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SECRET

Meeting with King, 12.7.1986

The meeting followed representations made throughout the night of the 11th and all day on the 12th in relation mainly to the Orange parade along the Garvaghy Road in Portadown and its consequences but also to several instances of threatened danger to the minority community on each of which the British were promptly helpful. At 7.00 p.m. I was invited to join the Secretary of State for dinner at 7.30 p.m. I sought to get instructions from the Secretary the Minister and, in the Minister's absence, the Taoiseach by phone.

Also present at dinner were Jim Daniel, King's Private Secretary and Mark Elliott, my opposite number.

Our meeting went on until about 12.30 a.m. and was interrupted very frequently by reports to King or to Daniel from "the field" and notably reports of the evening trouble in Portadown.

King said that the management by the RUC of the day's troubles was, in his view, a "triumph". He said that a lot of Catholics around Northern Ireland would be relieved at the fact that the parade permitted under conditions of severe restriction in Portadown that morning had taken the steam out of the situation, thus avoiding the likelihood which would otherwise have arisen of extreme violence against Catholics in many areas. King said that many Catholics had asked the police throughout Northern Ireland and particularly in mixed areas to do what was necessary in Portadown to stave off general attacks against the Catholic community.

King's assessment was that the management by the police of the day's difficulties had saved the Agreement. Had the trouble

which had been predicted taken place, it would have been represented as further proof that Northern Ireland would not live with the Agreement. There might indeed have been added pressure on police discipline.

The loyalist strategy was to stretch the Government at all points around Northern Ireland and particularly to stretch the security forces. They had not succeeded in this.

With the exception of a number of instances of sectarian conflict, most of the problems of the day had involved direct conflict between the RUC and the loyalists, with the RUC in the role of defending the minority.

King spoke at some length on the background to the decision to allow an Orange parade along the Garvaghy Road:

- he was not informed himself of the decision until about 10.10 p.m. when the RUC informed him;
- earlier in the week Paisley and Wright had been insisting on the Orangemen going through the Tunnel as the only alternative to "civil war";
- the Orangemen had in 1985 been offered the Garvaghy Road but had turned it down as unacceptable;
- the proposal put to them early in the afternoon of the 11th was to have 120 members of the Orange Order along with 30 supporters march along the Garvaghy Road starting at 8.30 a.m. A number of other conditions had been insisted upon all of which were observed. The only condition King said which had not been strictly adhered to was that only hymns, and not Orange songs would be sung. The reason that the Orangemen were late in setting off was not, as had been alleged, that they were hungover, but that they were frightened;

- there had been no arrests at any point along the Gervaghy Road and no incidents aside from random abuse by on-lookers;
- Alan Wright of the Ulster Clubs had not, as Brid Rodgers had alleged, led the march. (Note: From what I could see on television King was not right in saying this.) The so-called "decision" about Garvaghy Road was in the form of an agreement reached between Whiteside and the Orangemen at 6.00 p.m. Whiteside had informed Hermon who was dining with King during their dinner and Hermon had informed the Secretary of State at the end of dinner.

King said that it was clear that Dublin did not believe that King and/or Scott do not intervene in these matters. The fact is that they do not and he particularly asked me to convey his request that Dublin should take him at his word. Equally officials do not.

Scott had spoken to the Minister in good faith. He believed that the RUC would not make an unacceptable concession. In King's view, especially given the results, the RUC had not done so.

King said that it was totally unthinkable that he should accede to the request passed on at about midnight on the 11th that he ban the march against the advice of the Chief Constable. Supposing he had banned it and supposing there had been a breakdown in public order, that would have created a crisis both for King and for Hermon one of whom would have to resign.

Paisley, Wright and Robinson had jumped on the band-wagon before the RUC announced their decision at about 10.00 p.m. It was already clear that they had lost. Paisley stayed away and Wright was already complaining about police brutality earlier in the evening.

Dublin and the SDLP were already turning success into defeat. The OUP had missed its opportunity to up-stage the DUP.

(Note: King tried throughout the time we were together to get in touch with Hume and I supplied phone numbers of places where Hume might possibly be - without success). King said that he was now convinced that things could be done under the Agreement. He was convinced of this firmly for the first time. He was also convinced that had events gone the other way, with a lot of conflict, the RUC problem might be very great indeed. "We've got over our first 12th of July with the Agreement intact".

He accepted that there was a serious problem of perception on the nationalist side, arising particularly from Paisley's claims of "triumph". The reality was that Paisley was humiliated. King said he would seek an opportunity to say something which would be conciliatory of nationalist opinion and he asked his Private Secretary to remind him in particular to emphasise the need to "accommodate" the two traditions.

In relation to the Hillsborough demonstration, King said that an attempt had been made to force an entry in the Tunnel in Portadown earlier in the evening where the marchers had been repulsed. They had been similarly met in Lurgan and the RUC there~~A~~ deliberately decided to let them have their demonstration in Hillsborough where they had not given anybody any provocation.

Throughout the conversation I intervened (sometimes with difficulty) to make the points which were of concern to the Minister.

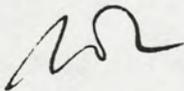
Leaks

King raised this subject and in particular the Conor O'Clery story in the Irish Times referring to exchanges between himself and the Minister about his Belfast Telegraph interview. King said that contrary to allegations which I had made, the NIO were absolutely convinced that these leaks came from Dublin and not from London. He said that the NIO information was that he had been in Dublin on the previous Tuesday. He had telephoned the

NIO on Wednesday morning on his way from Holyhead. I said that matched our own information but that O'Clery when he had telephoned our Embassy on Wednesday morning had indicated that he would be going to the NIO in London later that day to pick up the text of the Belfast Telegraph interview. I said that the leak in question was profoundly damaging to our interest and could not conceivably have come from our side. King said that exactly the same applied to the British interest. He insisted that the NIO were convinced that there was somebody in our system who was acting contrary to the interest of our Government. I insisted firmly that the converse was the case. King said that he was himself unhappy at the way in which Whyte had presented the interview: Whyte had left out a good deal and had moreover not give him (King) a chance to review the text.

King was relatively relaxed throughout and quite genial.

On instructions, I travelled to Dublin early in the morning of July 13th and reported all in detail to the Taoiseach, the Minister and the Secretary.



15 July 1986