



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/48/160

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

Confidential

cc PSI
PSS; Finlay
M. Mansel
F. Murphy
T. Dalton
J. O'Leary
A. L. L.
West
Councillors
M

A meeting with Ken Maginnis

Introduction

Ken Maginnis addressed a meeting at the Glenree Centre last Saturday (8 October) on the subject of "Understanding Unionism, its hopes and fears".

The meeting drew an attendance of about thirty, which included Senators Shane Ross and Dick Roche. (Senator Ross claimed in the following day's Sunday Independent that the event had been boycotted by the members of the Oireachtas, all of whom had been invited; this was not, in fact, the case).

The following are the key points of interest which arose (a) in Maginnis' public address; (b) over a private dinner afterwards.

Address

- Maginnis urged people in the South to deal with Unionists "as we are, not as you would like us to be".
- He highlighted the interest he took in Southern politics and Dail Eireann (with a jocular aside about the eye which he also kept on "that other great bastion, Iveagh House").
- The "only really new thing" about the Joint Declaration had been its acknowledgment of the importance of consent. Because of this, the UUP had been ready to move forward with it.
- They had been dismayed, however, by Sinn Fein's lengthy prevarication. The Declaration was clearly unacceptable to Sinn Fein because it "smacked of democracy" and denied the IRA the chance to continue to exercise a veto "down the barrel of a gun".
- Maginnis described the recent developments as "a ceasefire - but not peace". The purpose of the ceasefire was to provide a breathing-space for the IRA

While Gerry Adams courted international support.

- Consequently, while he understood the need for encouragement of Sinn Fein in the initial post-ceasefire period, he regarded the Irish Government's repeated emphasis on the "permanence" of the ceasefire ("in the face of everything we know") as unhelpful. Irish Ministers were not taking into account the possibility that Adams might be "dangling a bone on which there was no meat".
- Maginnis also criticised the prediction by Peter Temple-Morris earlier that day that the British Government would shortly accept the permanence of the ceasefire. Adams, he remarked, was not using the word "permanence" because "he cannot deliver permanence - it's as simple as that".
- Maginnis himself was willing to accept, instead of permanence, "a temporary ceasefire - by both factions - which would be ongoing for a considerable length of time".
- He went on to quote from an internal strategy document which he had sent to Jim Molyneaux on 11 July. Events since then, he claimed, had fully endorsed his analysis of Sinn Fein/IRA intentions at that time and there would be further endorsement in an imminent newspaper article. (This was an apparent reference to a piece by Ed Moloney in this week's Sunday Tribune, which invoked a current Starry Plough article in support of a view that the IRA initially contemplated a limited, tactical ceasefire).
- In the July document, Maginnis predicted that Sinn Fein and the IRA would offer a ceasefire of limited duration with a view to getting into talks with the British Government. However, they would at the same time try to engineer an escalation of Loyalist paramilitary violence, so that they would have a pretext to resume their own violence in due course in order to "protect their community". This would mean, of course, that they could avoid handing in their full arsenals. Their calculation would be that the British Government would not break off talks with them over an ostensibly limited resumption of violence for "self-defence" purposes.
- Maginnis had also predicted to Molyneaux that the Irish Government would "fan the flames" by e.g. holding emergency talks with Sinn Fein in order to discuss a worsening Loyalist paramilitary situation.
- (When, in private conversation afterwards, I asked him how he reconciled his theory with the IRA statement of 31 August which had omitted all reference to the possibility of a resumption for "self-defence" purposes, he replied

at the plan was to introduce this point only when the stage of talks with the British Government had been reached. If sufficient Loyalist violence had not materialised by then, the very fact of talks with the British Government would in itself destabilise Unionism and provoke Loyalist violence based on fears of a sell-out);

- As far as Maginnis was concerned, therefore, the IRA scenario involved a return to violence within "two to three months" (not even the "two to three years" which Adams had "let slip" during his U.S. visit). This would happen unless Sinn Fein received some encouraging signals from the British Government in the envisaged talks.
- Maginnis recognized, however, that the strategy would be frustrated if, as widely predicted, the Loyalist paramilitaries decided on a ceasefire of their own in the near future. He acknowledged that such a development was very likely and could be expected over the next few weeks.
- Maginnis resented any idea that there would be in any future talks "a blank page for Sinn Fein to write on". Rather, there would be a page on which a lot had already been written - by history...and also by the Joint Declaration. But there was "a bit left over" and he was prepared to let Sinn Fein write in that space - however uncomfortable it would be for Unionists to sit down and talk to them.
- Dealing with the prospects for political talks, Maginnis resurrected the UUP's proposals from the 1992 talks. He labelled as "power-sharing" (though the term "responsibility-sharing" had been favoured at the time) the party's proposal for an elected Assembly and a system of committees, with pro rata representation on each and weighted majorities for controversial issues.
- As an aside, Maginnis recalled that, when he had gone to the bar for informal drinks with Irish Government delegates during the 1992 talks (and had been castigated by Paisley for doing so - as well as for addressing them by their Christian names!), the Irish Government delegates had spent much of the time criticising the British Government. In turn, British Government delegates in similar circumstances had spent a lot of time criticising the Irish Government. Maginnis drew from this the comforting conclusion that the UUP enjoyed the confidence of both Governments and had converted both to the merits of "reasonable Unionism"!
- Responding to questions after his address, Maginnis avoided a straight answer when asked whether he trusted

John Hume. He chose to reply by lavishing praise on Seamus Mallon (who "has never lied to me in the 35 years that I have known him") and by commenting that he would not trust the outcome of anything proposed to him by Hume.

- He also underlined his own "Irishness", while acknowledging that many of his Unionist colleagues would say that they were not Irish. ("I am Irish because I am Irish; I am Irish by birth but British by outlook").

Private remarks

- Over dinner afterwards, Maginnis developed a number of themes.
- First and foremost, the Irish Government should make clear to its Sinn Fein contacts the importance which it attached to the handing-over of all IRA weaponry and explosives. A satisfactory verification process was the minimum requirement before Unionists could take the ceasefire more seriously and e.g. enter talks involving Sinn Fein.
- In this context, Maginnis wondered whether the IRA might prefer to hand over their arsenal to the Irish Government rather than to the British (in order to remove any appearance of a "surrender" to the latter). He would have no difficulty with this.
- He made clear that he did not realistically expect everything to be handed over. However, he would wish to see all "heavy weapons" and explosives handed over.
- I observed that, while the Irish Government clearly wished to see all weaponry and explosives handed over, this was a matter which the British Government intended to pursue at its exploratory talks with Sinn Fein.
- Developing his view that there was no serious IRA intention to end violence, Maginnis claimed that the figure whom he regarded as the "No. 1" on the Army Council, "Slab" Murphy, would make no permanent commitment of that kind. Neither would his (unidentified) "No. 2" - "the best and cleverest that they have". Adams, whom he placed at "No. 3", was a mere pawn who could be sacrificed to a wider IRA strategy.
- Maginnis went on to reiterate his criticism of the

●mple-Morris prediction and to urge John Dew of the British Embassy (who was also present) to convey strongly to his authorities that the Prime Minister should think again before accepting that the ceasefire was permanent.

- He also commented that the Irish Government had been "precipitate" in interpreting the ceasefire as permanent, in inviting Gerry Adams to Government Buildings for consultations and in saluting the "courage" of Sinn Fein and the IRA.
- I explained the basis for the Government's judgment in all of these matters. Underlining the need for a balanced and sensitive approach on all sides at this delicate juncture, I drew attention to the sensitivity to Unionist concerns which both the Tanaiste and the Taoiseach had displayed in their public statements since 1 September. I suggested that, in turn, Unionists could make a positive contribution by being more forthcoming about the ceasefire or, at the very least, about the obviously positive gains made since 1 September.
- Maginnis acknowledged the points made about Irish Government statements, while grumbling mildly at a tendency on the Government's part to "talk at us, rather than with, or to, us".
- I took this opportunity to raise Jim Molyneaux's long-standing reluctance to meet the Tanaiste. Maginnis replied that "Jim's instinct is to see Dick Spring - but he is afraid that it would look as if Unionists were weakening". I expressed great regret that this view was taken, particularly as Mr Molyneaux had already met Irish Ministers during the round-table talks two years ago. I put it to Maginnis that direct dialogue was the key to progress (which he accepted) and that he should work on his leader with a view to facilitating an early contact with the Tanaiste.
- Maginnis suggested that a Loyalist ceasefire could come within the next month. He mentioned that efforts by Molyneaux to arrange one during the summer (in order to "steal a march on the Provos") had come to nothing because "some of the cards were finally not turned up".
- In this connection, Maginnis raised the likely timing for the appearance of the framework document. He hoped that it would not be published until "mid to end November". His concern, it emerged, was to keep the framework document well apart from a possible Loyalist ceasefire in the interim. He revealed some unease at the prospect of "the likes of Davy Ervine" exploiting the document in a ceasefire context and undermining the prerogatives of Unionist politicians in that area.

- He was also anxious that the document should not appear until "after we have our knees under the table again at Westminster" (Parliament resumes next week).
- He indicated that he would be grateful to have a copy of the document in advance of publication.
- As regards future talks, Maginnis expressed fears that, if a new talks process were to be agreed but the verification procedure did not produce a clearcut result facilitating immediate Sinn Fein access to it, the SDLP would "sit on their hands for months" waiting for Adams to arrive and would avoid all serious negotiation. The UUP would not wish to find themselves in "a re-run of 1992" and hoped that, in such circumstances, the Irish Government would put strong pressure on the SDLP to engage seriously.
- I commented that warnings about "serious engagement" were a little hard to take from one of the two parties which had to date resisted all invitations from the two Governments to come to the negotiating table.
- On substance, Maginnis asked if the Irish Government believed that Unionists would accept cross-border bodies with executive powers. While he could imagine "having one or two extra bodies on the lines of the Foyle Fisheries Commission", he could not visualize anything more extensive.
- I explained in some detail the two Governments' thinking in this area and the need for significant North/South bodies whose remit would include executive powers. In the course of discussion, Maginnis said that he could imagine "doing a deal" on structures which would include executive powers - but this would have to be the subject of a separate and subsequent agreement, not part of the main agreement at which we were aiming.
- He also asked if we had a "fall-back position" in this area. When I asked him what he had in mind, he referred to the possibility of a North/South body which would begin modestly and "work its way upwards" with time.
- In response to both points, I underlined the importance attached by both Governments to a comprehensive package of interlocking elements, all of which would be present from the outset.
- Maginnis sought to dissociate himself from his own party's campaign against Articles 2 and 3. While acknowledging his role in bringing the McGimpsey case, he

aimed that within the party he had counselled against making this issue the top priority. Rather, he had argued for first agreeing new North-South arrangements with the Irish Government and only "at the last moment" indicating the UUP's presumption that these would be reciprocated by the amendment of Articles 2 and 3.

- In conclusion, we discussed Maginnis' visit to the U.S. last week, with which he was clearly well-satisfied. He mentioned that the earlier visit paid by himself and three colleagues had arisen from a suggestion by David Trimble to Molyneaux that, as Trimble was due to visit the U.S. as a guest of the Ulster Society, he might "take a run up to Capitol Hill". Molyneaux, apprehensive about the impact which the bullish Trimble would make on his own in Washington, decided to send the more emollient Jeffrey Donaldson as his "minder". Signals from Washington had subsequently persuaded him to add two "heavyweights" to the delegation - Maginnis and Ross.
- Maginnis was critical of the level of access to the Administration which Gerry Adams eventually received. Noting the role envisaged for the US Embassy in Dublin in relation to contacts with Sinn Fein, he also criticised the Lake letter as a "humiliation" for the British Prime Minister ("heads should roll in the British Embassy over that").
- This led him into a tirade against the "interference" of the US Ambassador in Dublin, which Dew of the British Embassy strongly supported. I emphasized to both the sensitivity which Ambassador Kennedy Smith had consistently shown in reaching out to both traditions (and which had included intervention in the Unionist interest at the highest levels in Washington). Maginnis grudgingly acknowledged this.
- Finally, the role played by Conor O'Clery in setting up contact between Adams and Nancy Soderberg was roundly denounced by Maginnis both in his public remarks and in private.

David Donoghue

David Donoghue
11 October 1994