

CONFIDENTIAL

58/8

1. Mr Bloomfield
2. A1 9/4



BRITISH EMBASSY,
DUBLIN.

Mark Elliott Esq
NIO
Belfast

31 July 1986

- 1) cc PS/PUS (L&B) 18/11
- PS/Mr Bloomfield
- Mr Brennan
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Innes
- Mr Bell
- Mr G. Henitt
- Mrs. Henitt
- Mr McConnell

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5 AUG 1986	
REFER TO:	



Dear Mark,

2) return to me please
M: 5/iii

THE 12 JULY AND SURROUNDING EVENTS

1. Thank you for your letter of 17 July. I found it a most perceptive analysis of Irish views of the Portadown episode. Happily it agrees largely with our own analysis, as my reports of frequent contacts here over the past fortnight with Irish Ministers and officials may have demonstrated.
2. I think perhaps that it does not take quite sufficient account of the Taoiseach's and Mr Barry's political need, as well as their emotional inclination, to respond to nationalist grievances by complaining both to and about the British Government. You allude to Irish recognition of our determination to protect the fundamental interests of Nationalists. They however feel compelled not only to press these upon us, but also, as you are well aware, to take up every small incident of alleged harassment or injustice against members of that community. They have a number of reasons for this.
3. First, it is a long habit, dating from days when HMG had, perhaps, less time for Dublin's complaints than now. As you know, the Anglo-Irish Division make a practice of frequent visits to the North, seeing numerous contacts regularly. This network of contacts has privileged access, and it can hardly be maintained without the guarantee that redress will be sought for complaints made. At times of crisis this army of reporters telephones in, often to Mr Barry personally, and the DFA is flooded with cries of pain and rage which have a cumulative effect. You will have noted the reference to this in paragraph 5 of my telegram No 347 of 14 July. It is therefore not just John Hume's reactions which determine the Irish evaluation of the nationalist view. This is borne out by the account in your letter of his passions having died down before those in Dublin. At the same time, the Irish Government would not be likely to take any major step, such as sending personal messages to the Northern Ireland Secretary, if it were opposed by both John Hume and Seamus Mallon. The SDLP remain the principle influence on Irish policy on the North, as they have been throughout the lifetime of this Irish Government.
4. This, then, is the second reason for Irish vehemence.

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✓ | Their desire to diminish the influence of Sinn Fein is as strong as our own. As they see it, the best means to this end is to show that the SDLP can achieve results which Sinn Fein cannot achieve. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is the supreme example of this, but, they believe, will only be an effective influence on nationalist opinion in the measure that it produces visible changes. Any compromise which may be interpreted as a defeat for the principles enshrined in the Agreement threatens the SDLP's hold on the majority of Northern nationalists and therefore the Irish Government are bound tenaciously to oppose it.

5. Another point to which you rightly draw attention is disappointed hopes. They expected different decisions on 12 July and they thought they had received assurances in that sense. This contributed to the sharpness of their reaction, which, as paragraph 2 of my telegram No 368 of 22 July shows, was subsequently mollified on this score. In general, I fear, they are feeling let down on a number of topics arising under Articles 7 and 8 of the Agreement where the British negotiators were understood by the Irish to be making promises to deliver various things which we now state to be outside the competence of Ministers. As you say, they find it almost impossible to believe that the Chief Constable has total discretion over operational matters, and they are inclined to say that, if he has, then we should change the system. They consider these matters, as in this case, far too political to be left to the judgement of a man whom, of course, they profoundly mistrust personally - though, of course, they admire him too. As you say, the Stalker affair is in their minds.

6. I agree very much with the thoughts in the second paragraph of your letter. The outcome of the Divorce Referendum not only made Irish Ministers feel guilty about Northern nationalists but also made them depressed and nervy generally. This induced a particularly irritable response to those points in Mr King's Belfast Telegraph interview which appeared to be at variance with our previous undertakings to them, and paved the way for further irritation over the Twelfth.

7. All that said, I entirely agree with your conclusion that Michael Lillis can be a useful ally. I have certainly found him so. He is capable of constructive indiscretion. His commitment to the Agreement and all it stands for is not in doubt.

8. Finally, may I say how glad I was to hear from you? The more we can exchange impressions and information on these lines, the more, I am sure, we can both benefit.

Lawson,
Alan

Alan Goodison

cc

C L G Mallaby Esq CMG
Cabinet Office

G E Clark Esq
RID, FCO

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