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To Hq from London
For Assistant Secretary Donlon from Ambassador

Airey Neave spoke to me this morning and I gave him the arrangements for his visit to Dublin. He is very pleased. He hopes, after consultation with Mrs.Thatcher, to give me in advance of his visit an idea of the matters he and Biggs-Davidson will wish to discuss. Neave hopes during his call on the Taoiseach to be able to suggest an early meeting between him and Mrs. Thatcher. She will be going to Belfast shortly and an early meeting thereafter with the Taoiseach is something he thinks she would welcome.

David James and Michael Mates came to lunch. According to Mates's information Mrs. Thatcher will be going to the North with Airey Neave on Monday next. She will spend 1/2 days there. Both James and Mates would hope that a meeting between Mrs. Thatcher and the Taoiseach could take place very shortly after and their hope is that this meeting could be in Dublin rather than here.

While Mates still has doubts about Craig's ultimate intentions, he is now strongly of the view that the coalition idea is the line to be supported. He has had a number of private talks with Craig and "despite Craig's sinister involvements in the past" Mates hopes that we can find it possible to give his proposal a chance of success. The indications are that, after the Convention Report has been rejected or almost rejected, there could be a considerable rallying of support behind Craig.

If this rallying of support takes place there could be growing

pressure on us for constitutional changes involving Articles 2 and 3 and divorce. In reply to a question from Mates I said I thought the SDLP would not be unhappy about the constitutional changes mentioned but that I was of course in no position to judge the likelihood of early developments in these directions.

Both Mates and James expressed considerable interest in our extra-territorial legislation proposals. They hoped they will not get bogged down. I said I doubted if this would be the case but there may be a slight delay because of the impending by-election.

Mrs. Thatcher is faced with front bench changes. She has however decided not to do anything until the Government has made its changes. The view in the Opposition at this stage is that Merlyn Rees may remain where he is for the measurable future because of the prospect of success on the Coalition idea. The expectation in Tory circles is that Reggie Maulding will have to be ditched and that Peter Walker will be invited in even though he is personally unpopular with many of his colleagues. Keith Joseph should be dropped but this would require great courage on Mrs. Thatcher's part.

Mates expressed considerable satisfaction that Biggs-Davidson will be going to Dublin. He hoped that we would be able to put our points of view across to him in emphatic terms. If Dr. Herrema comes out alive we will be able to talk against a background of goodwill here which has not existed previously in this country. That and our stand on the Spanish executions has given us a specially high standing in Tory circles.

David James and Mates hope to visit Dublin around the 18th November, perhaps for two days. James will be in touch with me about

the details shortly.

Mates mentioned in rather critical tones a recent drinking session in the Irish Club between Fitt and Craig which lasted until 5 a.m. He thought this highly injudicious on the part of both of them at this juncture. I had already heard unfavourable comment from Irish people interested in seeing the Coalition idea given a fair chance.

End of Message

DOS 21/10/75

Time: 17.14

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