

## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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276C IMMEDIATE 26.3.87

TO HQ FROM BELFAST

CRUINNIU

FOR O TUATHAIL FROM LILLIS

MY OPPOSITE NUMBER SPOKE AGAIN LAST NIGHT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON THE BASIS OF YOUR LATER MESSAGES YESTERDAY TO O CEALLAIGH. THE OTHER SIDE UNDERSTAND THE REASONS ADVANCED BY US FOLLOWING THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE TAOISEACH AND THE TANAISTE FOR HAVING AN INTERVAL BETWEEN THE INFORMAL MEETING AND THE CONFERENCE. THEY TAKE THIS AS A FURTHER EARNEST OF DUBLIN'S SERIOUS APPROACH TO THE CONFERENCE.

KING ASKED ELLIOTT, HOWEVER, TO CONVEY A NUMBER OF POINTS TO ME AND ELLIOTT ADDED SOME BACKGROUND FOR MY INFORMATION.

KING'S TWO MAIN POINTS WERE:

FIRST KING EXPLAINED TO US THROUGH ELLIOTT YESTERDAY THAT THERE ARE

''UNSHAKABLE'' PARLIAMENTARY REASONS WHY THE 8TH AND 9TH APRIL ARE OUT. THOSE REASONS ALSO AFFECT THE 10TH APRIL. THE NEXT WEEK IS HOLY WEEK. KING HAS ASKED DUBLIN TO UNDERSTAND A PERSONAL CONSIDERATION IN HIS OWN CASE WHICH IS THAT HOLY WEEK IS THE ONLY TIME FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AHEAD WHEN HE CAN TAKE A BREAK PERSONALLY. ASIDE FROM THE BUSY PERIOD AHEAD ON THE GROUND IN THE NORTH, HE WILL BE EXPECTED TO PLAY HIS PART IN THE CAMPAIGN LEADING UP TO THE LOCAL ELECTIONS ON MAY 7TH. HE PRIVATELY EXPECTS THERE TO BE A GENERAL ELECTION DECLARED WITHIN DAYS OF MAY 7TH AND THAT WOULD ENGAGE HIM HEAVILY ALSO UNTIL ELECTION DAY.

SECOND KING IS CONCERNED FROM A SECURITY POINT OF VIEW ABOUT

THE HOLDING OF A CONFERENCE BETWEEN APRIL 11TH, WHICH IS LIKELY TO BE DISRUPTED BY MAJOR LOYALIST PROTESTS, AND THE EARLY PART OF EASTER WEEK WHICH IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE SO DISRUPTED AND WHEN THERE WILL ALSO BE SENSITIVE REPUBLICAN PARADES. THIS ENTIRE PERIOD IS EXPECTED TO BE TENSE ON THE GROUND.

KING IS PREPARED TO FIX NOW A CONFERENCE FOR LATER IN THAT WEEK. THE FIRST CONCEIVABLE DAY IS WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22ND.

ELLIOTT ASKED KING WHETHER APRIL 6TH IS STILL OPEN, SHOULD DUBLIN FEEL THAT APRIL 22ND OR THEREABOUTS IS TOO LATE. KING SAID THAT APRIL 6TH IS HIS FIRST PROPOSAL AND IS STILL ON THE TABLE SO FAR AS HE IS CONCERNED, BUT HE WOULD NEED TO KNOW QUICKLY IF DUBLIN WISHES TO PROCEED WITH IT.

ON A SEPARATE POINT I ASKED ELLIOTT IF THE CONCLUSION WE SHOULD DRAW FROM HIS MESSAGE WAS THAT KING'S ATTITUDE WAS THAT IN THE EVENT THAT THERE WOULD BE A BRITISH GENERAL ELECTION, THERE SHOULD NOT BE ANOTHER MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE, AFTER THE APRIL MEETING, UNTIL MID JUNE. ELLIOTT SAID HE HAD PUT THIS IMPLICATION TO KING AND KING HAD SAID THAT THAT WAS HOW THE SITUATION SEEMED TO HIM TO BE.

ELLIOTT SAID THAT OF COURSE IF WAS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER WOULD, IN THE DAYS AFTER THE MAY 7TH LOCAL ELECTIONS, DECIDE NOT TO PROCEED WITH A GENERAL ELECTION. IN THOSE

CIRCUMSTANCES IT WAS HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT THE BRITISH WOULD FAVOUR ANOTHER MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE IN MAY. HE SAID THAT, IF THERE WERE A GENERAL ELECTION IN MID JUNE, THE DATE OF THE

CONFERENCE COULD OF COURSE BE AFFECTED NOT ALONE BY THE RESULT BUT, EVEN IN THE CASE OF A TORY VICTORY, BY THE QUESTION OF PORTFOLIO ALLOCATIONS: SHOULD THERE BE A NEW SECRETARY OF STATE, WHETHER A TORY OR OTHERWISE, SOME TIME WOULD BE NEEDED TO BRIEF HIM/HER BEFORE THE CONFERENCE MET.

THE NET POINT FOR DECISION IN DUBLIN, FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE CONCERNS OF THE AUTHORITIES HERE, WOULD SEEM TO BE WHETHER THE 22ND OR SLIGHTLY LATER WOULD BE OK AND, IF NOT, WHETHER WE WISH TO REVERT TO THE 6TH.