

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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NO. 590

IMMEDIATE MONDAY MORNING

TO HQ FROM WASHINGTON  
FOR S. WHELAN FROM D. O'BRIEN

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF A MEDIA POLICY BACKGROUND BRIEFING PAPER ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND ELECTIONS CIRCULATED BY THE BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES AS PART OF THEIR REGULAR SERVICE, OF WHICH YOU ARE AWARE, TO NEWS AND FOREIGN EDITORS AND TO SELECTED CORRESPONDENTS AND COLUMNISTS.

NORTHERN IRELAND: THE ELECTION RESULTS

THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND FOR THE NEW ASSEMBLY SHOWED OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR A CONTINUATION OF THE UNION WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM.

OF 78 SEATS, 59 WERE FILLED BY THOSE WHO FAVOR THE BRITISH LINK -- 26 OFFICIAL UNIONISTS, 21 DEMOCRATIC UNIONISTS, TWO INDEPENDENT UNIONISTS, AND 10 MEMBERS OF THE NON-SECTARIAN ALLIANCE PARTY -- TO 19 BY THOSE WHO FAVOR UNIFICATION WITH THE IRISH REPUBLIC.

THE LATTER COMPRISED 14 MEMBERS OF THE NATIONALIST BUT NON-VIOLENT SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY AND FIVE MEMBERS OF PROVISIONAL SINN FÉIN, WHICH IS THE POLITICAL WING OF THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY, DEDICATED TO SEVERING THE LINK WITH BRITAIN BY VIOLENCE.

BOTH THE SDLP AND SINN FÉIN HAVE DECLARED THEIR INTENTION OF BOYCOTTING THE ASSEMBLY, LEAVING THE NATIONALIST VIEWPOINT WITHOUT REPRESENTATION IN THE NEW BODY.

NEED FOR MINORITY VOICE

TWO DAYS AFTER THE RESULTS WERE KNOWN, ON OCTOBER 24, THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, MR JAMES PRIOR, MADE A STRONG APPEAL TO THE SDLP TO RECONSIDER THEIR POSITION. IN A BRITISH TELEVISION INTERVIEW HE POINTED OUT THAT THE PROBLEMS OF THE PROVINCE WERE SO SERIOUS THAT CATHOLICS NEEDED STRONG REPRESENTATION AND SHOULD NOT BE DENIED IT.

"I THINK IT'S A GREAT PITY ... THAT (THE SDLP) DON'T TAKE THEIR PLACES IN THE ASSEMBLY, BECAUSE IT IS THERE THAT THEY COULD START TO HAVE A REAL VOICE AND PUT PRESSURES ON THE UNIONISTS, AND THE PUBLIC GENERALLY, TO SHOW WHAT IT IS THAT THEY WERE AIMING TO ACHIEVE. AND THEREFORE I STILL HOPE THAT CIRCUMSTANCES MAY CHANGE AND THE SDLP WILL JOIN THE ASSEMBLY.

"I ALSO HAVE THE BELIEF THAT THE PROBLEMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND ARE SO SERIOUS, THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS ... WHICH HAVE PROBABLY GIVEN THE PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN THE SIZE OF THEIR VOTE, THE UNEMPLOYMENT AMONGS ABOVE SENT VIA ITT OCT 29 1982 1713 FROM 440026 HIBERNIA VIA ITT 0234

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SIZE OF THEIR VOTE, THE UNEMPLOYMENT AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE, THE DESTITUTION, THE POVERTY OF A LOT OF CATHOLIC FAMILIES, CATHOLIC WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES. ALL THIS SUGGESTS TO ME THAT THEY NEED STRONG REPRESENTATION IN A NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY AND THAT THEY OUGHTN'T TO BE DENIED IT."

MEETING DATE NOT YET SET

THE ASSEMBLY WILL GO ON, WITH OR WITHOUT CATHOLIC REPRESENTATION, MR PRIOR SAID, EVEN THOUGH THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE ENDING OF DIRECT RULE UNTIL THERE IS WIDE CROSS-COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR THE NEW BODY. THE ASSEMBLY IS EXPECTED TO HOLD ITS FIRST MEETING IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS' TIME, BUT THE DATE HAS NOT YET BEEN FIXED.

"I THINK THE ASSEMBLY CAN WORK IN ITS LIMITED FORM, EVEN WITHOUT THE CATHOLICS, ALTHOUGH IT WON'T WORK ANYTHING LIKE SO WELL AS IT WOULD DO IF THE CATHOLICS WERE THERE, IF THE SDLP WERE THERE. WE GET ON WITH THE ASSEMBLY AND WE SET OUT TO SHOW HOW IMPORTANT THE ASSEMBLY IS AND THEREBY, I WOULD HOPE ... ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO SEE THAT IT HAS A VERY USEFUL ROLE TO PERFORM ...

"IT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT HANDING BACK RULE TO NORTHERN IRELAND UNLESS THERE IS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY. THAT IS ABSOLUTELY CLEAR AND THAT IS ENSHRINED IN THE LEGISLATION."

## ANGLO-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY TIER

ONE OF THE MAJOR REASONS FOR THE SDLP'S POLICY OF ABSTENTION WAS THAT THE ASSEMBLY PROPOSALS MADE NO PROVISION FOR THE "IRISH DIMENSION" -- THAT IS, FOR AN ANGLO-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE IRISH REPUBLIC.

MR PRIOR, HOWEVER, HAS EXPLAINED THAT IF THE SDLP TOOK ITS PLACE ~~THE~~ ASSEMBLY ITS MEMBERS -- AND THOSE OF OTHER PA WOULD BE FREE TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY PARLIAMENTARY BODY WHICH MIGHT BE SET UP AS A RESULT OF THE ANGLO-IRISH INTER-GOVERNMENTAL TALKS +. (EXPLANATION OF ASTERICKS + - PARAGRAPH 8 OF THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED FOLLOWING THE MEETING ON NOVEMBER 6, 1981 BETWEEN THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER AND THE TAOISEACH OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC READS IN PART: "RECOGNIZING THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE TAOISEACH HAVE DECIDED TO ESTABLISH AN ANGLO-IRISH INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL THROUGH WHICH INSTITUTIONAL EXPRESSION CAN BE GIVEN TO THAT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. THIS WILL INVOLVE REGULAR MEETINGS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS AT MINISTERIAL AND OFFICIAL LEVELS TO DISCUSS MATTERS OF COMMON CONCERN. THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE TAOISEACH AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE FOR THE PARLIAMENTS CONCERNED TO CONSIDER AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE AN ANGLO-IRISH BODY AT PARLIAMENTARY LEVEL, COMPRISING MEMBERS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE BRITISH AND IRISH PARLIAMENTS, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND ANY ELECTED ASSEMBLY THAT MAY BE ESTABLISHED FOR NORTHERN IRELAND ...")

## ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

EXPLAINING THIS APPROACH ON TELEVISION, MR PRIOR TOLD THE LONDON WEEKEND TV INTERVIEWER,

"I PERSONALLY REGRET THAT THE MUCH BETTER RELATIONSHIPS THAT WE DEVELOPED WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND, THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND, OVER THE PAST YEAR HAVE NOT BEEN SUSTAINED, BECAUSE I THINK THAT THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN THE GREATEST HELP TOWARDS ENABLING THE SDLP TO SEE THAT THE (BRITISH) GOVERNMENT WAS SERIOUS TO DEVELOP BETTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE REPUBLIC."

HOWEVER, MR PRIOR POINTED OUT THAT BOTH HE AND THE PRIME MINISTER HAD SET OUT TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE REPUBLIC. HE PERSONALLY HAD TELEPHONED MR HAUGHEY AND SUGGESTED A MEETING WITH THE IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER, MR GERARD COLLINS, AND HAD BEEN TOLD A USEFUL DISCUSSION COULD NOT TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE ELECTIONS TO THE ASSEMBLY IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

SINN FEIN VOTE

ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SIZE OF THE VOTE FOR SINN FEIN, MR PRIOR IMPLIED THAT THE 10 PERCENT FIRST-PREFERENCE VOTE (SIX PERCENT OF THE OVERALL VOTE) WHICH IT RECEIVED WAS NOT ALTOGETHER SURPRISING.

“... IT WAS, I THINK, NOT QUITE THE SURPRISE THAT PERHAPS SOME PEOPLE THOUGHT, THAT SINN FEIN DID WELL, AND THEY HAVE ELECTED FIVE MEMBERS. AFTER ALL, ACTUALLY IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS OF ... JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, THEY GOT 7 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, AND NOW THEY'VE GOT 10, SO IT MEANS THAT A NUMBER OF HARD-MEN HAVE COME OUT AND VOTED WHO DIDN'T VOTE BEFORE.

“ALSO, I THINK PROBABLY THERE'S A REFLECTION THAT YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVEN'T HAD A JOB AND HAVE NO PROSPECT OF GETTING A JOB HAVE VOTED, AS IT WERE, FOR A MARXIST PARTY ...”

TALKS WITH PARTIES

MR. PRIOR WILL BE DISCUSSING WITH PARTY LEADERS THIS WEEK THE DATE OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY, AFTER WHICH IT WOULD BE A SOVEREIGN BODY AND HIS OWN ROLE WOULD BE “VERY LIMITED.” THE CONSULTATIONS WOULD NOT INCLUDE SINN FEIN, SINCE “THEY HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THEY'RE NOT INTERESTED IN THE ASSEMBLY” OR IN CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT.

MEANWHILE, HIS DEPARTMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS IN THE USUAL WAY AND GIVE WHAT HELP TO CONSTITUENTS IT COULD.

“THE POSITION (ON MEETING WITH SINN FEIN) IS ABSOLUTELY CLEAR: IF THEY ARE PREPARED... TO TALK ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT — AND THAT MEANS RENOUNCING WEAPONS AND RENOUNCING VIOLENCE — THEN THAT IS ONE STATE OF AFFAIRS.

“AS FAR AS REPRESENTING THEIR ELECTORS ARE CONCERNED AND THEIR CONSTITUENTS, THEN WE HAVE A FORM WHEREBY THEY ARE ABLE TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS AND THEY ARE ABLE TO SEE JUNIOR MINISTERS AND THEY DO GET ANSWERS FROM MINISTERS TO LETTERS THAT THEY WRITE, AND THAT WE WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO DO.”

END OF MESSAGE

29 OCTOBER 1982

TIME SENT:::1734HRS

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