussion on the previous day Sir Michael Havers, the Attorney General had told me that the main objection was the attitude of the Northern Ireland judiciary and the feeling they would have that the proposed change in the court system

was a reflection on them. Goodall said that this was probably right (ie that this seems to be one of the main points made by objectors to the proposal). He also said that some people suggest that to institute three judge courts now would leave the way open to claims that serious doubts must exist about convictions obtained in single judge courts. (This is not his own view - nor indeed was he arguing in any way himself against three judge courts but rather trying, helpfully, to tease out with me where the problems lay on their side).

I had mentioned earlier in the week to Goodall in a tentative way the possibility that I might myself seek to call on Lord Hailsham; and, as I am reporting separately, I had a brief - purely social - few words with Hailsham at a function here some evenings ago. I mentioned to Goodall that when I floated the idea to Havers on Friday he had advised against it. Goodall agreed and said he had taken some private soundings on my behalf and thought it would not be a good idea. I am reporting separately to you on this latter question.

Yours sincerely



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