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Meeting with Rev. Martin Smyth, MP on 12 November

1. Rev. Smyth who had earlier in the day met 3 U.S. Senators who had been briefed by the Taoiseach on Saturday last, did not expect major developments from the Summit, but was concerned by what he termed the policy of gradualism. The Irish Government seemed to be gradually bringing the British Government towards a series of moves in the political area. Hence the OUP had vigorously opposed the Parliamentary Tier idea as it was a first step in the process of undermining Northern Ireland. If an attempt was made to include the Assembly in the Tier, the OUP would have to walkout; if it was simply the two Governments developing closer links it would still not be acceptable but would not justify a walkout. On the Summit, his advice was that both Governments should do nothing to further destabilise the situation. There was a fear or apprehension on the Unionist side that things were being done behind their backs and this has already led to some Protestant paramilitary groups reorganising. He mentioned the Red Hand Commandos in particular.

2. Instead of major initiatives the parties in Northern Ireland should be allowed to get on with trying to develop devolved rule if necessary on a coalition basis. The Report Committee on Devolution of the Assembly continued to hear evidence from the likes of Boyle/Hadden and Cornelius O'Leary and would soon move to inter-party consultations of an informal nature in an effort to bring the OUP, DUP and Alliance to a similar position. His bottom line was no power-sharing as of right but he did not rule out coalition and noted a more flexible DUP approach in which they stressed a willingness to form a loyal opposition. Some way should be found to tempt the SDLP back in. He stressed the Alliance position that the SDLP should be given the opportunity to participate in government but if it did not take it then Alliance would go in without them. The Way Forward was accepted by the majority of the party although some elements continued to press the integration

argument. The Way Forward had deliberately been left vague and flexible on the necessary structures in order to give room for negotiation. Rev. Smyth stressed again that the DUP document bears close reading as it is a more flexible DUP position than has been seen before. He did not put a timescale on when the devolution committee would report but did not demur at 3 to 6 months. He also felt that new elections should not be held even if the basis on which the Assembly operates had to be changed. An election would bring out the slogans and destroy any possibility of progress. He realised this would cause problems vis a vis Seamus Mallon but it was better than another election.

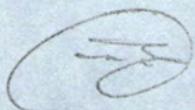
3. Sinn Fein

The British Government has pursued the policy of trying to wean Sinn Fein away from violence and bring them fully into the political arena. According to Rev. Smyth this policy had failed and the logic of the situation demanded a ban on Sinn Fein. British policy of not meeting them at Ministerial level but dealing with them through officials was untenable particularly after Brighton and Adams and Fheis speech. The OUP attitude is that as long as they are legal representatives they will continue to deal with them on district councils but will avoid contact to the greatest extent possible. He was critical of the SDLP walkout but hopeful that the SDLP would take a decision not to cooperate with them. Otherwise the SDLP's credibility with the majority community would be further dissipated. Rev. Smyth feels that Sinn Fein caution on next year's local elections is justified. They are unlikely to increase their vote especially if personation is dealt with. They will however get 30/50 seats and put everyone in a difficult situation. He feels strongly that they should be banned.

4. In discussing the Way Forward and respect for Irish cultural identity we touched upon the Flags and Emblems Act. Rev. Smyth felt that it would be difficult for Unionists to accept its removal at this stage. He personally could accept the U.S. system whereby other flags can be displayed provided the national flag is given pride of place. He did not however feel that many of his colleagues

would agree with this position.

6. My main impression of our discussion was his sense of distrust of British/Irish contacts and his feeling that a "process of gradualism" is in train which will eventually undermine the Unionist position. Hence they will be negative on any proposals emerging which although seemingly innocuous in themselves are part of a longer term process.



Martin Burke

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c.c. PSM
PSS
A-I Section
Box
Embassy London
Embassy Washington
File