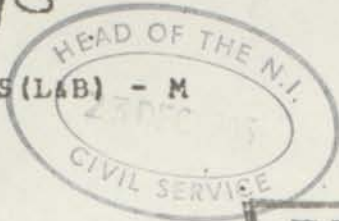


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(9) 667/120  
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PS/PUS (LAB) - M



cc:-PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - M

PS/Mr Scott (L&B) - M

PS/Mr Bloomfield - M

Mr Brennan

Mr Stephens - M

Mr Innes - M

Mr Chesterton

Mr M Elliott - M

Mr Gilliland - M

Mr Bell

Mr Blackwell - M



TELEPHONE CALLS BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MR BARRY  
20 DECEMBER 1985

The Secretary of State telephoned Mr Barry earlier today to say that in the light of the current level of threat in Northern Ireland, steps were being taken to increase our effort on the security front; and Christmas leave had been cancelled for many Army units. Security co-operation across the border was vital in these circumstances and the Secretary of State hoped that for their part the Irish would do everything possible to step up their efforts. This was also the Prime Minister's view; she was looking for positive gestures from the Republic as evidence of their good intentions.

2. Mr Barry replied that he was very concerned about the security situation in the North and would find out what might be done from his side. He would speak to Mr Noonan. He proceeded to ask for details of the position on the 27 convicted in the supergrass trial and the hunger strike. He was very worried about the prospects for an escalation of the hunger strike in the face of delays over appeals. There was a case for calling a special meeting of the Conference to discuss the issue, perhaps within the next couple of days. It was left that there would be a further telephone conversation in which Mr Barry would report on what now could be done on the security front and the Secretary of State would provide new details of the hunger strike and give a considered view on the idea of a special meeting of the Conference.

3. In the second telephone conversation, the Secretary of State reported that about half of those convicted in the trial had so far

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ected to appeal. One man had gone on hunger strike. It was not possible to be sanguine about the length of time that it would take before the appeals were heard; the appeals had to be fair which meant that full and accurate transcripts of the trials had to be available and there was already a backlog of cases to be heard. This pointed to an interval of several weeks at the very least before appeals would be heard. As for a special meeting of the Conference, the Secretary of State appreciated that the Irish regarded this as a very important issue and one about which there would be strong feelings in sections of the minority community in the North. However he did not favour a special meeting of the Conference. It could be interpreted as a panic measure and create an atmosphere of crisis in the North, which would be most unhelpful. The situation was confused and a Conference in the next couple of days would be meeting on the basis of inadequate and ill-prepared information. Also it was likely that nothing tangible would come out of a meeting; this could devalue the Conference in the eyes of the minority. The sensible approach would be to discuss the issue at the scheduled meeting in early January.

4. Mr Barry said that he had already carefully considered the arguments adduced by the Secretary of State. However they were outweighed by the need for the minority to see that the Conference was working and had a grip of the important issues. There had to be formal recognition in Conference terms of what was a very serious problem for the minority. This went to the roots of the question of confidence in the administration of justice on the part of the minority.

5. The Secretary of State remained firmly of the view that a meeting before Christmas was not on from the practical point of view and because of the arguments he adduced. Mr Barry said that he could manage a meeting on 27, 28 or 30 December. The Secretary of State noted this without commitment. It was left that both sides would "take a rain check" after Christmas to review the situation, with a view to deciding whether a meeting was necessary.

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Mr Elliott

6. I should be grateful if / would arrange for advice to be tendered to the Secretary of State by telephone on 27 December. It should cover the latest situation on the hunger strike, appeals, the likely timing of any appeals, the attitude of the Irish at that stage etc. It would be best if whoever is tendering the advice (I gather that it is likely to be Mr Stephens) were to telephone me in the first instance. If there is to be a meeting of the Conference then 30 December is the most suitable date from the Secretary of State's point of view. I am assuming that the meeting would take place in London. However I should stress that the Secretary of State's firm view is that there should not be a special meeting of the Conference before the meeting scheduled for January.

J A DANIELL  
Private Secretary

20 December 1985

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- cc PS/S of S (L&B) M
- PS/Mr Scott (L&B) M
- PS/Mr Bloomfield 23/1 M
- Mr Stephens M
- Mr Merifield N
- Mr Innes M
- Mr Chesterton M
- Mr M Elliott M
- Mr Gilliland M
- Mr Bell M
- Mr Blackwell M



PS/PUS (L&B) - M

TELEPHONE CALLS BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MR BARRY  
20 DECEMBER 1985

May I offer a comment on the suggestion, reported in Mr Daniell's minute of 20 December, that there should be a special meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference about the "Kirkpatrick" cases.

I gather from Mr Daniell's note that, although Mr Blackwell's earlier note of today reported that none of the men had yet formally appealed, about half of them are now known to have done so. Those cases are now, therefore, again sub judice. It appears from Mr Blackwell's note that the quick processing of their appeals will in part depend upon the goodwill of the Lord Chief Justice. Given what we know of Lord Lowry's sensitivities about the Agreement, I should have thought that it would be positively counter-productive to have an inevitably public meeting of the Conference which he and others would perceive as encouraging Irish intervention in the judicial process. Of course, we could say that the meeting was not about that but about ways of handling the hunger strike which was a legitimate matter of public concern. But how many would believe us?

I should have thought that, although this is a matter on which we should listen to Irish anxieties and do what we can to reassure them, it is eminently one to be pursued informally and privately through the Secretariat.

A J E BRENNAN

20 December 1985