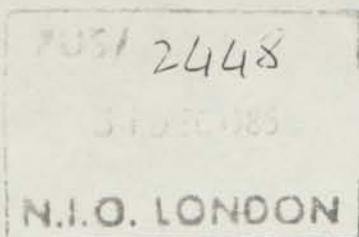


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Mr Andrew

2. A13/K
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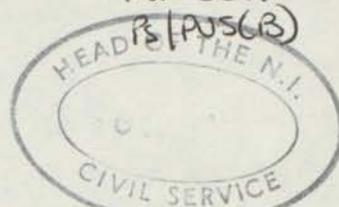
Ref. A085/3331

NOTE FOR RECORD

cc Those present

1. cc PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Brennan
Mr AW Stephens
Mr Chesterton
Mr M Elliott
Mr Bell.

PS (PS/6)



Northern Ireland Affairs

Sir Robert Armstrong held a meeting on 20 December at 3.15 pm to review developments since signature of the Agreement, and in the light of the forthcoming by-elections. Those present were Mr Robert Andrew, Mr David Goodall and Mr Christopher Mallaby.

2. Mr Andrew said that the unionist reaction to the Agreement continued to be very hostile, and those principally involved were at some personal risk. At a public meeting in Belfast recently he had been denounced as a traitor. It was something of a success that the recent Intergovernmental Conference meeting had been held as planned at Stormont, which now resembled a military headquarters, with barbed wire hastily erected. There had been a substantial demonstration at Maryfield, at which 38 policemen had been injured. There was some evidence of intimidation of contractors, and special finance would be needed to pay the additional costs. As the marching season approached, and particularly if the hunger strike by INLA men was carried towards a conclusion, there would be substantial police overtime required. Sir Robert Armstrong said that he would be happy to support a case for extra provision for the costs of implementing the Agreement. Mr Andrew said that the Northern Ireland Office would be pursuing the matter with the Treasury. In a meeting with the Prime Minister the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had put the case for a Spearhead battalion, as well as additional Royal Engineers. Without these measures, terrorists might be able to penetrate deep across the border. The level of PIRA activity was high, even though (largely due to good luck and

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the efforts of the security forces) casualties remained low. The GOC had had to cancel all leave in order to achieve this. It would be necessary to present the increase in armed forces in Northern Ireland as purely a response to this high level of PIRA activity, rather than as a consequence of the Agreement.

3. Mr Andrew said that the first meeting of the Conference had been amicable, but had revealed strains below the surface. The Chief Constable of the RUC, Sir John Hermon, had made a presentation (and had circulated the text of the assessment on which it was based) which had not been well received; his Irish opposite number, Mr Wren, had said that this was not how the Irish side saw it. His deputy, Mr Newnham, had not liked the implication that the Garda should do more. Sir John Hermon had given Mr Wren a shopping list of things we would like the Irish to do, including exchange of intelligence information, achieving compatibility in the wording of warrants etc. Regrettably there was no evidence yet of a meeting of minds. Some of the points made by the Irish side were unrealistic, including pressure for proportional representation in Westminster elections and the introduction of a Bill of Rights; they had also made accusations of bad faith concerning the Newry/Dundalk bypass.

4. Mr Goodall asked if we had presented the Irish with a shopping list of political points. Mr Andrew said that our main priority was to seek a positive commitment from the SDLP, including the nomination of nationalists to the Police Authority. The SDLP had been reluctant to commit themselves until it could be demonstrated that the Agreement was working; and Mr Hume said he could not participate in the Assembly, given the ticket on which he had been elected, until a fresh election had taken place. He had been regrettably silent on the subject of devolution and power-sharing. His deputy, Mr Seamus Mallon, had made a number of unhelpful calls for abolition of the UDR. As

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the latter was a candidate for by-election, it seemed likely that he would continue to speak publicly, and probably in an unhelpful fashion.

5. Mr Goodall said that it would be useful for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to have more detailed information about such developments. Mr Andrew confirmed that an FCO representative would be invited to attend future meetings of the IGC; noting that if a meeting were held at short notice, attendance would have to be arranged ad hoc. Mr Barry had asked for an emergency meeting on 23 December, which the NIO were resisting, as giving the wrong signal (ie that the British Government's arm could be twisted by nationalist pressure). Two days ago Mr Barry had proposed a meeting on 9 January; this would probably be accepted, on the basis that it would be held in London (since Mr King had to attend Cabinet here on that day). Meanwhile the two Ministers would meet on 27 December, to take stock of the hunger strike. This would enable Mr Barry to say that the two Governments were in close touch.

6. On security points, Mr Andrew said that the Irish were resting on their deployment of a task force on the border, comprising somewhere between 60 and 100 men. This seemed quite inadequate; it might amount to as little as one man for every 20 miles of the border. Arrangements for the two Chief Constables to get together again had been seriously delayed; it was worrying that Mr Wren did not appear to regard meetings with Sir John Hermon as a top priority.

7. Sir Robert Armstrong said that various people (including the Duke of Abercorn) had told him how difficult it was proving to project the Agreement in Northern Ireland. He wondered whether the Lord President or some other Minister might be encouraged to make a visit to the Province. Mr Andrew said that NIO Ministers had been active, making speeches and writing articles. Doorstep approaches were however ruled out by demonstrations. Mr King was

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threat of unconstitutional action would come during the marching season, especially if the hunger strike went the full distance; the risk of clashes, as at the funeral of Bobby Sands, would then be high.

9. Mr Andrew reported that there was anxiety that unionists within Northern Ireland had not been consulted in advance of the Agreement (though of course they might well have attempted to block it had they been consulted). The despatch by HM Ambassador at Dublin on the Agreement read rather blandly to those who knew the situation on the ground in the Province. It would be useful if Mr Kenneth Bloomfield could accompany Mr Andrew to a subsequent meeting in this series. It was agreed that this would be done, probably in the second week of January.

10. Sir Robert Armstrong asked whether there was any assistance which other Departments could give to the NIO in all this. Mr Andrew said that the most useful thing would be for HM Ambassador to reinforce, in representations to the Irish Government, the need for a substantial commitment by the SDLP to the success of the Agreement. Mr Goodall agreed to prepare a telegram of instructions to this effect.

11. Summing up, Sir Robert Armstrong said that a broadcast by the Prime Minister was a card to use after the by-elections. Contact with the Irish side would be maintained through Mr King's forthcoming meeting with Mr Barry, and through HM Ambassador at Dublin. Thereafter meetings of the Intergovernmental Council could alternate between London and Belfast, and occasionally Dublin, though 9 January was a special case since it had been requested as an emergency session by the Irish side. It would be useful for the United Kingdom senior officials to meet again in his office in January, to review developments.

No: this was
the 30 December
meeting

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12. The meeting closed at 5.00 pm.

MS

M C STARK

23 December 1985

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