

E. R.

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - m
PS/Ministers (L&B) - m
PS/PUS (L&B) - m
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Stephens
Mr Brennan - m
Mr Chesterton - m
Mr Innes
Mr Elliott
Mr Spence
Mr Gilliland
Mr Bell - m
Miss Elliott - m
Mr Blackwell
Mr S Hewitt
Mr G Hewitt
Mr Ehrman - m

MEETING WITH MR KEN MAGINNIS MP - 10.3.86

I met Ken Maginnis, at his request, in the Stormont Hotel. The meeting followed a series of telephone calls.

2. Mr Maginnis started by saying that no one was more keen than him to see talks starting between his party and the Government in relation to the future of Northern Ireland. He did however say that unless something was done to put the Intergovernmental Conference on ice he could see no way forward.

3. During the discussion he went over the same propositions which have been put forward during the last few days by various members of the unionist party ie suspension of Agreement/Conference/Secretariat.

4. I told him that the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister had made it very clear that the working of the Anglo-Irish Conference would continue. He would not accept this position and told me that while most of his colleagues believe the Prime Minister will not budge he is firmly of the view that she must and will.

5. I raised the 25 February meeting (with PM) and asked him if he agreed that for a short time people in Northern Ireland believed there was some hope that talks would continue and the events of last Monday would have been avoided. He agreed but pointed out that hope

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was based on a false premise that the leaders achieved something when in fact they had settled for nothing at all.

6. Mr Maginnis repeated his offer to debate with the Secretary of State, on television, the detail of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He says the problem is that he amongst others does not know who to believe - on the one hand the Secretary of State says there is not joint authority and on the other SDLP and the Irish Government insist that there is virtual joint authority. He gave me a copy of a Seamus Mallon statement on sovereignty (attached) to illustrate his point and then asked ... me why he should believe HMG rather than Seamus Mallon or the Irish Government. He went on to say that HMG cannot expect to be automatically believed and his hope is that a television programme were contentious points such as the 'SDLP complaints bureau role of the Secretariat,' sovereignty and devolution could be openly discussed, can only be useful and might lead to further discussions. He remarked that such a programme might be an embarrassment to the Irish Government if the Secretary of State is telling the truth on the above matters.

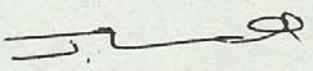
7. He raised one or two constituency matters which I agreed to deal with and also asked me if the contact could continue.

Comment

8. I tried to get Mr Maginnis to suggest a private meeting with the Secretary of State but he would not move in this direction as he felt it could be interpreted as him becoming a tool of the Secretary of State.

9. He describes himself as being in the same wing of the party as Peter Smith, Frank Millar, Harold McCusker and Bob McCartney and also that he is considered to be a hardliner on the Anglo-Irish question.

10. It is difficult to assess the value of a TV debate but there is little doubt that Mr Maginnis, along with some others in his party, is anxious for some form of dialogue to take place without any loss of face.


J. E. McCONNELL
Political Affairs Division

11 March 1986

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Mrs Thatcher would deny this interpretation and aver that there is no administrative structure which would be necessary for this to happen? Seamus Mallon would answer, '... the crucially important point is that the siting of a Secretariat with full-time Irish input in Belfast ... infringes the British Sovereignty. ... if next week you had British Ministers going to sit in Leinster House (*5) 'to deal with', and those are the words of the accord, political matters security matters and matter pertaining to the administration of the Republic of Ireland, backed up by a Secretariat which included British civil servants, would people in the Republic of Ireland feel that this was infringing Irish sovereignty? I think they would'.

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