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Mr Mc Carthy
Mr 4/3/94

Taoiseach
Do see please
passages marked
in report from
ambassador Small
Mr 29/4

cc: *PST*
PSS
Mr Murray
Mr Dalton
Gen Sec
Counsellors

CONFIDENTIAL

28 April, 1994.

Mr. Seán O hUiginn,
Assistant Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
St. Stephen's Green,
DUBLIN 2.

SEEN BY
3-MAY 1994
TAOISEACH

Dear Assistant Secretary,

Discussion with Sir John Chilcot

What follows is a report summarising a discussion over lunch at the Embassy two days ago with Sir John Chilcot.

The Joint Declaration

Chilcot said that despite the latest negative signs he remained relatively hopeful that there would be a positive outcome. We discussed briefly the clarification issue and I put it to him that the British should have acted more quickly and more comprehensively on this. Failure to do so had given the IRA a propaganda opportunity that they had fully exploited. Surely it was in the interest of the British to do what our Government had done at an early stage and call the IRA's bluff, if that is what it is. Chilcot agreed that we had moved more quickly on this but added that it was much easier for us to do so as they had a much wider responsibility. He drew my attention to recent remarks of the Secretary of State in North America, hinting clearly of a greater willingness at this stage to meet the repeated demands for greater clarification. Chilcot added that recent killings by the IRA had diminished the propaganda value of their clarification demands.

cc Mr Mansergh
Mr Mc Carthy

The Unionists' Visit to the United States

Chilcot remarked on the comparatively positive note struck by Molyneux and his delegation in Washington in relation to the Joint Declaration. The British were very pleased about this and were glad that the delegation was well received. He noted with particular interest the remarks attributed to Molyneux that there could be a cessation of hostilities within a year. While observing that in its composition the group was predominantly representative of the moderate centre, nevertheless he felt that it was a very useful exercise to expose the Unionists to outside influences. I said that we, too, were quite pleased to see them visiting the United States and being well treated there. The visit would have been highly educational for them and they would have discovered how seriously the Americans look on the Joint Declaration as the formula for a solution. Chilcot made the point that the Unionist leaders did not, of course, expect details of their conversations in Washington to be reported to their own followers at home. I offered the view that in many ways Unionist politicians were out of touch with the thinking of their own supporters, especially the business community, who seemed to manifest much more interest in a settlement that would restore peace to the area. In brief, the Unionist politicians seemed to be operating in a vacuum, trying in many cases to outdo each other in their negative attitudes, their behaviour influenced in some instances by leadership ambitions. I cited Trimble as an example, although he was not the only one. It was clear that he was making a determined effort to establish his leadership credentials. Chilcot agreed that in general the Unionist politicians were not nearly as advanced in their thinking as the business community and many others in Northern Ireland. There was a palpable yearning for peace but the urgency had failed to grip their public representatives. The attitude of the Unionists to the Joint Declaration seemed to have been articulated more truly in Washington than in Belfast. As to the succession race, he agreed with the view that Trimble was clearly positioning himself for a bid in due course. When I expressed the personal view that there seemed to be an unattractive measure of old fashioned bigotry in Trimble's make-up, Chilcot, while not disagreeing, pointed to some of his better qualities, including his intelligence, and said he had noticed an improvement over the past year or so in his capacity to contain himself. He was a man who had been much more ill at ease with himself and with others before that. He offered the view that his hard-line, negative postures may be tactical to some extent for the purpose of advancing his leadership claims.

Work of the Liaison Group

Chilcot expressed himself as very pleased with the work of the Liaison Group and hoped that we can arrive at an agreed text.

Even if that is not possible at official level he felt that by resorting to the use of square brackets it should be possible to prepare a document for consideration by Ministers. He laid particular stress on the importance of the two Governments "sticking together to the maximum possible extent, as in the case of the Joint Declaration", in regard to this next stage. While that kind of remark was to be expected, nevertheless one gets the impression that, more and more, there is a realisation on the British side of the advantages to be derived from bringing the Irish Government along with them. The very positive international reaction to the Joint Declaration, particularly in the United States, where they felt so vulnerable in the past, will have convinced the British of this. A full awareness of this on our side will, of course, influence and inform our tactics as we argue with the British about the elements of a shared understanding. Chilcot accepts readily that in subscribing to certain parts of the Joint Declaration, such as the principle of consent and its constitutional and political implications for us, the Irish Government showed great courage. He said they were also greatly impressed at the way the Taoiseach and Tánaiste had brought the Irish Government and people along with them. They had also made a very big impact on the British people by what they had done and by the way they had promoted the Joint Declaration and the cause of peace. They had been particularly effective in their many interviews with the British media.

Crossmaglen

Needless to say, I raised this issue with Chilcot, pointing out to him that the Tánaiste would be meeting a delegation from Crossmaglen that afternoon. Why did they continue to make so many incredible mistakes in that area over the past twenty-plus years? Their original blunder was to take over the GAA pitch which was as insensitive and stupid a thing they could have done in such an area. Ever since then they had scored a succession of "own goals". The latest development was an example of gross insensitivity not only towards the local population but also towards the Irish Government, commenced as it was without any prior consultation. Using an expression attributed to Prince Charles when commenting very critically on some of London's modern buildings, I said the Crossmaglen development was a carbuncle on the landscape in the fullest sense of the term and was ill advised. Chilcot said that we had made our views known very forcefully at Ministerial level on the previous day at the IGC in Belfast. All he could do is repeat Mayhew's explanation on that occasion when he said that he could not afford to leave security personnel exposed and vulnerable to attack, especially in the wake of the casualties suffered. Personal security was the overriding consideration. He was of the view that the public outcry in the media was worse than the reality on the ground.

Select Committee on Northern Ireland

Chilcot said he was pleased that the chairmanship of the Committee had gone to James Kilfeather and that John Taylor had been chosen as one of its members. He seemed to be suggesting that given Taylor's destructive tendencies, it was better to have him involved and engaged. He said it will not have escaped our attention that the first issue to be taken up by the Committee is employment, thereby implying that a certain degree of external direction and control is being imposed from the outset. The importance of the Committee's make-up was stressed by Chilcot in that connection.

Defence Cut-Backs

I asked Chilcot whether the latest proposals emerging from the Ministry of Defence review had implications for Northern Ireland. He was certain, he said, that the Army's capacity to fulfil its commitments in Northern Ireland would not be affected in terms of manpower or financial resources. There was, he said, very little controversy within their system over the extent or cost of their Northern Ireland involvement.

The Home Secretary

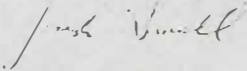
In the hope of learning something about Chilcot's own future, given the fact that the Permanent Under-Secretary post in the Home Office is now vacant, I moved the discussion on to the Home Secretary, Michael Howard and the many reverses and u-turns forced on him over the past six months. While not giving anything away in relation to his own prospects or intentions, Chilcot was scathing in his criticism of Howard, making the observation that in the past a Senior Minister who suffered so many humiliating policy defeats would have long since resigned. The Tory Party had, he felt, changed a lot over the past ten or twelve years. The type of candidates attracted to politics during the Thatcher years were now rather different: they tended now to be full-time politicians drawn from the professions and serious policy set-backs experienced by Ministers of that background no longer seem to be resigning matters, he opined.

The UUP and the European Elections

Chilcot said that while in America Molyneux and his colleagues were worried in case any of the mild views or statements they expressed there would be reported back home. The UUP wants the

Government on its part to be extremely careful in its public utterances on the run-up to the European Elections to avoid exploitation by Paisley.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joseph Small".

Joseph Small
Ambassador.