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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON



Confidential

12 February 1987

CALL ON NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY, TOM KING - 11 FEBRUARY 1987

Dear Eamon,

I paid a farewell call yesterday on Tom King and spent about fifty minutes with him. He was accompanied by Robert Andrew and had his Private Secretary, Neil Ward, as note-taker (although in the event, I did not have the impression that a very detailed note of the conversation was taken).

King was, naturally enough, very interested in the political situation at home and the possible outcome of our election. He was careful on several occasions to note that, as an outsider, he would not wish to interfere in any way; and I, too, obviously said that I was not in any position to forecast the outcome.

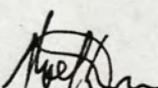
He is however, legitimately enough, considering what situation he would face if the Government were to lose, and the Opposition to win, the election; and he has been studying that part of the Opposition manifesto which deals with Northern Ireland, with particular reference to what conclusion he could draw about the attitude of the Opposition to Article 1. He and Robert Andrew made considerable play of the point that the Agreement had been negotiated as a balanced "package" and that, if on the Irish side there were less than full acceptance of Article 1, then it was hard to see how a British Government would find this acceptable and continue nevertheless to operate the rest of the Agreement. I listened to this and asked some questions to understand their position but made it clear enough that, if there were to be a change of Government in Ireland, the incoming Government would want to determine its position and that I, for obvious reasons, could not now speak for what that position would be.

One other item, worth mentioning from our discussion is that King said that he has come to feel that Ambassador Fenn should attend all meetings of the Conference as a member of the British Delegation. This is for purely practical reasons so that he will be well-informed when, as happens, Ministers in Dublin ask him about something. King does not envisage that Fenn would participate actively - he would simply be an observer from the FCO, along with or in place of, the existing silent observer. He asked if we would want to, or be prepared to, have our Ambassador in London attend and said that they felt that there is no need for symmetry in this respect., I

pointed to some difficulties about attendance by me or my successor at meetings in Belfast and said that I thought the general effect of what he has in mind would be to move a bit more away from the idea of small meetings and the specific character of the Conference and move towards the more formal "inter-State" apparatus through the presence of Ambassador (s). He sought to reassure me that it was simply a practical matter, that an FCO presence was needed anyway among the seven or eight NIO people there, that Fenn's presence would be as observer only, and that there is no requirement of symmetry.

I met King again at a dinner party later that evening but in the circumstances our discussion was purely social. I will however be meeting him again before I leave as he is giving a lunch before my departure.

Yours sincerely,


Noel Dorr

Eamon O Tuathail,
A/Secretary