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NOTE OF DISCUSSIONS DURING THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO DUBLIN ON 6 MAY 1983

The Secretary of State visited Dublin on 6 May. He visited the Spring Show of the Royal Dublin Society in the company of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Barry. He called on the Taoiseach, Dr Fitzgerald, and subsequently dined with Mr Barry. At the request of the Irish Ministers, no officials were present for the discussions with the Taoiseach or at the dinner between the Secretary of State and Mr Barry.

Meeting with the Taoiseach

The Taoiseach was accompanied by the Tanaiste, Mr Spring, and Mr Barry. The Secretary of State reported that the Taoiseach made strong representations on the following points:-

(i) UK Government Support for Sinn Fein

Dr Fitzgerald said that he had learnt from a number of sources that there had been an instruction to the Housing Executive from a Northern Ireland Minister that their decisions should seek to favour Sinn Fein. This allegation which had been made in the last few days seemed to have come from both Bishops Daly among others. Dr Fitzgerald concluded from this that the present Government intended to continue the practice of previous administrations of negotiating with terrorists. The Secretary of State reacted firmly. He was sure there was no truth in these allegations, but he would of course be following them up.

(ii) Reluctance to arrest Mr Maginnis

Dr Fitzgerald said that the evidence from the converted terrorist Mr Gilmore had succeeded in putting the IRA in Derry in disarray. It was inconceivable, however, that nothing in his evidence had failed to implicate Maginnis. It seemed, therefore, that it was a policy decision that he should not be arrested. Again, the Secretary of State reacted firmly. He was sure that if sustainable evidence

against Maginnis existed, he would be arrested. But he did not think there was such evidence.

(iii) Lough Foyle

Dr Fitzgerald was aggrieved by the terms of the FCO note which had been delivered on 2 May. They deeply resented the suggestion that Irish ships had no right to be in the Lough. The FCO action in leaving a note in these terms, was unnecessarily aggressive. The Secretary of State took note.

In further discussion the Secretary of State reported that the following matters were discussed.

(iv) The Forum for a New Ireland

Dr Fitzgerald said that he had encountered less difficulty with establishing the Forum than he had expected. It was larger than he would have wished, but he wanted to provide for an SDLP delegation which gave more support to Mr Hume to balance Mr Mallon's influence. He was determined that the Forum would report by the end of the year. He saw no major progress being made on the Northern Ireland issue until that had happened. He was anxious that as many as possible in the North, including Unionists, should give evidence. While the first and final sessions only would be in public, those who wished to give oral evidence in public could do so. He hoped the Secretary of State could encourage Unionist politicians like Mr McCartney to give evidence, if only to educate people in the Republic about the Unionist view. He thought the Report would offer a number of models, starting with the objective of a United Ireland. The Secretary of State said it was not appropriate for him to attempt to influence Unionist politicians on this matter. There were politicians who were more reliably representative of Unionist opinion than Mr McCartney. The Forum might look with more confidence to receiving evidence from academics, lawyers and perhaps businessmen in the North. He emphasised the importance of the Forum producing some short-term proposals which might attract a Unionist response rather than concentrating only on long-term objectives which were totally unacceptable to Unionist opinion.

(v) Constitutional Developments

The Secretary of State said that the Assembly was doing better than anyone expected. But it could not progress further without the SDLP. He emphasised the safeguards to the minority built into the 1982 Act. He hoped the SDLP could be encouraged over the next few months not to impale themselves too firmly on the anti-Assembly hook. He floated the suggestion that each of the constitutional parties in the North might be given responsibility for one Department under the Secretary of State. He thought this went a long way to meeting the wish expressed by the SDLP for a separation of powers between the executive and the legislative legislatures. He was not prepared, however even to raise this with the Unionist parties until Mr Hume had given him an assurance that the SDLP would join the Assembly under such an arrangement. He did not expect Mr Hume to react to this while the Forum was in being. The Secretary of State said that he believed the Assembly arrangement was non-boycottable in the sense that if a devolution arrangement were to fail, the Assembly could revert to its present role. Dr Fitzgerald referred to the SDLP wish for separation of the executive and the legislature. His idea of a non-boycottable system was where the Secretary of State would appoint a new Minister from the same party if one were to resign. The Secretary of State pointed out this was impracticable.

(vi) The SDLP

In response to Dr Fitzgerald's concern about Sinn Fein, the Secretary of State said that he thought Mr Hume and the SDLP should do more to help themselves. Mr Hume should concentrate more on building up the party's organisation in the North. Contrary to what Dr Fitzgerald had heard, Ministers went out of their way to help the SDLP, for example with the housing enquiry in West Belfast, the release of Christine Sheerin, and the assistance for Belleek Pottery. But the SDLP had not made particularly effective use of the opportunities they had been offered.

(vii) The Irish Dimension

Dr Fitzgerald attached some importance to developing this along with the Secretary of State's proposals for political development in the North. He showed the Secretary of State a list of outstanding points, probably arising from the joint studies, which could be pursued at official level. He hoped progress could also be made with the establishment of Encounter. Senator Whittaker was ready to be one of the joint Chairmen. Whether or not there was an election campaign in the UK, he hoped the Prime Minister would be present at Stuttgart and that the two could meet then and announce the establishment of Encounter. The Secretary of State hoped it would be possible to make early progress with establishing Encounter. Dr Fitzgerald suggested also that some progress might be made with the parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Council. The Secretary of State hoped that early progress could be made with Encounter. He had no objection to officials examining the outstanding points arising from the joint studies if that would be useful, but he saw difficulties about making major progress on the Irish Dimension. There was not much enthusiasm for the parliamentary tier within the British political parties. And progress was hampered by the insecurity which Unionists felt. Prospects for progress on the Irish Dimension were tied up with prospects for progress with the Assembly. Some Unionist elements, particularly part of the DUP, were amenable to finding ways of encouraging the SDLP to join the Assembly. And Dr Paisley had not reacted too fiercely to the Forum. But if progress was to be made, some positive response to Unionist aspirations was needed from the SDLP.

(viii) UK Political Assessment

The Secretary of State referred to the prospect of a forthcoming General Election in the UK. Dr Fitzgerald seemed fully content to continue to work with a Conservative Government if it were returned, but he was concerned about the prospect of a hung Parliament. The Secretary of State said that, if asked, he would be prepared to consider continuing as Secretary of State

for Northern Ireland for a further period. He considered that given the period of office left to the UK and Irish Governments after a General Election in the UK, that would provide the best time to make progress for many years. If they failed, the alternative was likely to be integration of Northern Ireland within the UK.

The Secretary of State said that while the discussion had been frank, the differences of view had been exchanged without rancour and the tone of the meeting was friendly.

Dinner with Mr Barry

The Secretary of State and Mr Barry dined alone. The Secretary of State reported that the following main points were covered:-

(i) Lough Foyle

The Secretary of State suggested there might be a joint examination of this issue to see if agreement could be reached on apportioning the Lough between the two countries. Mr Barry seemed unenthusiastic, pointing out that the Republic claimed not only the Lough but the six counties, but the Secretary of State suggested that officials should follow up his proposal.

(ii) The Nangle-Dowra Affair

Mr Barry suggested that new information had been passed to the Chief Constable of the RUC in the last two days. He had the impression that the Chief Constable was considering disciplinary action.

(iii) The Castleblaney Four

Mr Barry seemed to understand fully that this was no more than an ill-judged and unorchestrated outing by four junior RUC officers.

(iv) Mr Barry's Limerick Speech

Mr Barry made clear that he had not been suggesting the

withdrawal of Northern Protestants from Northern Ireland, but the lessening of the British influence. He was not suggesting, however, immediate British withdrawal.

(v) Defence Secretary's Statement

The Secretary of State explained the background to Mr Heseltine's reported comments.

(vi) Attorneys General

The Secretary of State apologised if his recent reported comments about a meeting between the Attorneys General had caused embarrassment. He thought, however, that the fact of the meeting had already been reported in the Press at the time.

(vii) Sydenham Airport

Mr Barry said that he was grateful for the customs facilities which had been made available at Sydenham.

(viii) Freeport

Mr Barry suggested that the Lough Foyle area might usefully be designated by both countries as a Freeport. The Secretary of State expressed personal doubts about the value of Freeports, but took note.

(ix) UK Citizens Franchise

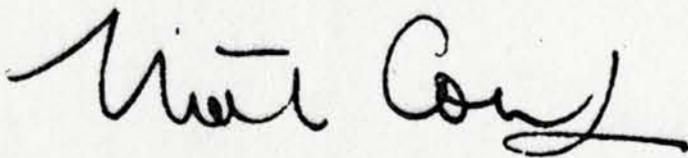
Mr Barry said that the Irish Government would announce in the next few weeks their intention to extend the franchise to UK citizens living in the Republic. It might, however, prove to be a constitutional matter which would need to be settled by referendum.

In general discussion, the Secretary of State emphasised that he would not be looking for dramatic new initiatives after the General Election. He did not think new initiatives were the way to make real progress in

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Northern Ireland. He again emphasised the importance of the SDLP joining the Assembly. Otherwise, the Unionists would have it all their own way. Mr Barry agreed that, while new initiatives had political attractions, they were unlikely to help matters. But he did not see how progress could be made in the short term without there being a commitment to an all-Ireland solution in the long term.

The Secretary of State thanked Mr Barry for not making a substantive statement to the Press following their earlier meeting in London on 1 February. The Secretary of State and Mr Barry agreed that no substantive statement would be made to the Press on their present discussions.



J M LYON
Private Secretary

6 May 1983

CC PS/SOS (B&L) - M
 PS/Ministers (B&L) - M
 PS/ PUS (B&L) - M
 PS/Sir Ewart Bell
 Mr Brennan - M
 Mr Bourn
 Mr Angel - M
 Mr Burns - M
 Mr Gilliland
 Mr Merifield
 Mr Reeve
 Mr Boys Smith - M
 Mr Abbott - M
 Mr Wood - M
 Mr Evers (RID) - M