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PS/SofS(L)

cc PS/SofS(B) M
 PS/Mr Scott (L)
 PS/PUS(L)
 PS/PUS(B) M
 Mr Bloomfield ^{6/11} M
 Mr Brennan
 Mr Chesterton
 Mr Bell

BRIEFING OF STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS

MR SCOTT'S MEETING WITH MR WILKINSON AND MR WENICK
 OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT, 4 NOVEMBER 1985

Mr Scott had a meeting yesterday with Mr Jim Wilkinson and Mr Martin Wenick of the State Department, who were accompanied by Mr Peter Reams of the American Embassy in London. Mr Scott was accompanied by Mr Bell and me.

2. Mr Wilkinson explained that he was newly arrived in his post as Deputy (one of five) to Ambassador Ridgway in the Bureau of European Affairs in the State Department. It would fall to him and Mr Wenick to implement the State Department policy in the wake of an Anglo-Irish Agreement. His visit was prompted by a general wish to brief himself about the Northern Ireland question; he had been prompted to call in on his way to a political conference in Norway, by press coverage of the prospective Anglo-Irish Agreement. He had visited Dublin, where he had found things were moving faster than he had expected. He had had a good briefing in Dublin from Mr Donlon, and he spoke most highly of the arrangements that had been made for him in Belfast. He said that he was anxious to be as helpful as possible over Northern Ireland, and do all possible to benefit it.

3. Mr Scott said that it would be difficult for either side now to contemplate a breakdown in the talks on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, though he stressed that nothing was settled as yet. The negotiations had become much more protracted than had originally been intended, partly because of the Parliamentary and Dail recesses, but in many ways this had been helpful, in producing a more workable Agreement. The Irish would try to portray the Agreement publicly as being as close to joint authority as they could; HMG would have to make new

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efforts to demonstrate that it was not. It was important that the Agreement produced concrete results, for example on security co-operation: at present co-operation was in a sense at a tactical much less than at a strategic level, in that it mostly took place between lower-ranking officers. It would be important to get the security forces on both sides of the border down to developing a view of future policy over a two or three year period ahead. Mr Wilkinson reported a comment by Dr Paisley to him; that the Irish Government had a moral obligation to co-operate on security to the fullest extent possible, without any necessary return. It had surprised Mr Wilkinson: that Dr Paisley had not been more yielding.

4. The conversation turned to the attitudes of the Unionist politicians, and their reaction to an Anglo-Irish Agreement. ^{Mr Scott said that} ~~it~~ irritated them that they had not been privy to the talks, and they had made difficulties. They had spread all manner of improbable stories about what might be in an Agreement; when it emerged that the Agreement was not so drafted they would no doubt claim the credit for that. They were obsessed by the slippery slope argument about relations with the South: any movement was represented as leading inevitably to unification. Mr Wilkinson relayed the views that Dr Paisley had expressed to him, namely that there would be particular antipathy to any joint Secretariat (something picked on also by Mr Molyneux as a sticking point) but that he did not believe that there would be a strike; a view expressed, however, along with allusions to people he did not control. (Dr Paisley had also mentioned the tactic of resignation by elected members; if Mr Wilkinson reported the conversation correctly, the DUP believes that members may only resign from the Assembly six at a time. Mr Scott suggested that Unionists might find the resignation tactic risky). The Minister said that he thought Unionist politicians would make a great deal of fuss over an Agreement. But he suggested that they would probably not give a clear lead to their people to cause serious disruption, and if that was so, and the paramilitaries remained quiet, there was unlikely to be too much difficulty. A very serious security incident or other major development could set something off; but there was a different mood now to 1974, the

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economy, though not in the healthiest condition was doing better, and there was nothing to focus on and bring down analogous to the Executive.

5. Mr Wilkinson passed on one other comment of Dr Paisley's, which he had found puzzling, but for which he had not really been able to get an explanation, despite questioning. Dr Paisley had said that, in the event of an Agreement, "there were those who might attack US firms." Mr Scott agreed that such attacks could have profound ill effects on new investment.

6. This brought the conversation to the subject of an International Fund for use in Ireland, and Mr Scott emphasised that there could be disastrous consequences if any such fund appeared, to Unionists, as a bribe to induce them to swallow an Agreement. It should rather be put over as a mark of approval by Americans. Mr Wilkinson said that the possibility of US cash being used as a bribe had been mentioned by Dr Paisley; he had said he regarded that as a ridiculous notion. In Dublin, Mr Donlon had been concerned too, about the same point. But the possibility of a fund was regarded ^{in Dublin} as being of high importance, along with a strong statement of US political support for an Agreement.

Mr Wilkinson said

7. /The US was waiting to be asked about the provision of a fund; it had not been asked yet. In discussion in Dublin, he had enquired how much was needed, by what mechanism it might be distributed, and to what purposes it would be applied. He had said that it would be possible to give money to both entities (his terminology; Northern Ireland and the Republic). But money had to be budgetted to stated objectives, and there was none in the budget at present for the objectives in question here. A few millions of dollars might be found from redistribution of money allocated under other heads, but not spent. In the longer term, to provide more significant sums, new legislation would be needed. Mr Wenick observed that this could come about either through a group of members of Congress supporting a specific Bill for this sort of assistance, or through its incorporation in a future Foreign Assistance budget. Mr Wilkinson said that the US would be generally supportive. His instinct, though, was that it would be important to spend the money wisely and well;

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otherwise after the first flush of enthusiasm, the fund would acquire a bad name. Dealing with Northern Ireland's problems would be a long haul, and Mr Wilkinson suggested that the arrangements for the fund had to match that. Mr Scott agreed that what was needed was sustained help, rather than a short spurt of money.

8. Mr Wilkinson speculated on the possibility of some sort of consultative mechanism being established, apparently between the UK, the Republic and the United States, over the allocation of money; the alternative was simply for requests for finance for such-and-such a project to be fed to the US.

9. Mr Scott asked whether pressures on the US budget, which he took not to be insignificant, could be outweighed by the political will to establish a worthwhile fund. Mr Wilkinson said that the will, ultimately, would be found to be very strong, particularly if worthwhile projects were at issue. Mr Wenick passed on a remark that John Hume had said Tip O'Neill had made to him; he had never voted money for Ireland, and would want to do so before he left Congress in a year's time. The technique would probably be to get a number of co-sponsors for the fund, including someone like Senator Wallop, who was close to the British.

10. Mr Scott asked about the Fianna Fail lobbying effort he understood was going on in Washington, particularly in respect of the Extradition Treaty: was it effective? Mr Wenick thought probably not. Congressmen would not typically give more than about ten minutes to that sort of lobby, and although lobbyists might go away thinking that their point had been well registered, it might well make little lasting impression. The Extradition Treaty certainly was in a lot of trouble; but the combination of increasing concern about terrorism, fuelled by the Achille Lauro affair, along with an agreement that showed movement on the Anglo-Irish front, might outweigh the arguments that had developed against a treaty - for example that there were restrictions on freedom of speech in Northern Ireland, the treaty was constitutionally inconsistent because it would have applied against the American revolutionaries, and so on. On the question of the Fund, Mr Wenick remained of the view that the average Congressman would be interested in doing something that might alleviate problems in Ireland.

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11. Mr Bell tried to press Mr Wilkinson on the way forward on the question of the fund. He mentioned that the FCO lawyers had investigated a number of possible structures for such a fund. Mr Wilkinson said that he was at present engaged in finding out generally what was happening, after which he would like to think, though he acknowledged there was not much time for that. He said that so far as we had ideas for mechanisms for a fund, it might be time to sit down with American experts in the Foreign Assistance field, lawyers and so on. The Reagan administration moreover, would be anxious to encourage private investment in Northern Ireland; Mr Scott strongly encouraged this, saying how well received had been the US Air Force order for Shorts' Sherga aircraft. Mr Wilkinson suggested that when he returned to Washington, he would get people together, including private enterprise representatives. Mr Bell acknowledged the practical problems: what might be needed was a sort of ad hoc merchant bank. Mr Wenick observed that trilateral talks would certainly be needed soon. But there would also be a need for multi-lateral discussions, bringing in the EC and others: any mechanism created must take into account such other parties.

12. Mr Wilkinson urged that we should not get too far ahead: what would come first would be a statement of political support. Stressing that (rather jocularly) that he was not speaking on behalf of the President, Mr Wilkinson said he was nonetheless confident that Mr Reagan would be able to come through with what was desired. He mentioned specifically in this context the visit of British officials to Washington this week. He did, however, stress that at certain times world attention might be on other matters, particularly the meetings at Geneva ; the President would probably leave Washington on 16 or 17 November.

13. Mr Wenick moved on to ask for Mr Scott's feelings on the situation on the ground in Northern Ireland. The Minister divided his assessment into three parts, security, economic and political. The security situation was improved, this year so far being better in terms of security statistics than at any time since the real start of the Troubles. The level of violence could never be said to be acceptable, but the risk of violent death in Northern Ireland,

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taking into account particularly deaths on the road and the like, was very well down any list of international comparisons. The lives of 90% of the people of Northern Ireland were physically untouched by violence; but it had a psychological effect, and spectacular security setbacks had a notable impact. The economic condition of Northern Ireland was dire, but better than it had been, and many people were coming to believe in Northern Ireland that the economy had turned the corner. HMG's effort on the political scene had always resulted in disappointment. Agreement would improve the international image; it would upset the Unionists in the short term, but Mr Scott believed in the longer term it might actually persuade them of the value of coming together with the other traditions. Mr Scott warned the Americans against reading too much into Sir Frederick Catherwood's activities; he really could not see that they offered any solution. An Agreement would be likely to make a continuing impact: the Irish Government would have every incentive to keep it going until the next Election in 1987.

14. Mr Wenick asked how the Agreement would operate: could the Irish Government come and say that the Falls Road had not been paved for 35 years: whereas neighbouring Protestant streets had? Would HMG then regard itself as under an obligation to investigate the complaint? Mr Scott said that they would, though the decision-making authority remained where it had always been. There was some concern that the Irish element of the Secretariat should not become a general complaints bureau, and he took it that complainants would, as it were, need to exhaust domestic remedies first. The organs of the Agreement should be more concerned with structural matters. On the prospects for an Agreement generally, Mr Scott finally added that he doubted now whether even some very bad development on the security front would shake the process. In answer to a question, he said that the Sinn Fein talk of proscription was mere propaganda, even though some of them might believe it.

A J Whysall

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PS/MR SCOTT

5 November 1985

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