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113

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NOTE OF A MEETING WITH HM AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON
ON 12 DECEMBER 1984.



1, Mr Bloomfield
2, POL/2

Present: Secretary of State
Sir Oliver Wright
Mr Andrew
Mr Lyon
Mr Sandiford



Sir Oliver said that a visit to the US by the Secretary of State would be useful in giving him an opportunity to explain UK policy, and in giving him a more direct understanding of the pressures on US political figures in relation to Northern Ireland. Sir Oliver said that most US political figures were reasonably content, provided that the relationship between Dublin and London was seen as harmonious. He thought that the Secretary of State should visit Washington, Boston and New York, and also if possible Chicago and San Francisco. After discussion, it was agreed that the Secretary of State should think in terms of visiting the US for ten days, with a weekend in the middle, in late March; but that this could be adjusted depending on progress towards and with the next Anglo-Irish Summit. Sir Oliver undertook to submit proposals early in the new year.

2. The Secretary of State thanked Sir Oliver for the time and effort which were put into presenting the UK case on Northern Ireland in the US. In reply to a question, Sir Oliver said that he did receive relevant material, but that the understandable constraints of confidentiality meant that he was sometimes not as fully briefed as might otherwise be the case. The Irish appeared to be less inhibited, but since Dr Fitzgerald had become Taoiseach the Irish had generally been helpful, not least in pointing out that the IRA were as much the enemy of the Republic as they were of the UK. It was agreed that it would be helpful, if possible, to let Sir Oliver have more advance briefing on the next Anglo-Irish Summit than had been possible before the previous one.

3. The Secretary of State expressed interest in the visits which people from NI could make to the US, or which US visitors could make to NI. Sir Oliver said that he thought there were enough NI

CONFIDENTIAL

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L.R.

visitors to the US, generally speaking, and that they went down well enough. He referred to Professor O'Malley's conference in January. The Secretary of State said that he was content for Mr Patten to attend, given that all NI constitutional political parties apparently intended to be present. He thought that there should be due economy in official representation; it would be helpful to have Mr Patten's views on this.

4. Sir Oliver suggested that the secondment of academics between NI and the US might be useful, and Mr Andrew undertook to explore the possibilities. The Secretary of State emphasised that he was keen to have US visitors come to NI. The US Consul in Belfast, Mr Bartlett was first class. The US Ambassador in London, Mr Price, was also very good, and his counter-part in Dublin presented no difficulty. Sir Oliver undertook to get feed-back on the results of the recent visit by a group led by Senator Hatch. The Secretary of State said that it was important for the UK authorities to have some influence over the programmes of US visitors, and it was agreed that it was important to liaise with Mr Bartlett about this.

5. As for visitors from NI to the US, the Secretary of State commented that visits by Unionists could be counter-productive, given the shrill and negative tone which they often adopted. Sir Oliver said that 'Co-operation North' had played a useful role. Visitors with a message of moderation often had difficulty, however, in making an impact. This had been so with the joint visit paid by the Lord Mayors of Belfast and Dublin.

6. The Secretary of State mentioned that Sir David Wills was keen to organise a Ditchley Conference on NI, in the autumn of 1985. It was agreed that this should be a useful enterprise, provided that the right people could be persuaded to attend it.

7. Finally, Mr Andrew mentioned that the UK authorities were currently well pleased with the co-operation with the US authorities over security.

Graham Sandiford

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12 December 1984