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## ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

Northern Ireland

Taoiseach,

As arranged, I met Cabinet Secretary Butler in London on 5th June for about an hour. This meeting was followed by another meeting with representatives from the Cabinet Office, Foreign Office, Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Civil Service (David Fell), attended by Secretaries Dorr and Brosnan, Assistant Secretary O'huiginn, Declan O'Donovan and Mr. Joe Hayes from the Embassy. This note summarises what I think are the main conclusions of the meetings.

The British side were unexpectedly optimistic about the prospects of moving to Strand II within the next fortnight. They implied that the chances were moving from possibility to probability. The driving force was public opinion in Northern Ireland which they interpreted as forcing the politicians to stay talking. They said the Unionists were pressing, in the talks, for more detail: the SDLP were arguing that more detail would sink the process before it reached Strand II. This was the nub of the difference between the two sides.

Butler was at pains to emphasise the great interest being taken by the Prime Minister in the talks. He was absolutely ready to intervene at any stage. If there was a sign of breakdown, he would have invoked your help. He is looking forward to the meeting in Rio.

The talks are centering about the proposal for an Assembly, with legislative and executive powers and a "panel" [perhaps of three persons elected in Northern Ireland] with other, as yet undefined powers. The SDLP proposals remain also on the table - though the British emphasised the strength of Unionist opposition to the idea of external commissioners on the proposed Council.

On the procedures for Strand II, if it were to happen, mention was made of the possibility that if the Strand were opened by yourself and the Prime Minister, personally, there was a possibility that Paisley might indulge in histrionics, with unpredictable consequences. Without having reached any conclusion on the subject, they seemed to be of opinion that it would be better if the Prime Minister and yourself were held "in reserve" to intervene in the event of a threatened breakdown. They were also of opinion that some other form of blessing for the opening stage - like a message or a separate meeting, in London, might be desirable. All of this is a subject you will probably wish to consider further. It is likely to arise in detail at your Rio meeting.

On the substance of Strand II, the main matters for discussion would appear to be -

- (1) Article 1 of the Anglo Irish-Agreement i.e. no change in the status of Northern Ireland without consent and support for a united Ireland if a majority of the people in Northern Ireland clearly wish for it;

# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-2-

- (2) Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution;
- (3) The Government of Ireland Act, 1920;
- (4) North/South structures [e.g. for political consultation, economic cooperation, perhaps judicial harmonisation and even harmonisation of law]; and
- (5) transcendence or replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

A Government view on each of these items will be essential for Strand II.

A feature of the discussions on Friday was the repetition by the British of the possibility of a "historic step" forward. Butler was at pains to emphasise that if there is a breakdown we will lose, with unpredictable results, but the terrorists will gain. His essential question was - are the SDLP ready to take part in a wide range of activity in Northern Ireland? I, of course, emphasised very much that that depended on the guarantees, structures and arrangements on offer.

Our conclusions were that the British were unexpectedly optimistic, were not asking us to pressurise the SDLP and that all of this area will be a major subject of discussion when you meet the Prime Minister in Rio.

European Community matters were touched on briefly, with attention being given to the Danish problem. The British seemed to go along with the idea that the other Eleven should ratify and then pose the question to the Danes "do you want to come in?". Their views are likely to be made explicit in a statement [by the Foreign Secretary?] in the Commons today. Again, this is likely to come up in your Rio meeting.



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Dermot Nally  
8th June, 1992.

c.c. Secretary Dorr - Will you please send a copy to Joe Small?<sup>2</sup>  
Secretary Brosnan  
Assistant Secretary O'hUiginn  
Declan O'Donovan