

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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1. According to Mr. Millar the OUP expect the Assembly to continue for its full four year term. He frankly admitted that OUP efforts to obtain devolved powers under present legislation were not likely to be seriously pursued. Although opposed to the Assembly in its present form the party was enjoying the benefits of membership.
2. The Secretary of State is seen in OUP circles as a lame duck who has less than two years left in government. The OUP expect him to make a final effort to bring about devolved government but are sceptical of his chances. Mr. Millar mentioned that Prior had recently concluded some deal with the Sainsbury family which involved the expansion of his farming interests. It is clearly felt by the OUP that a fairly early retirement from front line politics is on Mr. Prior's mind.
3. Mr. Millar said that his party was not upset by the recent Paisley allegations about Anglo-Irish cooperation. What had been publicised was clearly part of the ongoing economic, cultural and other cooperation. No statement had been issued by the OUP on the matter although it would be dealt with in the normal Monday morning Press conference. The OUP saw Paisley's behaviour as part of the build-up to next year's euro-election. One can expect a much higher profile by Paisley over the next nine months although he would continue to support the Assembly which his party found useful particularly from a financial point of view.
4. Mr. Millar displayed an unusual degree of interest in the Forum and had asked me to bring with me copies of all documents published by it. He was particularly interested in the timing of the Forum and whether it would seriously face up to the real problems of a new Ireland. He mentioned ideas which had been referred to by the Taoiseach in the past such as federal, confederal, condominium and asked whether the Forum would plump for one of them or have a series of options. I indicated that the Forum was facing up to the realities and trying to achieve consensus but that it would be premature to speculate on the precise nature of the final report.

One great flaw which he saw in any federal arrangement related to policing. How could you get the minority to accept the RUC in a federal arrangement where Stormont retained a major degree of control over Northern Ireland security? I spoke of the effect all-Ireland legal institutions and joint policing could have on attitudes to the security forces particularly in a situation in which more Catholics could be attracted into the local security forces. It emerged in conversation that the OUP were taking the Forum very seriously and are preparing their arguments against the outcome of the Forum, particularly if it achieves a nationalist consensus. He gave me the impression that they would mount an extremely vigorous campaign against the Forum at the time of publication of the final report.

5. Mr Millar spoke of a toughening of attitude among even liberal Unionists in current circumstances. The SDLP was seen as a fading force and if the minority were turning to Sinn Féin then Unionists would not avoid what they saw as inevitable confrontation. When I spoke about the dangers of such a confrontation and of Unionist unwillingness to give constitutional nationalism a role, Mr Millar spoke of repartition as a possible outcome and strongly criticised the SDLP for not playing their part in democratic politics in Northern Ireland and leaving the way open to Sinn Féin.
6. Mr Millar said that a large proportion of the majority community saw the constitutional amendment as a manifestation of the way Catholic attitudes dominated in the South. Unionist politicians would use the issue for all it is worth and would question the Taoiseach's commitment to a pluralist Ireland. Despite the intensity of the debate in the South he admitted that the issue had aroused very little interest among the general public in Northern Ireland.



Martin Burke

14 September 1983