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Note by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, T.D.,
of his Discussion with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,
the Rt. Hon. James Callaghan M.P. on Tuesday 26th August in
Schull, Co. Cork.

The Secretary of State and Mrs. Callaghan came to lunch with the
Tánaiste and Mrs. Corish. After lunch the Secretary of State,
Tánaiste and myself had a discussion.

The Secretary of State reverted to our discussion of the other
evening. He had clearly followed it closely and had been
reflecting on it. He had noted Maureen Lynch's intervention at
the end of the discussion when he had raised the question of
what the Irish attitude would be if the British Government in
attempting to deal with a doomsday situation had to take strong
measures in Northern Ireland such as the introduction of internment.
He had felt that the Leader of the Opposition had been approaching
the point of replying in positive terms when his wife had intervened
to indicate doubts about Fianna Fail's possible attitude in these
circumstances.

He asked a number of questions about the North, including asking
me to repeat the figures I had given of estimated strength of the
paramilitaries and the strength of the UDR and RUC Reserve. He
asked about the RUC. I said that its reputation had risen in the
North, although in an emergency it would probably at best be neutral.
However the 'conspiracy of silence' in respect of the Cookstown
affair had damaged its reputation and some action in respect of
this - transferring men to other stations for example - would
be necessary to restore confidence.

He asked questions about various political leaders in the North,
including questions about Faulkner's position.

He said that British public opinion could be very fickle on Northern Ireland. If there were a doomsday situation there, however, there would be a number of Tories who would adopt a 'unionist' position and favour continued British involvement, and others would tend to support the Government in action it took. On the Labour benches, however, there would be a number of people who would support disengagement. Harold Wilson would be 'all right'.

He said that he attached very great importance to the relationship between the Republic and Britain. It was very important that this should be maintained and it could be very serious indeed if the relationship were to deteriorate.

He said that this relationship depended essentially on Britain taking its full responsibilities in Northern Ireland. If Britain did so, taking the action necessary to maintain order and to protect the lives in particular of the 200,000 Catholics isolated in East Ulster, an Irish Government would, I thought, be likely to support British action. Only if Britain did not take her responsibilities was there a serious danger to Anglo-Irish relations.

In this connection I said that our relationship had been less close since the UWC Strike. He asked was this because they had failed to act? I said that in part this was so, but that the problem derived more from continuing uncertainty on our part about British policy, aggravated by the discussions that had taken place and were taking place with the IRA. We did not feel that we had been fully in the confidence of the British Government during this year, and at times the information given to us about these discussions was, to say the least, in arrears vis a vis the events. For example, we had received a denial about discussion of points mentioned in the Fisk article about 12 points put by the IRA to the British officials, but subsequently the British Ambassador had

revealed to the Taoiseach that a number of these points had in fact been put. It was naturally a matter of deep concern to us that discussions with the IRA, which had started on the alleged basis of 'clarifying British policy' which the IRA had misunderstood, should have gone on to include discussion at which matters such as the statement of intent had been raised, as was clear even from British accounts of these discussions. While it was our impression that reports that 'agreement' had been reached on a statement of intent were exaggerated, there seemed to be reason to think that British officials had allowed the IRA to continue to believe that a 'statement of intent' would be considered if and when the Convention negotiations broke down.

The Secretary of State said that he doubted if British officials would have acted in this way. It sometimes happened that they acted beyond their authority - he instanced a recent case where one of his officials had 'briefed' on Helsinki in the opposite sense to British policy and had been 'sacked' - but this was a rare event.

He asked whether Merlyn Rees - who, he said, was a very close friend of his - had been made aware of our feeling of uncertainty and not being in the full confidence of the British Government, - had ^{we} spoken to Merlyn Rees as bluntly as we had spoken to him? I replied in the negative, saying that of course we understood that Merlyn Rees was under very great pressures.

He raised the question of what action they might take if the Convention failed. Should they put proposals to the participants or bring them together to initiate a further discussion but without making a specific proposal that might be resented.

I said that some action along these lines was desirable. It would at least keep things going and in a situation of this kind when people were far apart some kind of mediating action was usually necessary; I agreed, however, that putting a cut and dried proposal might be a mistake as it might be resented.

He asked whether we thought it would be a good thing if we had a joint meeting - himself, Merlyn Rees and myself? I said that I thought this could be very valuable. Our success in coming through the critical months ahead depended above all on our being in close touch and in the full confidence of each other. He said he would try to arrange this. I suggested mid-September, before he and I went to the UN General Assembly. He said that he would take this up at the next meeting of the Irish Committee of the Cabinet. He was not sure when this would be. When the Tánaiste asked him who were the members of this Committee he said that he was not sure - he had not attended it for some time. Roy Jenkins was one, he thought. I said that I could understand his not having been involved with it for some time past but in the period ahead when this issue could become critical, and of international importance, it could be very important that he participated in the formulation of Irish policy.

The discussion concluded.

28 August, 1975